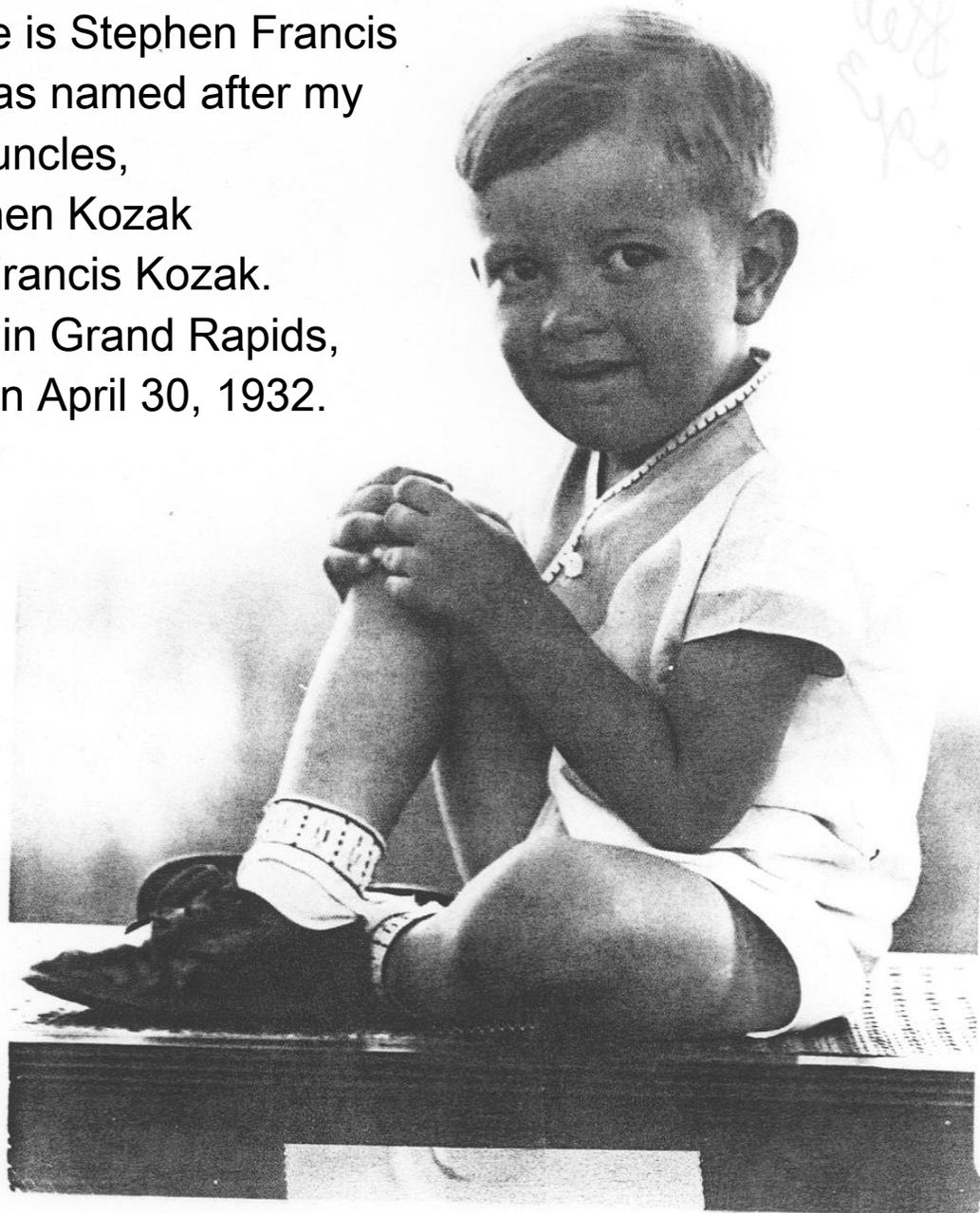


**Stephen Francis Kozak**

# My Beginnings

My full name is Stephen Francis Kozak. I was named after my two priest uncles, Rev. Stephen Kozak and Rev. Francis Kozak. I was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan on April 30, 1932.



I was taken care of by my mother Theresa. My earliest memory is of living on Seventh St. The great depression was going on in the world. The president of the United States was Franklin D. Roosevelt.

# My Family

My mother's name was Theresa Krzykwa. She was born in Grand Rapids on December 25, 1899. Her parent's home was on 4<sup>th</sup> St., near St. Adalberts. I remember they had an ice refrigerator. My mother was very protective of me – I was the baby of the family. My father was Joseph Aloysius Kozak. He was born in Grand Rapids on September, 1900. I remember him as a politician (city commissioner) – and helping people. My sister is Loraine (Kozak) Simhauser. My brothers are Jerome and Daniel Kozak.



# My Family

There was quite an age difference between us, so I did not spend much time with my siblings. I remember my brother Jerry because we roomed at college together for two years, even though there was a ten year age difference. He taught me how to drive. We got along well.

Our biggest argument was when Jerry decided to get married at the same time as I had decided. He found another girl, and did not get married at the same time.

I played with the neighborhood kids, but I remember playing ping pong with my brothers, and Jerry's classmates from the seminary.

Now that we are grown up, my brother Dan remains aloof, but does stay in contact. My sister is aging, but I try to contact her periodically.

My most memorable family reunion was after my Mother's funeral.



# My Childhood Home

My favorite memory of my home was bountiful holiday meals.

My parents made our house a home by being there, and providing a base for me to go to school.



The yard I played in was mostly a street corner, until my father pushed me into improving a vacant city lot (thru the help of the city and the neighbors).

Our neighbors were the Seamons and Irwins when I was young.

I shared a bedroom with my sister when I was very young, but most of the time I had a bedroom to myself.

# My hometown

The town we lived in was Grand Rapids.

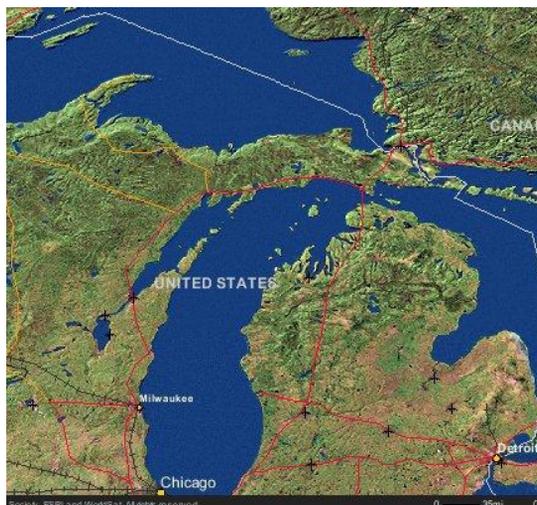
I played with my friends in our own improved field. The parks were quite far away and down the hill.

Someone I respected in my hometown was President Gerald Ford. I asked his office (then Congressman) to determine my first duty station after graduating from dental school.

My favorite store was the Zamaira's meat market across from St. Adalbert's. They used to give out bites of cold hot dogs or baloney when Dad bought the meat for supper.

The biggest event in our town was a political parade.

We went to church at St. Adalbert's.



## My favorite sports

My greatest sports victory was a 150 yard Eagle. I never had a hole-in-one. The eagle was the nearest comparison.

My biggest sports defeat was injuring my back, which limited my golf for awhile.

My father taught me to hunt.



*Steve and Jerry*

## When I was a boy



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Ice cream cones were \$.05 – now they are \$1.50.

We drove a 1941 Buick and a 1946 Chrysler.

My father always dressed in a suit.

I was expected to behave, especially because of his political career.

The most exciting invention of the time was the first TV in the neighborhood. It was a round, 12", tube, black and white, of course!

## My pets

I had a hunting dog “Mitzi”, which was a setter mix.

The animal that makes the best pet is a dog, because they are loveable and always there for you.

I different kinds of pet I have owned are dogs and fish.



# A typical day



My father owned his own business selling insurance and real estate.

My mother stayed at home.

The chores I had to do were taking care of a two acre Victory garden, 100 chickens, and helping my mother with housework.

On summer days I liked to play baseball.

On winter days, I liked to play ping pong, play with my train set, and listen to The Lone Ranger on the radio.

# With my Father

The most wonderful thing about my Father was that he was good at helping people and good at making deals.

I remember his resiliency and his success in business and raising his family.

He helped me by letting me be self-sufficient rather than doing things for me.

My father wanted me to succeed at what I chose.

He always took us to church each week and respected the church.



## With my Mother

The most wonderful thing about my Mother was that she always provided food and clothes for me.

She was a good homemaker. I remember her homemaking and cooking.

She encouraged me to do a good job.

She also encouraged churchgoing.



# Christmas

Our family's favorite Christmas tradition was family gatherings, dinner, and midnight mass. We always had a big breakfast after midnight mass.

My best Christmas memory is seeing our children enjoy their presents.

The best Christmas gift was the Bose radio.

The real meaning of Christmas is to do good for others, but pay attention to family on Christmas.



## Early School Years



- I attended St. Adalbert's grade school.
- I remember tutoring others while in grade school.
- I disliked history, but was good at math and science.
- I was in boy scouts after school.
- I usually walked home – about a mile.
- I played with neighborhood kids after school.

# High School Years

High school was only a transition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of St. Adalbert's. It was known as West Catholic for the first two years. For the final two years I went downtown to Catholic Central.

At a recent high school reunion, my classmates reminded me that we were very competitive, and that I usually was the class reader.

My homeroom and math teacher was Sr. Damien. She was a controlling person, but fair.

My best subjects were Math and Science, because they came naturally to me.

A popular fad when I was in high school was penny loafers.

My friends were Lou Freybler and Esch.





## Music

Growing up, my favorite music was Guy Lombardo and most 50's music.

As I got older, I discovered Glee Club singing.

Now, I like to listen to 50's music.

I took saxophone lessons.

My favorite hymn is "On Eagle's Wings."

My grandmother's favorite song was a polish hymn.



# First Times

The first time I drove a car was in my brother's coupe in low gear. It was on the two-track in front of our 7<sup>th</sup> St. house.

When I got my driver's license I was 16. My father had a broken bone, and I was able to drive quite a bit in the beginning.

My first car was a Plymouth. I shared it with my brother Jerry at college.

I only owned my own car when I got married.

The first time I shaved was in college, using an electric shaver.

The first time I voted was probably soon after I was 21, but for sure after coming back to Grand Rapids in 1958.

The first time I asked a girl for a date was in my Junior year in high school.



# Journeys

The first time I rode a bike was in late grade school. I tried the neighbors' bike because I never had my own.

The best vacation we had as a family was a trip out west.

A favorite fishing trip was with my Grandpa Kozak and Fr. Steve to Lake Brevort. It was the first trip I took without my family.

The most exciting trip I took was a plane trip from Milwaukee when I was in college.

I have always wanted to go to Alaska.



# Friendship

My closest friend growing up was Lou Freybler.

My best friend today is Lee Forgar.

Being a friend means just being there, and not questioning, but being there to help if asked.

You are not only my grandchildren, you are my friends because I want to be there for you if and when you want help.

I have seen you be a friend when you help your younger cousins.

God can be a friend when you feel down.



# My Favorite Things



I read a lot in my childhood, but I don't remember any favorites.

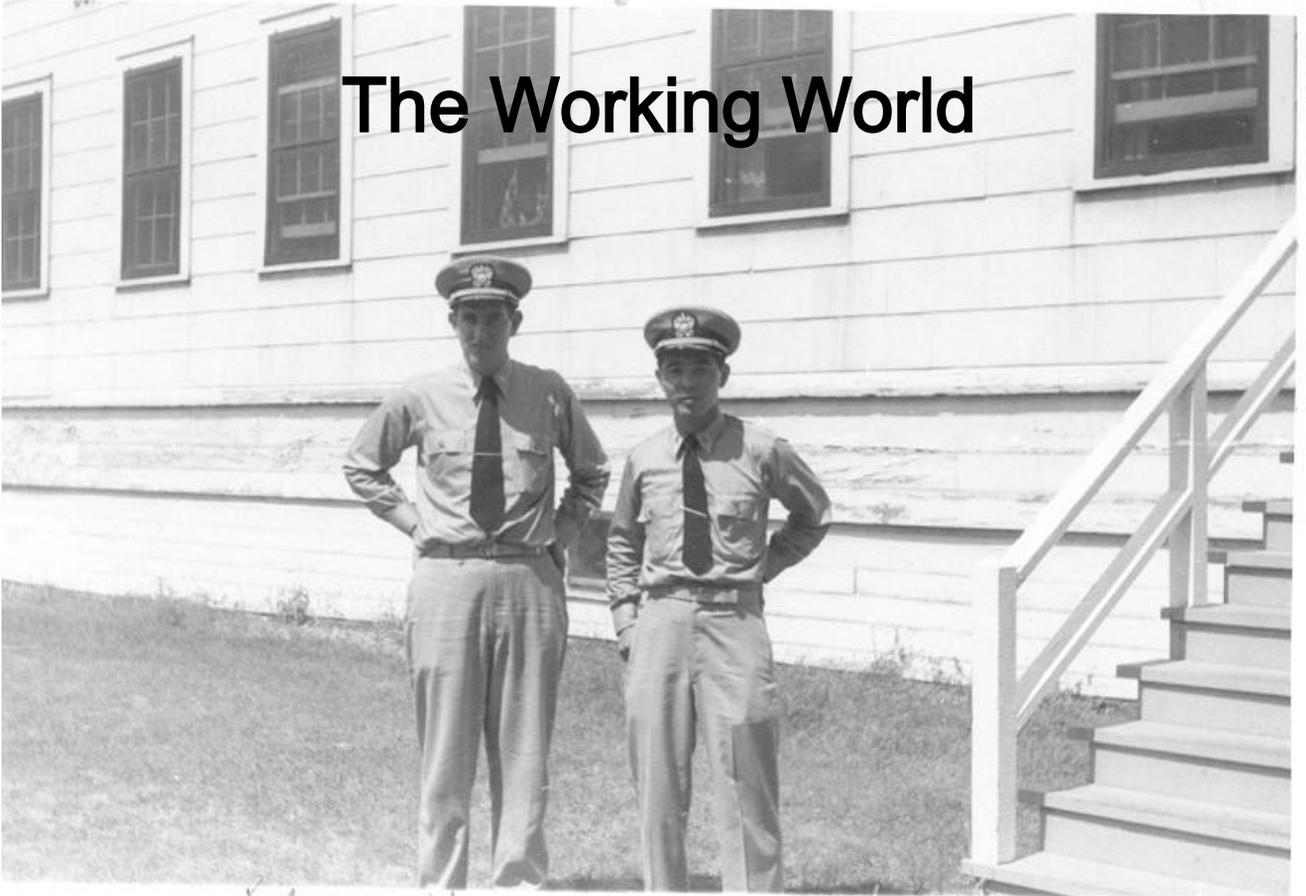
My favorite books as an adult are almost always professional books.

A treasured memento from my boyhood would be my memories.

My favorite place to think is in my computer room.

That which I value most in life is my health.

# The Working World



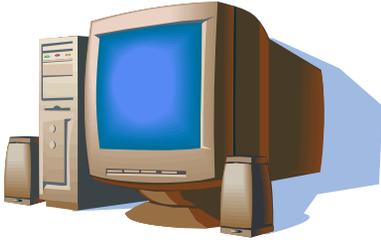
My very first job was factory work at Ideal seating, the summer before college. Before that I helped at home with the lawn, garden, and gentleman farming.

My favorite kind of work is things with a challenge; patients with difficult problems.

A typical work day involves 15-20 patients with a variety of problems.

I currently work at a clinic for the poor, in Baldwin, MI.

My advice to you about work is to find work that you enjoy. Excel, and do your best.



# Hobbies

My favorite hobby is golf and learning more about computing.

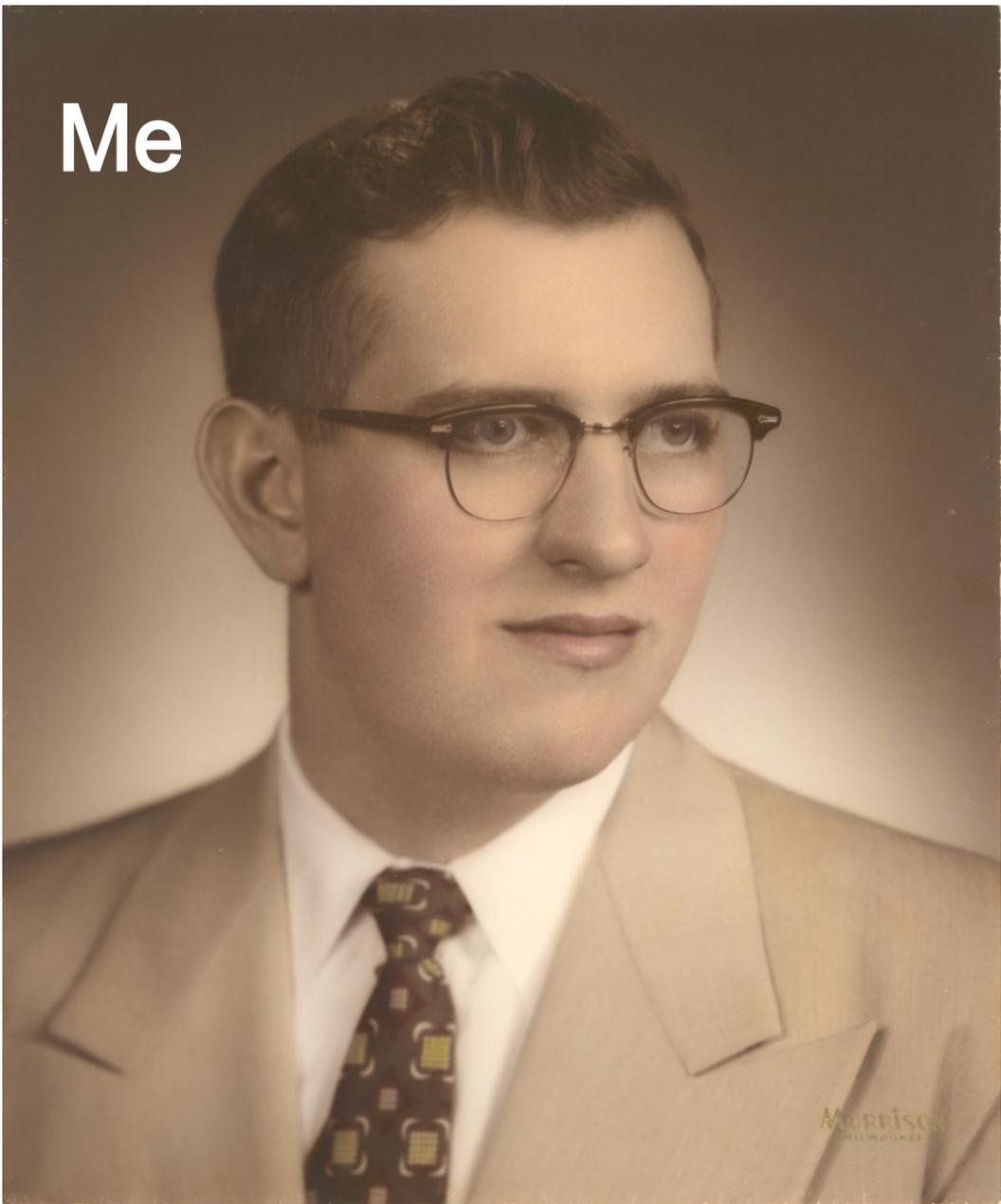
The person who first introduced me to golf is my brother Jerry.

My daughter, Diane, guided me in computers.

An important lesson I have learned from doing what I love is that no job is too difficult or too menial.



Me



My greatest strength is trying to be a good dentist and provider at home.

My weakness is not paying enough attention to my family.

I love my work and golf. I hate to clean up after doing odd jobs. I always laugh at funny jokes. I look at the world through my profession, and with dismay at the lack of enthusiasm in the world to improve one's knowledge.

# Goals



A goal I set and reached was to become a good dentist.

My greatest fear was to not succeed at being one of the best dentists.

My biggest disappointment was not having a child follow my profession.

Defeat can be turned into success by not repeating mistakes.

My goals today are to help my grandkids accomplish their goals, and for them to have high enough goals.

I am proud to see each grandchild accomplish success in school.

# Romance



My first crush was  
Justine.

My first girlfriend was  
Loretta.

My first kiss was with  
Loretta.

On dates, my girlfriend  
and I would go to  
dances at John Ball  
school, and Fruitport

*Handwritten signature*

# Love

I always thought that love was forever.

I was 14 years old when I met your grandmother.

We met when she moved into my neighborhood

I was attracted to her because she was a fun person  
to be with.

I proposed by the age of 19 or 20.



# My Wedding Day



We were married at St. James church in Grand Rapids on August 29, 1953 by my uncles Fr. Steve and Fr. Frank, and my cousin Fr. Walen. On our wedding day, your grandmother looked young. The wedding ceremony made me feel fulfilled because I wanted to share my life with her. My best man was Lou Freybler. The wedding was rather formal. My memory of our wedding was the delay at mass. Fr. Walen was late in getting there because the bishop died that morning. Our honeymoon was going to Milwaukee to find housing for the coming school year.

# Life as Newlyweds

The first place we lived was in an upstairs apartment in a suburb of Milwaukee (St. Frances).

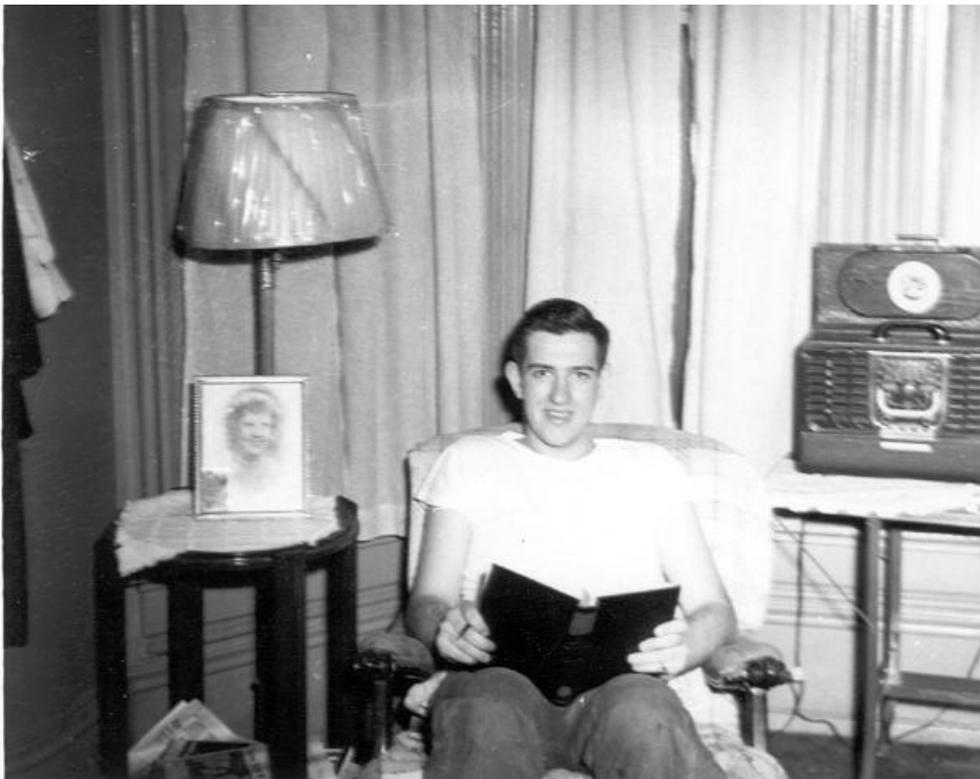
One thing we still laugh about is being asked to move by our landlord because we had so much company in a one bedroom apartment.

The thing I love best about your grandmother is her organization.

Our first fight was on our trip out west. I don't remember what it was about.

The most important thing I have learned about being married is that it doesn't pay to get angry.

We worship at Holy Spirit church.



# My Life as a Father



Our children are Ken, born July 17, 1955; Bob, born September 16, 1958; Diane, born February 2, 1963.

What I love about being a father is seeing my children succeed.

The most difficult thing a father has to do is see children make poor decisions.

I would have been a better father if I had more time with the kids.

An important lesson that I hope all my children and grandchildren learn is to stick with what you know best.

# Spiritual Lessons

Practicing your faith means being fair.

A real Christian is one who cares for others who are not as fortunate.

God seems especially close in times of adversity. Someone who teaches me about God are the people I help as a dentist.

One lesson I would like you to learn about faith is that you cannot do it alone.

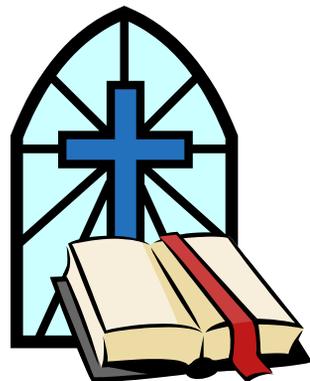
I know there is a God because this world is too complex to be an accident.

When times are difficult, I turn to prayer.

The best place for me to pray is anywhere I can be alone.

The best time for me to pray is at night in bed.

When I die, I believe that there is a life hereafter.



## Looking Ahead

The dearest people on earth are my kids and grandkids.

The people I miss the most are my parents and siblings.

I am happiest when I think of my wife.

I am most thankful for a full life.

If I could have anything, it would be nothing material. I just want productive lives for my kids and grandkids.

I wish for our family to stay close and in touch.



# Winning at Life

I always wanted to be one of the best  
at my profession.

I think that real success means being  
productive and providing for your  
family.

You are only a failure if you repeat your  
mistakes.

My dad taught me that winners don't  
always have to be first.



# Growing in Wisdom

In my twenties, I thought I knew all about life.

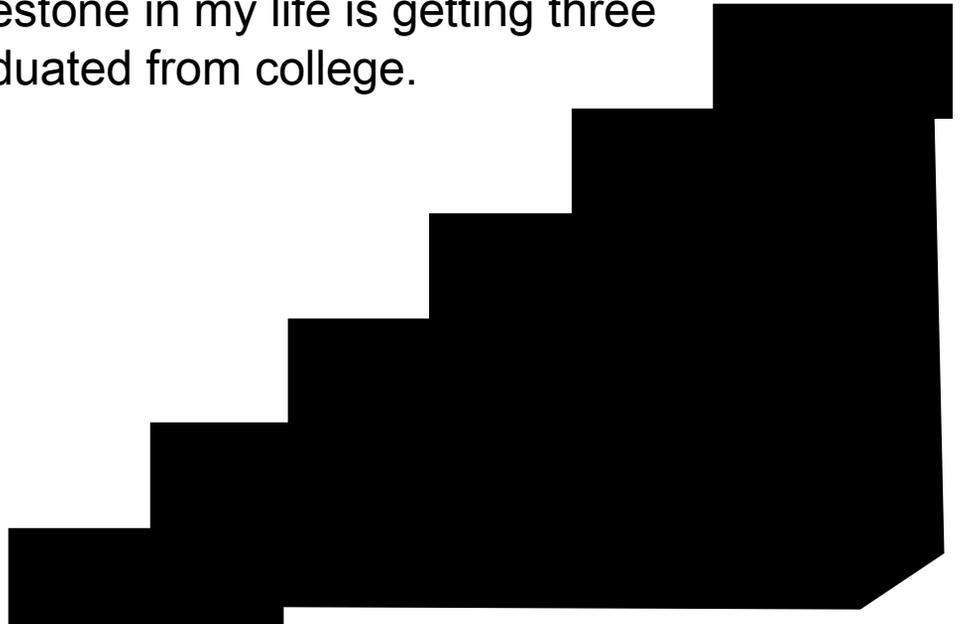
In my thirties, I found many things I did not know.

In my forties, I wanted to be one of the best in my work.

In my fifties, I gained much respect from my dental friends from my schooling.

Now that I'm a grandfather, I've realized there is more to life than work.

A major milestone in my life is getting three kids graduated from college.



# Someday



Being a grandfather means growing old.

The best thing about being a grandfather is that I still feel young.

When you have a grandchild, be sure to not show favoritism, but do pay attention to them.

Teach your grandchildren to respect their parents.

A grandchild is precious.

Remember to tell your grandchildren to love their parents.