

DRAGGING HIS FEET

UNCLE CT

JUNE 25, 2022

Eulogy by Jim Waddell

Good morning. As I begin, I'd like to explain to you that i am not crazy, and that I will refer to CT and Myra as Uncle and Aunt...though they are my Mom's (Toonie) and Aunt Bootsie's first cousins, I always knew them as such. Each family took turns, switch hitting in the task of raising us, whether it was at the beach or in town. I will also note that I was taught that anything written in this form should have a title. Thus, the title of this writing is Dragging His Feet. In these parts we all know that the term "Dragging your Feet" is a metaphor for procrastination, putting something off, etc. But, it has a more profound meaning in this case.

Reflecting on Uncle CT's life, two themes come to mind...community and commitment to education. He was born and raised in Apalachicola. He returned here after graduation from Florida State University and was an intricate part of a community he loved so dearly.

In what must have been the 60's and 70's as member of the Jaycees, I have memories of that group and others like it manning the booths at the seafood festival. In retirement, you could find Uncle CT and others, within feet of where those seafood booths were, holding court at the ten-foot hole, discussing matters of great importance. Fast forward to the last decade, when I was in town for work and there was a Rotary Club meeting to be attended at The Grill, Uncle CT was always present.

As an active member of Trinity Church, a member of the vestry, and as a lay reader Uncle CT delivered a many a sermon from this pulpit, especially during the time that Trinity shared a priest, Father Ellis, with Port St. Joe, and Trinity held Morning Prayer for half of its monthly services.

From the very beginning, Uncle CT immersed himself in education. He loved to read. My Aunt Bootsey says that as kids, when they were all together playing outside, Uncle CT, the quieter of the two brothers in comparison to Uncle Francis, would more than likely be found sitting on the porch reading a book.

If one were to take a virtual stroll down The Prado, turning right off of 98, heading west toward the family home, its fascinating to note that you would find a community of educators in that neighborhood: Coach Bankster on the left...the Howells, one block over...the Wagoners, directly across the street. Weekend mornings, Coach Wagoner, looking very much like a coach, mowing the lawn, but not too busy to stop and talk FSU anything with Uncle CT as he retrieved the morning paper. A little further down and either side maybe a block or two, the Whites, the Petteways, the Seyforths, the Galloways, the Siprells. Not on the street, I don't believe, but ever

dear to Uncle CT and Aunt Myra, the Burtons. I'm sure I've missed some. A community of educators...colleagues for sure, and, more importantly, the best of friends. And to think that Uncle CT spent his career in education basically with one employer is not unprecedented, but rare air in these days.

As a young man, Uncle CT suffered a terrible fishing accident involving a stingray. The poisonous barb, in combination with an underlying health condition, made for an extremely painful, long, and some may say never full recovery. Before the accident, we were taught as kids when wading or swimming in the bay or at the beach to drag your feet. The idea being that if you drag your feet, your feet will slip under and push the ray off rather than stepping on top and the ray going into defense mode.

Several years ago while on a family vacation cruise to Cozumel, there was a shore activity that provided an opportunity to feed and swim with giant rays. Thinking about Uncle CT's accident, I said, "you want me to do what?!!!!". Though I stayed in the water long enough to learn that the big rays' skin was silky smooth, it was not in my DNA to do it, so I bailed. Witnessing his agony after that accident had forever seated a life lesson of the caution of and importance of knowing when to drag your feet.

After Aunt Myra's passing, and while Uncle CT continued to live at Red Hills, which is just around the corner from where we live, our family shared a number of meals together, at a favorite restaurant, celebrating birthdays, or cooking/grilling at home for a FSU ball game. Uncle CT was always appreciative of the time together. It provided an opportunity to just catch up or share some memory. He often spoke of wanting to head down to Apalach to check on things. It was during these visits that I picked up on a subtle mannerism of his. Sometimes before addressing a new topic of the conversation, there was a pause, and a set of his expression. Not a reset, but more of a check for certainty of what he was about to say. That's a lesson in and of itself for all of us to take stock in.

The last time I saw Uncle CT was during a visit in the hospital post-surgery. Lisa and I talked with him about several things.... Aunt Myra, God, Heaven. He was watching the news. I remarked that it was amazing, sometime tragic, that the news isn't really the news anymore, but more of political spin. Then, it happened, the pause...and set. He recalled a quote from the 18th century French writer Voltaire, which basically was that if you hear something repeatedly, there's hope in someone's mind that you will be indoctrinated to it.

Hmmm...despite what I had learned about Dewey in Ms. Burton's library science class, and not armed with my 500 lb. set of World Book Encyclopedias, I did the only thing a late 20th century student could do in the moment...while nodding an acknowledgment of the quote...I googled Voltaire!! I thought I would share a few of Voltaire's quotes with you, which, if you take a stroll down memory lane, maybe it will invoke a special memory of Uncle CT in your life.

1. "Everything you say should be true; but not everything true should be said."

2. "The mirror is a worthless invention; the only way to truly see yourself is in the reflection of someone else's eyes."
3. "Judge a man by his questions, rather than his answers."
4. "Give me the patience for the small things of life; courage for the great trials of life; help me to do my best each day and then go to sleep knowing God is awake."

The last one sort of sums up Uncle CT for me.

My mom told me that the last time she spoke to Uncle CT, he said to her that he was just tired and worn out, and that he wanted to be with Aunt Myra. In my observation, the mind was sharp, but the body was giving up. Even with the best of care, there was uncertainty, but for the obvious. It was the "in between" the present and the ultimate outcome that caused him to pause...set...and, consider the course...with God's Grace, to muster his strength of will for the ultimate act and example of courage and dignity. At peace with it all, it was time, in his clear mind, not to drag his feet.

Christ is Risen. Amen.