

Reflections on My Father – Mike Zyzniewski

There are a number of people in our lives that shape and guide who we will become, and bring out the qualities of who we are. My Father was one of those people in my life, and I believe that to be the case for 100's of others as well. Early in my life, my Father showed our family the wonder of the outdoors in the high mountains of Colorado. He led a church youth group and our family on an annual, week long, backpacking trip into the Holy Cross Wilderness. This was an amazing place to be as young kids with the ability to hike, explore and catch wild trout in the lakes and rivers.

His love of the outdoors and sharing it with others was a part of his entire life. Even at 83 he managed to go out hunting and fishing despite the pain in his knees from an accident while hunting on Pikes Peak, a lifetime of use, and dwindling physical strength. In his later years he took up whistling softly to help take his mind off of the pain so he could focus on the things he loved doing. I'm relieved that he isn't in pain anymore and I will miss my regular trips with him into the Colorado wilderness to go hunting and fishing together.

My Father was an amazing story teller, teacher and Minister. He helped us understand God and to see his work in all things. As a young adult I remember telling him the I felt closest to God when I was in the outdoors enjoying all that God had created. Even when we didn't understand why something was happening in our lives, he would help us to see that there was an elegant plan at work that we just couldn't fully see yet. I find comfort in this, and can see a little part of this elegant plan even in the loss of our home and worldly positions in the Marshal fires. Perspective is important, and the loss of my Father has helped me see how insignificant these other losses are. If it had not been for the fire, I would not have spent a week with my Father or been there to

receive the advice and care that he always had for us. I also would not have been there with him in the last moments of his life to hear his final words or to comfort my Mother. There is an elegant plan that God has for all of us and we occasionally are gifted to see a little part of it.

When my sister and I first talked in person, after my Dad's death, she said "Dad had an amazing full life!" He did, and we were all blessed by the time he spent with us. We celebrate his life in this service and by sharing our memories of him! We will miss him and will take comfort that he is still with us in spirit as a part of him lives on in all of us through his words, his Love, and his kindness throughout our lives.