

# Recollections Of Fred For His Celebration Of Life

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Good afternoon.

My name is Andy Long; I'm Fred's nephew, his sister Marilyn's second son.

I had the great good fortune to spend several months with Fred and Louise here in Abingdon in the fall of 1985, and then again in the spring of '86 while I awaited my assignment in the Peace Corps.

I worked alongside Fred, enjoyed time at home with Fred and Weezy, and did little chores around the house. I sang here in the church choir, and Fred was my occasional Sunday School teacher.

Today I would like to share with you some light-hearted lessons that I learned during that time.

## **Uncle Fred was a born teacher, and he certainly taught me a lot. For example, he taught me how to swear:**

Son of a Buck!

Judas Priest!

Oh, I already knew how to swear in the traditional way — but he taught me to swear in this more dignified, diplomatic way. Although I heard him swear a few times in the way of a Military Policeman who'd served in the Philippines.

My personal favorite blue streak was when he and I were using the honey wagon to muck out one of his hog confinement buildings.

Fred had hooked it up, and I'd gone inside to feed the hogs, when suddenly I became aware of two things: Fred's blue streak, and a fine mist of something — manure! — that blew in on the breeze. The honey wagon hose had come loose at the wagon, pig poop slurry spewing into the air. I looked out to see Fred fighting his way valiantly through the fountain of manure to disconnect the hose, hop into the cab, and race for the nearest field, applying fertilizer in a concentrated stream as it spewed from the back of the wagon.

Then, when the wagon was empty, he and I stripped down to near nakedness, hosed ourselves off, and went home to Weezy and a couple of very long, hot showers.

I never did ask Fred how that field did the next year...

Weezy had to put up with a lot of Fred's Pig Poop! But she was certainly a good sport about it, and I can still see her smile and hear that famous laugh. She'll be glad to hear a whole new set of stories that Fred's been working up over the last 14 years or so.

## **Fred taught me other important things: he taught me how to hot-wire a truck.**

That was really interesting to me; I had never learned that in college. Of course Fred knew how to subvert the standard paradigm — probably his dad taught him a lot about having to make due during those depression years, and Fred did serve in the military. But Fred had a 5th degree black belt in making due.

Fred gave me a truck to drive when I worked with him, one in a long line of vehicles known simply as "bucket of bolts". This ol' bucket of bolts didn't have a door handle, so I improvised one out of a 2x4 and a band saw, and bolted it to the frame. He looked upon it approvingly, and I believe that I earned extra respect that day.

And so Fred taught me that not everything is what it appears to be. He had trailers parked on his farm that weren't trailers, though they might have looked like trailers to the undiscerning eye — in reality, they were a set of spare tires and some very valuable scrap iron.

He saw things from his own unique perspective, and I liked the way he saw things. Practically anything might prove useful someday, which probably explains his accumulations. I'm sure that his daughter Patti can tell you all about his accumulations... and most of you have seen the soil service plant.....

## **But, most importantly, Fred taught me the importance of family and relationships.**

I think Fred was a very astute observer of humanity. He told me who my grandparents were, who my shirttail cousins were, who Jesus Christ was, and he told me stories about every person that we encountered in the Pantry at 6 am. We'd eat a cinnamon roll, swap jokes and barbs with the collected company, and then he and I would drive off and he'd tell me a little something about everybody in the place. No better way to get acquainted with a town, than driving around with Uncle Fred.

Mostly he shared positive things, or at least sympathetic things. He knew the troubles and tribulations of the people of his town, sharing many poignant stories. He told stories about people who'd lost spouses; people who'd lost children (and even some who'd lost both); people who'd suffered terribly because of illness or drug addiction

(their own or a friend or family member's).

Today I think especially of one story that Fred recounted about himself: his grandmother, Flarra Cline, was in the nursing home, having lost her mind, knowing not even her own son Sam. Fred went by one day for a visit, as he was want to do — he was really good about that — and found his father there, kneeling by Flarra's bedside. Sam looked up at his son, looked down at his mother, and said to Fred "There's things worse than dyin'." Fred took that story to heart, and I'll tell you one thing I believe today with all of my heart: I believe that Fred was ready to go. And that consoles me.

In recent years Fred and I, and usually my brother Steve, went on several genealogy-oriented adventures at spring or fall breaks. We explored our family heritage in Illinois, in Kentucky, and even explored his new home in Minnesota. Which brings me to the other really important thing that Fred did in his later years: he brought Aunt Nelle into our family.

Nelle, you brought great joy to Fred, and that has extended to my mom, your new sister, as well. You've brought joy to me and my family. We are so blessed to have you in our lives, and we are so blessed that you were there to take care of the dear Mr. Cline when he needed you.

Bless you, thank you, and may God bless Frederick Walker Cline.

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