

LESTER TRUMAN YANCY
10-5-17 to 4-21-96

William Samuel Yancy
Pittsboro, Mississippi
10-5-97

It is a great pleasure to be here today. I haven't been in Sarepta for more than 40 years but our family has a long history in this area and I am proud to be a part of this homecoming. My grandfather, Daddy Jack, was born in Sarepta and met my grandmother, Ethel McGill, while they were in school here. My dad and his sister, Aunt Ruby Zane, were born here and attended school here. Many of our relatives are buried in this cemetery and I especially remember William L. Yancy, my great grandfather, and one of his daughters, Phronie, or Auntie, as I called her.

However, my most vivid memories of Sarepta relate to visits with Aunt Jett and Uncle Euel Cain. There are three things that I will never forget about Aunt Jett. The first is that I never saw her without a pinch of snuff in her cheek. Whenever we would visit she would make up some cocoa and sugar so we kids could join her. The second thing I remember is that she always had some peach tree tea handy. Some of you will know that this "tea" was not a refreshing drink for the thirsty. Rather, it was a thin branch from a tree used on the backside of children who had misbehaved. The third thing I remember had to do with some kittens that didn't survive my attempt to preserve them in a jar. Needless to say, that day I received a generous portion of peach tree tea.

Before I begin my formal presentation I would like to mention two things. First, today is the birthday of Hubert Glenn, Uncle Walter's brother. He is 91 years old. The second thing is that when we were in

Bruce for Dad's funeral, another Yancy died. That was Barbara Yancy, wife of Jess, Jr. and mother of Cindy, Tom and Lee.

I would like to ask for a moment of silence for my dad and for Barbara and for all of our relatives and friends who have departed this earth in body but who remain with us in spirit. May they rest in eternal peace.

Now, About my dad. I have put a lot of thought into how I could pay tribute to him at this homecoming when this has not been his home for so many years and because some of you would not have been alive when he lived here and had never met him. I thought I might try to entertain you with some humorous anecdotes about him but decided against that, considering that Mom would probably disinherit me if I did. So. I decided that because he was a quiet man who worked in a classified job, I would just give you some facts about him so that you could know him as I do, a man who carried his deep southern tradition wherever he went and succeeded because of his southern heritage and because of the lessons he learned from his family and teachers in this, his first home.

Lester Truman Yancy was born in Sarepta on 10-5-17. He was the first child of Claude Clay (Jack) Yancy and Ethel McGill Yancy. Most of you will know more about Dad's early life than I. He must have been as well-liked as a youngster as he was in later life because so many of you have spoken so highly of him. The words you have used to describe him are much the same as I would use: generous, kind, quiet and patient. I do know that he and his sister, Ruby Zane, attended the Sarepta School until the family moved to Pittsboro in 1931. They then moved to Bruce where Dad finished his senior year at Bruce High School in 1936. Next he attended the University of Mississippi where he studied business. He was a member of the Phi Pi Phi fraternity and in his senior year he was elected into the M.O.A.K.S. I don't know what the initials stand for but his yearbook describes this organization as an honorary society for seniors. From pictures I have seen of this time he was apparently quite a dapper dresser and I am told that he was a pretty good tennis player.

He had first met Mom (Maxyne Lindsey) while they were in high school and they were married on April 25, 1938. After I was born in Pittsboro in 1939 they moved back to Sarepta where Dad taught history and coached the boys basketball team. In 1941 Jackie (Jacquelyn Dee) was born. Then for a year he worked in Aberdeen for the U.S. Engineers before moving to Richland in the state of Washington to work for the Atomic Energy Commission. This was near the site of the Hanford Energy Works where a component of the first atomic bomb was

assembled. I don't know much about Dad's job during this time (1943-1945) because his work was highly classified. I do remember that he used to receive letters addressed to Lieutenant Yancy because his initials were "L. T.". He had tried to enlist in the army and passed his physical exam but was not allowed to serve because his position was critical to the war effort. After the war ended, the family moved back to Bruce where both Dad and Mom worked in the Bruce 5 & 10 Store. I have many fond memories of this time in Bruce, especially since I had easy access to lots of candy and comic books. What I remember about Dad during this time is that he would read to Jackie and me and helped us learn to read and would toss baseballs to me for hours at a time.

In 1951 Dad was asked to return to work with the Atomic Energy Commission and we moved back to the state of Washington. Dad's work ethic served as an excellent model for Jackie and me and his patient encouragement and generous support helped us succeed with our classwork and school activities. Dad was never much of an outdoorsman but one example of his dedication and support for his children is demonstrated in the vivid memory I have of a Boy Scout trip where he and I waded through frozen streams, hiked over a mountain after a herd of elk and slept on 26 feet of snow.

In 1955 Dad was asked to move to the headquarters of the Atomic Energy Commission in the District of Columbia. We moved to nearby Northern Virginia and shortly thereafter the Commission became the

Department of Energy. He remained with the Department until his retirement in 1977.

I mentioned earlier that I knew little about Dad's job because of his quiet nature and because most of what he did was classified. He used to say that he was like an accountant who counted atomic particles instead of money. Fortunately I have obtained additional information from some of his co-workers and from the archives of the Department of Energy. Of the material I received the following passage was especially impressive:

"In the early days, Truman Yancy was responsible for the manual consolidation of the Nuclear Materials Accountability Records and Reports. Truman later was responsible for converting this Manual Accountability System to an Automated System. Because of his dedication and effort, the conversion was completed ahead of schedule.

The automated Nuclear Materials Accountability System developed by Truman and a group from the Union Carbide Corporation remains one of the largest automated systems within the Department of Energy. It is now known as the Nuclear Materials Management and Safeguards System (NMMSS), and is the National Nuclear Materials data base. In order for Truman to manage the system he had to have constant daily contact with

Headquarters Program Offices, 15 Field Offices and 59 different contractors. He was required to provide guidance, instruction, advice and answers to questions about the system. All of these individuals dearly loved him and remembered him with thoughts and well wishes long after his retirement.

Truman is known as the Father of the Nuclear Materials Information System (NMIS). His name is in the Archives and to this day he is mentioned during various NMMSS discussions."

It is amazing to me that Dad was doing all this work with computers at a time when most of us had never heard of megabytes or modems, much less, knew how to use them.

Some of the personal comments were also meaningful:

"Truman was known as a true Southern Gentleman. He was well liked and respected by everyone." One co-worker noted that, "Truman brought two sandwiches for his lunch every day and usually had eaten them by 9:00 AM."

Shortly after his retirement Dad and Mom moved to Durham, North Carolina where Sue and I had settled. It was in Durham that Jackie met and married her husband, Herb, who was an gynecologist at Duke Medical Center. Dad spent most of his time puttering around in

his car, helping with our lawns and gardens and enjoying his grandchildren. When Jackie and Herb moved to Mobile, Alabama, Dad and Mom followed them there. There he tended his own garden and watched after the youngest grandchild, Richard. After Jackie moved to South Dakota where Herb was the Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dad and Mom moved back to Durham prior to his death last year.

Dad was a remarkable man in so many ways but he never sought to be in the limelight. Regardless of the situation he focused the center of attention on others. I think my son, Will, described him best:

“The attributes he passed on to us were integrity, selflessness, concern for others and the patience of Job. He never met a stranger. He was the kindest and gentlest of men.”

Perhaps the greatest tribute to Dad would be to describe the successes of his children and grandchildren and to recognize his contribution to those successes. His encouragement and support directed me to Duke University for my undergraduate and medical degrees. I have been practicing Pediatrics in Durham and teaching at the Duke School of Medicine since 1971. Jackie graduated from the University of Mississippi and has been a special reading instructor in the states of Virginia, North Carolina and Mississippi and the Province of

Nova Scotia. She presently lives in Johnson City, Tennessee. Dad's first grandchild, Amy (Amy Lynn Yancy), graduated from Auburn University and received her Master of Science in Nursing degree from Duke University. She is a nurse practitioner in the Intensive Care Nursery at Duke Hospital. Will (William Samuel Yancy, Jr.) graduated from Duke University and the East Carolina University School of Medicine. Will and his wife are expecting the first of the next generation of Yancys early next year. He is a third year resident at the University of Pittsburgh and has been asked to remain as chief resident for an additional year. He currently plans to practice General Internal Medicine when he finishes his training. Mike (James Michael Yancy) graduated from Bucknell University and works in Annapolis, Maryland as a convention planner and coordinator. The youngest grandchild, Richard (Richard Herbert Wiebe), is a high school senior in Johnson City, Tennessee where he is an accomplished musician and founder-director of a student program to provide meals for the homeless. We have all tried to emulate Dad's example.

Because this presentation has been in honor of my dad I have said little about my mom but she deserves credit, also. We owe them both great respect and much love and appreciation. Her strength and patience during Dad's last few years, while he struggled with heart and lung disease, were especially admirable.

At Dad's funeral I read a passage from the book of Matthew because I think he followed the message it gives. I would like to repeat it today:

ST. MATTHEW 6

TAKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

2 Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 That *thine* alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

5 ¶ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

I have spoken many words here but there are four words I wish that I had spoken more often while dad was still alive. I hope that he may hear them when I say them today: I love you, Dad.