

Stuart Van Leer Bradley

12/2/1916 – 6/15/2004

Eulogy by Stuart V. Bradley Jr.

Glen Avon Presbyterian Church was important in my Dad's life. It is the church where my parents were married right before Christmas in 1941, this is where Mark, Tim, Jean and I were baptized, and this is where my father was ordained an elder in 1948 at the age of 32. He remained active and involved in every church he belonged to throughout his life. He sang in the choir here and one of my favorite childhood memories is of Dad's booming bass voice singing "We Three Kings Of Orient Are" as he came down this aisle in regal costume and holding a small box.

I think it is somehow appropriate that my father died the same week as Ronald Reagan as they shared many of the same qualities. Like Reagan, Dad was optimistic, he never wanted to hear anything negative. He did not want to hear gossip. When I pressed him to tell me details of his brother Bruce's experience at the liberation of a concentration camp in World War II he would say only that "It was awful". He was almost always cheerful. He was friendly. He was almost always the last to leave a church reception hall. He was devoted to my mother. And like Reagan he struggled with a sort of good natured dementia at the end of his life.

Clearly his finest quality was generosity. He loved to pick up a restaurant check. He made loans that he never

expected to have repaid. He paid college tuition for many and that included non family members. He was also generous with his time. He volunteered constantly in his retirement. After the first hurricane to hit Kauai he was down at the Red Cross headquarters every day. I could also say he was generous with his advice, and many of you know he was quite persuasive.

Let me tell you a little about my Dad's life. He was the third of four boys born to Edward and Kathryn Bradley. His father was a timber cruiser for the family lumber business in Duluth and was away six days a week. That came to an end when Dad's older brother William got sick and died at the age of three months and his mother was distraught at having to deal with it alone. He was born in 1916 in a small town in the upper peninsula of Michigan called Alpha. They then moved to Iron Mountain and then to Iron River, Michigan. Some winters they would spend in California and Dad told me of the excitement of riding the Los Angeles street cars to school hanging on to the outside straps. They had a cabin at Spread Eagle and it was Dad's job to row across the lake for ice cream on Sunday because they were not allowed to use the boat motor on the Sabbath.

Dad learned to drive by taking his father around the county when he ran successfully for school board chairman. Dad wanted to be a lawyer. He was in High School during the Depression and his mother signed him up for an ROTC summer camp where the prize for the best camper was a full college scholarship. Dad won the scholarship only to find that it was to Michigan Tech and there was no prelaw program there. He got degrees in

Civil and Mining Engineering staying on for a fifth year because there were no jobs. He was, however, on the debate team.

Dad's first job was in Virginia, Minnesota and then Duluth. He met my mother on a blind date. Dad did not work for long before he was called up and sent to Fort Belvoir in northern Virginia in the Army Corps of Engineers. That is when he invited my mother to visit and proposed to her on a paddle boat in the Tidal Basin next to the Jefferson Memorial in DC.

He spent 5 years and one month in the service and was promoted to Captain. He helped build the Alcan Highway in British Columbia and D-Day tent camps in Wales. He also got to be an army prosecutor in France, oversaw army contracts in Belgium, and helped rebuild bridges in France and Germany.

He was a white officer in a black general services regiment. The closest they got to combat was during the Battle of the Bulge when they realized that there were no front line troops between them and the advancing Germans and as my father would say with a laugh "they skidadled". He wrote my mother over 600 letters during that period which she saved and I treasure. Since he was an officer he could censor his own mail so the letters are surprisingly informative. It is revealing that not one letter from my mother to him during the war has survived. He always lived in the moment and did not collect mementoes from the past.

My parents saved their money through the war and in 1948 built a house on Lakeview Drive here in Duluth several blocks from where my mother grew up. Later they built a cabin outside Iron River, Wisconsin. Dad's early morning splash would often wake us up in the boathouse as his dive off the dock was really more like a belly flop. He would commute into work in Duluth and then after he drove back he took another swim before dinner. We kept the cabin even after Dad was transferred to Pittsburgh by U.S. Steel in 1964.

Dad took early retirement at the age of 55 after working for 33 years and he collected a pension for 32 years. Not a good deal for US Steel. In 1971 my parents moved to the north hills of Pittsburgh to be near my sister and her babies. In 1979 they moved to Kauai where my brother Tim lives.

I have to say that Dad clearly loved living in Hawaii the most. He liked the year round gardening, the sea breezes on the lanai, the chance to go barefoot most of the time. He was a goodwill ambassador for the Island of Kauai, loved to greet tourists, and even brought some home to stay for a few days or even weeks.

After this service we will bury his ashes at Forest Hill Cemetery near here. There are four generations of Bradleys buried there including Dad's three brothers, his parents, his grandparents, his great grandparents, and numerous other relatives. I would like to point out that it was 50 years ago this year that his beloved younger brother Bruce passed away and 20 years ago that his mother Kathryn died at the age of 97. I also think it is

interesting that Dad's father died on June 13th, he died June 15th, and his father's father died on June 18th.

Dad did not talk about work very much. I was in High School before I had a clear idea of what he did for a living. Clearly, family and church came first in his life. I am pleased that we can honor my father in his favorite church with so many of his family members and friends here. Thank you very much for coming.