

Book
Nelson

Intro? ~~Following to~~

It's A Wonderful Life is a movie many or all of you are familiar with.

An Old, Classic starring Jimmy Stewart as George Bailey - George falls on hard times, is depressed and states: I wish I never was born.

* Clarence, George's Guardian Angel takes George through a number of scenes, showing him, had this been so, how his community, the lives of family, friends ~~and~~ would have been diminished.

Let's go back to 1958. Joe doesn't get the science teacher position at Cloquet. Instead He is hired by Duluth, Superior, Proctor - Somers

#2

There would be no Pine Valley Ski area
Very likely no ski jump in Cloquet.

No 13 State Team Championships

Likely, no individual state champions,
College or National level competitors,
Olympians and - fewer recreational skiers
who learned to ski at Pine Valley.

Joe provided the opportunity, the inspiration and place to develop an interest and love of skiing. He had a vision, pursued it vigorously and for many it significantly effected the paths we took as a result.

#3

Had Joe not landed in Cloquet as a Jr. High Science teacher in 1958, many of us would not have developed our strong ties to the outdoors - fishing, hunting, canoeing, camping, etc. When his hunting buddy Sam Wilkams wasn't available, Joe would take 2, 3 or 4 of us kids. We'd often use his equipment - rods, reels, tackle or guns. Some of those kids were from large families ~~that~~ didn't have the time or resources to provide those experiences, some didn't have a father in their lives. I'm sure some of the parents were glad to have Joe take the kid off their hands for the day or weekend.

#4

He taught us stream fishing, gun safety, how to paddle a canoe, how to take care of the game you did get. He brought us to places we would never have gone to - places I still go back to hunt and fish. He also taught us to pack your own lunch, because his idea of lunch was a loaf or bread, jar of pickles, liverwort and if lucky, a pack of Oreos. I liked the Oreo cookies.

The only way I could find to really express the cause and effects of Joe's influence on many of the lives ~~of~~ of us growing up in the 60's and 70's is to relate my story. ~~I don't want to break it just~~

#5

A similar one could be told by many others who were mentored by Joe and accompanied him on similar outings.

I started skiing on the hill at Leach School near our weekend home in grade school. We progressed to Pine Valley as it was being developed by Joe and his supporters. I had Joe as my 8th grade science teacher (he was an outstanding teacher by the way) Somewhere along the way I ~~was~~ was privileged to go on my 1st fishing trip with Joe up the shore - I was ¹³⁻¹⁴ yrs. old. We paddled a River and fished trout - We got to a beaver dam - Joe asked me to pull the canoe up - he was arranging gear, standing

#6

in the back of the canoe - I pulled the canoe up and sent him head first into the river with his gear. He never said a word. Later that night he explained what I should have done. I've spent hundreds of hours in a canoe since - haven't made that mistake again. - He was patient and forgiving. He continued to include me on his outings

I still duck hunt - I doubt I would ever have done so, had Joe not taken Butch and Jim Quinn and I to the Baudett area over 50 years ago. It was amazing to see thousands of geese and ducks. - Paddling in the dark - setting up a blind, waiting

#7 A

for the sun to rise and the flocks to come in. I still enjoy the anticipation ~~as~~ as I did then.

Joe invited Scot Smith and I to deer hunt near the Cloquet River - I was probably 15/16, Scot 13/14. Scot shot his 1st deer there. Several years later, as young adults Scot and I asked Joe if he would mind if we build a Cabin there. He approved, and we bought a lease and constructed a very rough building which we hunted out of for 20 yrs. We Rebuilt 2 years before Scot's death and I'm still hunting there, 50 years after that 1st hunt with Joe.

7 B.

Joe would bring as many as he could load in a vehicle to his Cabin at Lake Nicoles, for a weekend. When I look back on it, it was like a mini training camp, team bonding session in disguise.

We'd swim, waterski, have canoe races, shoot ~~the~~ arrows at targets, meet the neighbors, fish and just have fun. On Sunday morning, he'd load up the Catholic kids and they'd head to Church ~~at~~ up Hwy 33 to Three Lakes. I didn't think much about it then - it impresses me now.

#8

My 1st year of College, Joe lent me money to purchase a car to commute ~~to~~ to UMD. I know he made loans and helped out ~~with~~ financially others from the Cloquet skiing family. He had a generous nature.

- I decided on a career in Education and was a teacher and principal for 30 years. Why - probably because of Joe's influence. When I entered the Army at age 21 Joe and Mike Mariniak worked to get me an appointment to the U.S. Biathlon Training Center in Alaska. Mike pursued the coach whom he had met, Joe wrote letters and made calls to Congressman Blatnik. I still have the letters

#9

Joe wrote and then received confirming my assignment to the team. Instead of going to Viet Nam I went to Alaska and trained and skied, competed in races, traveling throught the U.S. Seeing places I'd never have seen, crossing paths with former Cloquet teammates such as Don & Dave Quinn and Tim Shilling at National Nordic Events. I developed life long friendships while on the Biathlon Team and over 40 years later still connect with them - last year fishing in Kodiak, Alaska - 2 years ago 6 of us canoed a 100 mile stretch of the Aligash River in Northern, Maine.

#10

My experience is just one example of the effects of one man's influence on a kid he took under his wing. Many others here or attending last night's visitation have a similar story.

Around 15 years ago I decided on making an effort to schedule an annual day trip with Joe to a trout lake - The 1st few years we went to Toft Lake out of Ely. The last several were at Taylor Lake near Hill City - All he needed was his fishing gear. I would pick him up, buy breakfast along the way, portage the canoe, provide

#11

lunch and so on. I would take him fishing. Our last trip was maybe 4-5 years ago. It was a beautiful day. I picked Joe up early we stopped for breakfast in Floodwood as usual and arrived at the lake mid morning.

Tell Story: I remember we both caught a trout or 2 just off the landing.

In closing, it's easy to see why so many of us have continued our relationship with Joe: Our teacher, Coach, mentor and life long friend.

It was a Wonderful Life.
He was a Wonderful man.