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## Prologue

My mother first wrote “Dad’s Lessons” in 2012 as a gift to her father for his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. My grandfather was a complicated man. He was a man of the greatest generation; raised during the era of prohibition and under the tutelage of some of the area’s greatest bootleggers, a survivor of the great depression, drafted into the second World War as a mechanic and then called upon to join the Screaming Eagles - 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne.

He rarely spoke of his past, but did remember, with laughter mind you, when his companion and best friend, snuck away to milk a cow. My grandfather never saw him again; the man having been captured and held prisoner for the remainder of the war. My grandfather was later dropped on the wrong side of the Rhine and after that his story became legend; romanced in film tales to this day.

After the war he became an engineer, raised four children (the youngest my mother) and became widely recognized in the hydroplane racing circuit.

His life forever changed when his beloved wife passed away December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1980, at the age of 60. My mother was only 19 at the time. She took over as a parent helping her father as he struggled to move on with his life, and the waves of that struggle made the two of them drift apart, but also, in a way, made their bond stronger.

My mother went on to become a psychologist and dedicated her time to helping people with developmental disabilities to live fulfilling lives and be better understood.

My grandfather passed on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 of natural causes and his daughter, my mother, followed him on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 after a long battle with cancer.

For me, they were like two titans that loomed tall over the first half of my existence. After their passing, I found that so much of what I had done, so much of what drove me, was the desire to impress them. Not because I needed to impress them, but because they were so impressive to me and shined so brightly, that I wanted to honor them in everything that I did.

My hope is that you take the lessons that you will find in this little book with you in your own life. They offer great wisdom; learned over more years than you or I could possibly possess in our singular lifetimes. So take their words, take these pieces of their lives, and let them better your understanding of the past, and shape how you think in the future. That was their gift to me. I now pass that gift on to you.

Yours,  
Tyler J. Booth

# Dad's Lessons

Written by Lizbeth Booth

Someone once said that everything one needed to know about life is learned in kindergarten. I won't argue that there are many lessons from that wonderfully fresh, strange and potential filled year that I carry with me throughout my life. In fact, I still tell stories about Mrs. Goodman's sun filled room of 5-year-olds. I always played the character of Batgirl at playtime, co-starring with Mark or Mark as the stunning Batman. Little did I know then that Mark would grow up to physically assault his girlfriend on more than on occasion or that Mark would disappear from our lives by junior high. In general I preferred boys to girls, except for a classmate named Linda. She and I shared the same birthdate. We were born at the same hospital. My mom was 40-years old and I was a 'change of life' baby; the last of 4 children; the oldest of which was in high school by time I came along. Linda's mom wasn't a day over 20 and a first-time mom. I was healthy. Linda was not.

Linda arrived at Mrs. Goodman's class in a stroller, too weak to walk; or maybe it was the protruding belly resulting from liver disease. She was small, maybe the size of a toddler with huge eyes and greenish-yellow skin. I remember I could see her blue veins. Even at age five kids are mean when they are scared, and Linda was definitely scary even if we didn't understand why. I will never know why I was designated as Linda's buddy, maybe it was because our names were

alphabetically in line, but I was. I pushed her stroller to circle time. I sat next to her during snack time. I was supposed to wheel her on stage for our end of the year ‘Alphabet Extravaganza’ play, but she wasn’t well enough at the time of the performance, so it was just me and my umbrella.

My career has evolved around people with special needs, many of whom remind me of this very special friend.

We put on a production to highlight the letters of the alphabet on the great big stage of Fletcher Elementary School auditorium. There was standing room only. My role was in honor of the letter U, or maybe it was R or W... I don’t recall, other than I wore a totally cute raincoat and rubber boots and twirled a brand-new umbrella. I still know all the words and most of the dance moves too, with or without the umbrella. If you want to hear it, just let me know. My children however will politely leave the room. I remember that Dad was standing in the back, near the door. I might not have seen him, bright lights and all, but I know he was there. He is always there. Needless to say, kindergarten was impressive or perhaps I was just impressionable.

To be sure, the lessons of kindergarten were tremendously important; but not quite as life shaping as the lessons I learned from Dad. From this vantage point – hindsight being 20 - 20 and all, Dad’s lessons define the person I am and the life that I choose to lead. His lessons permeate everything I do as a professional, as a parent, and as a person.

*Thanking* Dad for doing his job seems, well, contrite. He never seemed comfortable when someone offered him thanks, choosing instead to point out that the “thanker” was as much a part of the solution as Dad. After all, what does one do with a thank you anyway, especially when the person being thanked was just doing their job, or was acting of their own accord not



looking for or expecting anything in return? Can parents expect anything? Has any child ever asked to be parented? Or is that just what is required – like putting gas in a car, when the responsibility of parenthood is garnered?

I wonder: Are parents really like farmers, expecting to reap what they sow? And are children like crops? Sometimes destroyed in the storm or stunted because of lack of essential cultivation? Or just seeds that didn't take or were planted in the wrong type of soil? I can see me as a crop, planted in the richest soil and cultivated with just enough rain and sunshine; or discipline and warmth as the case may be. However, Dad doesn't strike me as a farmer. He hates snakes which are always sulking in gardens and he really doesn't seem to appreciate that plants need conversation too. Dad is more of a mechanic. He starts with a product and fixes it or tinkers with it until it is better than it was on its own; maybe a simple carburetor adjustment or a different size motor, a new paint job, the smoothing out of a dent, or just a whole new front end. He could take things that others broke and tossed away, and reshape them into something of which to be proud of.

As a mechanic Dad worked with what he had in front of him and went to the ends of the earth, or at least a distant junkyard or auto parts store to find just the piece he needed. I like describing Dad with the analogy of a mechanic better than a farmer as it allows for the uniqueness of the child; namely me and recognizes that the child (me again) brings something to the relationship. A mechanic needs a project and I needed a patient tutor, someone confident in his skills and gentle in his warnings... don't rub too hard and don't change the front end too much... We were the perfect match.

But back to the concept of "thank you." I'm not keen on thanking people for doing their jobs. I tip because it is expected, not because I am grateful or stunned by the level of service. So,

in writing this, be clear it isn't a "thank you". It is an honorarium; recognition for a job done well. I take responsibility for the choices I've made and will continue to make in life. My choices undoubtedly were shaped by Dad, and for the most part, the decisions I've made have turned out okay because I learned my lessons. However, I will not blame any bad choice on the coach. All said, the greatest tribute I can think of to offer in honor of my dad is to share his wisdom with others. This is also a chance to let Dad know that I was actually listening and watching and learning. Dad was also a teacher and as all teachers do, Dad expected his class to recite back to him the gist of lessons he taught.

So, for the record, here are my answers to Dad's final exam in the class he taught on "*The Art of Living*" or as it seemed at the time "How to act like a grownup."

The year after kindergarten I moved across the hall to Ms. Lawrence's first grade; but Linda stayed behind. We still saw each other during arrival and dismissal and sometimes I would go to Mrs. Goodman's class to sit with Linda. But as the year progressed, Linda wasn't at school very often and by wintertime she was not there at all.

My dad worked for the school system so it wasn't surprising to see him from time to time. Every once in a while, I would catch a glimpse of his face peering into that tiny slot of glass they called a window on the classroom door. When I was little it made me smile and feel special. By junior high I was embarrassed.

Dad always knew I was in trouble even before I did. My mom however, never came to school. On the rare occasions I could not walk home from school and my dad was unavailable, my oldest brother picked me up. That was the best because Tim had some pretty cool cars at the time. I've always been partial to men with great cars or at least to the cars.

All the students walked to and from Fletcher school at the time, twice a day. We would be dismissed at lunch and return an hour later for the afternoon session. Rain, hail, sleet or snow - we walked. I am still not sure how we made it home and back in the wintertime because dressing for the cold weather seemed like it took forever. Snowpants that were so bulky you could hardly bend over to slide on your extra pair of socks and then the plastic bag before pushing your now fat foot into clunky boots. And then came the matching thick winter coat. The kids who didn't need a grown up's assistance to get the zipper up were thrilled; it was much less likely that we would zipper our own chin than the teacher who had 20 other kids to help dress. Then there were mittens and hats and scarves that by the time they were all secured, us kids would be dripping in sweat and eager to get outside no matter how frigid the temperature.

Every so often, we would exit our classrooms to prepare for our lunchtime journey home and find the boots of fifty first graders strewn across the hallway; the goal was to find your personal matching pair. Today, forty parents would be calling to complain about some catastrophe - the comingling of boots, but back then it was just a moment of fun.

# Lesson One

*Just think about how good it will feel when it stops hurting.*

When I repeat Dad's inspiring words out loud, I always watch for the response of the listener. Without question it is a bizarre comeback when the emergency room physician says "it's broke and I have to reset it", or when a little one falls off his bike and is bleeding from the scrape on his knee. Most moms bend over and kiss the wound but not me... I might do that later, but the first thing I say as soon as the giggling stops is Dad's first lesson "just think how good it will feel when it stops hurting".

(By the way, the giggling is a long, genetically linked story that requires a whole different type of telling, so I will leave that to another time)

Dad's mantra reiterated the fact that whenever I got a cut or a bruise, the "owie" was only temporary. But I also read it in his eyes when the hurt I felt was churning inside my heart or pistoning up and down in my brain. I am pretty sure my response was similar to others: "How would you know" or "This will never stop hurting" or most often "What a stupid thing to say." But Dad was right. It felt great when it stopped hurting. *I* felt great when it stopped hurting; and the hurting always eased up just like he said it would.

This simple statement taught me to trust time. It promised relief. I learned not to be afraid of pain, and from there I learned not to be afraid to fall, or as I grew, to fail. If I got hurt, if I made a mistake, if I totally failed, the sun would rise, the river would flow, and I would still walk by putting one foot in front of the other.

Teaching me that I would one day feel better no matter what caused the pain was Dad's wise promise that all things bad would pass, and that there is always a dawn, even though the waking morning may still be very gray, after every storm. As Robert Frost once wrote, "Life goes on"...

As with all good lessons, there is the main lesson and the

secondary lesson, or maybe that is the rule for good novels. Regardless, this lesson also taught me that whatever I needed to weather the storm was inside me. Dad was inarguable proof of that obvious but often over looked fact: time may not erase, but will certainly ease the pain. Dad survived the Great Depression and the sequel to the “war to end all wars”; the big one - WWII. How could I debate with his experience, and more importantly, how could I doubt his word? He never complained of his pain or displayed it for others to lament.

Dad’s underlying message was as clear as his statement: If you need to go to the doctor to set your arm, or lean on a friend to heal a heart, make sure it was worth their while, because the fact is, you can do most things all by yourself if necessary and other people have a lot of their own “stuff” to do. The pain will end, if you just allow it. In the words of a great lyricist, “you can’t always get what you want, but if you want, you’ll get what you need.”

I learned lesson one very well, but not because I’ve had tremendous pain or heartache. I’ve been truly blessed in that way. I’ve learned the lesson because I’ve witnessed so much strife in others. Because I know the truth about pain, I’ve often been helpful to others riding out the storm and waiting for dawn’s first light; the children who I sat with at the hospital, some of their parents at tearful wakes, friends who suffered great injustices, and loved ones experiencing tragedy.

The legacy of Dad’s first lesson is pretty impressive if I do say so myself. I thank him for me, but also for all whose strength was sometimes borrowed from me. Dad showed me it’s never-ending source inside of me; a well to which I often travel.

# Lesson Two

*When you mess up fess up.*

Let's be clear, I learned this lesson vicariously. As a perfect child, I never had to fess up, because I never messed up. But I watched my brothers do it a lot. It didn't matter what they did, how big or how small. Dad always knew: A car driven too fast, a forbidden visit to the local watering hole, a sneak peek at Christmas time. Honestly, I don't remember any of the punishments – I am sure they were something along the lines of losing a privilege like driving the car or seeing friends. I don't remember them because those things didn't matter.

The punishments weren't the deterrent to future mess ups. What I remember is Dad's disappointment. Well, in reality, the first thing I remember is the panic of knowing you got caught, but then, the sadness of letting him down or misusing his trust. The real lesson learned here isn't about the physical pain caused by "messing up." People recover from broken bones, but sometimes the scars from hurtful words or actions run deep.

As a young child I learned that I need to think before I speak, and more importantly I learned to think before I act. To this day, when I am tempted to do something off the straight and narrow (okay maybe it looks more like the infamous Yellow Brick Road) I ask myself: "Self, is this something that would hurt Dad if he ever found out and don't forget, Dad always finds out." The idea of hurting Dad weighed the heaviest in those spur of the moment but life altering seconds of decision. While I knew the pain of disappointment would lessen, would the change in his perception of me be worth whatever I thought I was going to gain? In Psychology 101, students learn that perception is everything and Dad's perception of me is one of the most valuable possessions I own.

As much as I like to think I was the perfect child, I made a number of memorable bad decisions... However, I was a good kid not because I never screwed up but because I thought before I acted, minimizing not only bad mistakes, but long



ranging unwanted consequences for everyone involved. Dad instilled a sense of responsibility first to my family but then rapidly generalized to all other living creatures. One of the biggest lies children are told isn't about make-believe givers of gifts. It is about fearing physical pain over psychological pain. I've recovered from every thrown stick or stone, but there are words and actions of others that still give me pause.

Dad's lesson of responsibility helps me to minister to others who too are wounded or even maimed by the words and actions of others. The ripples of a good lesson someday reach around the world and for that I am thankful to Dad.

# Lesson Three

*Don't go to bed angry.*

When they read this, my siblings will silently say – “No, that’s not right.” But I am taking a liberty here, just like Dad does with songs... I know he said “Don’t let the sun set on an argument...” but by the time I was the one arguing with him, he had grown smarter than that; and the lesson changed. My siblings of course had all flown the coup too early to benefit from the second edition of Dad’s lessons; edited I am certain by their response to his debut attempts. Ahh... blessed is the youngest child because the parent is all “grown up.”

This is one of those examples of the fact that I reaped all the benefit of the parenting mistakes he may have made with the older kids. But I digress, so back to Dad’s lesson about the danger of sleeping in anger.

By the time I came around, it was clear that people can’t control the sunset and it takes two people to argue, only one of which you have any influence over – yourself. If someone else wants to watch the sunset angry, that is his or her business, but it doesn’t mean I have to lose a good night’s sleep. By the time I was of age to argue with others, Dad revised his lesson plan to account for the fact that I only had control over me... And, there was really no sense in going to bed angry, so it was up to me to do what I could to make amends but also to “let it go”.

At first I thought Dad just didn’t know how to have a good fight; verbally of course, but then I realized he was once again, just being one of the wisest men I know and practicing what he preached. As I’ve said before, words can cause scars deeper than any injury ever could. Words spoken in anger are rarely helpful; and anger is a potentially dangerous emotion. It zaps all your energy and diminishes capacity to do even the simplest things in life.

Life is short. Life is unpredictable and you can’t depend on it staying around until tomorrow. Dad didn’t need to teach me that. My friend Linda from kindergarten did. She also taught me

that when grownups cry, it is rarely a good thing. But again, I digress.

The bottom line is I can be angry or I can live my life. I can't do both because anger messes life up in more ways than people even realize. It's like the ripples that go around the world when a good lesson is learned. Anger can be a small bump that causes someone to stumble or an earthquake that destroys the whole town, the point is, your anger reaches others in ways that are soon out of your control. So don't go to sleep angry, a dozing monster might awake.

## Lesson Four

*Head for the round house George, they can't corner you there.*

First of all, if anyone can explain why Dad and other male family members on Dad's side called me George, I would love to know. There were enough relations actually named George to go around, so why they created another is beyond me, but as in all things Dad, if he called me George, I came running. Three other adult men also showed up slightly after, but it was usually me who he wanted.

The round house... This was one of the hardest of Dad's lessons to understand. It was also a truth that once embraced created a world perspective that defines me.

Because of the proverbial round house, I can never quite see anything clearly if standing in the square rooms we tend to find ourselves in or worse, those we work hard to create. In fact for me, claustrophobia is so strangling in square rooms I am left with no alternative but to *run George run*.

The easy meaning of the round house is: Don't leave yourself without an escape. A round house has no corners to paint yourself into. It also has no hidden hallways in which to lose your way or strand you in dead ends. Most importantly, there are no unseen turns for boogiemen to hide around and jump out and scare you. In other words, don't get yourself in situations where you make the problem more difficult, with let's say, overlooked consequences, bad influences or misplaced pride lurking in corners.

The round house is trouble, and when you are in the middle of it find a safe place and put everything out in the open so you can seek the solution. Corners are dark spaces where all kinds of evil lurks; yours and everyone else's.

If the metaphors are hard to follow, welcome to the Dad's class of life. I warned you the lesson was challenging. So here it is in plain Upstate New York English: Sometimes life is just hard. Sometimes problems just arise. So deal with it. The best way to address whatever life sends your way is not to run off to

a corner, but make the problem as clear as it can be... put it out in the open and then do something. Crying, shaking & being afraid in a corner aren't helpful and it isn't living. Being angry or boastful or threatening from the safety of your small corner is just plain dumb. You may yell out a lot of platitudes, but you're still standing in a corner watching the world go by.

And if you do step out, the people you were yelling at probably have elephant sized memories. The problem is that being the bigger person, the courageous person, the lead person isn't always easy. It also isn't always natural, so we have to practice, in the round house where there is no place to hide. On the down side, a round house doesn't have tunnels for a light to shine through. In the middle of trouble, the only light you're going to find is the one you create. Without corners or dead-end hallways or sharp angles for boogiemen to hide, there is no need to be afraid. But as a great man once said, "*The only thing to fear is fear itself*".

But in the dark, fear stands boldly in your path. So, if you want light in a round house you better find the switch and turn it on or throw open the shutters and expose yourself to the outside world. It's up to you and I've learned that the sooner you decide the better.

I must warn you however, that I've run into a few round houses where the power line has been cut and the shutters are nailed closed and the moon has even flown away: Times when it felt like me against the world. The round house always seems darkest during the bleakest of life's trials and yet in those moments I've also learned that sooner or later your eyes will adjust.

Back to plain English? - The round house means that there are some problems that will change a life and a person and that there is not always light at the end of every tunnel because

sometimes there isn't even a tunnel. Be thankful because when standing in the round house – you are well prepared. In the round house there is nothing lurking, hiding or having the advantage.

Whether you turn the light on and face trouble head-on or you stand in the dark long enough for your eyes to adjust, the solution will be right there with you because once you see things differently, the things you see will change.

There is no way to make that truth any clearer or any easier, which is perhaps why the lesson of the round house is so hard.

There is another part of the round house lesson that is equally tough. Round houses are not typical in this society. We've worked so hard to build big, beautiful boxy buildings that we've created an endless number of corners to hide in. So, for George to head to the round house, there's often a lot of searching, usually while others are yelling for you "run and hide" or "come in out of the rain", or stop fighting fate and just "wait for the storm to pass." It's hard to argue with that advice, except for the fact that Dad put that round house option up on the board the same way your math teacher put up the "problem of the week." Both expected someone to get up and attempt it – and remember to show your work.

You can solve a problem or you can ignore it. If you ignore it, it is going to stay on the board forever, reminding you that there is still unfinished business. The hidden lesson of the round house is – solve your problems because they ain't goin' anywhere without you.

I've watched people lose their jobs, their spouses, their children and even themselves by ignoring problems or waiting for them to melt away. Once you enter the round house, it's nearly impossible to delude yourself into thinking others have the power to solve the problems you face.

I am often referred to as a natural leader and an insightful



problem solver, little do they know I am just George, running  
for the round house 'cuz they can't corner me there.

# Lesson Five

*Set the bar high.*

There was never a time in my life when I came home with a perfect score on a paper – a hundred out of a hundred – when I wasn't asked “Why didn't you get a hundred and five.” Most people flinch when I tell this story. I've learned to wait for it. I've also learned that the greater the flinch, the lower the setting is of the flincher's internal hurdle. I always had the option to be good enough. I've also been very fortunate that Dad present the option of being top notch. Like the round house, once the option was on the board, it was like a beacon leading my way.

I don't remember ever resenting this statement as others seem to think I should, but remember pondering it, which was always the point of interactions with Dad.

Dad never taught something once and let it go, he taught it again, again and again, and pointed out the lesson in every opportunity. By asking why I didn't do better than I had, no matter how well I did, he taught me not to let anyone else set the limits on my abilities. If the test was worth 100, did I know 20 more things that weren't asked? Did I learn everything I could from the opportunity that was presented or did I learn just enough to get someone else's idea of an A? Dad taught me that just enough is never good enough: In school, at work or in relationships, I know I can get by with just enough of anything; but that would be a disappointment not only to him, but to me as well.

This lesson also taught me that you get what you expect from people and from life. If I expect someone to disappoint me, they will. If I expect someone to do half the job they will. If I give someone everything they need in order to reach the stars and expect them to do it, they will.

Dad taught me that “Reaching for the stars” isn't pie in the sky thinking, because he taught me lots of definitions for stars... Sometimes if dreams don't come true it is because I

wasn't dreaming the right dream. So, when I am struggling with something, I stop to figure out why is this so hard... invariably it's because I don't have the right information or what I am working on isn't really what needs to be done.

Somebody wrote a best seller about people who keep moving forward, adapting to change and learning new things. Dad could have written the book.

When people ask why I work so hard, I usually say because I can't sit still. The real reason that I work so hard is that I haven't quite mastered my hurdle. There are still things I need to learn from life's opportunity. I know I am getting closer, but I am pretty sure somebody is going to raise the damn bar if it gets too easy. I am equally sure I will be up for the jump.

# Lesson Six

*Kilroy was here.*

Every once in a while Dad would state - often times for seemingly unknown reasons, that “Kilroy was here”. His statement would be followed by one of the only war stories Dad ever told: No matter where he went during the “Big One” – the Kilroy symbol was waiting for him and his buddies. To be honest, I didn’t understand the importance or the power of this lesson until recently. Even with the best of teachers sometimes the lesson is still obscure, so I forgot about it. I settled for an A.

Kilroy however, was ever lurking in the shadows of my round house. The problem on the board that remained unsolved. I’d catch a glimpse of him every so often and finally I had to call him out... So, who was Kilroy and what was his lesson?

In the stories Dad told it was clear that when Kilroy was spotted, a modicum of anxiety was replaced by hope. Seeing Kilroy also left a tangible sense of wonder and amazement, and produced a question that was never clearly answered. How does everybody know about Kilroy, even in the God forsaken ruins of battle? How’d he get here and who put him here? The million dollar who, when and how questions.

The “where” was the only query adequately answered – everywhere. Kilroy was everywhere during a time when the world was afraid. It took me a very long time, but I finally figured out that Kilroy was the most spiritual lesson Dad taught.

I am not suggesting that Kilroy was a crude representation of God or that God was the entity that put Kilroy at the ends of the earth and all the spaces between. What I am suggesting is that much as the flowers in spring time, the downy snow that falls on a Christmas Eve, a baby’s smile or a puppy’s slumber, Kilroy was a not-so-subtle reminder for the men who experienced not-so-subtle evil, that we are never alone.

Dad’s lesson of Kilroy was a lesson of faith. When in the

midst of war he felt forgotten, Kilroy awaited at the road's next bend. When it seemed that no one could possibly survive the chaos, Kilroy was peering over a fallen beam boasting not only life but vitality. When it felt as if the war was all in vain, Kilroy was affirming that goodwill prevails. When sleep finally stole a few minutes, Kilroy's eyes were wide open, keeping watch over the weary.

Kilroy couldn't stop the evil, but he could fortify the good men who rallied against it. Kilroy could not stop the suffering, but he could comfort the disheartened. Kilroy didn't protect my dad from the horrors of war or lead him safely home to teach his wonderful lessons of life. I am however very grateful Kilroy was everywhere to put a smile on Dad's face, wonder in his mind, and faith in his soul; the seeds that would become my lessons of life.

When it stops hurting, when I mess up, when I discard my anger in search of a good night's sleep, when I run for the round house, and when I vault the high bar, I have faith.

I am never alone, because Dad's words live in my heart where they whisper his lessons, as I ponder every decision and nudge gently for me to seek the answers for every problem. In Dad's lesson's I have learned to take care of myself. In Dad's lesson I have learned to help others. In Dad's lessons I have sent ripples of faith around the world.

If it wasn't for the skill of 'Dad the mechanic,' I'd never get off the starting line, never have a chance to win the race, and never really know just how fast I could go, or what luster lie inside. All his tinkering and adjusting and sometimes just some TLC made the lessons, albeit taxing, worth learning. A good mechanic sees the potential when others just see junk. And that... is Dad's greatest lesson of all.

# Lesson Seven

*Life is what you make it.*



## Epilogue

I hope that you found their words of wisdom as meaningful and helpful as I had hoped that you would.

Now let me add a few more lessons... Lesson Eight: When the flag drops, the bullshit stops.

This was probably my grandfather's favorite phrase; at least at the end. It was passed to him from some Canadian hydroplane racers and he grilled it into me.

I spent a few summers with my grandfather helping him to restore some wooden race boats. He had this crazy dream of building a boat that he would call Last Blast and driving it on the river that he grew up on and raced on as a boy. He would repeatedly say, "Tyler, what happens when the flag drops?" and then he would wait for my response; and it was always the same response: "the bullshit stops" and he would smile, sometimes laugh.

What it meant was that, people can talk a big talk sometimes. A lot of us 'fake it 'till we make it' as they say. But you can't fake your way across the finish line in a fair race. So let people talk, let them believe that they are better than you if that is what they need to do to get by; and instead keep your mind focused on being the best that you can be so that when that flag drops, and the bullshit stops, you will prove your worth for the whole world to see. Also, don't diminish yourself by trying to pretend that you are somehow better than others. Don't feel like you need to fly your flag the highest or hold your candle the highest. Just be you. That will be enough.

I look back fondly upon my grandfather in church. He and I both grew up in churches that were built by our ancestors' hands; and that brought some expectations upon us within those walls. Yet, he would always sit in the back, on the end closest to the exit. He would have fun, make jokes, play pranks, embarrass his grandchildren at times; and he would never try

and be the person singing the loudest or holding that candle the highest. He would look at those who struggled to be the most visible with those all-knowing eyes of his, and I, looking up at him, could see the truth in them. He knew that the brightness that made a person shine in the eyes of those around them was from the inside.

Before my mom passed, she wrote my sister and I a letter. It read:

Dear Charlotte and Tyler,

The order of your names are simply chronological, no more no less. I can't love you the same because you are night and day.

But I can love you, respect you, and dream for you equally.

You are my greatest gift.

First and foremost, who you are has nothing to do with me and everything to do with the choices you made. For right or wrong, I gave you space to be who you have become and if my world ends tomorrow, I am beyond proud and humbled by who each of you are. Take time to reflect on that sentence... and see how in high esteem I hold you. I expect the Nth degree, and neither of you have let me down. Thank you.

There are no words of wisdom of which I should pass on.

There is no lesson you need to learn or that I need to teach. In other words, Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain....

Your heart, brain and courage is yours and yours alone. No one needs to tell you of their existence or how to use them.

Life is hard. Life can be good. Life can be grace.

Give thanks for what you have. Work hard for what you want, and give peace to those who need it.

I am sorry for any wrongs, short comings or faults.

I love you both and I hope that someday you can appreciate the depth of what it means to be loved unconditionally, for that is all I had to give.

Mom

Lesson Nine: Love Unconditionally.

Life is messy, hard, painful, and none of us know what we are doing. So, don't blame others for not living up to your expectations. Their life is their own. Just be happy, be grateful, that they chose to spend a moment of it with you; and make it worth their while if you can. Also, don't be afraid to love many things. Love is a beautiful thing. If you have the capacity to give it, then give it unconditionally. It is like passing a flame from one candle to the next... it can spread its light and its warmth endlessly if kept alive. You don't need to be around to know that it is there. You just have to breathe it to life.

Lesson Ten: We are never promised a tomorrow; so enjoy today.

At times, we all feel alone. Maybe lost, maybe misunderstood, maybe even forgotten. But look around. You may not know it, but there is so much life around you, always, watching you, existing alongside you. So look up, look around, smile; even if only in your mind's eyes. The flame within each of us was a gift. Don't let that gift go to waste.

If in pain, just think about how good it will feel when it stops hurting. If you hurt others, own that, and make it right. Don't let words go unspoken and don't let frustration diminish your flame. Face your troubles head on for nothing can control your life without your permission. You make your own path; so high or low, go without hesitation. When lost, have faith and know that people like me are with you, will stand beside you, always and take strength from knowing that you are never really alone. Your gift of life is yours and yours alone to make with what you will. Opinions only matter if you give them power over you. The greatest power that you can possibly give is that of your unconditional love. Love and life are like a flame; giving light and warmth wherever you chose to kindle them.

Yours always,  
Tyler J. Booth



SCHULTE - Clyde C. Age 98, of the City of Tonawanda, March 12, 2020. The Lord called and said, Clyde can you come up and fix the Gate? Clyde said sure, it's a five minute job. With that we lost another of the greatest generation. Predeceased by the love of his life Anna (nee Kovacs) Schulte and the late Lillian (Vanderheid) Schulte; father of Timothy (Carol) Schulte, Anne Marie (Paul) Holdaway, Mark (Regina) Schulte and Dr. Lizbeth (Jay) Booth; grandfather of 10 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren; son of the late Oscar Sr. and Fannie Schulte; brother of the late Oscar (late Isabel) Schulte; also survived by many nieces and nephews. Clyde was a 1940 graduate of Tonawanda High School and served with the 101st

Airborn Division (Screaming Eagles) and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He had been employed by the City of Tonawanda School District for more than 30 years. His family enjoyed many hours of boating and racing on the Niagara River.



BOOTH - Dr. Lizbeth Jean, PhD (nee Schulte) Age 60, of Cambria, NY. The Lord called her away, somewhere over the rainbow on December 14, 2021, while surrounded by her family. A brilliant mother, psychologist, teacher, and advocate for the misunderstood, Dr. Booth dedicated her life to helping others. She graduated from the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Medicine in 1999, while raising a family. A hard worker and advocate for her extended family at People, Inc., until the very end. Dr. Booth is survived by her husband Jay; son, Tyler Booth; daughter, Charlotte Patterson (nee Booth); son-in-law, Eric Patterson and granddaughter, Layna. She is also survived by siblings, Tim Schulte (Carol Schulte), Anne Holdaway

(Paul Holdaway) and Mark Schulte (Gina Schulte) and several cousins, nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her father, Clyde Schulte and mother, Anna Schulte (nee Kovacs).