

I have been **mentally preparing** for this moment for a while, although I dearly hoped and prayed it would come much later in my life. As the extrovert of my family and public speaker by choice I knew that talking today would be me. You should know that while I am talking today, the words I am sharing are from Lisa and David as well.

Thank you for being here today, whether in person or in spirit you are here because our Dad had an impact on your life.

My Dad may have driven you to a Doctor's appointment,
built you something,
given you a ride in his airplane,
given advice,
been present with you in a time of need,
made you laugh with a witty remark, or
cheered you on at a Science Olympiad contest, a horse show, a golf match.

You may never have met my Dad but you learned about him through the values he instilled in my siblings and me, to be **generous, kind, work hard and always value family.**

We could **write a book** and perhaps we will, because trying to summarize and even start to tell the stories of our Dad's life is impossible to do in a short speech.

Dad was a genius although he would never say that because he was so humble. He went to a small country community school with 19 members of his class.

He made C's and D's. Our Grandma said that she felt he was just bored in school. She told us the story of when my Dad took the **Air Force Entrance exam**, he was 17 years old. The recruiter came out of the office and said "So, where is this C and D Genius, I need to meet him" Apparently, Dad had aced the test. After spending 6 years in the Air Force, he worked for IBM for 37 years then retired in 2001.

It was **during basic training** for the Air Force that our Dad met his lifelong friend **Bob Carr**. Bob recently told the story of how they met, he said that he had arrived at basic training and was asking if anyone had a cigarette. Dad looked down at his pocket and said "I've got this one" and promptly handed his last one over to Bob. Bob said he knew that was a sign of a great friendship. Bob and my Dad had so many adventures. **To have and cherish a friendship your entire life is a feat and one I hope we are all able to experience.**

Dad was **always reading**. He kept a **book in his car** at all times. When at a stoplight he would pull his book out and read, he told us: the car behind me will let me know when it's time to go...and they would.

Dad read for fun but often he read to figure out how to do things. He learned to **build a passive solar log home, then designed** and was the contractor for the home we grew up in and still love.

Our **Dad never ever complained about anything**,...even if he didn't get the right order at a restaurant he would just eat it and say, hey chance to try something different.

The **day after a major surgery** when he probably should have been resting in bed, he was downstairs eating breakfast before anyone else and acted completely normal giving no indication that anything bothered him in the slightest.

He was **always smiling and positive**, eager to help or simply listen.

When we were kids he would tell us things like

"Don't worry about the things you can't change", or

"you probably won't remember this on your wedding day" and

"when you walk in your room, just put one thing away".

Our Dad was the **most patient person and never raised his voice**. We can appreciate this even more now that **some of us have kids** and understand how difficult that can be.

He was always kind, level headed and would listen to us.

He helped us rationally talk through a problem and come up with a solution.

Dad gave the best advice and we talked to him about everything. He was the **first call we made in times of crisis**.

One year Lisa and I surprised Mom by **decorating the house for Christmas**. We cleaned the house, put out decorations and even put all the ornaments on the tree (including some fancy ornaments that she never hung because they were so delicate). Wow, what a good surprise for her when she got home that day.

That same evening, the three of us kids were watching a movie in the living room and watched as in slow motion the Christmas tree fell over, audibly breaking several ornaments.

Mom was upstairs and we didn't want to stress her out, so we immediately ran to find Dad to help us manage the situation. He helped us pick up the tree, secure it, and sorted out the ornaments that needed to be fixed. By the time Mom came downstairs everything was straightened out.

Dad just knew how to fix any problem. And if he didn't know he would read a book or ask the right person.

And he never just patched something up, if he fixed it, the end result was always better than it was before.

He could fix cars, airplanes, computers, anything around the house and was the most talented woodworker.

He made beautiful custom furniture for our family's home, in addition to more bookshelves than you could count. And they weren't just simple bookshelves, these were all sizes and custom made for each space.

He made them for Lisa's classroom, several spaces and classes at Raleigh Charter High School, and when Lisa and I discovered the inadequate shelf space on the small college dorm room desk, Dad designed and built bookshelves for us and our roommates.

All his creations were beautiful but our favorites are the rocking horses he made my sister and me when we were little. Now imagine the look on my Mom's face one Christmas when he brought up an adult sized rocking horse for her.

Dad was always **good at surprises**, or surcies as he would call them for my Mom. Anytime a new Nicholas Sparks book came out he would get it for Mom and say it was a surcie, a gift just because.

Conversations with Dad were thoughtful. It seems there were always long roadtrips providing ample opportunity for these talks. David and Dad took several trips driving across the country going to rocket launches or internships, he drove us back and forth to college, and our long family trips. Of course as serious as Dad was he was well known for his **excellent sense of humor.**

One evening we were all sitting at the dinner table for supper when a telemarketer called selling some kind of credit card. This evening Dad decided he would see how long he could keep the telemarketer on the phone, of course his audience (our family at the dinner table) was rolling with laughter the whole time...

“So tell me about this card again?...”

Ok so does it have the little flapping bird in the corner? I really want the one with the bird in the corner when you move it back and forth?...

I have the gold one now....Isn't gold better than silver?...

well while I have you on the phone, my kids make these great homemade pot holders, would you like to buy one?”

While I don't think **he was ever successful** in selling our homemade potholders, Dad was always there to support us in every step of our lives.

He was the best Science Olympiad parent,
a horse show Dad,
took me to swim practice at 6am,
picked up David at the airport at all hours,
went to Father-Daughter dances and more.

We also enjoyed the special ways that Dad included us in his own hobbies.

When we were in the **5th grade** we went with Dad to **Florida for Sun 'n Fun**, a big air show. I remember eating corn on the cob, building model airplane wings, watching the Blue Angels fly, and Dad putting my hair in a ponytail.

Dad also took some classes while at Sun 'n Fun to learn how to re-cover his airplane wings. **Almost right after we got home, he took his airplane completely apart (not just the wings), and it was in the shop for 7 years**, which makes sense now having kids because I can't imagine having 3 kids, working full time and rebuilding an entire airplane.

This airplane is beautiful, it's a Cessna 120 which was only in production for 3 years after WWII. We all loved to ride in his plane.

He would take us for rides and we would fly over the house, once he flew me back to Clemson after a weekend at home. As kids our favorite part was when he would make it feel like a **roller coaster ride** while flying.

The **first time Steven and David met Dad** he took them up flying in his airplane. **He was sure to tell them that he had just finished rebuilding it.** When Dad took Steven up he suggested Steven call his mom and say "Hey we are up in the airplane and it's getting a little low on gas". Perhaps the airplane ride was just part of the vetting process for dating his daughters.

Dad loved his family so much and I know we all loved watching the moment he met each of his sweet grandchildren.

Grandpa loved talking to **Phillip** about airplanes and rockets. For his 4th Birthday party, Grandpa blasted off bottle rockets with all the kids and it was the biggest hit. He loved getting to take Phillip for rides in his truck and teaching him how to do the disappearing thumb trick.

Grandpa loved to cuddle and read stories with sweet **Laurel**, if Grandma and Grandpa were putting Phillip and Laurel to bed, Grandma would put Phillip to bed and Laurel would fall asleep in Grandpa's lap.

Grandpa loved when **Charlotte** would sit with him to read books, they even sang Old Macdonald had a farm together when reading.

Henry came along and quickly decided that Grandpa was his favorite. Even during his clingy mommy only time, he would always reach up to sit with Grandpa and would snuggle with him. Grandpa taught him to give high 5's and during the last week Henry would say "Ba-Pa", point and walk to the living room to check on Grandpa.

Grandpa was so proud of his grandchildren and we know his spirit lives on in each of them.

Our Dad left us so many reminders of his love throughout our lifetime of memories with him and we hope you will experience and see these lasting memories too.

Whether it's running your hand along a bookshelf he made,
watching an airplane fly overhead
or going to Camp Agape where he did so many projects with the Lord of Life Men and helped lead rocketry camp.

Maybe you'll start keeping a book in your car,
will pick up Krispy Kreme when the hot now sign is on
or go by a local BBQ joint.

We encourage you to make time for family road trips,
visit National Parks,
and go see a rocket launch.

Be kind, be generous, be humble...be like our Dad.

Thank you.