

George Miles Homer, Jr.

December 15, 1922 - December 26, 2019

Memorial Tributes from His Children
(January 18, 2020)

Pamela Miles Homer

Robert Miles Homer

Leslie Homer Knippenberg

At my mother's memorial service some eight years ago, I read excerpts from a letter that I wrote to her thanking her for all of her "gifts".

I wrote a letter to my Dad soon afterwards thanking him for being my dad. I also read that letter to him as he slipped away from us last month. I will now read from that letter.

Dearest Dad: I am writing to express my appreciation and gratitude for being my Dad. Thanks for being a great teacher - you taught me to be grounded, to be humble, to make my own way. Thanks for supporting me - and for letting me be me - even when it made your face cringe and the veins in your forehead protrude. Thanks for making me feel special and loved - for protecting me - and for stressing that I should always treat others the way that I wanted to be treated.

Perhaps more important than your verbal lessons, I learned from watching your own behavior. I saw you help so many through your charity efforts, I saw you treat others of all backgrounds with respect, I saw you work long hours so that I (and my siblings) could go to the college of my (our) choice. You took pride in everything that you did, reminding us that "no matter what you do, do it well." In addition, you made sure that I got to private music lessons each week for all those years, you put up with all the bad notes and painful mistakes when I practiced. You also attended my concerts, some of which you may not have enjoyed, but you showed up anyway. And when I needed expensive dental work after a tragic accident at age 5, you never asked, "Can we afford this?"

And, it may surprise you that I am now thankful for those dinners at home where you and Mom talked about business and more adult topics while we kids sat (usually) quietly. At the time, I was a bit bored, but I was listening. I have always been an attentive listener - I remember your own mother telling me how important it was to listen carefully. I learned so much from those dinner conversations. And, every so often during those meals, there would be a comment about someone's poor table manners. Those constant reminders were valuable learning experiences as well. Contrary to what is the norm on reality TV, good manners and etiquette are important.

Yes, you were strict, demanding, and I often thought too judgmental, but somehow I was able to extract what really mattered from your "teachings". It is likely no surprise that I found my place as an educator who has devoted her career to helping others reach their potential. I see so much promise in our young and being able to be a part of their growth and education is amazing and a great blessing.

I was at times difficult, perhaps too independent, often very emotional, as you would sometimes advise, "Pamela, don't let your emotions get the best of you." But, I never sacrificed my basic principles - those same values and principles that I saw in you and Mom. I know that you wanted me to be more like you, something I never quite understood, but hopefully, you like what I have become. I like to think that I have a good heart, a grounded /solid set of values, good principles and morals, tolerance, and a creative and curious mind.

I can't forget to say thanks for constantly saying, "Pamela Miles Homer, you can do whatever you set your mind to do." And, when I got too full of myself, Mom brought me down to earth with "Pamela, get off your high horse!"

I know that in your eyes, I will always be your "little girl," but . . . I have grown up and no longer need you to tell me to wash my hands or to practice my flute. But, I still need you in my life.

So, continue to fight and please hang in there! Mom is not ready for you yet. Remember that she always needs a lot of time to get ready and she does not want to be rushed. She has Uncle Jack, Aunt Doris, and Aunt Rosalie to keep her company until we join her. I still need you, so Mom has to wait her turn.

Lots of love, Pamela

That is the end of my letter, but I have a few final thoughts to say to my Dad. God has now called you home and hopefully, Mom is now ready for you. You will be missed and no one can fill your shoes. You will always be my "Daddy". I will miss our chats, often one-sided. You are the one person that I could call who would sit quietly by as I ranted about various things. If I got too excited, you would bring me back to earth with, "Now Pamela. Don't get yourself so worked up." I will not say goodbye because I will be talking to you, just as I have talked to Mom for the past 8 years. Please find peace and watch over Robert, Leslie, and I. We may not measure up, but we promise to try to live up to your expectations. Your spirit lives on in us and those that you loved. Thank you for being my Daddy - I love you.

To all of you, thank you for listening and for honoring my father today.

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December 15, 1922 to December 26, 2019

At Christmas Eve Service in Katonah the minister reflected on a "Christmas Memory". The young boy Buddy and his older cousin, while very poor during the depression saved their pennies under the mattress during the year, so they could make fruit cakes to give away at Christmas. The cakes were given away to people they may never have met. When asked why they didn't sell them Buddy explained you can't truly live until you have given back. When I heard these words I immediately thought of my dad. Ever since I can remember he has always given back.

As part of the "Greatest Generation" his most significant example was his service in World War II.

George was a war hero in the Philippines, as a paratrooper, and field medic, who rose to the rank of second lieutenant. He fought in the battle of Luzon, which became a major turning point in the war. On February 4, 1945 he along with other paratroopers of the 11th Airborne approached the city from the south. After a long battle the American troops along with local support defeated the Japanese and the country was returned to the Philippine people.

Following the war he returned to Gettysburg College, where according to his friend he used his track skills to catch Norma DeGhetto. They were married the summer after graduation and spent a few years in New Jersey, before settling in Larchmont. During their 63 years of marriage they became a powerhouse couple in both business and the charitable causes. They also liked to take credit for raising three great kids, and help with 3 grandchildren. George loved track, but when he learned his grandson's passion was baseball, he learned the game and looked forward to going to his games.

My father epitomized the meaning of giving back. It was difficult to keep track of the non-profit organizations he was part of, often times rising to the position of board president. He began his insurance career working on the company side. While working for The Hartford as the regional bond manager, he met agents Phil Murray and Donald Schoen who ran a small agency. My father was asked to join firm, since the third partner Morgan was retiring. He quickly became a partner and the name was changed to Murray, Schoen & Homer. Within a few short years he became president and sole owner. My father had great respect for these two men, who gave him this opportunity. As a result, the agency name was never changed. This is an example of the type of person he was.

He started his life of service with local organizations, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce and Mt Vernon YMCA, where he rose to the rank of board president. Due to his selfless work in the community he quickly grew his business. His clients knew he would provide professional service and operate his business with the utmost integrity.

Everyone who knew George is familiar with his vice grip hand shake. When he shook on a deal his word was gold, however he might break your hand in the process.

He remained the ultimate gentleman until his death. Even as he suffered with Parkinson's, he would struggle to stand up if a woman walked into the room.

All heroes have some flaws, for example while playing tennis with my mother who was a very accomplished player, he would cheat and call the ball out, when it was in. He couldn't accept that she always won.

Someone recently said to me that losing one's parents is a profound and emotional experience that should be celebrated, especially a long life like my dad's.

In fact rather than mourning my father's passing I would like to thank you all for being here to share in the **celebration** of a wonderful life.

Unfortunately due to weather concerns, it may have been difficult for some to be here today but it is obvious from the phone calls, letters and those of you that are here today, my dad did touch a lot of people

Most of you will remember my dad as a true "Gentleman", in fact that was a common adjective I heard when people were expressing their condolences along with the words gracious and considerate. He treated others the way he wanted to be treated , with **respect, kindness and patience**. It did not matter if he did not agree with you politically , socially or if you were the janitor of a company or the CEO of that company.

You already know most of my dad's accomplishments , I would like to share some personal memories and moments growing up.

Yes my dad was conservative often more serious than I or others **but** it was interesting how he seemed to be surrounded by friends and family that were the jokesters, often telling him hey George "lighten up" or I can picture my dad in matching plaid pants with his friend and neighbor at Xmas time, they looked like the 2 characters in Dumb and Dumber.

While he was often the disciplinarian , there was the softer and more emotional side. I recall one summer when I was away at camp and dad was taking care of my parakeet. *He tells the story proudly* - how he saved the bird's life . I remember how he explained while cleaning the cage, the bird got out of my bedroom window. Of course he panicked but He did not give up looking for the bird in fact he found it across the st in the neighbors garage and was able to nab him with a blanket. As he tells it he was so worried that he had lost the bird on his watch and what was he going to tell me when I got home. He was very proud of that moment, has he should have been.

My dad, George also liked to do things the old fashioned way. Like trimming the hedges with a manual clipper at their home in Larchmont.. Even though he had

new electric hedge clippers in the garage he insisted on doing them by hand no matter how long it took or how bad it turned out, sorry dad
Ill never forget one evening at dusk when my friend and I stopped by to say hi, there was my dad with his clippers frantically trimming the hedges. My friend Rich asked, hey what are you doing George? My dad replied in all seriousness “ I am fighting the edge of darkness” For the next 20 years that became our montra and common greeting for my dad that still makes me smile today.

George loved to read but not novels, he enjoyed the periodicals like the Wall St Journal or Insurance Review, reak exciting. I can still picture him following my mother oin the Supermarket with newspapers in hand (he wasn't much help) or studying for an insurance exam on the chair lift at Gore Mountain, Yes he did do that once.

As I was putting my thoughts on paper, I recalled so many moments that I wish I could share but of course time constraints make that it impossible.

In summary I know my dad did his best to make a difference in the world and his community along with his soul mate (my mom), I think he did a pretty good job

As evidence by the wonderful cards we received, I know that friends and family would agree. In fact thought I would share one of those cards from my Aunt Irene , I don't think she will mind if I share it with you all today.

Dear Leslie..... -

What a wonderful brother in law I had BOTH of your parents were so good to me during many difficult time-I walways knew they would be there for me if I needed them, George was a GIANT of a man. In his involment in the community, his church, his fmaily George ws always there and gave his all. MY Family and I will always miss his loyalty toward us, his kindness and his love

Thank you again for being here today, it means so much to us.

Love you dad, rest in peace and kiss mom for me.

My father lived life to the fullest. It is hard to remember all the organizations he was involved with:

Kiwanis and Chamber of Commerce –Mt Vernon Independent Agents of Westchester

Council of Agents and Brokers- Washington DC

Mt Vernon YMCA- When the organization ran into financial trouble and the City of Mt Vernon couldn't or wouldn't help to find funds to keep them in operation, my father stepped in along with help of a few friends, raised the money to keep it open. Sadly a few years ago, this Y ran out of funds again and they didn't have people like my father to help bail them out.

YMCA of Central & Northern Westchester

Visiting Nurse Services of Westchester, He was honored as man of the year.

United Way of Westchester & Putnam Boys Scouts of Westchester & Putnam

Larchmont Avenue Church, Larchmont Rotary

As a member of Independent Agents and past president, he received the Fredrick Dayton award- given to Westchester Insurance Agents who not only excelled in their profession but gave back to their communities.

I'm a believer in Karma. My father spent most of his adult life giving back, when he need help his friends stepped in to provide support. He found his two guardian angels Senada and Julia who took amazing care of our father for the past 8 years, following my mother's passing and became a part of our family. His friends and Neighbor Manuel and his wife checked in almost daily. Manuel being from Spain is an avid Soccer fan, my father spent many afternoons watching matches and learning the game.

After retirement, he became a member of the breakfast club at the Nautilus Dinner. His friends were always there to help out and keep him positive as his Parkinson's took over his body.

He enjoyed his meetings at Larchmont Rotary, and even though it was difficult at times to attend, he tried to help as much as he could.

Members of the Larchmont Ave Church called and visited regularly, a testament to all he did for the church many years before. One of the most touching moments was on the Sunday evening just days before he passed. The Christmas Carolers from the Church who came to his home and how they expressed their love and affection for him.

George was a die-hard Republican, but unlike our current congress, would actually compromise and vote for a Democrat, if he felt that person was the right person for the job, just another example of who he was.

Everyone who had the great fortune to have known him understood the type of person he was. He led a full and prosperous life and is now enjoying his long overdue rest with our mother.

Rest in peace we love and miss you.