

A Run for Dad

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2011 Promise Land 50K, my seventh, will forever go down in my personal history as a run for my Dad who ended his six-year struggle with a rare and debilitating disease known as Progressive Supranuclear Palsy. He died peacefully in the early morning hours of Friday, Good Friday, April 22, 2011.

Arch Leean was a man of few words. He was born with a great talent, but never spoke of his many accomplishments. He studied art in college and eventually worked for Hanna Barbara Productions (Flintstones and Jetsons) as an animator. He also worked for Disney. Without my Dad ever telling me of his successes there, I knew that he was well liked and well respected. He just oozed confidence, but always yearned for bigger and better. I suppose that he could have remained in California with his lovely and devoted wife and two very young, and darling daughters, but something told him to move back to the mid-west where he was life began. So when opportunity presented itself, he took on the job of assistant professor of art at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. It was during these years that I joined the family. My Dad would teach there for almost 30 years before he retired in 1991, and began a new life with the love of his life, our Mom, in Branson, Missouri.

Dad was a thinker, a great intellect. He sought truth. He studied the Bible constantly, I suppose, to see if he could understand better the nature of man, and how God through the written scriptures were relevant in our lives today. During my sisters and my teenage years, dinner discussions sometimes revolved around spiritual matters. My most cherished childhood memory is that on school days, all five of us would gather for breakfast and Dad reading the daily devotional, before everyone reciting out loud the Lord's Prayer. During our family vacations in the summer months, all five of us would go to the Montana Rockies as our Dad loved its natural beauty and serenity and wanted us to enjoy it as well. During the evening hours around the campfire, we made smores, sang songs, and read out loud good books that included The Bible. Dad would challenge us to memorize some of the verses that he found intriguing. One of them was James One, Chapter One, verse one. "Consider it joy, my brothers when you face various trials . . . for you know the testing of your faith produces steadfastness . . ."

So it was fitting that I run Promise Land 50K last Saturday. My Father loved the mountains. He captured their beauty on canvas a few times. God also chose to bring my Father home on Good Friday 2011. I boldly believe that it was because my Dad was THAT special to Him, for my Dad was THAT special to me and many many others. I struggled to finish Promise Land 50K this year; but oh what a finish. What a great welcome by my mortal friends at the finish line! Thank you Dr. David Horton, Nancy Horton, Dr. Frank Villa! Thank you my fellow runners and volunteers! Thank you all so very much!