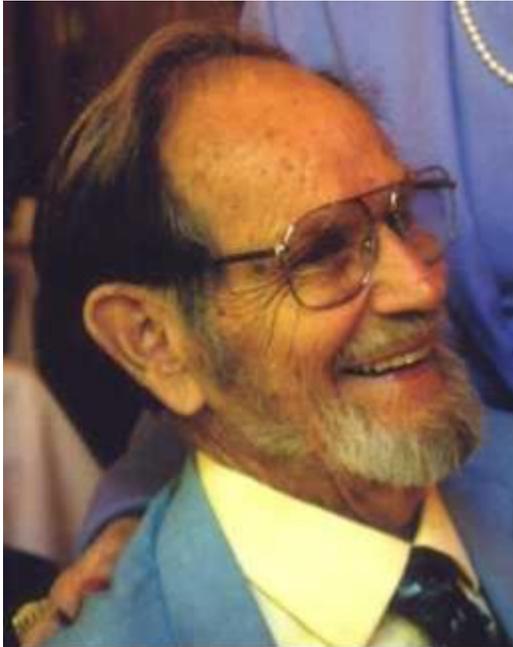


“Dad:”



My dad died January 9, 2003. The following was the eulogy I gave for him:

(Below can be a link or copied.)

Mr. Thorne D. Harris Jr. March 30, 1924 - January 09, 2003

Mr. Thorne D. Harris, Jr., 78, died peacefully at his home in New Orleans on Thursday, January 9, 2003. Before retirement, Mr. Harris was President and owner of Globe Finance Co. He, along with his late wife Myra, founded Glendee Kennels and bred over 40 Irish Setter Champions. Mr. Harris was a past President of the Louisiana Kennel Club and was a charter member and past President of the Irish Setter Club of Greater New Orleans. Mr. Harris was the husband of the late Myra Banister Harris; father of Thorne D. Harris III and Glenn K. Harris; brother of Loie Abbott; grandfather of Erin A. Harris and Glenn K. Harris, Jr.; and a very dear friend of Betty DeGrusha and Hank Klimitas.

Eulogy given by Thorne D. Harris III on January 13, 2003

Dad March 30, 1924 – January 9, 2003 (Delivered at Services on January 13, 2003)

This is not going to be easy. Dad would probably just say, “Words Fail.” And then he'd sit down. But, he'd still want to regale anyone within earshot with a story or a joke. For most of us, one we'd heard a 100 times. But we didn't care. We loved him and he enjoyed the telling so much that we enjoyed the listening.

My best friend called Dad “The Gentle Jester.” Thanks, Burt. That's beautiful. He did love to tell his stories. So, I want to share some stories about Dad today.

WITH MOM, HE SEEMED TO BE IN THE BACKGROUND

While Mom was alive, Dad always seemed to be in the background. Some thought he was quiet or withdrawn. The problem was: Compared to Mom, unless you were shouting at the top of your lungs and dancing on rooftops, you WERE quiet!

Dad's job was to make Mom look good and nobody did it better. Whether it was running the camera while mom danced to Little Egypt on New Years Eve, or fixing leaks, or adding on to the house, Dad took care of things and made everything happen. In his words, he did whatever had to be done.

HE DID WHATEVER NEEDED TO BE DONE

I remember growing up wondering how he did it all. He was up at 5:30 in the morning to feed the dogs. He brought Mom coffee in bed to help with her asthma. He woke Glenn & me up for school. Then he went to Globe Finance and put in a full day's work.

When he got home, he would feed the dogs again, wash the dishes after dinner, and then start working on whatever household project was in progress. (He built or rebuilt everything on Turquoise St.: Bathrooms, kitchens, floors, paneling, wiring, plumbing, you name it.)

If he was lucky, around 10PM he would fall asleep in his chair, but by midnight, he was up again letting the dogs out for the last time that evening. He started again at 5:30AM.

GLENDIE KENNELS

It was the same with Glendee Kennels. You might have seen the framed article in the other room about how the kennel came to be. Mom saw an Irish Setter and had to have one. Not only did Dad provide, but they started a prize winning kennel, producing 41 champions, and accumulating roomfuls of trophies. (Anyone need a dog trophy?) They had an international reputation and shipped their puppies all over the world.

Again, Dad made things happen, but was happy to let mom take the glory. The Glendee Kennels business card said it all. Along with a picture of Rocky (Ch. Glendee's Bourbon on the Rocks, for the uninitiated), were the words "Myra Harris, Professio

"Thorne Harris, Kennel Boy."

DAD KNOWS

My favorite movie, "It's A Wonderful Life" has a scene in which a young George Bailey needs advice and he sees a sign that reads: "Ask Dad, he knows." Not only did Dad know, but he could do. And not knowing when he started never stopped him from doing! Dad almost never called on a "professional." Anything that needed to be done, he did:

Tear down the wall between the kitchen and breakfast room? No problem. Install new kitchen cabinets? No problem. Wire the house for extra telephones and speakers in multiple rooms? No problem. Add a cabana, a workshop, a club house, a bathroom? No problem. Need to create a Solar System for a Christmas decoration? No problem. Need a balloon drop at midnight from a low-ceilinged den? No problem. Dad did all these things with such finesse and grace that he made it seem easy. But it was a lot of hard work and perseverance.

Once, while in the Garden Club, mom decided she would make a hat out of camellia blossoms. However, she and Dad talked it over and decided that, for dramatic effect, the flowers should start at the top with tight little buds and gradually wind around the hat with buds and flowers of ever increasing size, with the biggest on the outside. Think about that! The plan was to find exactly the right blossoms, in exactly the right shape, in exactly the right size, in exactly the right stage of opening, and, because the Garden Club was not going to change the date of the show, all of this had to occur at exactly the precise right moment in time. The whole concept seems crazy. But for Dad, no problem.

When the time approached for the show, they had a camellia bush, and it had buds. But they were not going to be graduated in the correct sizes, so every night for a week, Dad would set his alarm, go outside in the middle of the night, and train a light on certain sections of the plant so different flowers would open at different times, so they could get the effect they wanted for the hat. Mom won first prize, of course. Dad was not mentioned.

HE WAS ALWAYS THERE, EVEN AFTER I MARRIED

Even after I was married, I called on him whenever I had a question. One Christmas, we bought a model car raceway set for the nieces and nephews to play with on Christmas Eve. But the track was too big and cumbersome to set up and tear down over and over again. It needed to be fastened to a wooden surface and kept secure, but how? Nailing it was out of the question and trying to fasten all of those pieces with screws would have been extremely time-consuming. Dad not only immediately told me how to accomplish the goal simply and quickly, but came over that night with the special glue AND the fixative to speed up and finalize the process.

If I needed a special tool, he always had it. And he could show me how to use it.

Dad also gave freely without the need for acknowledgment.

After Mary & I eloped, Mom was, shall we say, a bit upset. Glenn reminded me the other day that she forbade him to speak to me. Mary & I were in Baton Rouge, with no money, no jobs, and law school looming. Dad slipped me a \$100 bill and said: "Don't tell your mother."

And later, when we were robbed of our tiny 12 inch TV, who showed up unannounced the next day with a new TV? Dad. He drove from New Orleans to Baton Rouge to surprise us!

FLAIR FOR THE DRAMATIC

Dad had his own flair for the dramatic.

On one trip, mom needed her asthma medicine, which she had run out of. They were in a strange city and did not have a prescription. The druggist did not want to give them the medicine...until Dad faked an asthma attack of his own in front of the druggist. He got the medicine.

Or the time we were working on an English project for Glenn one Sunday – Remember Links of Literature? We needed some gold leaf paint to complete the project, so Dad and I went down to the TG&Y. Unfortunately, when we got to the checkout counter, we were told that, because it was Sunday, the law at the time, did not allow them to sell that particular item. Dad calmly placed enough money on the counter to cover the item, looked the checker in the eye, and said: "You have two choices: You can either ring this up and charge me, or call the police. But, either way, I'm walking out with this." She rang it up.

He once went to Charity Hospital after a friend was injured, only to find him languishing in the hall waiting to be seen by a doctor. Dad simply impersonated a doctor and ordered the nearest nurse and orderly to take this man to X-Ray and start an evaluation.

He was always willing to help and gave his advice freely. At least, until the Bar Association asked him to please stop practicing law without a license.

FIERCELY SELF-RELIANT

Dad could be fiercely self-reliant. Some would say "pig-headed and obstinate."

I remember asking my mother where Dad was a half hour before a 4th of July party at our house only to be told that he was on his way to the hospital. He had discovered he had blood poisoning – he saw a red streak running up his leg. So, he drove himself to the hospital, got it treated, and drove back to the party....in time to barbecue the chicken and hot dogs.

He steadfastly refused help – because he could do everything himself.

Two weeks after his first, massive heart attack in 1985, Mom came home to find him on the roof installing a new TV antenna. After all, he explained, his doctor said he could resume “normal” activities. It’s just that the doctor didn’t realize what was normal for Dad!

MOM DIED IN 1987

When mom died in 1987, we were all concerned that Dad would waste away with nothing to do, no purpose in life. Mom had always kept him so busy....

But that was not Dad. He was not going to quit. He decided he would live. He renewed old acquaintances, pursued hobbies, visited friends.

HOBBIES

He became an avid radio control airplane enthusiast. He loved to build models. Even after his physical condition prevented him from doing the walking necessary to fly, he continued to build the planes. We still have a number of these, some of which were never flown. But that wasn’t the point. It was the building, the doing, that was important.

This love of aircraft spilled over into the dozens of books he read on aviation and the countless model planes he built, which we still have. He also built model boats, with and without radio control, some that were meant to float and some that were not.

Dad could do anything and never having done it before was not seen by him as an obstacle. He once told Glenn, “See that block of wood. That’s a boat.” Glenn said, “no way.” It

was just a chunk of wood almost 2 feet long. Now, it’s a beautiful Sloop on Dad’s wet bar, which he also designed and built.

DAD’S HUMOR

No description of Dad would be complete without at least a brief word about his humor. He loved to tell stories and jokes. Usually, the same ones over and over again. Put him in a room and the joking would begin. However, rather than try to tell any of Dad’s jokes, here are just the punch lines from a few of his favorites.

"I'd like two tickets to Pittsburgh."

"Why, that's the change of life."

"I don't know his name, but his face rings a bell."

KNOWN AND LOVED BY MANY

It is no wonder that everyone liked him. His old friends, some of whom he would call out of the blue after years, new friends, secretaries, clerks, and just about everyone he ran into. He always had a joke or story

at hand and was friendly to everyone. He kept up, as best he could, with his friends in the dog world. The LKC is dedicating the May Show to Dad!

His neighbors have come one by one to tell me what an incredible asset he was to the neighborhood and how much he will be missed. He opened his home to everyone. Many of the neighborhood kids learned to swim at Dad's house in the last 10 years, even though he has not been in the water for a much longer time. His own children had long since grown, but that didn't mean the neighborhood kids couldn't come over and play with his grandson, Kevin, at his house.

He was known as the best martini and strawberry daiquiri maker in the neighborhood, even though his physical problems prevented him from partaking. He gave unstintingly of himself and asked for little in return.

Because of his stature in Irish Setters, Dad knew millionaires, inventors, and politicians. But he also was a friend to all neighbors, handymen, clerks, janitors, and anyone who wanted to chat – or listen to one of his many stories. He could truly “walk with kings” but not “lose the common touch”.

COMMENTS FROM MY FRIENDS

A few of my friends emailed me when they heard the sad news. What they said was touching. These are just a few of the comments:

Bill Sickinger wrote:

“Although I didn't have much contact with him, I always admired his wit and happy-go-lucky approach to life. It seemed that whenever I saw him, he was genuinely glad to see me, and he always had something cheerful to say.

”

And from Ron Dubroc in Houston:

“[He] was one of my most fav people. He was one of the few people who left a strong influence in my life. He was a wise soul. And he had class and style. He enjoyed life as a New Orleanian should. He tolerated us as obnoxious teenagers, encouraged us as young men and on occasion counseled us as human beings.

“I remember to this day a piece of sage advice he gave me as a 17 year old. He said, "You don't have to be first to be the best." “I had the opportunity to talk to him about a couple of years ago or so. I wasn't sure he would recognize my voice after 20+ years, but he did. We talked for quite a while..... like no time had passed at all. It was quite comfortable, quite natural.....but isn't that the way [he] was??”

From Tom Stirewalt:

“I only met your Dad the one time (at the 2002 Office Christmas party). I liked him. He was a dog person.

“I am sorry for your loss, but I'm sure your Dad made lots of souls happy at the Rainbow Bridge.

And Burt, describing "The Gentle Jester”:

“Your father lived his life on his own terms.

“He was well pleased to be with you as long as he was. Remember his wily kindness that slipped you some cash while you were in law school. He loved you more than any principle. Being right wasn't important to him. He surrendered his ego to entertain, to serve and to love those around him. He was a man...a man to be proud of...a man to emulate...a man to cherish in your heart every day of your life...as he did cherish you.

Thank you all.

TWO SPECIAL PEOPLE

I want to mention, all too briefly, two very special and important people in Dad's life.

HANK

Hank Klimitas was almost like ANOTHER SON to Dad. Dad loved to help out down at Hank's veterinary clinic. It gave him another purpose and reason to get up each day. Of course, Dad was up for anything, from opening up the office and being behind the counter, to helping with the books and offering advice on the new location and operation. Dad even volunteered to do surgery, although Hank assures me that, despite Dad's offers, he didn't let Dad operate on any pets ...or people.

I know Dad was thrilled to help and he often spoke of the dinners, outings, and work down at the clinic.

Hank, he loved you, and Glenn and I appreciate all that you did for Dad. Thanks.

BETTY

In the last few years, Betty DeGrusha brought a new spark and twinkle to Dad's eye, and a new spring to his step. Although a very private person at heart and not one to share details, he made it clear how much he cared for you, Betty. After mom died, Dad eventually started going out, dancing, and seeing people. But he never felt comfortable bringing anyone else to our house for Christmas Eve. That was a real tribute!

Not only was Betty good for Dad, giving him the opportunity to enjoy many of his favorite things like dancing and going to the Jefferson Orleans (where they came to be known as Fred & Ginger because of all of the dancing), but on several occasions she actually saved his life. It was Betty who convinced him to go to the hospital over a year ago when he “wasn't feeling well.” It turned out that he was having multiple heart attacks and, had it not been for Betty getting him to

the hospital that night, we undoubtedly would have missed this last year with Dad. Betty also kept close tabs on him and called me or Glenn whenever Dad needed convincing to see a doctor or take medicine. Thank you, Betty, for all you have did for Dad. He loved you, and Glenn & I feel that he was richer for the experience.

HIS FAVORITE POEM

Dad never asked for much. He was very difficult to buy for when it came to presents. If you asked him what he wanted, it was usually “whatever.” He said he had everything he needed.

One of the very few times he expressed a definite view was when I asked him if there was anything special he would like read at his service. He first said no, then changed his mind. He wanted his favorite poem, Invictus, read.

In reading this over again this weekend, I think it fits. Dad lived life on his own terms. He was not afraid. He was unconquerable. He was the captain of his soul.

Invictus By William Ernest Henley 1849-1903

Out of the night that covers me,

Black as the Pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be

For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance

I have not winced nor cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance

My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears

Looms but the Horror of the shade,

And yet the menace of the years

Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate;

I am the captain of my soul.

Jackson Brown sang, "Nothing survives, but the way we live our lives...."

Dad lived his life well.

He touched all of us. We were fortunate to have him with us so long.

I know I speak for all of us when I say our lives are the better for having known him.

And I know I speak for Glenn when I say "I am proud to be his son."