

91 years old....WOW. Please bear with me as I talk as fast as I can in order to try and describe the life of Norbert Jacob (Jay) Wilde in 5 minutes! Some people later in his life have known him as Jay. If you are one of these, please bear with me because I have always known him as Norbert, in fact, Uncle Norbert.

The most important thing in Norbert's life since I have known him, which is all of my life, is Family.

Norbert was born on May 5, 1919 in Electra, Tx, a small town up close to Wichita Falls. Norbert was the 10<sup>th</sup> of 11 children.

Norbert and his family moved to the Valley in February 1926, when he was seven years old. When they arrived at their new house, they found that it was yet unpainted. Their furniture had not yet arrived, and there was no motel for miles, no running water in the new house, no gas, and no electricity in fact until ten years later. There also was no TV, no cell phones, no interstate highways, no AC! The land at their residence was newly plowed, and thorny cactus lay all around. At age seven, this cactus was a curiosity, and Norbert slipped and fell on one! According to his biography, the family had to pick out thorns from his rear for most of the night with only a Coleman lantern as a source of light.

Things must have been pretty tough for Norbert growing up. He faced a lot of challenges in his life, and through hard work, Norbert became a success in everything that he did. What ever challenge he ran up against, he faced it with strength, and courage. If there ever was a role model to be remembered and followed, it is Norbert.

Norbert spent 8 years in the seminary, but eventually quit the seminary because he felt that his real calling was as a husband and father. As Norbert admits in his autobiography, quitting the seminary was the most difficult decision of his life. There was a dreadful void created by the absence of the genuine friendships with the seminarians. But he never looked back and never thought that this most difficult decision was a mistake.

That void in his life existed for 3 years. Fortunately, he met a lovely lady by the name of Mary Walsh who completely filled that void. Mary also came from a very large family and that family, including Grandma and Grandpa Walsh, Gladys, Uncle Bill, Tommy, Jeanne, Emmett, Aunt Kat, Jack, Marion, James, and all of their husbands and wives and children all played a very important part in the lives of Norbert and Mary and their children.

Norbert and Mary met at a Knights of Columbus dance in the summer of 1949, and must have really hit it off together because they got married only a few months later on December 28, 1949. At this time, Norbert was 30 years old. I guess he figured if they were going to have a bunch of children, they better get married and they better get started.

As a result of their wonderful marriage, Norbert and Mary were blessed with 5 children....Greg, Denise, Gery, James, and Bernadette. These children then blessed them with 14 grandchildren, and now these grandchildren have already produced 4 great grandchildren, with more to come, I am sure. Norbert believed that your children will make you a good parent when you love them so much and when they respond to your good example. He believed that it is not so much what you give to your children in money, education, and time, but all the great virtues they give you for your eternal salvation! The Wilde family was his pride and joy, and what a beautiful family he and Mary have created!

Not only was Norbert a great husband and father, he was also a super great Uncle to myself, my brothers and sisters, and my seemingly hundreds of cousins. God blessed us all to have been around Norbert and to see the values that he promoted and that he lived his whole life by.

Norbert and Mary were married for 42 years. After a fight with leukemia, Mary passed away on February 2, 1991 at age 67. Mary was a beautiful lady and a great wife and a great Mother. Her funeral was one of the

biggest that Our Lady of Sorrows ever had, for she touched many people in the schools as both a Registered Nurse, and a friend.

Life had to be very lonely for Norbert after Mary passed away. A couple of years later, a friend introduced him to a lady named Mary Frances (Fran) Rigling, and they eventually got married on December 29, 1994. Norbert and Fran spent much of their married life in a community of retired people in Alamo, where they had to have had a whole lot of fun, playing golf, cards, dancing, and just enjoying life with friends.

Norbert's business career was a great success. Norbert put himself through school and then began a very successful 27 year career in insurance working for Prudential. His awards included District Man of the Year, The Texas Leader's Round Table, and the National Quality Award for 15 years. Selling insurance apparently became quite easy for Norbert (in fact, he passed up various management opportunities to remain in sales because he was very good at it, and he could be able to spend more time with his family). Norbert's very successful business career enabled him to take good care of his family, to help his children receive the best education available, and eventually to live a comfortable life of retirement which was very well deserved after having worked so hard.

Norbert loved sailing, and all of us cousins probably have their own stories to tell about one or more trips to Delta Lake for sailing with him in his sunfish. I do, but do not have time to tell it now. Norbert also loved gardening and barbequing, and he had a remarkable sense of humor.

Norbert lived in McAllen and played the organ and piano, and sang in the choir at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church for much of that time. After moving to Austin, he volunteered service at the St. David's hospital in Austin. In all cases, his love of the Catholic Faith was readily apparent.

By far, Norbert's greatest legacy is his family. But, I would be remiss if I ignored his other legacy which is that of writer of letters to the editor of the Monitor in McAllen. As Norbert stated, his educational background gave him a different perspective or insight, and he liked to use the news media to vent his feelings. When he would receive compliments and accolades from friends and prominent people for his letters, it would only inspire him for more!

We all have a lot to thank God for for the life of Norbert Wilde. Just a few weeks ago, at John's wedding, I was able to sit next to him for quite a while, and we talked about the past. I was able to thank him for all he and Mary did for me and for all of our family. I also thanked him for the wonderful example he had always been to me personally, and to all of us. Those were very precious minutes, and I will always remember them. The timing of the wedding was really great because it enabled Norbert and his children to be together one last time in a beautiful and festive situation that will always be treasured.

In summary, here is how I will always remember my Uncle Norbert:

What a Man, what a Husband, what a Father, what a Grandfather, what an Uncle, what a Friend, what a Sportsman, what a Catholic.

What a life. 91 years. WOW!

[Ed. Note: Written by Bill Walsh, Norbert's nephew, delivered 2010-11-24 at the Memorial Service]