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HAROLD BARTLEY: A QUIET MAN PASSES



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Mahatma Gandhi said, "He who knows need not shout."
Harold Bartley never shouted.

Harold Bartley was The Quiet Man.

This morning, as is my habit, I awoke at 4 a. m. and after dressing quickly, walked around the circle of homes in front of our home with my two dogs and our cat. My two dogs, HoneyBear and DaisyMay, tolerate a leash. But, there is no leash that can constrain the cat called TinkerBelle.

It is awe-inspiringly quiet at that hour. I inhaled the air, embraced the hush and became as one with the silence that surrounded me.

For those brief moments, I enjoyed the quiet calm that Harold Bartley enjoyed most of the days during the decade I knew him.

Harold did not need to shout. He knew who he was, what he had accomplished and where he was going. He was at peace long before he was laid to rest.

Harold Bartley played many roles in his life and wore many labels: Lover, husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, resident, retiree, golfer, bridge player and Christian.

I labeled him simply "Friend."

BARTLEY, Harold W., 89, of Sun City Center, passed away Monday, July 3, 2006, in Sun City Center. Mr. Bartley was born August 2, 1916, in Butler, Pa. He was the son of the late Edward G. and Florence Veach Bartley. He was preceded in death by a son, David W., in 1994. Survivors include his wife, Beatrice I.; a daughter, Beverly Maginn of Ruskin, Fla.; four grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. A funeral service will take place 10:30 a.m. Thursday, July 6, 2006, at Sun City United Methodist Church. The family will receive friends at the church from 9:30 a.m. till time of services. Burial will be at Hillsboro Memorial Gardens.

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Of all the labels he earned, he valued “Christian” the most.

Harold Bartley “walked the talk” of Christianity.

For him, the church was not some marble-laden, frescoed building on some foreign shore, it was the Sun City Center United Methodist Church. In that church, he sang in the choir and was on the Finance Committee for more years than I could account for.

When he became the Chairman of the Finance Committee, he realized that the pen-and-paper accounting system that had served him so well in the past would not do in the present. His had been a hands-on generation, but this one was computer-oriented. So he changed.

He bought a computer software package called Microsoft Excel. While I offered some training assistance, Harold Bartley taught himself all he needed to know.

At some point, his church became embroiled in a controversy about what some lady’s will intended to do for the church. Some called it a crisis. Some called it many things. Harold called it a “misunderstanding.” He knew that if members made the time to read the will, as he had, they would know — as he did — exactly what the lady intended.

Harold Bartley was that kind of man. He believed that if you had a need to know and you made the time to know, you knew all you needed to know.

If I were going to give someone a memento to remember Harold, I would give them one of the ceramic figurines that adorned his home. Each one was given life and meaning in the hands of this skilled craftsman. In my last visit with Harold, he showed me some of those ceramics. It was the most philosophical he ever got with me.

When asked which was his favorite, he could not — or would not — identify a single one as having more meaning than any other. Each had a story to tell and he had been a part of imparting that story.

I pointed to two figurines and remarked they were identical.

He pointed out that what looked like twins were, in fact, very different. Only his trained eye, having followed his experienced hands, had noted the variations that had escaped my eyes.

He talked of the joy of working with the clay to reveal the beauty, the skills required to hide the flaws and the willingly patient manner required to create excellence.

I guess life is a lot like his ceramics.

He explained that he took a gray mud-like substance he called “slip” and, when it reached the proper consistency, poured it into a mold.

After the proper preparation time, he would remove the mold and begin his real work. Carefully and tenderly, he would draw the lines, smooth the surfaces and remove most imperfections.

He never strived for perfection in his ceramics or in his life. He believed perfection was God’s work and his role was to do the very best he could with what he had.

When he was satisfied with the result, the ceramic would be fired in a kiln and, upon removal, was ready for painting.

He had a vast collection of paints and applied each lovingly to what would be another beautiful figurine to join so many others.

I don’t know that Harold Bartley ever fit a mold, but his life became a testament to what one can achieve if one has a vision, commits to it and works to make it come to fruition.

Harold made decisions and made those decisions succeed.

When still a lad, he was invited to a birthday party because the mother of the girl celebrating her birthday had run out of other boys to invite. It was there that he met that girl. Her name was Bea.

They spent the rest of their lives together. He was married to Bea for 70+ years. They produced two children and lead to the creation of four grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren.

Some time after marrying Bea, he decided he wanted to own his own business. With an initial investment of \$30,000 of his own money, he created a multimillion dollar corporation called Ohio Grating Incorporated.

But he never talked to me about that company.

He talked about his service to his church.

So I concluded my early morning walk and the quiet was gone.

Harold has completed his time on earth, but his quiet continues.

As he roams the halls of heaven, I’m sure he is making silent notes about his new home. He will walk tall, sit erect and be silently content with all

that has been bestowed upon him. He will be grateful. He will be calmly proud that he chose and stayed on the right path.

And he'll stay busy. If asked, he'll offer ideas on molding the next generation of Christians, but until then he'll go serenely about whatever task God gives him.

He'll walk with the Christ, listening and learning in the placid calm of eternity.

And he will await there — quietly — for those who are to come after him.