

What's a Dentist to Do? Chairman of the Board

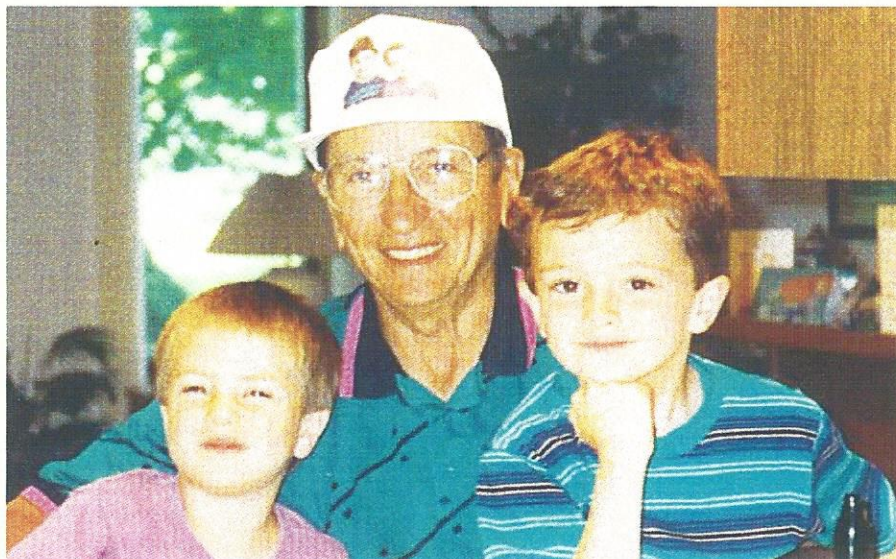
Please e-mail us at kdegrote@mndental.org or fax us at (651) 646-8246. We look forward to hearing from you not only regarding this article, but also if you have any ethical dilemmas you would like to present to the membership. Perhaps we can help you decide what to do.

Jack L. Churchill, D.D.S.*

My father-in-law, Charles Roepke, passed away recently. He was 78 years of age. An industrial arts teacher at Centennial High School for 31 years, he was a loving husband, a proud father of my wife Lori and her brother Don, an avid hunter, fisherman, and lover of the outdoors. He also adored golf and skeet shooting. I would like to depart from case studies and dental ethics to write to you about Charles, because I believe his is a story to tell. It should be of interest to all of us not just as dentists, but as people.

Just yesterday a group of friends dropped off a sympathy card with a gift card in it to buy a tree in memory of Charles — an oak maybe, strong and enduring. I thought my own memorial to him would be this article — one that serves our members because he embodied so many of the values that we should aspire to in our practices every day.

Our world is a world which is constantly changing. Charles was one



A father-in-law to remember, with grandchildren who will never forget him.

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of those who lived on this earth understanding this, and he embraced these changes knowing full well that most were for the good. However, there were certain things that Charles would not budge on. He would not change these certain things. They were steadfast.

One was respect. He respected people who were genuinely good, people who worked hard, who gave freely of themselves. He respected people who were in positions where they had to make tough decisions. He respected and honored his father and mother. He never behaved disrespectfully to anyone. He would always have a kind word to say about those around him.

Another was commitment. He died three weeks shy of 54 years of marriage. While teaching industrial

arts for those many years, he was totally committed to his students, his "kids". A testament to that was the number of former students at his funeral, many of whom became carpenters and craftsmen.

Charles was passionate — not only about his teaching, but about everything he did. He custom built fishing rods and tied his own flies. He built model airplanes and flew them over sod fields. He made krumkake at Christmastime and shared them with everyone he knew. He was especially passionate about his family. He loved them dearly and was so proud of his two grandsons. He witnessed each grandson catching his first fish and took the fish in a live

Continued on next page

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Ethics Committee

Continued from previous page

well directly to the taxidermist to be mounted. He attended many of his grandsons' sporting events. If he was not there, he would ask them to phone him with a report.

Charles had integrity and was honest. If he promised to do something, he would do it.

He was someone you could always count on.

He was a hard worker. For 31 years he instructed his students in woodworking and architectural drafting. Work did not stop after school. He ran the time clock at the home basketball games in the winter and was the starter for the track meets in the spring. He helped friends and family members build cabins and re-roof houses, and he helped build ramps at a friend's home to make it wheelchair accessible.

And he loved. He loved his students, he loved his hunting, fishing, and skeet shooting buddies, he loved

his golf, he loved his neighbors, he loved nature, and he loved his family.

Respect, commitment, passion, integrity, honesty, hard work, and most of all love. These are the things that never change in our world, and shouldn't. Charles was all of these.

At the visitation and funeral, I met Charles' hunting buddies, fishing pals (this group of 30 or so would go to Lake Kabetogama annually and named themselves the Nimrods), fellow teachers, golf partners, skeet shooters, neighbors, and friends.

I was struck by the quality of the people I met — people who held the same values,

the same time-honored characteristics Charles had. It occurred to me that these values are contagious, that by committing ourselves to them, we encourage and grow them in others. As Centennial's Teacher of the Year one year, Charles wrote, "Enthusiasm

is contagious; without it the classroom lacks the spark necessary to begin the learning experience."

Don't worry about the Bird Flu. Infect someone with respect, hard work, passion, and love. We should do this every day at home and in our practices. These values are the building blocks of ethics.

Andy Andrews, the motivational speaker, tells of developing your own personal Board of Directors. These are people you know who are at the top, people you respect. Though these people don't even know they're on your Board, you use them to inspire you. They set an example that you want to emulate. Surround yourself with those who are better than you so you rise to their level. You always play better tennis when you play against someone more skilled. Develop your own Board of Directors and aspire to what they do.

I won't tell you who the members of my Board are, but I will tell you one thing: Charles Roepke was the Chairman of my Board. And the Chair rests.

We miss you. ■

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