

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
#123

Dearest grandchild,

As you know, it has been several weeks since our last letter. The reason for this, as you also know, is that Betty suffered a stroke on January 16th. My desire to care for her leads me to devote this letter as a tribute to my mother, Zola Mae Mouton. She set a good example for me and for everyone. She established a high standard with reference to keeping her wedding vows. Momma was born October 12, 1909 in Ralston, Oklahoma. She died on Father's Day (June 16, 2002) at 3:25 p.m. Her passing came at the McCune Brooks Hospital in Carthage, Mo. By the grace of God my sister Zoanne, and I were both present at the time.

As you know, the wedding vows are "for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part". Zola Mae was married two times, and kept those vows with both husbands. In fact, she was with both of her husbands when they died.

Momma married her first husband, William Henry McCaslin Dec. 24, 1926. On Oct. 7, 1927 she gave birth to my half brother, Robert William McCaslin. As you may know, we shared the same birthday. He was born with a crippled foot. It was corrected by surgery, but he learned to crawl dragging a cast. William, mom's husband, was a "teamster". In those days "teamsters" actually drove teams of horses. He got a job working in an oil field at Gladewater, Texas, and momma set up housekeeping in a tent. On April 28, 1931, both mom's husband and father in law were killed in an explosion. As I recall, seven were killed at the same time. Those who died worked for the Sinclair Oil Co. In those days there was no workman's comp, or death benefits of any kind. As if to add insult to injury, since the explosion came at 4:28 p.m., William was docked 30 minutes on his final pay check. William did live several hours, and as I said, mother was at his side when he died. Momma said that it was in the crucible of this catastrophe that she turned over her life to God.

For your information, my brother Robert William married, had two sons, Michael and Patrick. Robert died of colon cancer Feb. 7, 1985.

Mother married my father, Henry Boyce Mouton, Sept. 14, 1932 at the court house in Carthage, Mo. After more than 50 years together, dad suffered a paralytic stroke Feb. 12, 1988. He was shaving and getting ready to go deer hunting at the time. Since he was initially unable to eat, the hospital put a feeding tube in his nose and down his throat to give him nourishment. When he developed a high fever they wrongly concluded that they had accidentally perforated his throat. When approached about whether to let him die or operate, I said: "I can accept the stroke as an act of God, but if you have ripped his throat I'm not sure God should get the credit" After the surgery, they confessed that their diagnosis was wrong, the surgery was unnecessary, and the fever was the result of a collapsed lung and pneumonia.

After many weeks in the hospital, dad was given no hope for recovery and we were informed that he had to leave the hospital. We were told to make arrangements to put him in a nursing home. When mother asked about bringing him home, she was told that if she tried to do that, both she and

dad would be dead in two weeks.

As mon was pondering her decision, a torrential rain fell on Tulsa and mom's basement flooded. At 2:00 in the morning we were both in the basement doing our best to mop up the mess. We were stressed out beyond words to describe it. In addition to sleep deprivation and fatigue, mom also had shingles which produced painfussl sores all over her body. Sometimes when things are going so bad you can't do anything but laugh. So, in the middle of the night, we sat down to rest and began grinning at one another. What else was God going to put us through?

It was at that point that momma looked at me and said: "Why can't your father come home? This is his home too and he has just as much right to be here as I do."

As you remember,. she brought dad home and was his principle care giver for the next eight and one half years. Dad was paralyzed on the left side and was never able to even sit on the edge of the bed. Mother became an expert in changing his diapers and taking quick action at the first hint of a bed sore. When she saw one developing, she rolled dad over on his side and turned a lamp on the wound. Dad died peacefully at home at 2:15 p.m. Dec. 5, 1995. Mom was by his side at the time.

I have taken the time to tell this story because I am convinced that momma did the right thing. She stood before God and took wedding vows two different times. With the help of God, she kept those vows. Since most of you who receive these letters are single, I tell you the story of my mother with the hope that it will inspire you to honor your wedding vows as she did. Please do not even consider marrying someone who does not hold the sacred vows of marriage in high esteem.

While it may be difficult to believe, I am convinced that the eight and one half years that mom took care of dad were perhaps the happiest and most fulfilling of her entire life. Jesus promised His disciples that the would have peace, but not like the world gives (Jn. 14:27). In the world we will have tribulation, but be of good cheer for Jesus has overcome the world.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce