

My Father --Harold Durley Lamb

My Father admired a humble person. To be great and humble was even better. He himself was a humble and great man.

I'm writing this not as a biography, but to show the character of this man. I want to show his devotion to family, his love of nature, beautiful music, poetry, astronomy and his ability to comfort and help people. It is my thought that he chose the ministry for his career as this gave him the opportunity to make lives better. His six children were the joy of his life.

His work in the family dairy kept him at home. This was an advantage to the children as he was around to teach them games. Summertime found the yard full of neighbor children. Although he was working in the milk house he was watching them play. He'd show them games. Using a jack knife he taught us mumbledy peg. Then there was "Cricket", "Annie Annie Over" and "Red Rover, Red Rover". He showed us how to play marbles by drawing a circle in the dirt. Then he demonstrated holding the shooting marble and flipping it with the thumb. These were such good games for any number of children. Where he learned them I don't know. Some of them I've never encountered elsewhere after all these years. Evenings found us playing cards around the dining room table. Euchre was a favorite. I'm surprised that he knew so many card games as Grandma Lamb considered them sinful. She did approve of the game of "Flinch". That is still one of my favorites.

During the mid-thirties we had a terrible drought and heat wave. Many days the temperature never went below 100 degrees. With no air conditioning and a house with no insulation, it was impossible to sleep in the upstairs bedrooms. They were like ovens. We'd spread blankets in the yard and try to sleep. With no clouds in the sky there was a brilliant display of stars. As we lay there looking up at them, Father told us their names. He'd point out Venus and the North Star and all the constellations. He explained the rotation of the Earth. He predicted that someday men would walk on the moon. Lindberg had flown across the ocean around that time and Father reasoned that since man had accomplished that they could also fly to the moon. Due to that terrible hot summer I learned about Father's knowledge of Astronomy. He'd had one course in it and his memory was amazing.

I think the town is Sheldon

Spencer, Iowa was the town where Father spent some of his childhood. He spoke fondly of it. It was not without tragedy, however. His father died at a very young age leaving his mother with three small children to raise. Father often told how she cried every day. She felt lost and didn't know how to manage with the three little ones. Father assured her that he would always take care of her.

When he attended college in Grinnell, Iowa she moved there and they lived in a house together. He attended Harvard Divinity school. While there he fell ill with Tuberculosis. As part of his recovery he was advised to live where he could be outdoors in fresh air. That was the reason he and mother chose to move to Keystone, South Dakota where they lived in a log cabin. How they

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did enjoy that life! He became the minister in the church. Their first child, Julia, was born there. Holding true to his promise to always care for his mother, he arranged for her to come to live with them. It seemed a perfect arrangement except that mother didn't like having Grandma Lamb there. The solution was for Grandma Lamb to go to Hennepin, Illinois to live with her sister Rose.

From Keystone they moved to St. Onj South Dakota where Bob was born. As was the lot of ministers, they moved often. Two years was the usual stay in one church.

He served churches in Chatom and Belpry, Ohio. That is when Elizabeth came along. I was born in Dwight, Illinois. He did well in all these churches and his career as a minister was flourishing. He loved it when mother could accompany him on house calls. Mother could hire help in the home so she had freedom to go calling with him.

Again tragedy struck. It was during the terrible flu epidemic of 1918. Father had a severe case of the flu. It damaged his speech and caused him to sleep a lot. Delivering a sermon was hard due to his speech problems. Preparing a sermon was almost impossible as he would fall asleep as soon as he'd sit down. He felt he had to give up the ministry.

What a terrible blow for him. Their next and final move was to Urbandale, Iowa where they bought a house on 5 acres of land. Here they lived well making use of all the produce they could grow. They raised a huge vegetable garden with plenty of sweet corn. They filled the chicken house with chickens which provided eggs and meat. They sold fruit from the apple, plum and peach orchards. When they were able to get a few cows in the barn they began selling milk. Eventually they were in the dairy business delivering milk to families in both Urbandale and Des Moines. The big dairies were competition with their pasteurized and homogenized milk. Father promoted his milk as tasting better raw and having cream that rose to the top of the bottle.

Father certainly had the ability to adjust to change and make the best of it. I never heard him complain. He was not a swearing man. He did get annoyed with one cow when she stuck her foot in the pail just as he finished milking her. He said, "Oh Gee Whizz" The swear words I know I didn't learn from him.

Father was dependable and faithful in his milk deliveries. Collecting was another matter. He would rather give the milk away than ask for payment. I don't know how well he kept accounts. Most people paid by putting the money in the empty return bottles. Mother seemed to know who owed. Sometimes she'd send me to collect. I had no problem.

His children were his pride and joy. What a beaming man he was when he became the father of twins. He had a big part in naming them William Winfield and Mary Ella. The event inspired him to write one of the many poems he wrote. This one started "The tenth of May on Mother's day two little Lambs came to town".

Mother was overwhelmed by having two babies. It took a long time for her to recover physically. She stayed upstairs for weeks it seemed. She didn't even come down for meals. Aunt Blanche came to help. She was wonderful. I remember her going up and down stairs many times a day waiting on mother. She must have done all the cooking for the rest of us as well.

She loved the babies, especially Mary. There was talk of her taking Mazy home with her. She had no children at the time and mother thought she had too many. When Julia overheard this conversation she ran screaming to father that mother was giving Mary to Aunt Blanche. I don't know how he handled that crisis, but it was resolved quickly. No one was going to give his child away.

I must tell about another caring thing that father did for us. Whenever any of us girls attended a late night school activity or worked late, he'd get out in all kinds of weather, trod down to the streetcar stop and walk us home. I appreciated this as it was scary walking home in the dark. There was a culvert at the bottom of the hill and I feared something horrible was hiding there and would jump out at me.

As we grew up and left home one by one he kept in touch through letters. I think it was his idea to have a family round robin. It is still circulation and getting better all the time as the next generation has become involved. It keeps the family close.

In later years he suffered with Parkinson's disease. This did further damage to his speech. He shuffled as he walked, His hands shook. Worse was the effect it had on his facial muscles. They seemed frozen in one expression. It gave him a blank stare. He could not smile. His beautiful beaming smile was gone.

He left this world on a cold March day when he was 66 years old. He collapsed from a brain tumor and died in a few days. He was great and humble man and I loved him.

Dorothy Lamb Baxter Nov. 1998