

A Good Word for Carrie Lee Kluttz
October 15, 2008

Anytime we do a funeral for a man of Carrie Lee Kluttz's generation – especially those who served their time in the war – we always reference the now famous phrase of Tom Brokaw – “The Greatest Generation.” As I sat and listened to Carrie Lee's children talk about her and her life's story, I wondered why I have reserved that phrase for the men. As I listened to Neil and Patricia and Linda talk about their mother, I recognized Carrie Lee as a full-fledged member of that Greatest Generation in her own right. Carrie Lee's growing up years and young adult life were marked by the Great Depression and war which meant hard times, death, taking in others, and moving. She was placed in charge of the household long before a girl should have to be after the deaths of her mother, grandmother, and brother within a six month timeframe. While some would live a life of resentment or even anger, this would not be Carrie Lee's way. Surely these hard times must have shaped her into the steadfast, persistent, steady person she would become. Never seeking attention. Trying to remain inconspicuous in all situations. Keeping up a house so that a home was made for many. That was Carrie Lee's life, best I can tell. Her son-in-law, Bill, said that he sure could use her on any of his jobs because she was “slow, but steady.”

It occurred to me that in our fast-paced world – with all of the advanced technology right at our fingertips – what we can use more of these days is that slow but steady way of Carrie Lee Kluttz. Folks who love to laugh and don't have a need have the final word – or any word for that matter. Folks that stay informed and read and keep up with what's going on in the world. Folks, that when they don't know the definition of a word or have a question about a certain issue, automatically pull out a dictionary or encyclopedia to become better informed. Folks who take responsibility for themselves and those in their care. Slow but steady. Faithful. Yes indeed, I believe our world could use more folks like Carrie Lee Kluttz.

Family was Carrie Lee's love - her three children, her grandchildren, and her extended families. Having them underfoot in the kitchen was no hindrance to her – it was pure joy. Linda said that her mother often said, “I don't knit or crochet, but I have a good lap.” I love that. Is there anything better than that. Her first husband died early in their life together. They had two children. Then Carrie Lee married again, and they had one child. It was amazing to me how these two families have blended – the Query's and the Kluttz's so that all became one, really. I can't help but believe that that was largely Carrie Lee's doing. Her way allowed her to stay connected to her first extended family while making a new life with a new family and somehow they all became not just relatives, but real family. That is a gift, and I believe Carrie Lee gets much of the credit for making that happen, though credit is nothing she would ever seek. It is a true testimony of the love of her family. And through all of these years living alone – holding in her mind and in her heart all of the pain and all of the joy of her life's journey, her children returned her love and care in the way they cared for Carrie Lee – making it possible for her to stay in her own home and live as independently as possible. Of course as Linda's pastor, I know this best by what I have seen in her – her commitment and unfailing attention and care. To all three of Carrie Lee's children I offer this word of blessing: *well done good and faithful servants*. The way you have cared for your mother is an example to us all. And I believe it is a testimony to Carrie Lee's commitment to you. She must have Raised you Right. In that way, I believe she was indeed close to God.

Next to her family, Carrie Lee loved working in her yard. They say that she was the happiest when she was digging or raking or pruning or planting – as long as her hands were in the soil working her garden or her flowers, she was content and happy. Neil said that what she

loved most was dirt under her fingernails. A real connection to creation. In that way, I believe she was indeed close to God.

Linda provided us with what she called a “stream of consciousness” about her mother. I have taken much of what she wrote to prepare this good word for Carrie Lee, but Linda’s last two paragraphs are worth simply reading to you: “She had no desire to travel and did very little. For her the grass was not greener on the other side of the fence. She was perfectly happy in her home and her environment. She had a great deal of pride, the good kind. She never left her house, even to work in the yard without her hair neatly in place and her lipstick on. Her house was always clean and neat, but no room was off limits to playing children. Mother did not look for change. She went to the same hairstylist for 46 years and wore the same color of lipstick for about the past 40 years (Persian Melon by Moondrops!). When changes came, she accepted them because she was not one to hold on to the past.” Linda, what a good word about your mother. Thank you for the way you helped to let us in on her life and her way.

This good word about Carrie Lee cannot end without that always Good Word of who God is and the hope that comes with faith. When Jesus said *let the little children come unto me*, I wonder if what he was really saying was something along the lines of “I don’t knit or crochet, but I have a good lap.” He had a way of creating a sense of home and family wherever he was and with whomever he met. And unlike the pristine Jesus we often imagine, I believe he too like to get his hands dirty with the good dirt of the earth – even under his fingernails. And so it is today that we hold onto the Blessed Hope of the Forever Presence of God - that today, Carrie Lee Kluttz has joined in with the great cloud of witnesses taking her place as the quiet gardener who enjoys the playful nature of all of heaven’s children that surround her now. And like never before she is close to God. May it be so.