

Richard Bernard Lapp
Remembrance – May 31, 2017

I want to share with you a Lapp family story. A story you have never heard...a story The Lapp family has never heard....it begins like this.

Our elementary school class was studying the Scandinavian countries - Norway, Sweden, Finland and an Arctic region of reindeer herding peoples called.....wait for it...Lapland.

Hearing this, my hand shot into the air and before I could be called upon, I blurted out, "I have relatives from there.....the Lapps...Uncle Dick, Aunt Betty and my cousins!!"

The teacher was amazed. With great expectations, she asked if my relatives raised reindeer. My little mind raced to remember the various MI country homes of Uncle Dick and Aunt Betty.....the lake house where Uncle Dick took us ice fishing. No reindeer! Another house way in the country with the big walnut tree in the front yard, at least I think it was a walnut tree. Uncle Dick warned us not to touch the walnuts lying at the base of the tree because they would turn our fingers black! For a moment, I wondered why they would keep such a nasty tree near the reindeer. But where were the reindeer?

Quickly thinking on, I remembered that this same house had a few small out buildings, too. Yes, I said out loud to my class, the reindeer must have been hiding in those small buildings till Christmas! I was sure of it!!! The teacher thanked me for my contribution and the lesson moved on.

I so wanted to believe I had reindeer relatives!! It was only recently that reality caught-up with my imagination. But, before I completely give up, one last inquiry.... Aunt Betty, did you and Uncle Dick have reindeer?

On a day like this, we all arrive with memories. I best remember Uncle Dick's calm, soothing, smooth voice as he extended each word as if each was to be savored. He would always talk with a smile in his words....how did he do that? To me, his speak is unforgettable. Aunt Betty's speak is unforgettable...even when she writes an e-mail.

Recently, my cousin Steve shared with me words I will always treasure. Quoting him, he said of his father, "He was loved and he loved us back-what more could you ask?" End of quote. I would simply add, how true for both.

We cousins have been fortunate to have parents that have valued family, family ties, and family gatherings. Holiday gatherings I remember well. The ones where all of us kids had our own table. A place where we could eat black olives stuck on each of our little fingers and not be chastised for doing so. I must say, Steve and I may not have set a good example for the younger cousins! And finally, I so remember that after the meal was concluded, we cousins would rampage through the house away from the watchful eyes of Uncle Dick and the other adults, eating grandma's homemade candies and ultimately getting sick beyond sick for the trip home.

Betty and Dick grew up and came of age in WWII...the greatest generation. Where would we be without their service? So too with Claude and Emma, Gene and Margaret, Carl and Lucy, Claudy and Nels. They have all shown the way and we cousins have followed. Lives lived with grace.

I would like to share with you Aunt Betty a poem, a poem your brother Gene found very comforting. A poem he knew by heart and often recited quietly.

Softly the leaves of memory fall,
Gently we gather and treasure them all.
Unseen, unheard you're always near,
Still loved, still missed, with each passing year.

God bless the Lapp family on this day of remembrance.
The one true blessing in life is family.

Your Loving Nephew,
David E. Clemons*

* I have learned over time not to commit emotions to memory, so I have notes. When you speak from the heart, it is sometimes hard to get it all out.

