

Eulogy and Life Story of Earl Reber

Dad was born in Wilmington, Delaware July 24, 1937. It was also Jonathan G. Reber's birthdate, his great-grandfather for whom the Reber reunion was started and who at one time was pastor of the Mohrsville Church (known as Maiden creek Church of the Brethren back then).

He was a child in the depression era. His father worked for the Reading railroad switching station. His mother worked in a sewing factory. He was the first in his family line to go to college, which made his mother very proud. He was their only child.

He started accordion lessons at 7 years old. He learned to play the trombone and the baritone. Later he joined a band run by Father McGilvery named the Stardusters. He had a Boston terrier named Butch. He spent his summers on a farm with his cousin Miles, who was also an only child. They did farm work, helping with the egg business, milking cows and baling hay.

They moved to Allentown in his senior year, and then he went to Penn State College. His first part-time job was in an ice cream warehouse. But he wanted to be a farmer, so he studied soils and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture. He got a summer job in Berks County and lived with his great aunt Katie. He enjoyed going to various church picnics. He began attending Maiden creek Church of the Brethren. There he met my mother, Anna Wagner, who was teaching children's Sunday School. An event at Camp Swatara found them both there together and they continued to attend church meetings and services together.

They got married at Mohrsville in 1959, a marriage which would last 55 years. He joined the Soil Conservation Service as a soil scientist. They moved to a trailer in Bellefonte, PA where Faye, Fern and William were born, and then to a house in Montrose where Kurt was born.

In Friedens PA, his office was under a music store where Faye took piano lessons. She practiced on an old upright piano he was given by another member of the Grange.

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He was thinking of moving out west with his job, and so he learned to fly a single engine Cherokee Six plane to save airfare on flying the family back to PA. But instead we moved to Suffolk Va. He would fly us to Gettysburg where we would be picked up by Grandpa. And then we flew to Queen City Airport in Allentown to be picked up by his parents. He also flew us to Kittyhawk once. I used to go with him when he practiced touch-n-goes on the airport runway at night.

Then we moved to Midlothian VA, where he commuted to work in Powhatan, Cumberland and Amelia Counties on a motorcycle. His office in Amelia was an old bank building, and his desk was inside the old bank vault. But no matter where we moved, we would always come back to PA to visit relatives. He/we faithfully attended the three family reunions each summer: Reber, Wagner and Fox. No matter what church we attended, he always sang with the choir and played the trombone or accordion when given the opportunity.

For his job he mapped and authored books on the soils of the three counties. They are in a library for zoning reference. He was our church treasurer for a short time. He took computer courses at night and wrote the church's first computer program. He loved classical music and jazz. Waltz of the Flowers was his favorite piece (although he could play anything).

He loved listening to NPR radio station and supported it financially. He had a long list of charities and wrote two or three checks a month. His favorite charity was the Southern Poverty Law Center. They work helping the poor and minorities who cannot afford a lawyer, to get justice. When Morris Dees retired from the SPLC, they sent major contributors a book about his life and the SPLC's mission against the KKK. I was not familiar with this and Dad had me read it to him. Even with glasses, reading was hard for him. I found the story fascinating.

He always had old cars. If it could be fixed, he would rather fix it than replace it. He took good care of them.

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He did a lot of walking in his job through the underbrush, creeks and forests, taking soil samples. In Suffolk Co, he mapped the Great Dismal Swamp. In retirement, he walked every day and for a while my mom walked with him. And later, Dad and I walked every Sunday after church. Every year for more than 25 years, he went on the Crop Walk. In the beginning it was 10 miles long, not 10 kilometers. He was the CROP coordinator for years.

He developed an interest in genealogy. So, for a while, every PA trip involved stopping at new cemeteries to look for possible relatives. He would catalogue the information. He collected old pictures and scanned them into his PC. In his later years, he kept himself fit by going to the Sheltering Arms gym and working with a trainer. Up until 5 weeks ago (as of May 15th), he was still walking down the street and back with a rollator and an assistant.

We had a caregiver staying with him from 8:30 to 4:30. At 5, I would come in and feed him and read to him and put him to bed. Patrick, our family friend, lived with him and watched him at night. On Saturdays, Darleen would stay with him until 5pm. Then on Sundays I stayed with him all day: we would Zoom Sunday School and livestream church. We had Subway sandwiches for lunch, and then went grocery shopping, which he loved to do.

One day he could not stand up, so I sent him to the hospital, where they ran tests, but found nothing wrong. Finally, they concluded it must be Parkinson's. From the hospital, he was sent to a place for physical therapy. He failed to progress and became bed-ridden. On May 15th he died.

He had a long, remarkable life full of music and service to his fellow man. He loved science and computers, philosophy, social justice, airplanes, old cars, soils, farming, family, education and Star Trek. He got all of us hooked on Star Trek. He would take us to the planetariums in various cities. Once he took us to the symphony. Upon hearing the music, Fern asked "Daddy, when does the story start?"

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His story isn't over, because it continues on in us.

Memories:

- ✓ He ruined a milk-drinking contest at the grange because he wanted to enjoy drinking the milk.
- ✓ In Friedens, PA he designed and installed an extensive home sewage treatment system. He used his surveying equipment and we got to hold the measuring rod. He had little flags all over the yard to designate elevation.
- ✓ He took Faye to choir practice on his motorcycle.
- ✓ He designed a deck for the Midlothian house and had it built to accommodate handicapped people.
- ✓ He would dig up the garden each year, so Mom could plant it.
- ✓ He loved laughing with Aunt Barbara (but who didn't?)
- ✓ He valued exercise so much that when Mom got Parkinson's, he set out two wheelchairs and walked her from one to the other and back every day.
- ✓ He went on at least one Habitat for Humanity project.
- ✓ When Grandma came to live with us, he slept at the front door to keep her from wandering outside at night. When she went into the home, he visited her each day.
- ✓ He always said Grandpa Wagner was the strongest man he had ever seen and the hardest worker.
- ✓ He had only one grandchild, Michele, and absolutely adored her. You should see the many movies he took of her as a small child.
- ✓ His accordion playing was a large part of every family Christmas celebration.
- ✓ He always looked forward to choir practice and singing on Sunday, despite difficulty walking to the front of the church. He also enjoyed mingling with others in the fellowship hall after church.