

By Rachel Smith

Good morning, thank you for joining with my family as we celebrate the life of my grandpa, RC Smith. My name is Rachel and it is an honor to stand before you and speak about my grandpa today, as we remember a husband, a father, a grandfather, and a friend.

As a grandchild, some of my fondest memories of my grandpa was listening to him tell us the story of where he came from. I thoroughly enjoyed every opportunity I had to listen to the story of a man who created a new life with his bare hands. We grandchildren drew such inspiration from our grandpa, who came from next to nothing, so that one day we could have more.

A dear friend of my grandfather's always encouraged us to "get to know a person's story." And his was a story told by a self-proclaimed "simple man." But as a listener, it was a story that was far from simple. The story was always told the same:

Born in Palestine, Arkansas in 1933, he was one of 9 children. He didn't have an easy life by any means. He learned from a young age the value of working hard for what you wanted, and it's a lesson he continued to practice for the remainder of his life.

His extraordinary physical abilities began at a young age, where he proudly recalled how he could pick about 300 pounds of cotton a day when he would pick cotton in Arkansas.

The story continues as he moves to Illinois to create a new life for his family. He had about \$50 dollars in his pocket, and a hope that he could find work. He had heard from a friend that there was a demand for loggers. He basically bluffed his way into the logging business with a determination and stubbornness that is typical RC Smith. But anyone who knew my grandpa knew that he wasn't afraid of hard work.

His hard work brought him to settle down in Williamsville, a place that he was so proud to call home. He worked for Snyder Lumber Company in Petersburg for many years, before partnering up with his son, my dad, to create RC Smith and Son.

Mr. Snyder was kind enough to bring a picture of his sawmill, hopefully you will have an opportunity to look at it; you'll notice that the log yard is stacked full of logs as high as the loader could reach. He shared that all of those logs came from trees that my grandpa cut. To give you an idea of how many trees he has cut, imagine a caravan of 5000 semi trucks packed full of boards that would stretch from here to St. Louis.

As we would listen to this story of his life, we would notice that it revolves mostly around work. It was because of his work that he was able to give his family a more deserving life that he hadn't had. His determination and physical strength allowed him to go places and do things that an ordinary person would simply not have the capability of doing. So when this self-proclaimed "simple man" tells us how he got here, we know that this is a silent indication of what he expects his family to be like as well.

He instilled into us so many hopes, inspirations, and values, all which have such a lasting impact on each of our lives. He is the perfect example of a person who leads by example. It wasn't always necessary for him to lecture the importance of a hard days work, because he proved it at the end of everyday when he returned home to his family and gave to them everything he earned.

He had a personal obligation to be committed to everything he involved himself in. He committed himself to his work, to his family, and to his community.

As grandchildren, we learned very quickly that Pop didn't accept slacking off. While he loved to see his "kids be kids," he made sure that we took our responsibilities as seriously as he took his. If ever there was a day when we'd come home from school and complain and carry on about how we didn't want to go back the next day, boy did we get an earful!

It's such an incredible thing to watch the amusing pair of him and my grandma. She tells me, "Sometimes, he could say the most outrageous things, and if it were anybody else they'd wanna punch them in the face, but because it was him, he just made people laugh!"

He had a charm about him that can't really be put into words; he had a way of capturing the attention in a room by just being him self. And everyone who ever met him was sure to remember him.

He loved to stir up a conversation, be an “agitator” as my grandma would say. And if you were lucky enough to be caught in one of these conversations, you’d learn pretty quickly how my grandpa felt about things. But if there’s one thing he loved more than actually stirring up the argument, it was having the opportunity to laugh with his family and friends after it.

He had a sort of “no-nonsense” attitude about life, and everything else really, which anyone who knows him can completely understand. I can imagine my grandpa saying something like this, “Life is tough, but it's tougher when you're stupid.” And if you happen to be a western fan (like my grandpa), you would know that that is a John Wayne saying.

And now we are left with a story, and of memories and lessons, and though it is hard to imagine a family and a community without such a dear husband, father, grandfather, and friend, I am certain that as we go about each day, we will be reminded of the lessons he taught us, the values he instilled in us, and the “Arky-isms” that we all knew and loved.

The following is a poem by an unknown author:

“Because the ones whom we love and are longing to see,

Can be reached anytime, any day.

For the ones who are closest in heart and in thought,

Are only a memory away.”

Thank you for allowing me to celebrate with you the life of my grandpa. While it is difficult to put into words all that which I’ll remember, I will continue to see him each day in the form of my grandma, my father Rick, my aunts Pam and Julie, my brother Taylor, my cousins Jordan and Tanner, and all of his friends who’s lives he has touched.

On behalf of us grandchildren, we thank you for sharing your lives with our grandfather and our family. Our community was truly blessed the day he decided that this is where his family would call home. It has given us such pride to know of the impact that our grandpa had on everyone he met in his journey to pave the way for our family. He is truly, the stuff men are made of.