My "Great" Grandfather

Kurt Krusekopf

As a college freshman, when I came to live with my grandad, I was filled with trepidation of how I was going to "learn to live" with a man nearly 75 years my senior. A 75-year age gap has a historic connotation like three-fourths of a century. Why, he's older than Sanborn Field! It was not long before I recognized that the chronological age of a person is a meaningless measure of the difference in generations—you are 'automatically' young at 19, but you can also be young at 94. My grandad changed by preconceived fear of "learn to live" to living to learn.

During the first few weeks I would come home after classes—and we usually had a 'rap' session. He would be reading scientific journals, news magazines, etc. It used to bother me—why is he still studying—study is what you do the night before an exam in high school and college—certainly not after retirement. Ironically, he would speak of the present and the future while I was generally more interested in the past. (You don't have to think very much to talk about the past.) He would not discuss trivia, and squeezing any information from him about his past experiences was a rare moment indeed, and were usually only incidences that carried a meaning. He felt that many past events became exaggerated and legendary, and I tend to agree.

In discussing what to do when someone was mad at you he related a horse and buggy-day experience from soil survey work. Seems he was preoccupied in taking soil samples in the range country when he looked up into a double barrel shot gun held by an irate farmer demanding why he was "digging holes in his field?" The normal explanation of soil samples didn't work and the gun remained at the side of his head. Then he started asking the farmer questions—Are these your cattle? Is that your house?, etc. With affirmative replies from the farmer the gun was slowly lowered. He had turned the attention from himself to the source of hostility. Simple, but sound advice, and something I've found very useful when you deal with anger.

His advice, when sought, was usually questions that made you explore your own thinking for an answer. He didn't believe problems had true or false answers, or multiple choice A, B, C, or D answers. He extended that to possibilities and limitations, and from A to Z.

He was never without wit. After many hours of boring proceedings during an Indian Claims hearing in Washington, he was questioned by

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1 This article is printed with permission of G. W. Roach, Executive Secretary, Alpha Zeta Fraternity. It is taken from the February 1980 Alpha Zeta News. The author, Kurt Krusekopf is an agriculture student at the Univ. of Missouri. Kurt's grandad, Henry Krusekopf, was a Missouri soil scientist who influenced soil survey nationally. Henry Krusekopf died at his home in Columbia, Mo., July 26, 1979.