

Two Sacred Things

By Lynn Kraft Cassidy

I have two things that remain from my father's life: his Air Force cap worn while he served his country during the Korean Conflict, 1950-53. It doesn't sit in my hat-cluttered closet with baseball caps and straw gardening hats. It has its own special place of homage on my wide oak dresser, framed by a floral-carved mirror. It sits next to a black and white photo of him – Fred Kraft, broad smile, USGS Dept. of the Interior Dodge truck behind him. He is kneeling, holding a new-born fawn whose fragility contrasts with my father's fit frame and strong, but gentle arms. That photo captures pure joy!

He loved the outdoors. In high school, he came west from Chicago to work as a fire lookout in the forests. He spent hours looking through binoculars to spot curling smoke and alert the fire-fighters of the Forest Service. When he came to Colorado State University for college, his intention was to become a forest ranger. Half way through his forestry program, it was cut. The young students were told that engineering or science could be alternative choices, since the world needed more engineers and scientists. The program was cut due to the Korean War. The government didn't need forestry graduates, they needed people to help build missiles! He chose engineering. After college, he was employed for a few years by the United States Geographical Survey. It was during this time, while surveying in some remote location that he took the picture with the fawn. He was about 28 years old, strong, and vibrant!

I love this picture because it captures his essence: joy! He expressed his joy as a father of three girls, taking us on camping trips, hiking, and fishing. He expressed his joy in playing the harmonica and singing, "I Dream of Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair." (My mom's name is Jean.) He expressed himself through jokes, tickling, and backyard softball games, always throwing the best pitches. I loved those early days while growing up which is why I chose to keep these two sacred things. His captain's hat reminds me that he made sacrifices for our country; the youthful picture reminds me of the joy he shared with all who knew him. I'm thankful for many precious memories with my father!