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Dear Harold and Lil:

Thank you for your kind words concerning dad. He kind of felt like he knew, since I talked about you so much. We worried about you and Lil <sup>you</sup>, more than we worried about him.

Dad went the way he would have wanted, in his easy chair. But it was about 10 years too early.

I had convinced dad that JFK was killed in a conspiracy. At one time, some doctor gave him some material on the autopsy, believe it or not. But a few years ago, he searched high and low and could not find it. Wonder if we shall ever know.

I always appreciated dad not discouraging me in this field. Guess he knew I am a little eccentric. As you know, some think we are nuts!

But he thought it was better than me taking up flyfishing! Been doing that for 30 years, and that really ranks you as a radical in Kentucky!

Been kind of vaguely depressed. Dad had been somewhat sick all summer, so it was not a total shock. But I didn't expect him to drop dead in front of me. Glad I was there to help mom.

Certainly hope you and Lil are doing well. That was a nice father's day card from Clay. Nice guy. He has come along and helped you at -a good time.

Don't quite know what to think of Clinton. Boys will be boys! Tough time to be a Democrat.

Will every politician that ever had sex with someone he or she was not married to please stand up?

Congress and the Senate can now be seated.

Enclosed is an article on Dad that my brother Larry submitted to the human interest column. HE ran almost the whole thing.

Say HI to Lil.

Bill



# BOB HILL

STAFF COLUMNIST

9-12-98

## Son remembers father's life as testament to power of kindness



HILL

This has been — in general — a good week for niceness. The best thing about the Mark McGwire-Sammy Sosa-Baseball-Apple Pie Love Fest was that it was contagious. Who would have dreamed a month ago that the last six balls McGwire hit for home runs would be returned to him free. Do you believe that would have happened if the new home-run champ had been a jerk?

Then came this letter — not about baseball, but about ... being nice.

"Dear Mr. Hill,

"I'm not really sure why I'm writing you. My dad, Louis A. Neichter, died on Tuesday, Sept. 1. The Courier-Journal carried a nice obituary for Dad, and the Rev. Bob Russell conducted the service and gave my dad a great eulogy.

"I'm still trying to deal with my own grief, but all this doesn't seem like enough. I was very close with my dad. That makes it harder to lose him, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

"Not only has our family suffered a great loss, but so has the Louisville community. Dad was well-connected and often knew those in power, but did not seek the limelight or attention. He made generous contributions to charity and countless individuals, but always did so anonymously.

"Dad was born April 19, 1922, in Louisville. When he was 15 his father was killed in a truck wreck. Dad went to work to help support his mom, Louise, and two sisters. Dad's father, Bill, had worked at Wayne Supply Co., a Caterpillar tractor distributorship. Dad went to work there as an assistant janitor. He eventually became a mechanic, a branch manager, vice-president, president and retired as vice-chairman of the board. He remained on the board until his death, completing over 50 years of service.

"Dad, who completed his formal education when he graduated from Ahrens Trade School as a machinist, loved to joke that he might have made something of himself if he had gone to college.

"But really, that marked Dad more than anything. Although he ran the biggest Caterpillar distributorship in the country, he always saw himself as an average guy. He always kept an open door for his 1,000-plus employees. Though he knew senators and governors, he usually

answered his own phone.

"Wayne's was the only place he ever worked, except when he volunteered to join the Navy in World War II. He loved his country but disliked the regimen of the military, and often said it was the last time he ever volunteered for anything.

"My dad and mom, Kitty, would have celebrated their 57th anniversary had he lived five more days. They had three sons, Bill, John and myself, and set a good example for others. They disagreed sometimes, but always loved each other, and we knew that.

"My dad and mom had added a sister, Linda Nunn, in an unusual way. Linda's parents, Bill and Evelyn, were friends since World War II, and when the Nuns and Linda's brother died at an early age, Linda just became part of the family.

"... I think that more than anything else, what marked my father was the way he dealt with people. He treated everyone with respect and kindness. If he was in the hospital, the nurses always got candy. He'd never use the drive-through window at the bank because he enjoyed going into the bank to chat with people. Several tellers came to his funeral.

"The night Dad died a member of the admissions staff at Baptist East came by just to tell us he had met Dad often due to his illness, and that although that was the only dealings he'd ever had with him, he would miss him.

"I was recently at my pharmacy. I was astounded that they knew my name; I'm not there often and they deal with hundreds of people every day. One of the pharmacists told me it was because I was always nice to them, and they appreciated that. My father would have liked that because he treated everyone equally, and with respect.

"In many ways, my dad was just an average man that accomplished some extraordinary things. He is proof that nice guys don't always finish last.

"And yeah, it is true; the world is a little bit less of a place today — for everyone.

"Sincerely,

"Larry Neichter"

*Bob Hill's column appears in SCENE each Saturday, and also in the Tuesday and Thursday Metro sections of The Courier-Journal. To reach the guy, give him a call at (502) 582-4646.*