

## Daddy's Legacy

*by Linda Hultin Winn*

In 1929 the Kingsport Times touted the talents of a strapping young football player as being different from the rest.

"Swede' Hultin, 185 pound tackle of Kingsport, is an entirely different type of player. He does everything mechanically. He rips occasionally, but most of the time he is content to ward off the interference with his hands and nail the ball carrier at the line of scrimmage.

"Hultin is a smart tackle, or else he is gifted with football instinct.

The opposition rarely fools the big fellow. In all of the games this season, Hultin has played fine football. However, he would be a great tackle if he possessed the spirit of a football player. His possibilities are great, but he does not call into play all of his ability. Once imbued with the real spirit of the game, Hultin is destined to be one of the finest tackles ever turned out by a high school in East Tennessee."

The following year, the big Swede accepted an invitation to play football at the University of Tennessee, but his heart wasn't in it.

Although he was "gifted with football instinct," his family instincts were stronger. He didn't possess "the spirit of a football player" or "call into play all of his ability" because he didn't want to leave home to go to college in the first place. I know how he felt. I am his daughter, and I didn't want to go to college either.

Swede, my daddy, loved life and loved the games he played, but he was not devoted to them. He was devoted to his family. So after playing college football the first year, he came home to work with his dad at the Kingsport Press and never returned to college. Four years later, he married his sweetheart.

When WWII broke out, a previous sports injury labeled him "4-F," so he was sent to Oak Ridge, Tennessee- the home of the atom bomb- as a black-out scout.

After the war, Swede returned to Kingsport to work with his dad again. Together they built a big duplex so they could live side by side, and that's where he raised his family.

Swede was a devoted husband and wonderful daddy to my two sisters and me. He spent all of his free time with us. As children we gathered around a bowl of his freshly popped popcorn each evening to listen to Smokey Joe tell Uncle Remus stories on the radio. We danced on his shoe tops to big band music and went with him to Kabool's store for an ice cream cone after supper.

He listened while we recited our verses for Sunday School; helped us with our piano lessons and took us on picnics in cow pastures by the Holston River.

On weekends Daddy took us for Sunday afternoon "spins" and trips to the Smoky Mountains to see the bears. Then each summer he took us to the beach.

If his dad did all those things for him as he grew up, no wonder he didn't want to leave home and go to college. Daddy must have regretted that decision though, because he insisted that we go. But I didn't want to go to college any more than he did. So I became a problem student in high school, refusing to study, thus ensuring grades lousy enough to keep my applications from being accepted.

But Daddy tackled that problem head-on, the same way he "nailed the ball carrier at the line of scrimmage." He made me go to summer school every summer for three years to make sure I graduated with my class, then he packed me off to college.

Daddy faced several trials in his life more serious than a rebellious daughter though.

He experienced a loneliness that heavy drinking couldn't drown when his daughters grew up and left home. He knew a deep sense of helplessness in the prime of his life when his dearly beloved wife lost her vision to a rare disease. But he faced

total despair years later when Mother suffered a massive stroke that left her in a coma for three weeks with long-term left-side paralysis. Then he felt deep rejection when he found Mother curled into a fetal position to die instead of recovering through re-hab in a nursing home.

Daddy came alive when doctors refused to do anything about Mother's withdrawal from life. He met that problem head-on, too. He emptied his bottles and made his final trip to the nursing home — this time to take his wife home.

Daddy brought in physical therapists to rehabilitate Mother. Within a year, she walked with a walker and made her own transfers in and out of her wheelchair to her bed, to her wing chair and the tub; and she learned to take care of herself again.

Because of Daddy's great love for her, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and enjoyed another four years together before Daddy suffered a fatal heart attack. Even on his deathbed, Daddy arranged for Mother's continued care after he was gone.

Daddy lived his entire life loving, serving, and providing for his family with selfless devotion. His legacy of love illustrates what Jesus meant when He said, "Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," (John 15:12-13 NIV).

That's what Daddy did, and he was obedient unto death.

THE END

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"Those who belong to the Good Master wag a happy tail."