Chapter 17

AUTUMN DAYS

Leviticus 19: 32

Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God.

I am the Lord.

AUTUMN DAYS

During the autumn of our lives when our thoughts, like leaves, float restlessly upon the wind, our minds journey down long-forgotten pathways in a time of remembrance. Recalling the dreams eagerly stored in our youthful hearts, we smile at our naivety and child like faith that nothing was beyond our reach; a time when the world was our oyster and the sky truly was the limit.

Then, recounting the tears sown over hard lessons learned, at so great a cost, we wonder how new found hope brought forth tomorrows dawn when the rightness of things returned. Thus, at this point, we become fully cognizant that without the toils of life, a rich harvest we could not have gleaned.

When, finally, winter approaches and our limbs are made bare, we fully realize in spite of the many cold bitter nights experienced, life's beauty far outweighed the gloom. Truly showers of God's blessings have landed at our feet in great abundance.

Now observing our reflection in the mirror, we identify the gray hair which God labels as a "crown of splendor" signaling the book of our life has not yet closed. As long as we have breath, the Lord has a purpose for our lives. Above all, faith has been granted for the remaining miles of our journey so that we may tell our stories to others and learn the lessons

God desires. Psalm 94: 14 by stating, "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green", serves as a testament to this fact.

TIME TO RETIRE

When Dick left California and needed to be near relatives due to declining health, he was faced with leaving the historic residence that had been home for 37 years; a difficult adjustment indeed. Now retired and no longer a sought after fashion designer, enormous courage and inner strength were required by a man whose body now was aging. Feeling the restrictions brought on by the passing of time, he could succumb to old age and throw in the towel, or bow his neck and make the decision to regroup and bear much fruit. Either he would now wither or stay fresh and green; a decision everyone faces during the sunset of life.

However, since at age five, Dick had fallen hopelessly in love with "sewin," that needle and thread were not about to retire into inactivity. Instead, they served as the catalyst for a total revival of his spirit. Thus, after two years in his new location, he made his entrance into the art of quilt making in a big way. Each quilt pattern was designed from a perspective that only a fashion designer's eye could imagine. Dick simply started with a blank piece of paper and drew the total dimensions and colors of the quilt from beginning to end. Since his imagination still soared to unbelievable heights, there was nothing ordinary about <u>Quilts by Du Puis</u>. Even in his sunset years, Dick Du Puis possessed the same visual imagery that so wondrously surfaced at age five while reclining on a pallet in conversation with his loving mother in Louisiana. Today, he is in several quilting guilds on line as well as within the local area and has received numerous awards and recognition for his workmanship.

Therefore, at age eighty, it was because of these associations that he received motivation while facing a severe health crisis at Christian Health Care & Rehab East. When his on line quilting friends got wind of Dick's predicament, small packages containing fabric squares and quilting supplies began to daily arrive. Surprisingly, the fabric that continued to be shipped had just the right hues for Dick to design a dusty colored quilt that contained 75 flowers. Although his circle of friends could not say anything on line that would be misconstrued as soliciting, enough signals were sent to each other that everyone knew exactly what to send in order to keep their cherished friend quilting. Due to their compassion, Dick Du Puis merrily quilted along as he healed at Christian Health Care. In addition, he met residents and staff that were desirous of learning how to quilt and graciously stopped and taught classes.

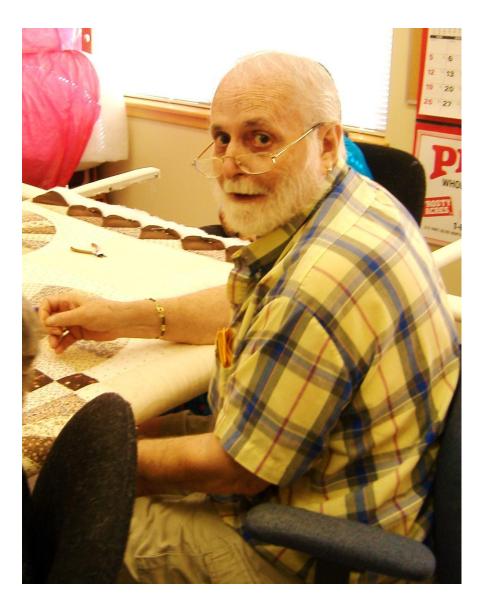


QUILT FROM FRIEND'S FABRIC SQUARES



GREETING CARDS FROM FRIENDS

Even today, Dick continues to design and sew beautiful quilt tops at home that are then transported to the local senior center in Yellville where a group of ladies complete the rest of the hand work. Two days a week he can be seen sitting with them as the only male quilting away; a behavior he started when in the high school home economics class. The all time favorite quilt Dick has completed to date is called "Dancing Flames On Water" which contains many of the colors found around the Gueydan, Louisiana area. One of the hardest to quilt was the one named "Roses For My Lady" containing an array of small pieces that required time and patience.



(DICK QUILTING AT THE SENIOR CENTER WITH THE OTHER LADIES.)

Also, another project Dick became involved in while at Christian Health Care occurred when his physical therapist sought his advice on different aspects of making a christening gown for her first grandchild. As a result, this relationship prompted Dick to rely upon his fashion design career as a surprise for her and produce a breath taking creation that caught the attention of everyone. Then in preparation for the christening, Dick's kind hands had the great pleasure of dressing the little girl in the stunning white delicate gown trimmed with pink ribbon, thus, establishing precious memories for family, friends and staff.



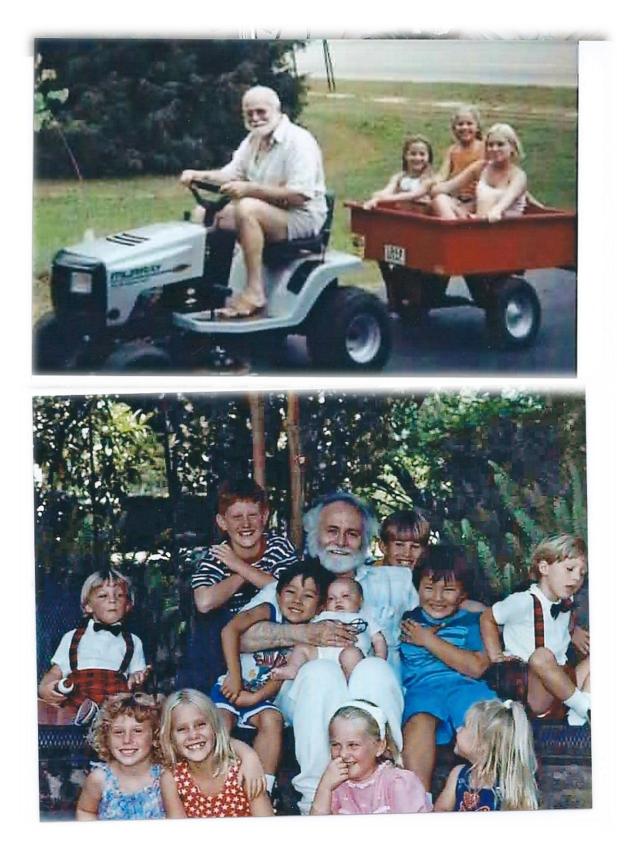


MEMORIES FOR THE AGES

PAPA DU PUIS

At this point, Dick's story would not be complete unless finishing with a focus on his children and grand children. He will clearly state with great pride to one and all that the blue ribbon achievement in his life has been and will always be his family. Today, he stays actively involved in all aspects of their lives through every form of communication possible. He spends countless hours interacting with them either in person, by phone or email.

PAPA AND HIS GRAND CHILDREN



It is not uncommon for him to send humorous poems to them as a way of showering love and affection. A great example of his continuing humor was displayed when he arose one morning to discover his mirror showed a reflection of his countenance as looking the worst for wear; a sight he thought they would enjoy. Thus, they all awakened to be greeted by the following snapshot via email from their Papa.



PAPA SAYS GOOD MORNING!

Certainly, when his family members look back at Papa Du Puis, they will all agree that he taught them to live life to the fullest through example. During times of adversity, he wore a jaw of steel and stepped forth with great courage. When experiencing sadness or sympathy, his face would be openly washed with streams of salty tears. However, the greatest gift he passed along was his ability to laugh at himself or the circumstances in which he navigated. It truly is refreshing that Aunt Evelyn's nephew with the dancing eyes is alive, well and extremely energetic even at age 80, during the autumn of his life.



CLOSING THOUGHTS

Now that you have walked hand in hand with Dick Du Puis on his journey called life and witnessed repeatedly his acts of compassion to all God's creatures, may you now be cognizant that these streams of mercy and love never die. The timid hand stretched forth to aid another in need may stir a heart toward a life saving transformation and total renewal of the spirit. A sympathetic word softly spoken during another's darkest hour may awaken a soul to love forever. Thus, let no opportunity pass to assist another who struggles to stand, but shine on them a light of love that brightly illuminates the path. Lose not one chance to show sketches of compassion that become stunningly bright and beautiful as you love your neighbor as yourself. As a result, God's Word will then become the greatest benediction ever experienced as you witness your fellow man's life made whole in response to your acts of grace. Then, in a time of introspection, you'll soon discover it is truly more blessed to give than receive; a lesson Dick completely internalized as a boy of only twelve years of age.

Finally, it is critical to sketch acts of compassion toward all mankind, no matter the season of your life. Even during the autumn days when requiring the assistance of others in order to physically function, focusing outward rather than inward becomes absolutely critical for emotional security and completeness. In becoming the hands and feet of your Master, you will feel His tender touch when you reach out and show compassion to all of His children.

Amen!

