

TO MY GRANDSONS: LIFE IS TOO SHORT TO WASTE

To Brian and Thomas Yarbrough, Zachary and Nicholas Wansley:

Don't look now, guys, but we are halfway through the first decade of the 21st century. That may not seem like a big deal to four active teenagers with the best years of their lives ahead of them, but from one who first saw the light of day before World War II, it is a little frightening. The older I get, the faster time seems to go. Thankfully, I have reached the point in life where I realize how precious each day is and that when the day is gone, you can't get it back.

Your grandfather spent too much of his career grinding over what I believed at the time to be life-or-death issues. Today, I can't remember most of the issues, but they sure weren't life-or-death. I want you all to work hard, but don't work so hard that you fail to appreciate every God-given day. Dr. Gil Watson, the World's Greatest Preacher, has counseled his flock that the operative word for 2005 is "joy." I second that motion. Life is too short to worry about petty frustrations. Live it with unbridled joy.

It is hard for me to realize that Zack is headed for college and over the next few years the rest of you will be, too. Let me give you a little perspective from one who has "been there, done that." College is the time when you will transition from young men to adults. Mom and Dad won't be there to ensure that you do your homework or get to class on time or to satisfy themselves that you are comprehending what is being taught. You will be on your own, and it will require a great deal of self-discipline. College is a lot of things, but it isn't a babysitting service. You must work very hard for your degree. Otherwise, you likely will find yourself stuck in a dead-end job doing something for which you have no passion. That would be a shame.

College is also a time of temptation and experimentation. Without parents looking over your shoulder, you can do a lot of things you wouldn't have dreamed of doing when you were living at home. When faced with such temptations, ask yourself, "Would this hurt Mom or Dad if they knew?" They may never find out, but that isn't the point. The point is that they have worked extremely hard to give you a good solid moral foundation and, frankly, they deserve better than having you cave in to peer pressure just so you can be "one of the guys." I know you all have more character than that, but this is a matter too important not to mention.

Three of you have your driver's licenses and Thomas will be getting his learner's permit this year. I have ridden with each of you and know what good drivers you are. But still I worry. Georgia motorists have degenerated into rude, cell phone-yakking, in-a-hurry-to-go-nowhere, tailgating boors. Watch out for all the fools on the road and drive defensively (with both hands on the steering wheel and the radio off). The vast majority of these self-absorbed drivers don't care what happens to you. I do.

I'm sorry you never knew your great-grandparents. They were wonderful people. Granny made sure to tell Papa every day that she loved him. I doubt she missed a day in their fifty-four years together. "If something happens to your daddy," she once told me, "I want to remember that the last thing I said to him was that I loved him." Please don't let a day go by without telling Mom and Dad that you love them. You may think saying stuff like that is uncool. It isn't. We all need to be reminded that we are loved and appreciated. Certainly, Grandma and I have no trouble telling you how much we love you. We are proud of your academic and athletic achievements and your good nature. I don't know what we did to deserve you four boys, but we aren't giving you back.

Love,
Pa