

The Family Friend



A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

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A Grandson's Letter to His Grandfather (Part 1)

This letter was written to **Ernest Clevenger, Jr.** on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. It was written by his grandson, Paul Jacob (Jake) Loyd, in 2009, and read at a family gathering in Gatlinburg. Brother Clevenger has since passed away. He was a preacher of the gospel (and brother-in-law to Betty Clark, of Calvert City). Due to its length, we will print it in two parts.

Grand Dad:

I have been meaning to write you this letter for several years now. However, meaning to do something, but actually getting around to doing it are two very different things. Since your 80th birthday is now upon us, I figured it was as good a time as any to write this. No, not because you're getting older, but because if you're 80, then that means I'm almost thirty and I just might start forgetting some of these thoughts soon. In actuality, I will never forget these thoughts; in fact they become more ingrained in my mind the older, and some would say wiser, I become. The truth is, I am writing you this

letter to share some thoughts and memories I think about often, especially when I am hunting and fishing (particularly when I'm alone on the deer stand). I am also writing it to express my appreciation and gratitude to a man I highly admire and aspire to be like, that's you; just in case you're wondering, my Grand Dad.

As I get older and learn more about myself, I have come to realize in most cases I don't remember intricate details of my past experiences/stories. For a short period of time after an event I could tell someone more details than they care to hear, but after a while most simply fade out. I am not sure why this is, but I think it's because I have a very forward looking personality or mind set, I tend to not dwell on the past. However, the exception to this rule is hunting and fishing. When it comes to this subject in my life, my memories are very vivid. Three experiences (ironically all having to do with trout fishing as opposed to hunting) still come to mind as if they happened yesterday. It is strange to me why two of these stories are so crystal clear in my mind, because in both cases I was very young. I think there are two main reasons: the first is because you did not prewarn me or make me aware of

the situation before hand. Instead, you waited till I figured out something wasn't adding up, asked you about, then you explained. The second reason is because in both instances, I was dumb founded once hearing your explanation, but afterward very happy to find out the new knowledge I learned from you.

I will never forget when we were trout fishing one day and you were catching fish right and left. You must have caught at least ten fish to my one, and probably more. Of course I was a little frustrated watching you reel in one after another. Finally, I hopped across the rocks, over to where you were standing, and I asked you why you were catching so many more fish than I was, when I was doing the same thing you were. You smiled. Then, you said something to the extent of, "What color shirt am I wearing?" I answered, "Camouflage". Then you said, "And what color pants am I wearing?" Again I answered, "Camouflage". You then said, "And what color shirt are you wearing?" I answered, "White". You then explained that trout fishing was a lot like hunting, and told me the idea is to blend in and not let the fish know your there. Then you explained to me that when the trout swam

downstream after my lure they were seeing my white shirt (and me) and would not bite. Of course I immediately wanted to discard my white shirt and wanted to go back to the motel and switch shirts. I am not positive about this part, but if I remember correctly I believe you said you might have another camo shirt with you, and lo and behold, you pulled one right out of your bag. Coincidence? I think not.

I remember another day we were trout fishing. I had gotten a little better by this point and you were only catching about four times as many fish as I was. As you often did, you would periodically stop and silently watch me fish. Every once in a while you would instruct me on where to cast and so forth. You kept saying, "Oh, one is following it", or "You had a couple chasing it, throw it back out in the same spot but a little further upstream". Finally, after this scenario had played out many times over, I turned around and said in a puzzled voice, "How come you can see these fish and I can't?" Again, you smiled, and then took off your sunglasses and said "Put these on and look at the water". Well, I was flabbergasted; it was like x-ray vision that allowed me to see straight through the water. Then you explained that they weren't just any sunglasses, they were polarized sunglasses and explained how they worked.

My final story which most often comes to mind, again, is when we were trout fishing: up on Elkmont I believe. I was quite a bit older and more experienced. Whenever possible, we often fished separate sides of the river to cover more water.

However, when this event unfolds, we were on the same side of the river and you were a couple of steps in front of me. We were both concentrating on our casts as we fished a large pool, when you turned around and looked at me and in a very calm voice, as if it were no big deal, you said, "Jake, there is a bear behind you". Based on your tone and the manner in which you said it, I turned around expecting to see a bear thirty or forty yards downstream, maybe twenty yards if I was lucky. Never in my wildest dreams did expect to turn around and see a bear, neck stretched out, nose to the air, and still moving towards me, so close I could have reached out with my rod and touched it.

It still blows my mind how calmly you said, "Jake, there's a bear behind you". Don't get me wrong, I understand the importance of remaining calm and all, but your voice had zero assertive tone to it which would have alerted me, or prepared me, for what I was turning around to see (which by the way makes the story that much better to tell, and many of my friends have heard all three of these stories, but especially this one). Too startled to move much, I turned my head back towards you and quietly said, "What do I do?" You then raised your arms in the air and started waving them, and hollered a little bit, and the bear turned and slowly wondered off. If I must say, that was one of my neatest, if not the coolest experience, I have ever encountered in the outdoors.

In recent years, I have come to several realizations concerning my love for the outdoors. For instance, while having a conver-

sation with a close friend, Ben Miller, regarding hunting he said something along the lines of, "My Dad didn't hunt, so I kind of had to teach myself and I didn't get into hunting nearly as early as you and your brother". Immediately, my first thought was, my Dad didn't either (though he did become more involved while we were young), Will and I don't know how lucky we really are that Grand Dad moved to Nashville and taught us how to hunt and fish".

In another instance, Michael Woods called me one day and said he was going to Gatlinburg with his family (his wife's parents were going too). He said he and his father-in-law were going to sneak away one morning and try to go fishing. He knew I had a lot of experience fishing around Gatlinburg and asked me where he should go, what he should do, and what lures to use. I wanted to send him where I thought he would catch the most fish, so I told him how to go to Elkmont and gave him very detailed instructions, or so I thought. I told him he needed #0 - #2 Mepps Spinners. I told him exactly where to park. Then, I told him he needed to walk up the road about a mile and a half till he hit the big rocks in the road and start fishing there. I even told him to wear camo clothes and explained why. He is a very experienced hunter and fisherman. I thought these directions would be more than sufficient. — To be Continued next month.