



PASCAL HENRY CALDWELL

BORN: MARCH 28, 1922
WEST MONROE, LOUISIANA

PASSED: OCTOBER 5, 1996

AT REST: DREW CEMETERY
WEST MONROE, LOUISIANA

Honoring the Life and Example of Pascal Henry Caldwell

As we the family and friends of Pascal Caldwell mourn our loss of this very good man, we honor his memory and his example by recalling the many victories he won throughout his life. We can deal with our loss and overcome our sense of sadness by pausing a moment to look back on Pascal's life and taking from that experience, lessons that Pascal learned and celebrate his achievements, his courage and his energy that he directed toward living life in many of the ways that our Heavenly Father intended.

So, let's pause for a moment to remember and reflect upon Pascal's life....

Pascal Henry Caldwell was born on March 28, 1922 in Quashita Parish, Louisiana. He was born to Walter E. Caldwell Sr. and Mattie Victoria Downs. Pascal was the eldest of five children from the marriage of Walter Sr. and Mattie. They were the third family started by their father who lost two previous wives to the hard life of carving out an existence in rural Louisiana. When Pascal was born he joined 4 elder brothers and sisters from those previous unions - Alma, Jim, Sarah and Walter Jr. Following Pascal's birth in 1922, he would lose Jim and Sarah to death and see his father's third family grow with the births of Rose, Violet, Willis and Gertrude.

Pascal was taught to work hard, as were his brother and sisters. His father was already in his 50s when Pascal was born and his labor was needed for the family to survive. The value of work was among the first of many lessons that Pascal would learn.

Pascal's sister Rose recalls when she was about eight and Pascal about ten, that he gave her a *chaw* of tobacco. Even at this early age Pat was very persuasive as well as mischievous. "Rose," he said, "you really need this." Not one to ignore the advice of her big brother, Rose complied. "I got sick as a dog," she remembers, "but when mama got through with him, he was through with tobacco."

His contribution at home was so necessary to his family's survival, that Pascal decided to quit school in the 8th grade. It was the height of the Depression and he worked hard in making his contribution which was to help farm part of the original 160 acre homestead of his grandfather.

As Pascal matured, he went to work for Louisiana Power and Light and for Minden Shell where he started to learn the craft of an electrician, skills that he'd put to use later in service to his country.

With the outbreak of World War II Pascal joined the Navy in 1942. His older brother Walter and his father accompanied him to the train station - He would not return home to stay for more than 40 years.

From 1942, to January of 1946, Pascal served his country. During the war he served in many of the major campaigns in the Pacific Theater including Tarawa, the liberation of the Philippines and the Iwo Jima. During this time, he was twice wounded while advancing in rank to *Electrician Mate 1st Class*.

During his final months in the service he served at the Naval Weapon Station in Port Chicago, California. While serving there he met a young Army widow - Winifred Begich. Winnie, as she was called, had a two year old daughter - Cathi - when Winnie and Pascal fell in love, they were married on March 2, 1946, and built a home in Concord, California - a suburb of San Francisco, California where he would live for almost 40 years.

Pascal joined the Civil Service at the Port Chicago Naval Weapons Station and he went back to school so he could advance at work.. He completed high school and took several college level courses during his years at the Naval Base. As a young husband and father, he became a deputy sheriff, improved his home and found some time for hunting, gardening and fishing - activities that he pursued throughout his life.

He also continued to help his family in Louisiana - sending money to his parents and providing other support. About 1955, he took his young family back to Louisiana one summer where he brought in-door plumbing into the old house and rebuilt the porch. Throughout all of his life he honored his parents and supported them and his sisters and brothers with his skills as an electrician and builder, as well as with financial assistance.

He was a good father and raised Cathi as his very own. He taught her the value of education and the importance of honesty, hard work, and solid Christian values.

Cathi fondly remembers the fatherly love and support that Pascal so freely gave. Like the time her macho dad hosted a slumber party filling wash tubs full of ice and sodas and barbecuing hamburgers for a bunch of giddy teenage girls. She has never doubted his love. She knew he'd always be there - even though those words were never spoken. Their's was a communication of the heart and spirit.

In 1960, Pascal became a Grandfather for the first time. And over the years Cathi would present him with 5 grandchildren.

As one Grandson remembers-

"We called him 'Bumpa' and thought nothing of it. I don't personally remember when calling him Bumpa started but have been told it started as an attempt by my big brother when was very small to call him Grampa. What caused it to stick, I don't really know. But to this day, this is how we know and love him.."

"Of particular impression to my child's eye were his hands. It seemed that when I was near him as he was sitting close or those times when I was on his lap his hands seemed to engulf me. His hands were unlike any others I had known because they were hard, tough, large and yet very adept and gentle."

I can recall with fondness just watching Bumpa do small things - driving his truck or fiddling with a tool and wondering how he got those large paws of his to do things with such a light touch. In fact, his hands seemed to mirror all of his other physical characteristics. His broad shoulders, long strides and the heavy thud of his work boots all added to make him literally a larger than life figure to me."

Cathi remembers the Concord years as a time when he was constantly on the move - "It seemed that every weekend he was either rototilling somebody's yard or building something." He was a good neighbor always willing to help out.

In 1967, Pascal lost his first wife, Winnie and in the early 1970s he retired from the Naval Weapons Station where he had risen to a management position as a planning estimator.

During the 1970s he invested in property. He was a landlord and he owned and operated a truck stop and restaurant in Brentwood, California. During these years of financial activity he seemed to be without a compass. Being unsure of what he wanted to do next. In the late 70s, he suffered the first of several heart attacks that served as a reminder of his mortality and the need to master lessons yet unlearned.

One grandson remembers this period in Pascal's life. "*I am fortunate to have had his companionship as a child, as an adolescent and as an adult. In my teenage years, at the end of high school and a little beyond, I spent a great deal of time with Bumpa before he moved home to Louisiana. These were years of transition for us both and in our varied states of chaotic change, we found much common ground. I was preparing to leave where I was for a new chapter in my life. So was he. I was leaving a place called home most of my life. So was he. I was anxious to get going and a bit impatient to be done with it. So was he. Somehow, despite the generational differences between us, we grew a relationship based upon these common circumstances. He assumed for me the role of mentor- flavored as it was with his brand of philosophy, tempered with his sense of humor and communicated through the benefit of his life's experiences."*

"In moving from his home (the house where my mother grew up), the selling of his unwanted possessions and the settling of his business affairs in California, I learned more about this man who was my mother's father. In many ways, he simply wished to cast the dust of settled life here aside and be gone in a fresh start. But he saw value in all he possessed here and was intent on sharing with me the source and story behind much of it".

"In reality, the experience that lives so vividly in my mind of his moving back home came from going with Bumpa every Saturday and Sunday to the flea market to sell what he could of the things he did not wish to move. As we cleaned out the old house we collected what to me seemed mountains of junk: old coffee cans of nails and screws, a rusty pipe wrench, an oily rope-things which were at one time of use to him but had in some way fallen into disrepair or were simply no longer needed. I remember expecting to throw a great deal of it in the truck and make a run to the dump. But we went to the flea market instead and it was there, in the competitive atmosphere of buying and selling, that I learned to have fun with Bumpa".

"The man could drive a hard bargain. We would empty the truck of the all the stuff we had packed and lay it out on the ground. I didn't think for a minute that anybody would buy any of it. I knew I certainly wouldn't give any of it a second look. But Bumpa was convinced that what he had to sell was the best stuff on the lot and he would rather throw it away than sell it for less than what he thought it was worth."

"A little after 7am the junkhounds (as Bumpa called them) started browsing and to my dismay they seemed to all stop and linger at the treasure we had put out. I remember watching three individuals spying the coffee can of rusted nails. One picked it up and came to me to ask how much. Just as I was about to say 25 cents Bumpa said the guy could have it for ten dollars."

“Ten bucks! I felt my neck snap as I turned to look at Bumpa in disbelief. His head was down, his eyes intent on what he was doing but he was smiling. The junkhound offered a dollar. “Hell no,” Bumpa said, “There’s several pounds of good nails there and I won’t sell it for a penny less than \$10.”

I thought the guy would put the can down and run. But he only nodded and look around for other items. He found an empty gas can. He asked how much. “Seven dollars,” Bumpa gruffly said. The guy offered a dollar. Bumpa looked up and said quietly and seriously, ‘Seven dollars or I throw it away where no one can use it!’”. The guy looked around some more and found a piece of rusted chain. “I will give you \$10 for the nails, the gas can and the chain.” I was amazed. I wouldn’t have given fifty cents for the whole thing and this guy was giving away \$10. I thought Bumpa should swallow his pride and make the deal. But instead he shook his head and said firmly “\$20 dollars!”. The man countered with \$15 and Bumpa answered with \$19. They glared at each other for a moment. I thought the junkhound was going to throw it all down. Finally, he offered \$17 and Bumpa nodded yes. I was stunned.”

“They were long days. We would start out before dawn, having loaded the truck to the gills the night before. We’d stop at a diner and eat a sloppy egg breakfast and then head for the flea market. We would get sunburned and tired but we always had a great deal of fun and Bumpa always left with a large wad of money in exchange for what I took to be worthless junk”.

“These were also days where we had a great deal of conversation. Bumpa liked to express his ideas on women, marriage, employment, real estate, cars, types of people and government. In a great sense he made me feel like a grown up. If I expressed an opinion that differed from his own- and I did, for we differed on many things- he listened and acknowledged my opinion. And that was important to me at that point in my life: to be heard and respected as an adult.”

"In this time period I came to respect Bumpa for conducting himself according to his own rules. I could not find it within myself to agree at all times and in all things with him but I admired his sense of direction and his need to stick with his convictions. He did not do things out of selfishness. He did them out of respect for what he thought were the right reasons. I found this to be an admirable quality."

"His final years in California were difficult. If he was not combating his health problems he seemed to be constantly searching to fulfill his emotional needs. As his family here, we tried our best to be of support. But there was an emptiness within him we could not fulfill and after a few visits home to Louisiana we were glad to know that he felt he could find peace there."

"In 1987 I had the opportunity to visit him in his Louisiana home. And it was truly home to him. He took me around where he grew up, told me stories of his heritage and with great pride showed me the things he had built up for himself since leaving California. His emptiness was gone and we were happy for him. "

In 1981, his youngest sister, Gertrude urged him to come home to Louisiana for Christmas. Finally he agreed. It was during that visit that he met Mary and suddenly his life truly changed.

In speaking with Pascal and Mary about their meeting, it **WAS** love at first sight. Their courtship lasted almost a year and they were married in November of 1982.

Pascal came home. He'd rediscovered his moral compass in Mary and in the family and friends that live here in Louisiana.

Mary's family loved him. "He fit right in and was so comfortable to be with. You knew he was glad to be there when he came to visit." They said.

His gardens became legendary. He love to fish and raise cattle. He added a major addition to Mary's house to help accommodate the family and friends that came to visit. He set about to clean up Drew Cemetery and brought order and organization to the Caldwell plot there. He also saw that headstones were provided for his parents and grandparents enlisting the support of family members.

He was constantly busy helping family and neighbors. He actively supported his church becoming a major contributor to the building of the new chapel.

In speaking of these past 14 years, family and friends have said the following:

"He didn't preach religion. He lived it! He helped his neighbors. He was the model of honesty."

"He was a wonderful husband, looking after Mary's every need. And when he wanted to make a major contribution to the church, he conferred with Mary to make sure that it was all right."

"Pascal would give you the shirt off his back - but you'd better not try to take it."

"He loved to have a good time. Each year he and Mary attended the Annual Reunion of his shipmates from the U.S.S. Zeilan - on which he served during the war, and Gertrude, Huey and Pascal and Mary visited almost every day. They made trips to Branson and Nashville together and enjoyed each other's company in many ways. Pascal truly enjoyed his family and friends."

Over the past few years Pascal endured great pain without complaint. His diabetes caused severe pain in his right foot and yet he refused to succumb to the disease. Instead he forced himself to walk each day at the mall. Just a few weeks ago he receive a jacket in recognition of the more the 1,000 miles that he had walked.

As his brother Willy has said, "Pascal paid dearly for many of the lessons that he learned" and that's the very beauty of his example. He never stopped learning, he grew continually - his life was lived in crescendo.

One of his grandchildren observed, *"As a man, Bumpa's life has been an interesting study to me. I have observed from a safe distance as he has grown more and more tender in his later years. I have witnessed his strugglings and his ability to persevere through adversity. He could be very tough. He could be doggedly persistent. But as time wore on his body his mind remained ever at the ready. His sense of what was right and his loyalty to those that supported him and loved him grew ever sharper."*

These last several years he has made efforts to communicate to me the need to care for 'my mama'. I have not shared this with my mom because I felt out of obligation to "Bumpa for some reason not to let her know he made this effort. I guess Bumpa was never one to draw attention to himself and by talking about it with Mom it may have done that. But he left me with a charge- up until my last conversation with him less than a week ago- to see that mother is cared for. He was not firm or directive with me- that was simply not his way. But as I would call to see how he was doing he we would inevitably discuss her needs."

"Bumpa was never a man that could say I love you. Recently, in a phone conversation I told him that we loved him and are concerned about him and he said 'thank you, we are too.' That was as close as he could come. But I have never doubted his love, despite his inability to express it."

"Bumpa was not a perfect individual. I have known him from a little boy's perspective, really. I have witnessed his misgivings and triumphs of his later years and have learned of many experiences of his early adulthood from him. He was not a man without regrets. I cannot live in judgment of him, however. I can merely observe the fruits of his labors and what his life has yielded."

"He leaves this mortal existence an accomplished family man. He dearly loved his wife. He dearly loved his home. He took immense pride in his heritage."

"He left this life a father. From my little perspective of the world, this was his crowning accomplishment. It was an accomplishment because it was a responsibility he clearly choose. And he chose it until his dying day. Any man can father a child, but it takes a someone more to be a Daddy."

"He left this life a changed individual. I find great honor and respect in this as well. Any man who can look at himself and iniate change in himself is indeed a character of nobility."

"I feel fortunate to have known him. I am thankful he got the opportunity to meet my family and to understand their importance in my life. It made me feel good to have him ask about "the babies" and to take an interest in their well being".

"Pascal Henry Caldwell had no obligation to me. He did not have a legal responsibility to my mother. He did not ask to have us a part of his life."

"Yet, he is my mother's father and he is my grandfather and he is my children's great-grandfather. And he did this because he wanted to, not because he had to. It has been our privilege to be the recipients of his love and concern. And for that I will be forever thankful."

He could admit to mistakes and work to correct them. He truly lived as Christ taught - thinking about the needs of others without thinking of yourself.

He rejoiced in secretly giving gifts and helping others. He did not seek credit for what he did. He only wanted his loved ones and friends to be happy.

The best way that we can remember Pascal and honor that memory is to incorporate the qualities that he demonstrated in his life, into our own lives.

Be honest; show courage in the face of pain and adversity without complaint, and strive for the kind of greatness that the scriptures teach.

*"..he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." **Matthew 23:11***

and

"And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God."

Mosiah 2:17

Pascal did indeed serve with love and he was one of the greatest among us. May we follow his example is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.



AUG



