

Ordinary People

One of my favorite quotes has always been one for which I have no idea for whom credit should go: "Heroes are ordinary people who make bad decisions at good moments." Surely with my wide-ranging blog someone must have a good idea from what source this comes from. I have thought long and hard for several years and have come up with nada.

Today, I was fortunate to attend a memorial service for a man who could be seen as a hero in the eyes of many in the very small community I was raised in. I know of at least one individual who considered Mr. Peverly their personal hero, my Uncle Bob.

The memorial service was a bit unusual. The atmosphere was very light and dare I say, fun. The Elementary School gymnasium was adorned with pictures of high school sports teams, trophies, and a batting cage. Over the speakers, music from the 1950s played ("Yakety-Yak," "Rock Around the Clock," etc.) Far from the slow, sober music one might expect for a funeral.

Mr. Peverly taught high school math from 1956-1988. He was perhaps better known as the coach of baseball, basketball, and cross country. Unfortunately, he retired from teaching one year before I entered high school. I did however have him as a substitute for French class; which he told us he knew absolutely nothing about. A good thing for him it was mid-term exam day.

Mr. Peverly and my uncle have had a very long, interesting relationship. My Grandfather Swary passed away when Uncle Bob was 15 years old... years before either of my older brothers were born and before my parents were married. Being the youngest of 3 (and the only boy), Bob needed the guidance of a male figure. Because he saw in Bob someone who was more

inclined toward sports than classroom studies, Mr. Peverly took him under his wing and nurtured him into the man he is today.

As one of the three speakers at the service, Uncle Bob told one very interesting story from his youth (one my entire family knows by memory). It seems that during his senior year, the varsity baseball team lost the Regional finals game 2-1. That night, Uncle Bob and some teammates decided to go and "Break some training rules." They went out and got drunk. The next day, Robert was called to Coach Peverly's office where he was asked (with his mother beside him) if he indeed did "break training." Since Coach was one of the few people he could not lie to, Bob confessed. Punishment included sitting out the rest of the season (there were still regular season games left to be played) and being ineligible for MVP honors (for which he was sure to win and was even scouted by the KC Royals ballteam). Years later, Coach Peverly went to Uncle Bob's house with the MVP award.

Everyone has a hero who they either looked up to in their youth or someone they continue to look to for inspiration. It was very comforting to see someone I have grown to respect give tribute to one of his heroes.

And to prove I do have some prowess in math Mr. Peverly taught math for 32 years at one school. If only he had stayed another 4 years. He must have known there was another Shaffer boy coming and ran.