



Gary George Rustad

December 3, 1944 - February 13, 2021

From his son Gary Brian Rustad

Since Sabbath I have been hoping that I would wake up and dad was here. It's taken me a bit to get my thoughts together about my hero.

When I was a boy my dad, Gary George Rustad, loved to take Sabbath naps. I remember waiting for my dad to wake after these naps with all sorts of ideas of what we could do to complete the Sabbath. I didn't understand the value of these naps until I reached adulthood and began pastoring myself. Only then did I begin to find greater appreciation for them and the rejuvenation they supplied a wearied body and mind. These brief naps offered a bit of recovery from the many accomplishments my dad committed himself to each day. Accomplishments that made him my hero, but for him was just part of what God called him to do.

My dad was my hero for countless reasons. First and foremost, he was my hero because he had the Bible written in his heart and mind. The Bible was his constant companion and he studied it faithfully. There are countless times church members and fellow pastors have come up to me and said, "Your dad knows the Bible better than anyone I ever met." I can still vividly recall when a fellow pastor came up to me at a KY-TN camp meeting and said; "You know, your dad and I have the same kind of photographic memory, mine just hasn't

developed yet.”

And there was no question my dad’s mind and memory were fully developed. While I was studying at Southern Adventist University there’s a particular moment of panic that has permanently etched itself in my memory of when I realized I had forgotten to write a Bible study for an assignment that was due that day. As always, I knew I could call dad for help. Without hesitation I picked up the phone and dialed away without any consideration to what time it was. I briefly explained the situation and the topic I was assigned and he instantly started listing off Bible verses in an order that built on one another. Once he had listed 30 plus verses I told him that was more than enough, and I heard mom call out “Good night Gary Bryan.” I asked, “Are you in bed?” You see my parents lived in Hong Kong and in my panic, I had forgotten they were 13 hours ahead in time. My mom responded, “Yes we were asleep, but so glad you called.” My dad had given me all those verses in a organized order from memory all while lying in bed in a sleep stupor!

But that’s just the beginning. My dad was my hero because he didn’t just accumulate the knowledge, but also the wisdom to listen when the Lord called. Whether it was serving in Texas, Oregon, KY-TN, Hong Kong or the Southern Asia Pacific Division, he was always listening to God and allowing Him to lead and direct his path. I didn’t always appreciate the fact that Dad knew and lived by the verse, “God’s ways are higher than our ways.” (Isaiah 55:9). Like the time when my parents sat my sisters and I down to share that we were moving to Hong Kong from Nashville, TN. To say I was NOT thrilled would be an understatement. Dad and Mom had received a call to pastor the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital Church and after much prayer they both realized God was calling them as missionaries and they could not say no. A few weeks after the move I soon realized for myself that God had indeed called us to Hong Kong and my admiration for my dad’s connection with his heavenly Father grew even greater.

Though it was evident God was first in his life, he never made us feel like we were second best. My dad was my hero because he always took time for us kids. From the time we were young, he made family vacations a priority and made sure Sabbaths were a joy...even with a nap. I can still recall our Sabbath afternoon excursions following his nap, or the occasions when he skipped it and went straight to the excursion. Saturday nights were mostly filled with us playing Intellivision-NFL Football, and many Sunday afternoons were spent in the front yard throwing the football...over and over and over... until he had finally worn me out, or I him.

Then there was his sense of humor. My dad was my hero because he always enjoyed a good laugh, and never missed an opportunity to laugh at himself. From my earliest memories of Dad I can recall him laughing with friends, sharing corny jokes, watching Laurel and Hardy together as a family, or sharing humorous illustrations in his sermons. He lived out Proverbs 17:22, “a merry heart does good like medicine.” He often told the story about how my mom’s dad, A.K.A “Papa” would tell him that they were both in the “same business”. You see Papa was a Nurse Anesthetist and he liked to say, “Gary George we both put people to sleep, the difference is I know how to wake them up!” Retelling that always brought a good laugh from my dad.

Through his light-hearted spirit and a heart like God’s he learned how to tame his frustrations. So, my dad was also my hero because of his ability to “guard his mouth” (Proverbs 13:3). Whether it was by not allowing negative emotions to get the best of him in a difficult board meeting, refraining from gossip or harsh talk about others, or never hearing him complain about his Parkinson’s, he was always constant in his speech. I will forever be incredibly impressed with how well he knew that a wrongly placed word or one filled with anger or hate wouldn’t help anyone and he acted accordingly.

And I ask myself what did he do with all of the pent-up emotion? I presume he let go in his music. My dad was my hero because he was incredibly gifted with music and used it for the honor and glory of the Lord. I have often said that the extraordinary musical talent he and mom possessed had evidently skipped a generation in our family, so he enjoyed listening to his grandkids as they learn to play. He was most happy when he was standing with his bass fiddle or sitting at a piano playing. From growing up playing instruments with his own father and brothers, to the Sundown Vespers at Madison Campus, to 'picking' with friends while in the Philippines as a missionary, music was part of who he was.

Music was just one of many ways in which my father used every opportunity to evangelize and share Jesus with others. My dad was my hero because he believed firmly in Evangelism. He'd share story after story with me of working with the evangelist Fordyce Detamore, early in his ministry, and it was highlight of my ministry to join with him in together holding evangelistic meetings in Thailand. He always believed that this was the MAIN responsibility of a pastor and he made sure I started my ministry by taking on that responsibility right from the beginning. He was always so excited to hear reports from my series I was holding or a Bible study I was giving. When I had the opportunity to begin to meet with prospective pastors who may be a good fit for our conference he would remind me, "Ask them about their Bible Studies and Evangelistic Meetings."

If you can't already tell, my dad is my hero because his entire life was dedicated to living for the Lord. While at work, when in study, with family, or in his leisure, every moment was spent with God in his heart and mind. He lived over 20 years of his life struggling with Parkinson's, yet pressed on with Bible studies, evangelism, and traveling the world to share the gospel. But the dreadful disease continued to press on as well and slowly his body and mind became too worn and tired to go on any further. Early Sabbath morning,

February 13, 2021, my dad took his final Sabbath nap. How appropriate that he fell asleep to rest peacefully on Sabbath just as our Lord did. His life dedicated to the Gospel and to his family is now over. He sleeps waiting on his Lord and Savior to wake him up on that great Resurrection day (1 Corinthians 15:51-57.) That wonderful day when Jesus will call out “Gary George Rustad I’m here for you, come with me and let’s journey to your new home.”

And just like his previous naps there will be people waiting for Him with all sorts of ideas of what we can do together. I imagine all the family circling around him awaiting a hug. I imagine a crowd of coworkers, missionaries and friends anxious to talk about the memories through the years and play music together. I look forward to the long line of people whom he has shared Jesus with stopping by to say thanks. And in the midst of all this excitement I imagine dad being beckoned by his angel to come join their choir...they need a bass fiddle to complete the sound.

Rest well dad! Your nap will soon be over, and this time our plans together will last for eternity!

Services are pending, please check back

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRdjh3Nu_iw

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUg_ulAnTXc

Tribute Wall



“ Reflecting on Memories created a Tribute Video in memory of Gary George Rustad



Reflecting on Memories - February 15, 2021 at 10:41 PM

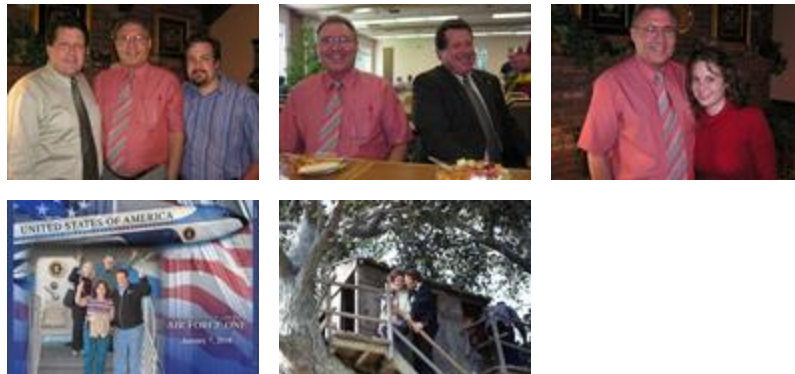
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“ Gary was a friend of mine too but not as available as Roger. Gary had this quietness about him, but his laugh was so fun to hear. I am so sorry this news. Hugs to all of you. Beverly Stevens Dittberner

Bev Dittberner - December 22, 2025 at 12:38 AM



“ 6 files added to the album Rustad Memories Album



Reflecting on Memories - February 19, 2021 at 11:40 AM