



Full Circle

By Paul W. Schenk, Psy.D.

some major basement renovations. As I have done with so many projects before and since, I had seriously underestimated how much time it would take. The work that summer morning had progressed with a mix of small talk, the usual bent nails, and a close call or two between a hammer and thumb. Almost without thinking, I commented at one point that I would be glad when the project was over. My father responded with an anecdote, as has often been his style over the years. Lecturing and scolding are just not his way. He has always been a storyteller in the best sense of the word, possessing an innate sense for choosing when to share a tale so that its deeper meaning will be understood and remembered. So I knew what was coming as he began to respond to my mild lament. But as with an unopened birthday present, I would have to wait for the story's conclusion to understand this particular gift.

"That reminds me of the time Harry Johnson and I had to bench-test hundreds of electronic parts for a NASA contract," my father said to me. "The task had taken most of the day when I told Harry that I sure would be glad when we finished testing all those parts. Harry looked over at me and said, 'Oh, have you been testing transistors, Bill? I'm helping send a man to the moon.'" Without missing a beat, my dad then turned to me and added, "Is that what you've been doing, Paul, putting up corner molding? I've been spending the morning working with my son."

In the 20 years since that summer weekend, I've grown fuzzy about exactly what happened next. I vaguely recall dropping the hammer I'd been using. I think I bent down and picked it up. But what I do remember clearly is that I spent the rest of the day working with my dad. I have no idea what time my father and I put away our tools and called it a day that Saturday. Nor do I remember how long it took Peter and me to finish planting the bulbs. Time stopped seeming so important when I remembered Dad's gentle way of driving home wisdom. Suddenly all that mattered was that I was with my son.

In his own unassuming way, my father taught me that the best tools to have when you leave home in the morning are a good attitude and an appreciative spirit. Throughout his life dad has chosen to see the world as one full of opportunities, not problems. His 88 years of living have taught him truths I am only beginning to understand. Of all the things I could possibly learn from him, I recognize that what I will continue to treasure most is the wisdom contained in his stories and the loving way he passed it on to me. Now, as a father myself, I savor the opportunities I have to share these life lessons with my own two sons. Maybe one day, when they have children of their own, they will continue the tradition.

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Kit Latham

Tools for Life

my 10-year-old son, Peter, has a passion for gardening, and his green thumb has produced a beautiful transformation of our yard over the last two years. It has also provided both of us many hours of pleasant memories working the earth together. One Saturday last spring we set out to plant some 80 bulbs as a sidewalk border. Georgia clay is not the friendliest soil for gardening, and my energy began fading about the time I reached the halfway point. I was about to comment to Peter that I would be glad when we finished planting all the bulbs, but before I could get the words out, a memory flashed in my mind that made me stop.

I started to grin as I recalled a similar experience that had occurred with my own father. During a visit one summer many years ago, Dad had offered to help me with

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