

Dad - Literary Club - read 25 February 2019

For 63 years a Reichert has walked through the door at 500 East Fourth Street. My Grandfather became a Literary Club member in 1956 at the age of 59, serving as President in 1973-74. My Father joined in 1970 at the age of 41, serving as President in 1992-93. Over Dad's nearly 50 years as a member he wrote about the passions in his life: Art, Music, Opera, Golf, History, and, it seems nearly a prerequisite that all Reichert's write about Poetry and Robert Frost.

Until the end Dad went to the office, enjoyed reading, music, the arts, exercise, having an active involvement here at Literary Club, the Opera, Symphony, Losantiville Country Club, Rockdale Temple, and enjoying friends and family. He enjoyed following the Bearcats and complained about the Bengals and Reds. Above all he enjoyed the companionship of my Mom, and as Parkinson's gradually took her from him, he said, repeatedly, "I don't want to lose her." And, he didn't.

Like his Mother, Louise, Dad graduated from Walnut Hills. He went to Bowling Green to swim but broke his arm ending his swimming career. He earned a Law Degree at UC and, after two years in Japan in the Army, began his legal career. The other day I was opening his mail and saw a letter from the Ohio State Bar Association inviting him to a luncheon at McCormick and Schmidt's to recognize his nearly 65 years of practice. He would have loved that lunch.

Classical music and opera was Dad's soundtrack but if there were to be a theme song for his life it may be Sinatra's My Way. To the end he was David Reichert, living his life his way, pretty much on his terms. Two weeks ago my son Shane, who has been here, and I, visited. Although Dad was in visible pain from hip arthritis, we all went to symphony on Saturday night. Dad stubbornly refused to use a walker or wheelchair, and barely used a cane. Though struggling to walk he still drove us to Music Hall. It was a lovely last thing for us to do. Who knew it would be the last time together for the three of us? Hearing Bruckner. "Jim, what's the last thing you did with your Dad?" "I took a nap with him and my son at symphony."

Visiting him that weekend there were core reminders of just how "David Reichert" David Reichert was. Classical music played in the condo. The paper was opened to the sports page. Next to his chair was an impossibly thick book. It wasn't Ulysses. He finished that. Finished Proust, too. Mom was in the bedroom and he would frequently check-in with her, engaging in a one-way dialogue, unable to know what she understood. He, Shane, and I took in the view of the Ohio River. He was so happy to have Shane there. They played cards. We all sat and read on our handheld devices together. Though 89, he was adept with his iPad. He had his Shredded Wheat for breakfast, with black coffee. He did not have spoonfuls of Graeter's because he said he was feeling too cold.

Shane and I went to Findlay Market to shop for food for dinner. Dad wanted to be near Mom and did not want to go out. He doted upon her and cared for her with all his being, transforming himself as he learned to cook at age 82. Prior to that, I'm not sure he could make toast.

We get different things from our parents. Political or religious beliefs. Tastes in food or clothes, lifelong love for sports teams and exposure to music or media. We get opinions and personality

traits. When I wrote most of this, thinking about the traits I got from Dad, I was at Newark International, waiting to board a United flight here. An announcement had come over the loudspeaker that the flight was oversold and they wanted volunteers to fly next morning for a travel voucher, hotel for the night and meal allowance. Listening to the announcement, aware time is of the essence because Dad's blood pressure is dropping with alacrity and he may die that evening, a thought perversely washes through my brain and I know it would be so very "David Reichert" to take the bump, and take the offer rather than rush to his deathbed. I imagine sometime in the future being reunited with him and the first thing he says is, "You should have taken the deal." I got my Midwestern parsimoniousness from Dad. I got my love for my kids and my family from each of them.

He loved golf. While playing at Royal Dornoch in Scotland this past October, I was asked if I could play one more round where would it be and with whom? I said, "Losantiville, in Cincinnati, with my Dad, and Shane and my brothers. A fivesome, which would become a foursome after a few holes when my brother Bill, who hates golf, quits." We had great golf memories. A trip to Ireland was a hi-light. There was the time on the Kapalua Bay Course in Maui where we came to hole 17, a 185 yard par three forced carry over water. Dad said it was the most beautiful golf hole he had ever seen. He rushed to hit first, even though I had honors. He never stopped talking about the beauty of the hole. I never stopped reminding him he was so excited he topped his five iron into the Pacific Ocean.

He loved classical music and opera. WGUC was always on, and I was amazed at his ability to identify a piece of music, down to the movement, within just a few notes. I would struggle to know who the composer was, but his, nearly immediate, recognition was something. He would say he should have been a Conductor.

He loved watching the barges go up and down the River from the condo. They moved there from the house in Amberley because he was starting to have trouble with steps. He loved art and showing off the collection he and Mom spent a lifetime amassing. His "eye candy," he would say. He loved going to museums and galleries with Mom and they loved collecting together. He would say he should have been an Art Dealer.

Dad and Mom had a great love story. They were travel companions and art co-conspirators, and running and walking buddies. My brothers and I knew they loved each other. We especially knew they loved each other when their bedroom door was locked. It was locked...a lot. Watching what was happening to my Mom was killing him for what he loved above all else was Marilyn. For him to go peacefully before her seems fitting. He didn't want to lose her, and he didn't.

Maybe Dad should have been a conductor, or an art dealer. But, if he did he may have had his enthusiasm dampened for music and art, so maybe practicing law, at a pace where he was able to play catch with his boys in the backyard and play golf each weekend was right for him after all. What you can take away from his life is that he loved the things he knew gave him joy and he filled himself up with them.

My Grandfather wrote, “Religion is the art of living in such a way that as you grow older looking backward you'll have the fewest possible regrets.” I don't think David Reichert had many regrets.

I hope he's at peace because the past few months were so unnerving for him. I hope he's looking at art with an operatic soundtrack peacefully running through his mind, because for the past several months he was not at peace.

There is symmetry for me that the last time we spoke I was at the Met Opera waiting for Rigoletto to start.

I hope he's walking fairways and greens. He would tell me about having golf dreams. Now, I dream about walking fairways and greens with him.

As for me, before earning Graduate Degrees at Wash U. in St. Louis and UPenn in Philly, I earned a Bachelor's degree up the road in Oxford. I studied English and Poly Sci and was fortunate to have Ducky twice. During my time at Miami there were occasions when Ducky would drive me to Cincinnati to either hear my Father or Grandfather deliver papers. Fraternity pals would wonder why I would want to waste an evening driving to sit and listen to a boring paper rather than hang on the porch having beers or try to persuade a naive Freshman into bed. They did not get it. On those drives with Ducky I learned how a Coxswain uses a cox-box to keep a boat on stroke and the true wisdom in owning a Volkswagen Jetta. In his class I learned as much about comedic timing as I did about Dorothy Parker. Having lived in New York for nearly thirty years and being a member of The Penn Club, on West 44th Street, Clubhouse Row, I still cannot walk by the Algonquin Hotel without thinking about Ducky and his discussions of the Round Table. In college I envisioned joining Dad's law practice and not necessarily loving the practice of law as much as loving being in Cincinnati writing Literary Club papers and putting my name up on the Losantiville Country Club champions board. My career went in a different direction and I became an Author and Marketer.

On those drives to Literary Club Ducky would say, “You're in great company because the club has had guests such as Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. I always considered it a privilege to be a guest, and still do. Ducky would say, “It's nearly your birthright to someday be a Club member.” I don't know if that will ever happen, but I have always considered this to be my home, and I know there is no place Dad loved more than coming here on Monday nights.

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