

Donald Phillip Eng

Eulogy

October 22, 2007

First United Methodist Church

Written and Read by Michael Eng

I'm sure everyone here knows who I am, but I'll introduce myself anyway. I'm Michael Eng, the fourth child of Donald Phillip Eng, but also his number one son. That's how he liked to refer to me, at least.

To call our father the best dad in the world is an understatement. He taught each of us so much; not only his children, but everyone that he came in contact with. He showed unconditional love no matter what the circumstance. He taught each of us to be strong and courageous. He taught us to never quit, even when we were tired. He had words of wisdom that were occasionally hard to value at the time of delivery, but it was those words that became the pillars of our strength in our latter years. He instilled values, ethics, and determination in each of us, but most importantly he and my mother brought us up, knowing the significance of having a personal relationship with God.

As a Chinese boy in Tulsa, Oklahoma, my dad had a difficult early life, not having adequate finances and the death of his own father, when he was just four years old, only added to his challenges. It was these things, that at the time, were hard for him to live through, that made him the person that he was. The values that his mother Elizabeth taught him, about working hard and taking care of his family and making something out of nothing, made him the success that he was in life. His drive and determination is directly attributed to her, his Chinese heritage and his faith.

Debi reminded me that one of my father's favorite parables from the Bible was the story of the master that gave his servants the talents. Two servants invested their share and doubled them. One buried his, because he was afraid to lose it. This story sums up my father's life in so many ways. He started with so little, he

had the love of his mother, brothers and family and his God given talents, and took those and made them into an empire. He was a faithful servant.

When dad was a teenager, he had a near-death experience, almost drowning. This event shaped his life and made him thankful for all the years that followed. He made the most out of them, never being frivolous with his time.

One thing about my father that can never be questioned is his love for my mother. He called her Kunipie, and she called him Kuuipo. He was not only deeply and madly in love with her, and married to her for 51 years, but he also put her first. In his last days in the hospital, he was in horrible pain and would sometimes even have a difficult time speaking, but when any of us would ask him how he was doing, he would always remind us to take care of mother. Every time a doctor would come in to check on him or give us a report, he was always sure to push the attention to her, reminding all of us about her love and devotion, the fact that she hadn't slept in days, and telling us about how great a woman she was. Seeing them interact was the epitome of true love. Whether holding his hand or gently kissing him on the forehead, my mother kept him strong and positive. He would always reciprocate, grasping for a gentle touch, or quickly responding to the numerous "I love yous".

My father was never much of a drinker. In his later years, he would have an occasional half glass of beer at Shogun during a family birthday party or a few sips of the girls Margaritas during shopping trips to Dallas. One time when he and my mother were in their courting years, he had one too many, which most likely meant that he had 1, maybe 1 and a half. They were at a dance, and he was softly whispering in my mom's ear, the 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, which he always did to keep her in rhythm. He suddenly stopped mid-step and said, "You wanna neck?" Anyone that knew my father, knows that this is out of character, but what is even more surprising is the fact that my mom said yes. They were both so shy, that they couldn't even look each other in the eye as they stole a kiss in the middle of the dance floor.

My father was true giver. In the last few days, so many people have told me stories of the different ways my father gave to them, whether it was a tidbit of advice, a chance to break into the building business, or even just the patience to listen to them talk. He gave his time, he shared his knowledge and life experience, and he always shared his music.

Music was so important to my father. Not just any music. My dad liked what he like and ONLY what he liked. It didn't matter what genre, what decade or who else liked it, it had to get the "Daddy Cool" stamp of approval, before it could achieve regular rotation in his car or the house. He would never accept a CD as it was bought in the store, there was always at least one song on it that had to go, and usually more. He would make custom versions with only the songs that he liked. He would also add stickers and checkmarks to the custom CD inserts to remind himself, which were "the best of the best." Dad was famous for his compilation CDs. If you were ever lucky enough to get a DC mix CD, you were one of the privileged. He labored over them meticulously, hand picking each song for that specific person. Of course there were some favorites, like the Sukiyaki series that he handed out to quite a few people, but the real prize was a custom CD, made just for you.

Dad could do anything he put his hands to and he never left a job unfinished. He built the girls uneven parallel bars for gymnastics, stilts that were painted different colors, a homemade foosball table. He built a playhouse for my sisters that included a stove and other kitchen accessories. When we couldn't afford to have the store bought toys that other children had, he made sure that we got them. They were homemade and even better than the ones that our friends had.

Dad took thousands of pictures. He always had a darkroom his house. Melanie has fond memories of him letting us use the tongs to swish the photo paper in the photographic solution until we would see the pictures come to life. At Christmas time, he made photographic Christmas cards of the family. The year I was born, the Christmas card was already made, but he added a picture of me with a drawn on paperclip and the words "me too" in the Christmas greeting.

Family vacations were so important to dad. We always had our annual trips, driving to Las Vegas, to see grandmother and granddaddy, but before that there were also plenty of trips to Six Flags. He and mother would always oblige the children by arriving when the park opened and staying until it closed and riding rides with smiles on their faces. In his later years, there were trips to San Francisco, where he loved to visit Chinatown, to eat Chinese food that was only rivaled by the food his aunts and uncles would prepare on trips to Hawaii. Shopping trips to Dallas were a standard, he was always happy to buy his children and wife the things that they wanted and waited patiently at each store as we made our selections. Of course trips to Hawaii are a given. Dad loved Hawaii. It wasn't just that that was where his family was, but the relaxation of the beach, the shopping and, of course, the food. One favorite memory of Debi's is one of the times that he took all of us there. Dad loved the tropical fruit, and knowing that you weren't supposed to bring any fruit back in your luggage, there **were** signs posted everywhere, he hid papayas in his suitcase. We all looked on in horror as his suitcase passed through the security check. The alarms bells rang out and the lights flashed. When the security officers opened his suitcase, it took them what seemed like hours to unravel the fruit from the layers of socks of underwear that it was hidden in.

As a homebuilder and even before, dad's tools were always important to him. I remember getting in trouble many times for not returning his tools the proper place in the garage after using them. One year, after I was older, wiser and married, I told my father that all I wanted for my birthday were the tools that he thought I needed. I never imagined the buckets, boxes, and crates of items that would eventually arrive at my house as a gift, each tool precisely chosen and even labeled. Stephanie had a similar experience after he built her house. He even presented her with a hand-painted wheel-barrow, with the inspirational words, "you can do it" painted on the front.

One of dad's talents that was fairly unknown outside the family was his amazing skill in the kitchen. He made buttermilk biscuits from scratch, homemade fried okra, and of course fried rice, which he always spooned into a coffee cup and

turned upside down to form the perfect round dome on each plate. His most coveted meal was his Thanksgiving turkey. It was the ugliest bird you ever saw, but that didn't matter because he didn't care about the presentation. There was no golden brown crusted skin, it was soggy and limp, you would have never seen this bird on the cover of any magazine, but anyone that tasted it, knew they had never had a Thanksgiving turkey that tasted as good. As each one of us would arrive in the afternoon, dad would proudly walk around and dole out "samples," as he called them, of the Thanksgiving turkey. Fingers to mouth, the bite tasted like butter, juicy and delicious and like no other turkey you have ever tasted.

My dad's chef name was the Duck King, but another one of his names could have been the Label King. If you ever bought trouble and actually entered his office, you would have seen that every single item in the place had a label. It wasn't just the typical things, like storage boxes or binders, it was things like a cup of highlighters on his desk with a big handwritten tag, "Highlighters." "Do Not Throw Away" was another common one, but my favorite was the label on the box of labels.

There are so many things that will always remind us of dad and so many things that will never be the same again without dad being there: the pickle bar at Goldie's, Mrs. Fields cookies, Hawaiian print shirts, bike rides in the neighborhood, planting trees in each of our backyards, rubber bands on 2 liter bottles of Coke, jam on toast during an elaborate meal, helping me hide Sasha's engagement ring in a green pepper when I asked her to marry me, working on cars, playing tennis and going bowling, Christmas pictures at Utica Square, dancing his grand-daughters to sleep, hibiscus trees, pulling weeds, and of course daddy pulling up into your driveway in his big truck and walking in with his bucket of tools.

Most of all dad taught us what family is really supposed to be about. He loved unconditionally, with strength, character, honest, integrity, humility and patience. He loved God and put him first. He loved his wife, our devoted mother, whom he adored, and showed us how to love each other and be kind and patient to anyone we came in contact with.

I would be so happy to see my father one last time, he would walk up to me and embrace me with a hug, both our faces turned to the right, then pulling back to embrace again with our faces turned to the left, that was our ritual, but I can't. All I can do is celebrate his life and know that one day, I'll see him again in heaven, and he'll be waiting for me at the front gate to say "Welcome home, son."