



THE DODGE FAMILY ASSOCIATION

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Dear Family Members:

January-February 2008

Just over two months ago, the phone rang as I was preparing dinner. Little did I realize how my life was about to change. My family had plans to leave in two days and travel 700 miles to help my daughter celebrate her 21st birthday. But the phone call brought this distressing message, "Faith, your father is dead! He died this morning at the airport, and I just found out."

As I tried to take in the meaning of my mom's words, my immediate future changed. A mere one hour later, I was on my way to the airport for a flight to Denver. Gone were vacation plans; reservations were canceled and new ones were made to fly grandchildren to a funeral. After Dad's funeral and a short trip home to spend Thanksgiving with my own family, I was back in Denver for the balance of the year to help Mom begin to go through Dad's things.

Wow! The task before us was overwhelming! How does a person go through 74 years of a life and make order of it in one month? It was impossible. We were faced with countless decisions. When we uncovered Dad's stash of gifts, we asked, "Who did Dad buy this DVD for?" or "Who is going to deliver his dozen boxes of chocolates to the post office clerks?" We uncovered Dad's important mementoes: adoption papers of my brother, Mike; newspaper clippings of a trip to England on behalf of Halliday Hill House; the genealogical record of his relationship to Calvin Coolidge; the translation from Latin of the lyrics to "Mr. Bean." We worked alternately in tears and with laughter.

We didn't finish our task, in fact my sister thinks she will spend most of the year helping Mom work her way through it, but hopefully I left them a little closer to completion than when I arrived. Through my work, though, I rediscovered the essence of my Dad. He loved God, he loved his country, he enjoyed a joke, he enjoyed life, and he treasured his family. Of course I had already known these things about him, but I never fully grasped the depths of my remarkable father's character before.

I'm home now, back into my routine, busy caring for my own husband and eight children. But even though my life by all appearances is the same, I hope and believe that my future is still changed. Dad's passing has reminded me of not only the brevity and uncertainty of life, but also the importance of cherishing family. I intend to reform myself like the new Ebenezer Scrooge. I'll keep planning those special visits with my own children, but I won't let weeks pass without calling Mom, either. I think I'll write a letter to that niece I haven't seen in nine years, and I am definitely going to renew my membership in the Dodge Family Association. I can think of no better way to honor Dad.

Faith Dodge Nelson

Dear Dodge Family: I enclose \$_____ to bring my dues up to date. I also enclose \$_____ to pay for _____ gift memberships at \$20 each. I have included those names and addresses on a separate sheet of paper.

Name _____ STREET _____

CITY _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email _____

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