



The Greatest Generation

12 March 2015



I took a road trip with my father on Sunday. I was scheduled for a Confirmation service in Whitbourne (Parish of the Holy Trinity) that morning and thought he would enjoy coming with me. He lived there for 27 years after moving there to be what would become the final agent at the CNR railroad station. I too had lived in Whitbourne for a time, finishing high school there.

Sunday brought back many memories for both of us and in my homily that morning I told the young people that I too was confirmed in that church. The bishop was Robert Seaborn and the priest who prepared me was Wilson Tibbo. I remember the day well and asked the newly confirmed to always remember their day of Confirmation. After the service there was luncheon at the Lion's Club, which Dad enjoyed very much as he chatted and reconnected with old friends. We were honored to have the rector of the parish, Nancy March, sit with us.

My father is 93 years old now. Mom passed on a few years ago after 56 years of marriage but Dad has certainly made the most of all the years he has been given. He has travelled a lot and maintains a rich social life. Gifted with remarkable health, he has vowed to remain active as long as possible and still drives on his own and bowls every week. As we travelled together on Sunday I was reminded of many other times we travelled together over the years and I was grateful that I have had him in my life as long as I have. His mind is still very sharp and he has opinions on everything and a memory that stretches back almost a century. He comes from a generation that knew ferocious hardship and even hunger in its time and yet the one thing I find absent in his worldview is some of the entitlement and privilege that those of us from later generations have sometimes come to expect.

I have long treasured Tom Brokaw's book, *The Greatest Generation*. Although focusing upon the United States, it's really the story of my father's generation, of people born in the 1920s,

who grew up in the 1930s, went to war in the 1940s, and then came home to have their families and build so much of the society we benefit from today. In one of the tributes to Brokaw's book on the jacket we read: *"They came of age during the Great Depression and the Second World War and went on to build modern America – men and women whose everyday lives of duty, honor, achievement, and courage gave us the world we have today."*

My parents never had it easy but they did so much to make life easier for all of us. Neither of my parents had the privilege of much in the way of formal education because back then you went to work as soon as you were big enough but they wanted their children to go as far as they could in school. I think they were prouder than any of us with our various graduations and accomplishments along the way. We all know that we stand upon their shoulders in all that we do.

Mom and Dad moved a lot in raising the five of us. Dad's job took him all over the province and at various times we lived in Stephenville Crossing, Doyles, St. Andrew's, Grand Falls, Bishop's Falls, Alexander Bay, Trinity, Lethbridge and Whitbourne. A typical first week in a new town involved two things: a visit to the local school principal and a visit to the closest Anglican priest. In both cases they were told that there was a new family in town and they would be seeing us. School and church were fundamental to who we were so that in spite of all the other changes that came with moving, two things remained constant: the school community and the church community. I think it was Khalil Gibran who wrote of parents' main responsibilities being to give roots and wings to their children and I think that's what our parents did for us. We were given deep roots in our family and school and church just as we were given wings to dream of something still bigger than we had yet known.

I am grateful for Sunday past and the gift of a day with my father.
I am grateful for everyone like him from that most special generation.
I agree with Tom Brokaw when he called them great.
They still are.

Blessings,
+Geoff