

Good-Bye, Dad

Harold Goldstein, 1917–1997

I sat down to write this editorial about my father, Harold Goldstein, as he approached his 80th birthday in October. I had meant it to be a celebration of his nearly 65 years in the machine tool business. Unfortunately, on August 26, as I was working on it, my father passed away after a long battle with emphysema. This editorial has now become a memorial as well as a celebration.

In many ways, my father's story was that of his generation. He entered his teenage years at the beginning of the Depression and spent his young manhood in a world shattered by war. He had to leave high school in his second year to earn money to help support his family and never knew the easy security that comes from having (or at least believing one has) a guaranteed lock on one's fair share of the good things in life.

But these early experiences strengthened him. Along the way, he made sure his own children had some of the important things he'd missed in the formative stages of his life; not so much material things, although he took care of that as well, but a strong sense of the importance of family, togetherness, love and caring.

He was self-taught. He turned himself into a very well-read, articulate individual, and his knowledge of accounting, business law, sales and marketing came on the job. In 1950, he struck out on his own from the business he ran with his father and founded Cadillac Machinery.

Dad also earned the trust and respect of his colleagues. Along with his father, he was one of the founding members of the Machinery Dealers National Association (MDNA) and became its national president in 1967-8. Later, in 1971 he was awarded the organization's Randolph K. Vinson Award for outstanding contributions to the industry. But he was particularly proud that he, with no formal education, was selected to represent the machine tool industry and the MDNA to give testimony before the House Ways and Means Commission with respect to the Investment Tax Credit.

He placed a tremendous importance on education as a tool to help us move through our lives, and he always stressed that importance to his children.

And it wasn't just "book learning" he impressed on my brothers and sister and me. In spite of all his early disadvantages and the hardships he faced during his formative years, there were certain admirable personal truths he lived out and taught his children, lessons which have helped to give my life some focus and direction. . .

. . . Your Word Is Your Bond. . . Be Scrupulously Honest. . . Don't Be Just A Taker In Life; Give Back As Well. . . It's Easy To Write a Check to a Charity; It's Harder, But More Useful, to Give Your Time, Experience and Talent. . . Fight For What You Believe and Stand Up For What You Think Is Right, Even If It's Not Popular. . . You Can't Be Successful If You Work Only 40 Hours a Week. . . Your Company Doesn't Pay Your Salary; Your Customers Do. Without Them, You Don't Have A Job or A Business. . .

To help his children to have a wider vision of any given situation, my dad would constantly tell us, "You don't know what you don't know."

Throughout my life, I have found this last statement to be particularly insightful. It's taught me to look beneath the surface of situations; to assume that, most of the time, there's more going on than first meets the eye; that things are generally deeper and more complex than they first appear. It's helped me to avoid making superficial judgments, not to be too cocky too early in the game and to do my homework.



Harold and his wife, Susan.

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PUBLISHER'S PAGE

Working with and for my dad, I learned about industriousness, leadership, tenacity, ambition, self-confidence and perseverance. Dad could be a tough boss, but he was a fair one, and I was fortunate to have mostly his praise and admiration as I went through my own career.

He provided a tower of strength for our companies, Cadillac Machinery and Randall Publishing. Even after he was no longer strong enough to come into the office, he had a seemingly inexhaustible supply of interest and enthusiasm for the business. I spoke to him nearly every day, and he always had the same questions: What did we buy today? What did we sell? What new projects were we working on?

And he had the same kind of interest and concern for the larger industry and for both our immediate and extended families. He was a patriarch in the truest and best sense of the word.

The end of his life, like the beginning, was not easy, but even when he was quite ill, he continued to teach us by example. He put his affairs in order quietly and efficiently so his family would be spared the burden of tying up the loose ends. He called those close to him together to say his good-byes, an act of closure that's been deeply meaningful to me these past few weeks. He met his end with a courage, grace and dignity that made me even prouder to be his son. His job was done, he was rightfully proud of what he accomplished, and he went in peace.

Once this summer, reflecting on the number of his family and friends throughout the world who called or came to visit with him, he said, "I guess I did something right."

Dad, you did so many, many things right. We're going to miss you.



Michael Goldstein
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief