

Big George, my dad, in many ways seemed to be larger than life. When he rolled up in his jeep or walked into the room, everyone knew. I'm a pretty big guy but my whole life I've always been, "Little George".

It seemed like he knew everyone, and everyone knew him. All you had to do was mention "Big Geo" and there was instant recognition. One of the posts I read when he passed, said "That guy was a legend"

He seemed to be able to do any kind of work; plumbing, carpentry, painting, roofing, electrical, masonry, concrete finishing, auto mechanics, chimney sweeping, snow plowing.....you name it;

And it appeared as though he had every tool known to man.

He had an amazing memory. I don't recall ever seeing him read a book, but it seemed like he had read them all when he was a kid and remembered every one. He could tell you exactly where he'd put a specific part or tool in our basement that pretty much contains a small warehouse. He could recall specific details about jobs he'd done twenty years ago. You'd ask about something and he'd say, "I don't know" then proceed to tell you all the specific details.

When he'd do things, he'd always try to do them big. Throughout my childhood, we always had a huge Fourth of July party, where it seemed like half of town was there. For the Indy 500, he decided he was going to start cooking his own Italian sausages because the ones there weren't good enough, so he went out and got special sausage made in a big roll to cook at the race. One time, he was able to get tickets to the Steve Miller concert, in the very front row.

He always had a story to tell; and when you followed him around like I did, you'd hear him tell the same story to about 20 people in one day, and each time, while the general outline remained the same, the details became taller and taller.

But all of this does not paint the whole picture.

Along with all the know-how and memory came the attitude. You could ask him for advice but you'd better be prepared to get a hard time along with it. One of the last ones I remember was when I was installing a walnut countertop in my house and trying to figure out how to finish it. I was explaining to dad how I'd tried some different stains on the back of it to try to pick one and he said, "What are you talking about, You don't stain Walnut, people stain other wood to look like walnut".

There were also the "dadisms", most of which, I can't say in church; but he'd always be saying stuff like: "This ain't a spectator sport", or "What do I look like, a novice" or "Come on guys, this ain't brain surgery" or "If you're working and don't have a tape measure, pocket knife, flashlight and something to write with, your worthless"

He was eccentric. He was a son of a college professor from the city who professed to be a redneck. He got straight A's in college for chemistry and ended up being a plumbing contractor. He would always talk tough about kicking people butts but was mostly a big softy. He usually refused to dress up and drove junky trucks but commanded respect. He called the concrete bases he used under decks he built "truncated pyramids of Cheop's form" after the Egyptian pharaoh. He had his "word of the day" teaching people on the jobsite words like "recalcitrant" and "parsimonious". He'd always say how he hated when people left tools laying around or didn't clean up a jobsite but he would leave his old trucks parked all over town.

And he wasn't always the easiest person to get along with, just ask my mom. He was always running late. There were numerous times that we'd all be in the car ready to go and just be sitting there for 10 or 15 minute waiting for him. And if anything of his was in your way and you moved it, he'd start complaining about people moving his stuff. This would have been a lot less of a problem if he didn't have so much stuff, but he'd saved just about everything he'd ever owned. When I was younger, he had the audacity to start calling me "turtle boy" because I wasn't moving fast enough for him, when in fact, he was one of the slowest people in the world.

Even though he was difficult, we all put up with him, because everyone knew he cared.

He cared about doing a good job on everything he did. Saying "Don't ever do anything half-ass"

He cared about not giving up. Saying "Edwin Schwindel taught us there's always a way to get the job done"

He cared about people and he never looked down on anyone. He ran the cloth-a-child program for the Elks for several years. He'd loan people money and not ask for it back. He'd loan people tools, but those you did have to bring back. He'd buy turkeys and hams at Thanksgiving a Christmas and give them to people he knew were having a tough time. If someone showed up looking for work, he'd take them on and give them a job.

He cared about his friends. If someone called him and needed help fixing something, he'd be there. When someone he knew was sick or passed away, you could see how it hurt him.

He cared about his faith. He prayed a great deal and loved the parables of Jesus and the lessons they taught.

He cared about his family. He was always worked hard to provide for us and tried to instill us with good qualities. It seemed like he was always there, whether it was going along on scout trips or coming to our games or just hanging out together.

My dad was a lot of things. He was smart, resourceful, capable, loyal, generous, funny and loving. He loved his family, The St Louis Cardinals, The Steve Miller Band, Rugby, the Indy 500, playing roulette, cooking on the grill, Swing-In pizza, Janko's meatballs, hanging out with his friends and Budweiser Beer.

He taught us all a lot and everyone will miss him. But as he'd say, "The last thing I want when I die is a bunch of people sitting around being sad" He'd want us to celebrate his life and all the great times we had and to all stick together and take care of each other. So that's what we should all try to do.