

December 16, 1999

Dearest Daddy,

Johnnie asked me the other day what I wanted for Christmas, and my response was, "new intestines for Daddy." God still performs miracles, so it could happen, but it certainly is hard to see you sick and feeling horrible and know there is nothing we can do to help. So, I just pray a lot and ask that your pain and misery be minimized and that what little you eat and drink will stay down!

What does a daughter of 52 years say to her father to convey how much she loves and adores him? I've spent time reflecting on the special qualities you possess, and just what it is that makes you so unique. I once read a book entitled Man of Steel and Velvet. The author borrowed the term Steel and Velvet from Carl Sandberg who used it to describe Abraham Lincoln, and I can think of no other expression which so adequately describes you. As a man of steel, you are a man of honor and integrity with a strong character. As a man of velvet, you are kind, generous, patient, tender, and compassionate. Your quiet and gentle spirit, yet strong and spirited nature has served you well these 81 years, for you are loved by all. From this daughter who loves you so passionately, I would like to say "thank you" for so many things.

Thank you for the safety and security of a home where love and respect for each other was taught; where laughter and tears were plentiful; where hard work was expected; where the truth BETTER be told, OR ELSE; where honesty was ALWAYS the best policy; where mistakes were forgiven and grudges never held; where unconditional love prevailed. Thank you for always being available to lend a sympathetic ear; to speak just the right words at the right time, even when the truth hurt; to dole out discipline justly and fairly; to help mend the broken hearts and wounded pride; to share in the triumphs and disappointments of life. Thank you for loving our spouses, our children, our pets, and sharing in the lives of each. Thank you for your devotion to Mama giving us children a firm foundation on which to build our marriages and raise our families. Thank you for teaching us, by example, love of God, country, family, and our fellowman.

You've had an interesting and exciting life with many accomplishments to be proud of, but your greatest accomplishment, by far, has been to stay happily married for 54 years, and to raise a family of happy, well-adjusted children to adulthood. Rest assured, your children will continue to carry on your mission of guide, protector, and provider to Mama

when you depart this life on earth. We will be fine as we carry on with precious memories of a precious man.

I will miss you so much, but I'll see you in Heaven!

*I love you with all my heart,*

*Judy*