



## CHRISTMAS 2004

As Christmas approaches and as age creeps up on me, I begin to reflect over where we have been and how we got here.

I was reminded by Tom Brokaw's retirement of his great book, "The Greatest Generation". The reason it came to mind, I guess, was thinking about my Dad and his experiences in World War II. He was a Marine in the South Pacific, wounded in action and awarded the Purple Heart among other decorations. The sacrifices made by his generation allow us to enjoy the freedoms we know today.

I did not always have the best relationship with my Dad. I was a strong headed, independent soul and we had many disagreements. There is an old saying, "once a Marine, always a Marine". That applied to my Dad, he was a tough taskmaster so we butted heads.

I finally grew up and my Dad mellowed some with age. We got to where we could genuinely have a good time together. I miss him a lot. He was a big bear of a man, loud and deep voiced but totally devoid of ego or self consciousness. I think he really got a kick out of life and took great delight in the trials and tribulations of watching his kids grow up. He kept us more or less on the straight and narrow and when we screwed up, he came down hard. The three of us have turned out all right and we have him to thank for it.

As I have watched the difficulties of war graphically shown on TV every night, it reminded me of what Dad must have gone through slogging it out with our enemy on remote islands so far away. My Dad is truly a hero in my eyes for so many things. He took great care of Mom, expected the best from us and worked very hard to provide for his Family. He fought bravely alongside his fellow Marines and thank God, came home to his Family and Friends. I am very thankful he did, and was so much a part of my life and who I became.

I'm sure my three Sons would say I was a hard taskmaster too, but they are all great young men. I can't begin to say how proud I am of them all, they delight me no end. That's the way it should be I think.

We have been so blessed, Patti and I. We will celebrate Christmas this year with many of our extended Family. The house will be full. There will be children in the house for Santa. There will be many wonderful aromas coming from Patti's kitchen.

Thank you Lord for a wonderful life!

Grant Rader & Family

