

Laurence Charles Holden
1929-2017

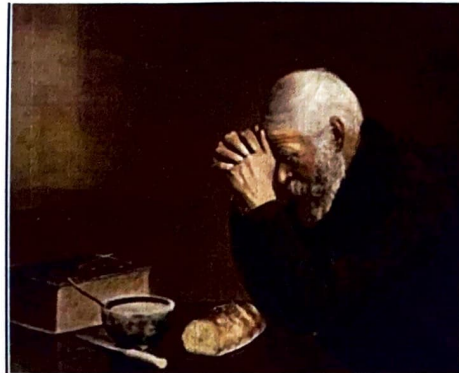
The highest complement our father, Larry Holden, could give was to label you a "good sport." We, his children, were good sports when we spent all day waiting to get standby seats on a flight that never came, or when we had a boating mishap on the Fox River and had to return slowly down the river backwards, or had our tonsils removed.

But all those things had a good outcome. What did being a "good sport" mean to Dad? It meant things like this:

- Being taken to a bar by his father as a toddler and having his father slap him and take his salary from the pocket where Dad had been holding it for safekeeping, and drinking it away.
- Being sent to northern Wisconsin to live and work on his grandfather's farm because his parents couldn't afford to support him during the Depression.
- Going to the charity food pantry to pick up vegetables with his mother and brother and sister, putting the food in a wagon, and bringing it back home where his mom would make soup to last the week.
- His father leaving home to return to his first wife and their children in Kansas, or roaming the country on hunting trips, having him return, and then leaving for good when Dad was 12.
- Living for decades with a heart problem and refusing to take medicine for it.
- Going through many injuries, illnesses and operations and surviving several life-threatening situations.

When you understand what Dad went through, you appreciate what kind of a father he was, and you forgave the personality traits that seemed difficult to us before we understood where he was

coming from: his frugality; his desire to go away each winter and live in a trailer by himself; working the evening shift for years and simply not being around many evenings when his children were growing up.



His own grandfather left his family in Kansas when his children were young and lived the rest of his days in California. His father left one family in Kansas when his children were young and went to Chicago, where he met his second wife only to leave his second family when his

children were young. He lived in a trailer by himself when he had a stroke and his son (his first son, from his first family) brought him back home. In other words, Dad had no model to follow when it came to being a father, which makes it remarkable that he was such a good father and grandfather himself.

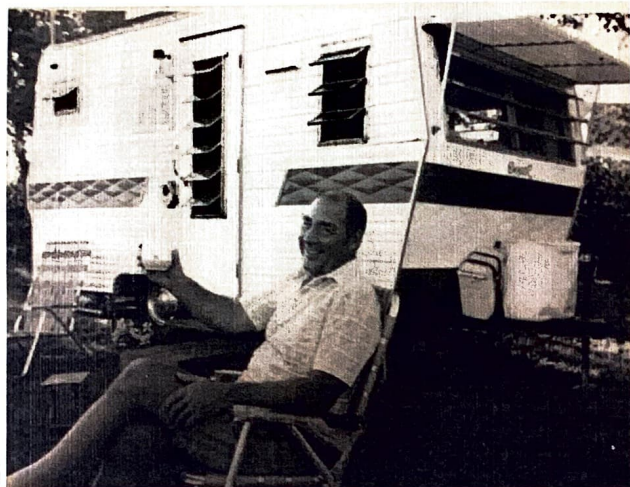
He learned about discipline and responsibility from the Christian Brothers who operated St. George High School in Evanston. Church, and faith, were another rock he could lean on. In our mother he found a kindred spirit: an orphan, estranged from her father, who found great consolation in the Catholic church and her own Catholic high school.

After traveling the country with the merchant marine, he went to college. He was in a theater



group; he wrote poetry. He played golf. He worked as a salesman, but then left the business world and reinvented himself as an automobile

mechanic. After working in garages and enduring a serious knee injury that required surgery, our mother found an easier job for him with United Airlines. He did maintenance on vehicles and on food warming machines that were widespread when airlines served hot meals on a regular basis.



Dad used his benefits from working at United to take us on many wonderful trips: to Hawaii several times, to Florida, California, Spokane for the World's Fair, and so on. We flew first class on a 747 in the upstairs "bubble" section. We walked to the edge of an active volcano in Hawaii. Dad loved camping and lying on the beach. He loved going to any place and sitting and relaxing. When we asked what he was doing, he would say he was "learning to relax."

He came from a time when relaxing was one of the ultimate goals in life. He drove with one finger on the steering wheel, listening to the "Beautiful Music" radio station, WAIT. He was a champion thumb-twiddler. When he wanted to figure something out, he simply learned how to do it and did it. He built a barn and a backyard storage structure he called "The Breeze House." He fixed radios and electronic devices of all sorts. He fixed his own cars and his own boat, with tools scattered all over the stones in the driveway, using a "trouble light" and rolling under the car on a "creeper." He helped his oldest son put together a car from pieces. He taught us about capacitors, and torque wrenches, and power saws, and lag bolts, and oscilloscopes, and vacuum

tubes. He took us to a church where a liberal and intellectual priest, Father Winters, gave interesting sermons. He took us boating in a wooden boat we called The Peanut and a white boat with a windshield. He was occasionally silly, and had a smile for everyone. He never met a waitress or hotel employee he couldn't charm or get to smile.

He taught us about patience and acceptance. He never spoke harshly about his own father. That's just the way he was. When the likelihood of death came closer, he was unafraid. That's just the way things were. He approved some serious major physical repairs over the years and made sure they were done correctly. When no repair options remained, he accepted this last disappointment stoically, refusing treatments to prolong his life, choosing to die quickly, and getting his wish.



He wished to outlive his grandfather and not to be incapacitated for years in a "crib" in a nursing home as his grandfather had been. He wished not to be a burden on us. He achieved all of these goals, dying peacefully at home with his three children caring for him and surrounding him at the end. This man, who had been taught abandonment and cruelty as a child, never left his family, and transcended his past. He taught us the highest human qualities of patience, and resilience, and independence, and love. We, his children, are happy to share him with you today.

Gregory Holden
Michael Holden
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