

## In Praise of Mom and Dad

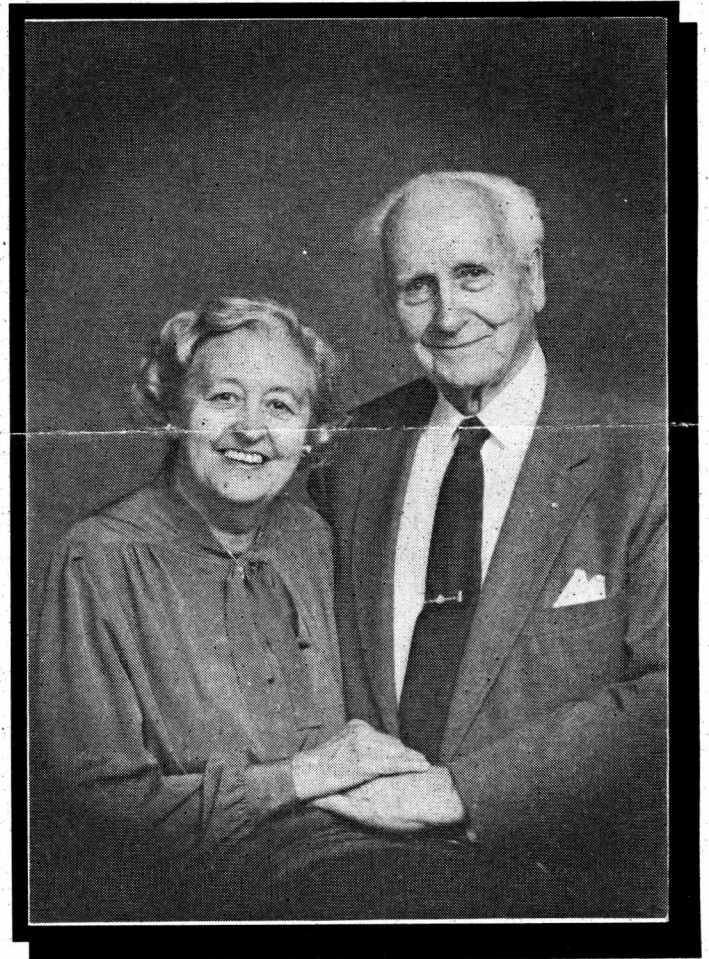
This past weekend I received some bad news. My eighty-seven year old father had lost consciousness getting up from bed and had to be taken to the hospital by ambulance. A year ago he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer and I wondered if that had anything to do with his present circumstances.

**It was only today that I found out that his condition is stabilized and much better.** It appears that he has an ulcer in his esophagus, but other than that, the news was good. Our family would not have been surprised if the cancer had spread to other organs. But apparently, the tests reveal that this has not happened. The fainting was probably due to loss of blood through the ulcer.

It is times like these that make us all realize the finiteness of this life. I've actually wanted to write this letter about my parents many times, especially since I traveled to St. Louis last year to help him through the end of his hospitalization, but busyness kept putting that off.

I don't think this is the end at all, as far as I know, Dad and Mom may be around for many more years. I just wanted you to know them both; God has used both of them to play key roles in my life. Of course, that's what all parents do--play key roles in their children's lives.

**So meet Chester and Rose Cook.** Mom's parents came from Austria in their twenties to start a new life in America. Dad's parents came from Ireland and Scotland, and go back



**Chester and Rose Cook**

several generations this side of the Atlantic. My guess is that they came to America during the Irish potato famine of last century.

Mom and Dad met in St. Louis (where they continue to live) during the thirties and were married in 1936. Then the children came along first in 1943 with my older brother, Jack, 1947 my sister Carol, me in 1949, and my kid brother, Tom, in 1952.

My father came to faith in Christ, by his own testimony, in the forties just as the children were coming around. Lucky for him.

**And certainly that was the most important and determinative thing that happened in our family's life, because soon thereafter, mother came to faith and much later, all of the children. Dad's "spiritual heritage" came through his mother; she was a daughter of an itinerant preacher who converted to faith in Christ during the revivals of the last century. Dad's father (my grandfather on Dad's side) lost his life when my Dad was only ten years of age. It had and still has a profound impact in Dad's life. For many years he's had reoccurring dreams of meeting his father when his father came home from work. It is a sobering reminder to me of the importance Dads play in their children's lives.**

Dad's grandfather (my great-grandfather) traveled much of America as a preacher of the gospel and wrote several books about it; some of which I tracked down through the Library of Congress. One clear memory Dad has of his grandfather was that when he stayed at his home, Grandfather would often sleep along with Dad in his bed. In the mornings before daybreak, Grandfather would quietly slip out of bed and pray on his knees for an hour or so. Dad would pretend to sleep and sneak a peek once in a while. No doubt among the many things he must have prayed for, he must have been praying for Dad and the generations to come.

Looking back across those generations I can see the grace of God in it all. Of course, the contribution of my parents to our family has been enormous. Though our family had our share of problems growing up, it was nothing like the problems of today's generation.

Mom and Dad have prayed for and supported our ministry for more than twenty-three years of service. We talk nearly each week by phone and regularly pray together about the ministry the Lord has given us to fulfill.

I can remember from my childhood that Dad led many people to faith in Christ. He led people to faith at his work at an

employment agency he directed and when he preached at the Sunshine Mission in St. Louis. God must have a sense of humor; Dad's ministry was mostly to the down and outers; mine has been mostly to the up and outers. But I see those experiences as preparatory to my calling in life--it never ever occurred to me as a child that I'd be doing what I'm doing now.

Mom was even-tempered, both were frugal. Mom could be more depended on for getting the details correct, Dad, a perfectionist in his own right, seemed to me less often correct on the details. For me Mom was easier to talk with and work with than Dad. Neither demanded good grades or success in sports from us children. Of course, they didn't just let us goof off. Their marriage weathered more than a few storms. When three of the four of us children were teenagers at one time during the sixties life wasn't easy for anybody.

I'm just glad they hung in there and didn't give up on us. All four children graduated from college; two of us mostly on athletic scholarships and two partly on academic scholarships. Of course, when we all get to heaven, we'll find out more clearly, I believe, that it was not our great faith in God that got us through, but rather our small

faith in a great and faithful God that will have made the difference.

So thanks to both of you, Mom and Dad. Thanks for your support. Thanks for your prayers. Thanks for your integrity. Thanks for the spiritual, the emotional, and the physical heritage you passed along to us!

Hear, my son, your father's instruction,

And do not forsake your mother's teaching;

Indeed they are a graceful wreath to your head,

And ornaments about your neck.

Proverbs 1: 8,9