

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA
#436

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about a farmer named Louis Marsden Bellati. He attending the Copeland Christian Church where Granny and I began our ministry in 1955. It was a small country church with an average attendance of 115. The nearest town was Mt. Pulaski, Illinois about 6 miles away. (Mt. Pulaski has a population of around 1,500 and is only 654 feet above sea level) The church was started in 1866 in John Copeland's grove and I was honored to return and speak on their 100th anniversary. Sadly, they closed their doors in 1990 with \$1,500 in the bank. I was deeply humbled when they sent that money to me. I used it to print the book *Words are Windows* which I dedicated to Don DeWalt whose use of words inspired me, and the Copeland Christian Church whose generosity made the printing of the book possible. Here is a link to that book if you are interested.

https://boycemouton.com/downloads/Words%20are%20Windows_all.pdf

While Lou told me this story in person, here is part of a newspaper article written about him by Charlotte Ludlow of Mt. Pulaski. It appeared in the *Pantagraph* in Bloomington, Illinois March 10, 1981. *"They just wouldn't believe he could breed his beans . . . Call it ingenuity, call it stubbornness, but a 35-year devotion paid off for a Logan County farmer when he decided in the 1940s that the quality of soybean varieties on the market were not good enough. "I wasn't satisfied with the beans," said Louis Bellatti of Mount Pulaski. "Back when my dad was farming, we used to hand select all our own corn. So, I figured if I could hand select corn, I could select beans." Called a maverick, a crackpot farmer by neighbors and university personnel, it took Bellatti, equipped only with a high school diploma, 20 years to get recognized as a legitimate soybean breeder. According to Bellatti, university officials were very slow to recognize his ability to develop varieties, and for obvious reasons the man had no formal education in plant breeding. He was using (then controversial) honey bees in his nursery to cross varieties, and he claimed to know the parentage of the cross simply by knowing the characteristics of all the parent beans in the nursery. University officials were very cautious; Bellatti was going to have to prove himself. Bellatti sold his first bushel of certified beans Bellatti L-263 in 1960. But again, not without some opposition. It was first thought that his variety was just a little too similar with the Clark variety. Only after he successfully picked out his variety in four trials at University of Illinois test plots, did some of the professors believe he knew what he was talking about. As one university professor said, the man had "an eye for soybeans."*

Lou told me in person that since he was styled as a "country bumpkin" he showed up for the trials dressed for the part. He chose to wear his oldest pair of worn out overalls and a beaten up straw hat. He had been accused of stealing Clark soybeans so the test involved planting his beans and the Clark beans side by side to see if he could tell the difference. Even the judges were not told which rows were which lest they reveal their identity by accident. Lou not only correctly identified every row but challenged the judges to shell out the beans and he could still tell the difference between his beans and the Clark beans. As the article said, after four trials they had to admit that he knew what he was talking about. Lou said that after he was vindicated he was invited to Egypt and Russia to advance their understanding of plant breeding. He made the trip and said they greatly appreciated his help.

Lou's father, Fred Bellatti, was the chairman of the board of our church. His mother, Nell, was an excellent cook and frequently invited us to dinner. When she prepared a meal for the two of us and the two of them it would usually consist of 3 different kinds of meat, several different desserts, and enough vegetables to feed a harvest crew.

As a young man I was impressed that Lou drove a brand new 1955 Studebaker Golden Hawk. It had a 275 hp V-8 and would go from 0-60 in 7.8 seconds. It could also go a respectable 125 mph. It was hardly the car you would stereotype for a “country bumpkin.” This amazing and gifted man was born June 9, 1913, spent his life as a farmer, and passed away Dec. 8, 1987.

Please prayerfully consider the challenge of this poem by Edgar A. Guest:

**Somebody said that it couldn't be done, But he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin on his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing That couldn't be done, and he did it.**

**Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that; At least no one ever has done it"; But he took off his coat
and he took off his hat, And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin, Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing That couldn't be done, and he did it.**

**There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done, There are thousands to prophesy failure;
There are thousands to point out to you one by one, The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin, Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.**

Please remember! There is no limit to what you can do if God helps you to do it!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce