

# Memories of Robert Nicholson

As told to Bernadette Leith about her Grandfather

Couple of thoughts from Chris Nicholson Sutphin

He loved ginger ale, never tasted coca cola or coffee in his life:. He loved sweets and was the only person I knew who actually buttered his donuts!!!

Athletically he was an excellent tennis player and also played softball on a team for Texaco. As a boy he caddied golf and actually won the caddy's golf tournament. I spent a lot of time growing up throwing the ball with a game of catch with him in the yard on South Brett St. and playing tennis at the courts at Texaco.

He was a bombardier during World War II in the air force and spent 5 years stationed in England during the war. So did Paul Connelly, his friend from Beacon and that was where Paul met Mary.

He loved having all the latest equipment and was the first to buy a transistor radio; he was the first in Beacon to sign up for cable TV. He had a reel to reel tape recorder that we all had to recite on and sing and play the piano and count to 10 in Spanish on.

He took piano lessons when we did but got very frustrated because he practiced more than the rest of us but never could get the left hand correct with the exception of Beautiful Dreamer which he played again and again (it only had two notes in the left hand),

He liked logic, word problems and was very good in Math.

He liked teasing people and jokes. He taught your mother and Uncle John how to play chess and used to belong to a chess club.

He and Grandma went to every library in the Hudson Valley and got books out of them. he loved to read.

He and Grandma used to sit on the front porch together every night after supper; Grandma drank a cup of coffee. Me, your mother (Eileen) and Aunt Kathy did the dishes and Uncle John emptied the garbage. Then my father and Grandma used to take a drive down Main Street. Guess what he used to call Comma Judy "KNOT HEAD!!" but he liked her a lot.

One of my fondest memories was going to the cemetery with him in Beacon after my grandmother died. He and grandma had decided to buy the plot right in front of them. He said "watch this" and he did a little dance/jig on top of his future grave. He said now you'll be able to say that you saw me dancing on my grave!!

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Couple of thoughts from John Nicholson V

I can remember helping him build the back extension to the house on South Brett St., don't know the year, Grandma or Eileen might, but after working all day, somehow I got around to asking

for money for a yo-yo. I remember him saying, "You worked hard today, I guess it worth a \$1.00".

I always remember him saying, "Do what you want to do for a living, money isn't everything. I don't think he liked his job that much. I have always lived that way, my back account proves it.

Another thing he always said, probably after I got in trouble a little, "you are judged by the company you keep".

I can remember getting pulled from a CYO basketball game because it was time for my piano lesson, I wasn't happy about that.

I remember going down to "help" him on Sunday morning at Van tines newspaper store. Mostly it was so I could read the comics and then occasionally I would be told to bring up a batch of papers from the back.

I had an early morning paper route that required me getting up around 5 am. I would set my alarm and go out and do my run. Sometimes he would shut my alarm off and let me sleep and he would then start my route for me and then come back and wake me up to finish it. He always told me to wake him if it was raining and he would drive me around. Most of the time he was up, but I do remember a time when he wasn't up and it was raining and I can remember sheepishly calling in and waking him to tell him it was raining.

Your Great Grandma lived next door, Grandpa's mother, and we would go over all the time and bring in the paper or what not. I can remember being upstairs in her bedroom and she was yelling at me for no reason, I went home crying and your Grandfather asked me what was wrong and I told him, I remember him saying it was all right and he went over to see her. I think she was probably a little out of her mind with sickness around that time.

I can remember him being sad when his friend Bobby Brown got killed. He told me it was at a railroad crossing. Later on I was led to believe alcohol had something to do with it also.

I can remember picking apples and sticking some extra's in the side pockets of the car, as told to by both parents. (stealing)

I can remember being the remote control for the TV and the "get my apple" for him guy.

No one was allowed to speak during The FBI TV show. He watched very little TV and he wanted absolute quite during "his" show.

I remember him always spooning out the baked potatoes for everyone and mixing it with butter. He would eat the skins.

I do remember the back side of his hand, not often but enough to know he had one.

I remember him giving a \$2.00 bill to buy something at a Fermbrook Farm store, and the clerk thinking it was phony.

I remember sitting on the front porch during lighting storms, to this day I still like to sit out and watch the storm.

One time when he was in the hospital I took "Nick" the dog and put a Seeing Eye hardness on him, Sue and I and Nick got in to see him. He enjoyed that.

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Couple of thoughts from Eileen Nicholson Leith

Well at the risk of being repetitious, I also remember Daddy always wanting us to use a sharp pencil when he helped us with math. Also we always had a lot of scrap paper around and were encouraged to use as much as we needed. (My kids will probably recall I am the same way when I helped them with homework).

We made many trips to Mr. Rodriguez' apple orchard. Once I tried yellow delicious and found I liked them so daddy always had him throw some extra yellow delicious in.(probably another maneuver to get free apples) To this day, I prefer that flavor of all apples. I do not remember "stealing" extra apples like the older children seem to remember having to do. A rainy Sunday would be the optimum day for a ride to Mr. Rodriguez' with the cigar or pipe smells in a car with the window closed. Remember I always had to ride up front since there were 6 of us so I probably had the most second hand smoke exposure. Daddy also liked to impress us with blowing smoke rings so we got a little extra cancer blown at us!!

I remember having to go up to Vassar Hospital when Daddy would be in and we would have to hang around the lobby (Unattended no less!!) but we would be allowed to go in the coffee shop for a sandwich (we must have been there hours for that to happen!!). I learned quickly to tell them no mayo on my ham sandwich.

When he was in the VA hospital once with neuropathy, he would not let us come up to the floor to visit since I guess he felt it was not appropriate for young kids to see these vets hanging out of wheelchairs etc. So he would always meet us outside for a visit. I only remember him being in the VA once. The rest of the time I think it was Vassar. No need to remind everyone of the time he had it in his mind to escape from Vassar in the middle of the night (the drugs must have been doing funny things to his mind) so he did a change out of his hospital clothes in the hall stairwell and hitchhiked as far as Wappinger Falls. He did get one car to stop that had "hippies" in it and the guy asked him if he would pick him up if he was hitchhiking and Daddy said no so the guy rode off. Once he got to Wappinger, he walked into the police station to ask to use the phone to call mommy and I guess they saw his arm bracelet from the hospital and realized he had escaped. I am sure she was not too happy to get that call in the middle of the night.

One time he was in the hospital the same time as Kathy (she had a ruptured cyst and had an operation). Of course he had to go back and forth from his floor to hers to check up on her. Our kids do not realize how lucky they are we inherited the Olivieri healthy genes and not the sickly Nicholson ones.

Daddy always used to call Jeannie "19" because one year she had a t-shirt that had 19 on it and after that, that was all he would ever call her.

Daddy liked to put butter on everything--cookies, cake, and apple pie. Of course at our house we used on margarine. That was why it was such a treat to go visit Grandma and Uncle Jack, she would make you toast (protein bread which now sounds so healthy but we did not realize it) with the real butter on it.

He did have a sweet tooth. Even one of his last few days alive, he wanted us to stop at the Fishkill Bake shop and buy apple turnovers and we did.

When I got Missy (you know I really had to put on a hard sale to get her--sure it was him that agreed and not Mommy), he erected a fence the first night out of big cement blocks that would keep her in an enclosure until he made something better the next day (No one kept dogs in the house in those days, even a 6 week old puppy). Well she knocked that down and was down the street visiting the Morans in the middle of the night. Well the next day he made some other enclosure and announced man is smarter than dog. Well she got out of that so the next day we got a bigger better enclosure. I remember this went on about 3 nights until she finally was secure. Each day he would announce, Man is smarter than dog!!! At first, Missy was only allowed in the enclosure. Well pretty soon her area was enlarged bigger and bigger and before you know it, she had the entire side yard.

I learned to play chess from Daddy. A few times he would take me to the Cold Spring Library where he was involved in a chess club. The first time I went, I was probably about 9 or 10 and he matched me up with some teen age boy who looked disgusted to have to play me. Well I beat him so that shut him up.

I think Kathy and I must get our love of detective stories from Daddy. I remember he used to bring home Detective magazines. Not sure if he ripped the covers off because he "helped himself to them at Van Tines and they needed to save the covers to get credit for them" or if he ripped the covers off because they usually had a scantily clad woman stretched across the cover who had been murdered.

Once Billy and I started going out, he seemed to enjoy renewing his friendship with Bill Leith. They reminisced about the old days growing up together. Bill lived in many different houses in the same neighborhood. I think Daddy might have been friendlier with Bill's brother who had moved to Ca. Daddy really liked Anne's cooking. She would make the most delicious apple pies. All we ever knew about apple pies were the way Grandma made them with no or very little sugar (one of them at least tried to control his diabetes) and once he tasted Anne's pies and admired them, she always made sure he had some.

Daddy enjoyed teasing Anne Leith about certain baseball players. She hated Pete Rose and he would bring his name up often.

Daddy did drink skim milk, but not the kind you buy in the store. He would buy this powdered milk that every night after supper we had to mix up. I think it was a quart of water and 1 1/3 cups of powdered milk. I know if I smelled the powder today blindfolded I would recognize it. It was pretty gross. The rest of us would drink some combination of the powdered and milk that was bought in the store.

Daddy was known to curse from time to time. You knew it was time to lay low if he was yelling out "Damn it to Hell". Not quite sure what triggered that but you did not want to hang around and find out.

Daddy had a shamrock tattooed on his forearm (anyone remember if it was left or right?) and it said Eric Go Bragh (or something like that which meant Ireland Forever).

We all took piano lessons but as Chris said, he could not get the hang of the left hand so he stopped and I started. Kathy turned out to be a lost cause and was allowed to quit early on. I had

to hang in there until finally Mr. Detloff died and i was allowed to stop. He always wanted to hear us play but I think especially like Chris' playing since she really had the most talent. One Tuesday (I think) a month, Mommy would go to St. Roccas for her monthly meeting and I was encouraged by Daddy to bake. I do remember asking him what type of sugar I should use for sugar cookies and between us we decided confectionary was the appropriate one (wrong!). But then again, once he slapped the butter on, I sure they tasted just like the correct ones. I don't think he really liked choc. chips too much because usually when i would make a batch of them, I would keep some of the batter without chips to make them plain for him. Daddy did like the different, newest gadgets. He was the first to sign up for cable TV in beacon. I remember him grumbling that he paid to sign up (we got terrible TV reception with an antenna) and when Uncle Jack finally got a TV and signed up, he signed up in conjunction with Washington's birthday and he got a cherry pie for signing up. One time we found a dog and we were allowed to keep it (on the front porch--go figure that one out) until the owner claimed him/her. Not sure how we finally got the owner to claim her but I believe we had this dog 2 nights. I do remember her name was Cotton and she was claimed by someone affiliated with the Salvation Army. One last thought. I got my love of doing puzzles from daddy. If I was working on a jigsaw puzzle, when I was not looking he would put a piece in his pocket. Then when I was just about done and looking all over for the piece, he would come along and say, I see you needed my help to finish your puzzle. He liked logic puzzles like I do. I am sure once I close, I will think of more.

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Couple of thoughts from Kathy Nicholson Youngs

Here are some of my memories of grandpa I remember him working on Sundays at Van Tines and bringing home a half gallon of Holland Hall ice cream for dessert on Sundays. We usually had some kind of macaroni Sundays lunch and he would tie a dishtowel around his neck so the sauce wouldn't splatter his shirt/ He liked to smoke cigars and would some times blow the smelly smoke at you cause it did smell (talk about bad second hand smoke) He did try to get his pilots license in the war. He could do it all except land the plane (that could be a problem) He was a gunner in the ball shaped thing that hung off the bottom of the plane. He said they ate one time at some farm house and when he found out he ate rabbit he went outside and threw up I also remember hiding the apples in the side compartments of the car. I think it was a green station wagon. I don't really remember getting swatted by him. Grandma took care of that, I was a bit mouthy. We use to go for Sunday rides in the car and sometimes would stop at King Kone ice cream stand. One time as he was walking to the stand we started yelling out the window changes of what we wanted. He got back in the car and drove off. When he helped you with your homework the first thing he would say is get a clean piece of paper. We have plenty of paper in this house. He was good at math and took course in it also. He liked the game master mind and we would play it. When Judy would come over if she smoked and he was in one of his quitting stages, he would give her grief. He use to play pinochle with a few guys from work I remember Bobby Brown and maybe Walt Powell If you wanted something he would be a better person to ask to buy something. Grandma was more inclined to say no. He did like to spend

money. He took a loan out for U, John for his motorcycle from the credit union at Texaco. Uncle John paid him back, but I think he only paid the credit union back a little at a time. He would spend the money. He never defaulted on the loan just didn't pay it back as quick. Wendy remembers him standing in the kitchen and cutting a big piece of sausage to eat.

Couple of thoughts from Judy Stella

First of all I remember when he started to go with Aunt Rose. I was not happy with him and when he came to call I would do my best to sit between them. I was three or four at the time. I remember saying "Bob is here"

He would often call me Knot Head. I think maybe that was his sign of affection for me. He loved to tease me. Like I said I was not happy with him because he was taking my aunts affection and time away from me.

Also I remember a time when I first starting driving I was on main street and this guy started to follow me and I couldn't get rid of him. No one was home at my house and I didn't want him to know where I lived so I went to grandma's house. Your dad was home and I told him what was happening and he went outside and got in his car and went riding around looking for him. I don't know if he found him or not but I didn't have any problems with him again.

Also I remember your dad worked with a guy named Jack Dyson(I think that was his last name) well where ever I would go and if I saw Jack he would always go back and tell your dad where and when he saw me. It got to be a joke with me and my friends and we use to say "Watch out for Jack"

I also remember his love for butter which was some thing I hadn't seen until he came into the family. We rarely ate butter so we knew he was the "American" in the family.