

The Legacy We Leave Behind



By Rob Pue

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This message is going to be a bit more personal than usual. You see, as I am about to turn fifty-three years old in a few weeks, I confess, I am starting to feel my age and doing a bit more reflection lately. Emotionally and spiritually, I don't really "feel" fifty-three. In fact, it seems like only yesterday that I was a teenager or a young adult, vibrant and strong and full of ambition. I'm still full of ambition and I will probably always be what people call a "driven" person... but the reflection in the mirror is not what it used to be.

It's probably around this time that a lot of people begin to think about their legacy...their accomplishments, and wonder if they have made any sort of positive difference in the world. Is the world better off for us having been here? Or has our existence been completely in vain? Have we touched any lives? Has our life had any meaning, or if we had never been born, would anyone have noticed? I don't mean to get off on any narcissistic tangent here, but I hope you'll indulge a few personal thoughts.

One of my hobbies is studying our family history. I find it fascinating to learn about my ancestors, where they came from, what they did, what sort of legacy they left after they were gone. The Pue family comes from Northern Ireland. Our family had the first printing press, and thus the first newspaper

ever published there, starting in the 1600s.

I don't remember my grandfather; he died when I was just two years old. His parents raised eight boys and three girls in a small Irish cottage near the seacoast. My grandfather's name was Alexander Pue, or "Alec" as he was called. He left home as a young man and traveled to Scotland, where he learned a trade as an architect, builder and stone cutter. I believe he was about 20 years old when he left the old country for good and emigrated to Canada... he never saw his mother again. He started a business there, and in 1910, at age 28, he married my grandmother. Several of his brothers also followed him to Canada. His sister Margaret came over in April of 1912. In her memoirs, she writes about sailing in the path where the Titanic disaster occurred just a week before, and seeing all the debris still floating in the water. Her ship stopped there, and they held a Christian memorial service in honor of those who lost their lives on Titanic.

Some time later, my grandparents moved to Chicago where my grandfather continued his business. He built many of the huge, ornate buildings in that city, many of them still standing, some historic landmarks.

My Dad was born in August of 1925. He was four years old when the Great Depression hit. Though the country was in turmoil, my Grandfather, a devoted Christian, weathered the storm and kept food on the table for his family, even as a self-employed builder. I'm blessed to have as keepsakes some of the tools he used in his business. My grandparents raised two daughters as well as my Dad, and sadly, a fourth child, my Dad's young brother, died in 1917 at just four months of age. Life must have been tough. I can't imagine it. But they made it, as they kept God at the center of their family. My Grandfather insisted on it.

He was also an Elder at Chicago's well known Moody Church for many years. He even preached the sermons there on occasion.

My Dad attended there as a child and recalls when a young Billy Graham came to teach them as their youth pastor. Moody's Senior Pastor at the time was Dr. Harry Ironside, one of the most prolific Christian writers of the 20th Century, having published more than 80 books, a number of which are still in print. On my office wall, I have my Dad's Sunday School Diploma, dated 1939 and signed by Dr. H.A. Ironside.

I never found out, until after my father's death, that he had never completed high school. Instead, at age 17, he joined the US Navy and went to fight in World War II in the South Pacific. When you watch the old documentaries and newsreels about the war, and see our servicemen on those ships, and see those planes on life-and-death missions...and the amphibious vehicles landing as the Philippines were liberated by the Allies in 1944... my Dad was actually there. He did that.

I believe it was the highlight of his life, and of course, it would be. Few of us will ever be involved in anything quite that significant.

As all Americans during that time worked together for the one common goal of freedom and liberty, and ending the bitter tyranny our enemies were bringing upon the whole world, my mother, too, joined in the efforts. Raised in a tiny, rural town in northern Wisconsin, she grew up studying in a one-room schoolhouse a mile or so down the road from her home. When she and her siblings did not walk to school, my grandpa would take them there in a horse-drawn wagon, or a sleigh in the winter. I cannot even begin to imagine what that sort of life was like. She grew up in a time and place where electricity was not commonplace, going to a one-room schoolhouse, heated by a wood stove. Telephones were rare, radio was the tool for mass communication, if you were fortunate enough to have electricity. TVs did not exist.

After leaving school, she went off to Chicago to join in the war effort, building war planes for McDonnell Douglas

Corporation. When you see those old newsreels of ladies building airplanes for the war effort – (they called them “Rosie the Riveters”) – my Mom was one of them. I can’t imagine the intensity of it all. The work must have been extremely hard, and the pay, not much. It took a toll on her later in life, as she ended up with severe hearing loss, undoubtedly caused by the work she did as a young lady, serving our country.

My parents left Chicago with their four kids before I was born. Knowing nothing about country life or farming, my Dad bought a farm near Marshfield, Wisconsin and moved his family there. That’s where I was born, and five years later, my youngest brother.

I’m blessed in that we have a few old silent movies of those days, and lots of pictures remain, showing what our family life was like. We think our winters now are harsh... but I remember snow storms on a regular basis that completely covered the cars and drifted as high as the garage rooftops. Our family farmed, but my Dad also took another job working for Sears as a repairman, where he was employed for more than 30 years. He had a hard time retiring.

It was March of 2007 when my Dad had an episode with his heart and was having severe blood pressure issues. My sister and her husband came and took him in to the Emergency Room that night. He had no idea as he left home for the hospital, that he would never come home again. Complications happened. We can second-guess the doctors and the procedures that were done, but they can never be reversed. My Dad went from the hospital to a nursing home, then to Palliative Care... and four months after his visit to the ER, he passed away. My Mom changed dramatically and quickly after that. It was as if she suddenly realized her job on this earth was done, no one left to take care of, no more work to do... she followed him into eternity just four months later.

We do not know the number of our days, none of us does. Our end can come quickly, like a thief in the night. Or we may experience some health issue that will come upon us suddenly, and nothing will ever be the same ever again... we, too, may one day go to the Emergency Room and never again return home. We don't know. God knows.

And so as I grow older, my kids now all gone from home... one about to become a father to his SECOND child, (making ME a Grandfather again!!), and my two daughters now graduated from college, my life has changed as well. My wife and I are adjusting to this "Empty Nest" business. We're doing fine, but it's a different life than when we had little ones at home every day.

So I look back on my own life, and wonder what I've accomplished. I've never left my home and family and sailed to a new country by steamship, starting a new business and a new life in a foreign land. I didn't leave school at 17 years old and go off to fight for my country in wartime. I have survived many challenges, but I've never lived through the Great Depression, or moved my family to a different state to live a lifestyle I've never known before. And while I'm honored to be working in full time ministry in service to the Lord, I've never studied under the likes of Billy Graham or Dr. Ironside.

I DID accomplish quite a bit as a young person. Even from the age of 12 I was very industrious... in fact, as I have lamented the fact that today's youth often seem to lack motivation and focus, my wife has informed me that, "Rob, you are not normal. It is not normal for a kid to do the things you did. You did things that most kids would never dream of attempting." I won't go into those accomplishments, but suffice to say, I probably wasn't normal, and probably still am not normal. I did start two businesses from scratch and (praise the Lord) they were successful and helpful to people; I did start a Christian newspaper in a place there wasn't one

before, but then GOD did that, He just did it THROUGH me. But regardless, I still seem to fall way short of the accomplishments of those who came before me.

I'm very proud of my own kids too, the things they have and are accomplishing, the things they're doing with their lives. It's a different world now, with new challenges, things I never dealt with at their age. But I look back at my parents and grandparents in awe... truly, I don't think I could ever have done the things they did... and I wonder where our future generations are headed, given the way our country's leadership has changed our collective worldview.

It seems the age of industriousness, innovation, and self responsibility is just a fading memory in the rearview mirror. I look at my grandfather, sailing across the Atlantic to a whole New World at 20 years of age, and wonder... what are 20 year-olds doing today? I think of my Dad, leaving the comfort of home and family and all he ever knew and going to fight a brutal enemy in a very foreign land, at 17 years of age... and I wonder, what are 17-year-old kids doing nowadays? Will any of us ever measure up to that Greatest Generation?

Today, as our country is in decline, we are not united as a nation. Many of us support our enemies and defend their religion, while vilifying our allies and denigrating the one true God who created us and who provides all our needs every day. On our college campuses, privileged kids, many of whom have never known what it's like to work a day in their lives, sit under the tutelage of liberal teachers and professors with even Communistic worldviews, as they learn to hate their country. Most of us, even most Christians, no longer attend church or have any regular connection to a church home or family. And for that matter, I dare say that today, MOST of the churches have engaged in the Great Falling Away. We have cell phones, tablets and smart boxes with the world at our fingertips, but we can't carry on a human-being to human-being conversation anymore. We cannot even agree what Marriage is

or what makes up a family.

As I look around my community, and all across our state, I see there are job openings nearly everywhere. Even part time employees at a fast food place or gas station start out at \$12 an hour. When I was a kid, \$12 an hour was a dream – something I could only hope to achieve in my life...someday. But today, employers cannot find people to fill the jobs. And workers are in a tough situation too. Today in America, the official full time work week is 30 hours. Our government has so arranged things that if business owners have full time employees, they are penalized and regulated to the point that they cannot afford to keep them. So they keep their employees on as part-timers.

On the employees' side of things, many survive only because they're able to receive subsidies and gifts from the government... but if they work more than 29 hours a week, or if they work two jobs equaling more than that, then the government considers them "too wealthy" to continue receiving aid. So the hardworking individual who wants to make something of himself and provide a better life for his family is relegated to a part time job and partial gifts from "On High." If he dare work more, assuming an employer would be willing to get taxed and regulated into bloody submission by the government by providing a full time job, then the poor soul actually LOSES money and his situation is worse for having a chance and wanting to work harder. We cannot win with these kinds of rules. But I digress...

Each of us has but one life to live on this planet, and then we meet our Creator. I pray that each of you is prepared for that eventuality, for we never know when that day will come. It may even be today. But what will our legacy be, when our life here is over? Legacies are made moment by moment, by the little choices and decisions we make each day... you can't throw together a "legacy" at the last minute and expect it to simply "look good." A legacy is borne out of character, and

something that can never be faked.

So how will we be remembered? Are we doing our best to make the world a better place for us having been here? Are we putting God first in our lives, being good examples, role models, and providers for those whose lives the Lord has entrusted us to care for and nurture? Are we influencing the world around us, leading the lost and lonely back to God? Are we standing in the gap for the most helpless among us? Are we pushing back against the forces of the evil one? Are we doing GOD's work as we live our lives each day? If we are, then the legacy we eventually leave behind will be truly something future generations can look back on with admiration, joy and love. There will be smiles, and people will be proud for having known us. If we are not going about the Lord's work and living righteous, holy, admirable lives, our legacy will be quite different.

We only get one chance here in this world, and then comes the judgement. A life is a terrible thing to waste, but how much more awful the wasting of a precious soul? How are you doing today?

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