

Bob Beattie 1911-2003 as told by his grandson, Bruce Bitner

Hi(in Morse Code)

This knock is Morse code for “Hi”. Grandpa taught the grandchildren to use this when we came over to his house. It was a 200 yard trek to his house and I made it at least once, if not more, every day during the summer. See grandma and grandpa’s house was right next door to our’s. This was not a coincidence, but a one result of one of grandpa’s greatest qualities, generosity.

Grandpa gave my parents the land next door to build a house on for their wedding gift. This enabled us to have not one dad, but two. Our 2nd dad was retired and also very generous with his time. Many beautiful summer afternoons, we would take a 3 mile bike ride through the Illinois cornfields. We would sit at the end of the road by a turn of the century school building and talk about anything.

One thing I talked about is wanting to ride the train to Chicago. I would have to work for this one. The price, approximately 50 backrubs. He really enjoyed backrubs. A little more, a little more, just a little more, we would hear. This made me feel very appreciated. He used to like to be pulled around the pool by his toe as he floated. He was playful, jumping into the deep end of the pool with us. We would always be taking some adventure when we left the house. On vacation, he would talk to the locals using his ham radio. We got a tour of a Canadian Pacific train switching yard in Canada just because he talked to someone on the radio.

Grandpa really enjoyed people. He would drive around on his lawn tractor, and talk with the neighbors, or come over to our house. Grandma would often have to come looking for him to remind him it was dinner time.

Grandpa’s generosity fit very well with his 2nd passion, teaching. Grandpa was a teacher, through and through. My earliest memories of Grandpa was sitting on his lap and getting an explanation of how a steam locomotive worked. Grandpa taught us how to swim, taught us how to drive a tractor, taught us how to drive a car, and back a trailer up a long narrow driveway. Grandpa had patience to watch us make mistakes and get frustrated. I heard the phrase, “There’s always a another way to skin a cat” hundreds of times.

And sometimes we the learning process damaged things. Sue or I were practicing tennis and sent a ball through his garage door window. Instead of being upset with us, this turned into a lesson on how to remove and install glass. When I backed the tractor into the house, thinking I could stop myself by straight-arming the wall, this became a physics lesson that is still clear in my mind. Grandpa trusted and had faith in his little students. He let me, a young teenager at the time, remove and replace all the plumbing in his house. Think about that for a moment. I didn’t know anything about plumbing, but he had faith, I could do the whole thing. He was generous enough to let his grandson disconnect the water to every faucet, toilet, bathtub/shower, and spigot in his house. The effect of faith and trust is immense.

Through his generosity and teaching, Grandpa gave us freedom; Freedom to take a bike ride just to get out of the house; Freedom to drive a car; freedom to believe on ones abilities; freedom to enjoy life.

Thanks Grandpa!