

Memories of my father H. Tracy Hall by Charlotte Hall Weight, Feb 12, 2009

I worked in the lab at BYU for my father when he was working on the sintered diamond process. He was very patient with me as everything was experimental at the time and there were many “batches” that failed. I also broke a couple of anvils which made me really upset because I tried so hard to tape the sample on the anvil carefully to avoid breakage. He would tell me of all the anvils he had broken in his life time and reassured me that everything was ok. He pretty much taught me the whole process from loading samples, running the press to dissolving the samples in hydrochloric acid. It was nice that he had so much confidence in me to let me operate the expensive equipment.

Dad was always quiet but kindly. He only spanked me once and I was devastated. I don't remember why he gave me a little swat—I'm sure I deserved it—but since he was always so gentle I knew I was in big trouble!

One day my sister Virginia and I went downstairs to find that dad had cut out a photo of a baby found on his “ulcer” cookies on each of our bulletin boards. I can't remember the brand of cookie but it had a photo of this cute baby on the front sticking out her tongue. It made me so happy to see that he had tacked it on my board—I knew he was thinking of me and that he loved me. I used to ask him if I could raid his ulcer stash in his drawer in his office in the lab. (This lab was back by the BYU power plant). In that drawer he had Zwieback toast, vanilla pudding, baby sugar cookies and other yummy food that would make me wish I had an ulcer.

When I was in sixth grade, he used to drive me to the Wasatch Elementary School early in the morning so that I could work on my hooked rug. He didn't really like me going in that school all by myself and would warn me to tell him if anyone tried to do anything inappropriate to me. I was trying to finish the rug to enter in the state fair. Thanks to dad's chauffeuring—I finished it and won first place in the hooked rug division.

Dad was always taking us on cool vacations. We had the “Prowler” trailer that we pulled behind the car. I specifically remember the trip to Flathead Lake. It was such a beautiful area and dad let me drive the car with the trailer hitched. Coming down Provo Canyon pulling that trailer was so scary for me! But he kept reassuring me that I was doing fine.

Another scary time was when Dad was trying to teach me to drive stick shift. We were at the corner by Carson's market and I couldn't let the clutch up slowly enough and we were stuck at that light for 4 turns of the green light. He stayed very calm and was patient with me—but my inability to get through that light was probably aggravating his ulcer!! One day only the blue truck was home and I had to go down to Ream's market (the old ice rink). I couldn't get the truck out of 2nd gear into third—so I drove all the way to and from in 2nd gear.

Dad encouraged all of us from an early age to serve the Lord in the mission field. I never felt that he encouraged my brothers more than us girls. He was very supportive when I chose to go. Even though a member of the bishopric thought I should stay home and find a mate. With dad's encouragement I went and this man sighed saying “well, maybe I would find my mate on my mission.” I'm glad that dad was nondiscriminatory towards us girls. After my mission I was

completely lost about what to major in. I remember sitting in his office complaining about my talented siblings and how I didn't have anything to hang my hat on and didn't know if I was smart enough to major in a science area. He kept saying over and over again—that he knew I could accomplish anything I wanted to do. I challenged him to name ONE talent that I excelled at—and he paused for a long moment and said, “Charlotte, you are patient.” Not exactly what I wanted to hear at age 22—but now that years have passed I can proudly hang my hat on that.

After my mission Dad, Mom and I took a trip back east to do genealogy. Dad wanted to take every fork, dirt road, or pathway. He had such a curious mind and always wondered what was down this way or that way. I remember the phone call from the stake president that we received in a motel room on our way back. I think we were in Ohio. The stake president was asking him to hurry back fast because he was going to be sustained as bishop on Sunday. I always wondered how they found us at the motel!

So dad was my bishop during the last of my college years. I lived at home with them—all my other siblings were married off. My senior year, I think he and mom began to worry about my chances of meeting a young man to marry—so dad offered to pay my rent if I would move into a college apartment. So I agreed and met Bryan the first week and we were married the following December. Dad had paid for the full years rent upfront and we never could find someone to buy my contract—but I think he was just relieved to have me finally married. When Bryan came to ask my hand in marriage—he and dad talked in the office for a really long time. I was getting kind of mad—wondering if Dad was telling Bryan all my faults! But Dad's not like that—they were just gabbing away.

One of the most poignant memories of my dad was when we were sitting downstairs on the couches watching a program that KBYU had filmed about Dad's diamond discoveries. I was so proud that my dad was FAMOUS and on TV!!—that my buttons were busting. I looked over at Dad and tears were running down his face. It was the first time I had seen him sob. I asked him why he was crying and he replied that they made him look like a freaky scientist. He was upset that they had edited out the parts where he spoke about how much more important his religion and his family were to him than his scientific achievements.

So that's why I love my Dad! Devoted father. Firm in the Faith. Best in the all the areas that really count! And a brilliant scientist on top of all that! But most of all—he was always patient with me!

PS: I was born on my dad's birthday and have always been his favorite child!