

The Eagle's Nest By Philip J. Lawson, J.D.

Faith, Family and Friends



Those of you familiar with my column know that I attempt to share leadership and personal growth principles which can make a difference in a law firm and in our personal lives.

In thinking about the topic for my column this month, I thought I would share with you a number of writings; some written by my mother and father and others collected from their personal diaries and other gems of wisdom collected as “special treasures.” These writings reflect their love for each other and for their six children. (I have tried to give credit to other writers in this collection where their identities were known.) Further, these writings reveal their desire to raise children who knew the significance of the three important “F’s” in our lives – Faith, Family and Friends.

* * *

Faith, FAMILY and Friends

TO MARGUERITE

Joseph W. Lawson, Sr.

(A love note from Dad to Mom)

Fear not, sweet love, what time can do;

Though silver dims the gold

Of your soft hair, believe that you

Can change but not grow old.

Though since we married twenty years

And five have flown away,

As bright your beauty still appears

As on our wedding day.

We will not weep that Spring be past

And Autumn shadows fall;

These years shall be, although the last,

The loveliest of all.

* * *

Mom and Dad were married 67 years and remained sweethearts their entire marriage. Dad died six years ago and, unfortunately, Mom died several months ago in

an automobile accident while traveling with her two caregivers. Fortunately, the caregivers lived and their injuries appear to be manageable.

Dad’s mother was a midwife in the coal fields of West Virginia and died when Dad was 13 – but not before having him promise he would go to Berea College (a poor folks’ college for mountain children) and get an education.

Mom and Dad met one Christmas while working at Murphy’s Five and Dime in Point Pleasant, West Virginia. Mom was a clerk and Dad was playing the role of Santa Claus. Dad had just returned from Berea College.

Mom and Dad enjoyed writing and good books; it was through their love for reading that they learned about the world beyond the hills of West Virginia.

* * *

“Love Me Now”

Robert Paul Moreno

1-16-70 – 2-27-87

If you are ever going to love me,

Love me now, while I can know

The sweet and tender feelings

Which from true affection flow.

Love me now

While I am living.

Do not wait until I’m gone

And then have it chiseled in marble,

Sweet words on ice-cold stone.

If you have tender thoughts of me,

Please tell me now.

If you wait until I am sleeping,

Never to awaken,

There will be death between us,

And I won’t hear you then.

*So, if you love me, even a little bit,
Let me know it while I am living
So I can treasure it.*

* * *

YOU CAN'T GO BACK HOME AGAIN

Joseph W. Lawson, Sr. (June 1963)

*Memories of my youth I've cherished
Through the years I've been away;
A dream I've dreamed so many times
That I would go back home one day.
The time is now and here at last
I view old scenes in sad dismay.*

*The creek that tumbled tirelessly,
Its crystal ripples flashed with gold,
Haunted and teased and tempted me
With roaring rapids and sandy shoals.
Can this be it; this torpid trickle?
Struggling towards some far-off goal?*

*The tree down by the garden gate
With branches that fingered the sky,
The one I used to shinny up
With a proud, triumphant cry!
I'm slow to accept as only a bush –
Its tired branches tangled and wry.*

*The great old barn where I used to go
Twice a day to milk the cow
And put out feed for the horses –
Climbed a ladder to the old haymow;
Is not at all what it seemed to be.
I see a small, sagging shelter now.*

*Weeds and brambles clog the path
Where oft I have walked before;
A faded rambling rose now rambles
Right up to the weathered door.*

*The breeze that frets the tall grass
Whispers;
"Joe, you can't go home anymore."*

*Now that my dreams are realized and
My experience is positive truth,
There is a time of enchantment
That must be left with the game of
Youth; and
As I proceed with the business of living,
Accepting that which I see as Truth.*

* * *

WHAT I WANT FOR MY BOY

Joseph W. Lawson, Sr.

*I want my boy to have all the advantages
I can give him.*

*Such as having to earn his own allowance
by running errands, cutting lawns.*

*Such as getting good grades in school –
getting them because he wants to, and
because he knows what it would do to me if he didn't.*

*Such as being proud to be clean and neat
and decent.*

*Such as standing up and standing proud
when his country's flag goes by.*

*Such as addressing elder friends of his
parents as "sir" and "ma'am."*

*Such as having to earn his own way in
The world and knowing he has to prepare
for it by hard work, hard study, and
sacrificing some of the pleasures and ease his friends
may get from too- indulgent parents.*

*These are the advantages I want my son
to have, because these are the things
which will make him self-respecting and
self-reliant and successful.*

*And that is the happiness I want him to
have.*

* * *

“HAPPINESS IS”

Marguerite Lawson (March 15, 1969)

(These excerpts were taken from a speech to the
Lionesses of Mansfield, Ohio District 13-B Convention.)

*Happiness is bread my mother baked fourteen years
ago. The last piece of dough Mama rolled and tied into
a knot. She called this a duck.*

*Mama was good at this. She had much practice. I am
one of twelve. We each took our turn getting the Duck.*

*Happiness is a letter from a little boy in Tazewell,
Virginia, enclosing his favorite critter, a rubber snake.*

*Whether we realize it or not, we depend on those we
come in contact with for our happiness. “All who would
win joy must share it, happiness was born a twin.”*

*Throw a kiss to your husband as he leaves and for the
day he will be ten feet tall. I do suggest that the kiss be
thrown from the door and not the bed and that he leaves
with a full stomach. It is much more effective.*

*Happiness is: the security of family and friends, a
harvest moon, the stillness of the night during a falling
snow, the dew of early morning, the call of a dove at
dusk, the colors of Autumn, the feel of air before a rain,
the restful feel of a bed after a long day, the crackle of
an open fire, the sacred feeling we get while listening to
Christmas Carols, and the call of children, “Mom,*

I’m home.”

* * *

**“Children are the living messages we
send to a time we will not see.”**

John W. Whitehead, 1983

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**Children are the anchors
that hold a mother to life.**

Sophocles

* * *

OLD HOUSE

Isabel Conant

(These words were found on a small piece of paper
inside one of Mom’s diaries)

*He who loves an old house
Will never love in vain.*

For how can any old house

Used to sun and rain,

To lilac and to larkspur,

To arching trees above,

Fail to give its answer

To the heart that gives it

Love?

* * *

Faith, Family and Friends

A FRIEND

Joseph W. Lawson, Sr.

A friend is a gift you give to yourself,

That’s one of my old-time songs.

So I put you down with the best of them,

For you’re where the best belongs.

Among the gifts I have given to me;

Most comforting, tried and true;

The one I most often think about,

Is my gift to myself of you.

* * *

SUCCESS UNLIMITED

Joseph W. Lawson, Sr.

*Bite off more than you can
chew – then chew it.*

*Plan for more than you can
do – then do it.*

*Pledge more than you can
spare – then spare it.*

*Hitch your wagon to a star,
Take careful aim and there
You are.*

*Build your mansions in the
Air, then build a ship to
Take you there.*

*This will give you success
Unlimited.*

* * *

Gift of Angels

(Author unknown)

*If instead of a gem or even a flower –
We could cast the gift of a lovely
Thought into the heart of a friend,
That would be giving as the angels
Give.*

* * *

COME LITTLE LEAVES

Marguerite F. Lawson

*Come little leaves said the leaves one day.
Come over in the meadow with me and play.
Put on your garments of red and gold,
Winter is coming and the days grow cold.
So, laughing and dancing the little leaves went,
Winter had called them and they were content.
Soon fast asleep in their earthly bed,
The snow made a blanket over their heads.*

* * *

IMMORTALITY

Mary Elizabeth Frye (1932)

*Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there. I do not sleep.*

*I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,
I am the gentle Autumn rain.*

*When you awake in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circling flight,
I am the soft stars that shine at night.*

*Do not stand at my grave and cry.
I am not there. I did not die.*

* * *

Quotes for all Seasons

(These wonderful quotes were found in Mom's
1985 calendar, and in her handwriting.)

*"Youth is a gift of nature,
Age is a work of art."*

*"Don't let old age be the winter of your life.
Let it be the Harvest."*

*"Happiness is being in the sunset of your life,
old and wrinkled, and having your grandchildren
tell you that you are beautiful."*

*"Memory is the power to gather roses in
the winter."*

* * *

Dad's hopes and dreams for his children in his absence.

This letter from Dad to the children was written in 1944 and shared with each of the six children in 1979. Dad was ill and felt that he might not be around to complete his "...loving duty of rearing" us. He wanted to

share a "...few admonitions – and make these few requests." This writing touches the heart as Dad shares his hopes and dreams for his children.

8-8-79

Dear Children,

Twenty-five years ago – and in what appeared to be a poor physical condition – and wanting each of you to be a successful, contributing and happy American citizen, I wrote this letter. Today, I found it in my deposit box.

Thought you might like a copy.

Love, Dad

* * *

408 3rd Street
Princeton, West Virginia
October 19, 1944

To my dear children:

You know, I feel and believe that I should be here to watch you grow up into earth's greatest creations; good men and women. This is my sincere hope, prayer, and wish; but should the great master of the universe, that loving spirit that maketh all men rich and addeth no sorrow therewith, see fit to absent me from my loving duty of rearing you, I want to give you these few admonitions and make these few requests.

"Goodness is the greatest treasure of all human beings. If you love me, please strive to be good under every situation, and to all living things." Kindly Suggestions:

Never put off until tomorrow what you can conveniently do today – without injury to yourself.

Never trouble another for what you can do yourself.

Never spend money before you have it.

Never buy what is cheap – if you don't need it, it will be a dear price.

Pride costs no more than hunger, thirst or cold.

Never eat too much – and do not drink intoxicants at all. You will need all your five senses at all times to carry out your duties to God and your country, and to your families.

Nothing we do willingly is troublesome.

Never worry about tomorrow – do all you can do each day and success is yours.

Take things thoughtfully always by the smooth handles. When angry, count ten before you speak; if very angry, then a hundred.

Children, please remember that the most difficult problems will resolve themselves into simple propositions when given to the proper analysis.

Your dad has done the best he could possibly do, as all his thoughts were for your protection, security, and education; so that you might be able to compete in the world, be a service to your country, and raise fine Christian families.

Your Mother is a grand lady; God never gave one better to a man for a wife, or to children for a mother. Listen carefully to her; she is fine and good and Christian.

If I am not here when you are "growing" up into womanhood and manhood, remember, your dad is on the sidelines cheering you on – and may success be yours. "Nothing succeeds like success."

Oh yes, please remember that you can do and be anything you want to do, with faith, hope – and work.

I am for you always

Affectionately Your dad.

Big Joe

* * *

LIFE'S SHORT DAY

Joseph W. Lawson, Sr.

Time is swiftly running out

It waits not a second for me;

Too few the remaining moments

Of this preface to eternity.

So many things I planned to do

Ere the close of Life's short day;

Some of them I would do now,

If I could bid time to stay.

I'd walk in an April shower,

Feel the raindrops' gentle caress;

And wait for the sun to shine again

To catch nature at her best.

I'd pause in the quiet of evening

Feel its breeze gently finger my hair;

Softly as an Angel's wings

*Winnowing the air.
I'd go again to the chapel
Once again with the choir I would
Sing;
Giving thanks unto the Lord,
The author of every good thing.
I'd gather my loved ones about me
And thank them for being mine;
Then, quietly, without a murmur,
I'd surrender myself to Time.*

* * *



Joseph and Marguerite Lawson

In closing, I want to share **What is Life**. This writing was found in Mom's collection and summarizes beautifully Mom and Dad's expectations for the children. It gives a view of life as we should see and live it. Life has many challenges, but it is

well worth living when we value and attempt to live by the three "F's" – Faith, Family and Friends.

WHAT IS LIFE?

(From Mom's Collection)

Life is a JOURNEY; complete it.

Life is an OPPORTUNITY; take it.

Life is a DUTY; perform it.

Life is a BEAUTY; praise it.

Life is a CHALLENGE; meet it.

Life is a GIFT; accept it.

Life is an ADVENTURE; dare it.

Life is a SORROW; overcome it.

Life is a GOAL; achieve it.

Life is a TRAGEDY; transcend it.

Life is a MYSTERY; unfold it.

Life is a SONG; sing it.

* * *

My sincere hope for all of you in the New Year is that you and your loved ones will find health, happiness, and prosperity.

Most sincerely,
Philip J. Lawson

I would like to dedicate this column to Sonya Richards, a member of The Smoky Mountain Paralegal Association and a professional staff member of our firm. For many years, Sonya has added great value to the firm, to me personally, and I have always valued her contribution, dedication, and friendship.