

On the Anniversary of My Grandfather's Passing

by Steven J. Kolbe

What I remember about my grandfather were his fart jokes. When he wasn't telling us kids about how young David defeated the mighty Goliath or how Saul the pharisee humbled himself to become Paul the Apostle, he was telling us about the baby burp that begged to go out the back door. Parable or pun, he was always ready to entertain.

What I remember about my grandfather is that he was always ahead of me--impossibly so. In the thirties he began writing poetry, seventy years before I would. When I was still an infant, he'd come to dinner and tell my dad to quit drinking--fourteen years before I'd pick up my first drink, twenty-one years before I'd put down my last one. And by the time I knew enough Ancient Greek to talk about it, he had already forgotten most of his. All he had left was one simple phrase: "Iesous Christos, Theou Huios, Soter; Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

What I remember about my grandfather, most of all, is my grandmother. After they moved him to the assisted living hall of the retirement home, she would wheel herself across the building each day just to watch him sleep.

We never talked about any of these moments, of my becoming the man I was meant to be or of his letting go of the man he was. Seventy years is just too large an age gap to overcome. But I will always have his stories. Stories of Solomon and of snakes in the mission field. And, of course, I will always have his fart jokes. Oh so many fart jokes.

