

Good Morning. I am Cathy Stevens, and Daddy B was my grandfather, my mother's father and my children's great-grandfather. I would just like to say a few words about the strong presence Daddy B had in my life and the lives of many. As I sat down to write these words, I began to meditate on what traits, and which memories, stand out over time, and so many things came to mind.

First and foremost, I thought of his marriage to the heroic and marvelous Mama B. Nearly everything else I could think of emanated from this platform of love and devotion that is unparalleled in my mind in the world of marriages. Without trying to be an example, but simply through their love, kindness, humor and constant companionship, they showed so many of us what it's like to love over time and to tend to a relationship, giving and taking, leading and following (both doing both at different times), dancing in time together.

Over the past decade or so, I think of Daddy B's command post or better yet his pulpit in the den, yet before that in my many summer and winter trips to Columbus, I recall his strong, lanky and tall body slowly making his way through the house and across the yard, surveying the scene, taking it in and making sure all was in place and right in his piece of the world. He took care to tend to all things, not only to his marriage, but to his children's lives, to his home, to his garden, and to his beliefs. He was a thinker, an intellectual, a reader, and he knew much more than he tended to let on, but we all knew he was strong in his beliefs and potentially unwavering.

He was safety-conscious, to put it lightly. This trait which perhaps grew out of his harrowing experience on Iwo Jima during World War II but became more real when he experienced the intense love that comes with parenthood and grandparenthood occasionally drove those rebellious among us a bit crazy when we wanted to swim alone or drive home past 9pm, but how could we really argue with what was his desire to preserve and keep safe what he loved more than anything and simply felt driven to keep close and shield from bad things. This trait did, of course, wear off on several of his children who may have had a few head-to-head battles with their own children who wanted to stay out late as teens. And, I still think of Daddy B's influence whenever I ride with my brother in the car and admire his leisurely pace on the road or during my mom's and my incessant asking of our husbands while driving "Are you alright, Matt/Erik? Are you tired? Are you

sure?” and then asking the same thing again five minutes later just to make sure. Erik calls that the “Bedingfield” gene.

I also think of the two years in my early 20s when I lived in Columbus and had the precious chance to eat dinner 3-4 times per week with Mama B and Daddy B. We set records for number of vegetables eaten, and had lively conversations with the Braves on in the background. I feel so lucky now to have had the chance to talk to him so much. I think of his strong grip, a good hand squeeze being one of life’s best greetings, and those lucky days when he offered me a piece of his juicy fruit gum, his hat perched on his head.

Daddy B’s quiet, analytical stroll around the yard; his participation in conversation sparingly but often humorously; his adoration of us, his grandchildren, and his desire for us to do well in the world; his love and encouragement of his children and family; his strong marriage; his reluctance to pose for family pictures; his love of strong coffee; his feistiness; his convictions (that we may not have always agreed with); his love of reading; his humor and enjoyment of cartoons; his interest in politics; his concerns with religiosity and his faith; his succinct, unpretentious prayers, “much obliged,” and pointing to the cross stitch that said “In Everything Give Thanks” and saying Amen; his love of baseball; his love of crosswords, his witty one-liners; his green thumb and care for his garden; his ability/insistence to fix things himself and not hire others; his care for children and their education; his simple life; his ability to cut to the core of things; his loyalty to family. I can list all of these things and they still do not capture nearly all of him, yet I am amazed when I think about the varying combinations of all of these traits that now appear in all of our family members. He has been part of creating all of us – his four children, his 12 grandchildren, and even the traits these grandchildren sought out in their mates, and will inevitably go on to teach their children.

Let’s face it; raising four children in a two-bedroom home with one bathroom and a dining room turned into a bedroom is under most any circumstance a fast track to dysfunction, and yet there we all are, every Christmas, children, grandchildren and now great-grandchildren present, participatory and having a great time. In general, there’s not too much drama. We have people who love their families, take care of each other, are attentive, and supportive of one another. This is indeed Daddy B’s legacy, and Mama B’s too.

This for me is the main thing that I land on when I think of Daddy B. The way he, in his subtle, yet strong, way, became so vividly woven into many individual across generations. His strong presence, though often quiet, made us all who we are, who we will be, and who we will teach our children to be. To make that type of impression and share that type of love, devotion, and loyalty in life is more than we can all hope to do during our small time in this world.

When I have walked into the house on Warner Road, there has always been a strong center, a source of love and strong belief that just existed in the house, somewhere in the center, near the den, and it was Daddy B. We will all miss him terribly. Thank goodness all that he taught us and represented will continue to be a part of the world through those who were fortunate to know him, and be loved by him.