

## JAMES F BORDEN

1926-2006

*[Delivered before 200 family and friends on May 1, 2006.]*

I'd like to welcome all of you on behalf of my mother and the rest of the family and thank you for caring.

Each of us has our own memories of times spent with dad, and we are here today to remember them. And while you remember him in your own way, I would like to share with you my perspective on who he was.

We lost dad a few days ago, but he has been sick for almost two years now, and while his body was tired and weakened, his mind was sharp and his wit was quick, right up to the end. Though he fought two major cancers, he never gave up hope. He always planned for the next day. Even the day before he died he was planning to go home. However, on Wednesday he suffered a stroke and passed quickly and without pain. While it is sad to let him go, in our hearts we know that he lived a good and rich life and given the circumstances - it was time.

As you know, dad's father Herbert died in 1931 when dad was only 5 years old. His mother, Clara, went to school after Herbert's death to learn bookkeeping so she could work to feed the family – after all, these were difficult times – these were the depression years. At age 17, and right out high school in 1944, dad enlisted in the Navy and served on the USS Missouri and he saw combat in the Pacific. You may remember that the Missouri was the ship on which the Japanese surrender was signed in 1945 – he was a witness to history. After the war, dad took advantage of the GI bill to attend business school and in 1950 he began his 37 year banking career, most if it at the Union Savings Bank. He was committed to the bank and he advanced over the years holding many positions before retiring as executive vice president in 1986. While I was too young to know much about his career at the bank, there is one story that I remember that demonstrated his commitment to his job. It is a story that has come back to me many times. It was winter time in the late 1960's. We had a huge overnight snowstorm. The roads were not plowed, and schools were closed. Dad got up and put on his winter clothes to head out to the bank. I asked how he was going to get there and why was he even going – no one in their right mind would be going to the bank that day! He said people expect the bank to be open. It is a matter of trust. If people can't depend on banks then they won't put their money in them. He told me about past banking crises and how they were really a crisis of confidence – and without people's trust and confidence, you have nothing. In any case - he walked to Fall River that day and opened the bank. That example of doing more than was really necessary to meet the needs of others and the need to establish confidence and trust and to be reliable led me to make similar decisions that have served me well in my work and in my life.

Shortly after retiring in 1986, he and my mother began spending winters in Florida and summers here – and they golfed year round! He had a long retirement that was, for the most part, healthy, and enjoyable and one we would hope for ourselves.

Dad was a member of what Tom Brokaw called the “greatest generation” – The greatest generation lived through the depression, fought World War II and then built the strong post war economy that

moved this nation into its status as a world power. Brokaw described not just a generation – but he describes perfectly, my father’s life.

According to Brokaw, the greatest generation possessed core values that were supposedly forged as a result of the depression and as a result of the war. They valued honesty and hard work, they saved their money, and they valued family and education and practiced their faith. They participated in community organizations, all of which, strengthened the fabric of the community.

But I know that the greatest generation did not come by these core values all of a sudden, or as a result of just the deprivation of the great depression or the strife of WWII. I know that they were really the continuation of the character and the values that were passed on by many preceding great generations in this country.

In fact, dad was a member of the 11<sup>th</sup> generation of Bordens in America. In 1803 the village of Fall River, then part of Freetown, consisted of only 18 families – and 9 of them were Bordens. And at that time in 1803, the Bordens had already been in the area for 165 years. Richard and Joan Borden, dad’s 8<sup>th</sup> great grandparents, settled in Portsmouth shortly after the Anne Hutchinson party in 1638. That group was fiercely independent in the practice of their faith and in their desire for self-rule. They wanted nothing to do with the government and church in Boston. Because of their antagonism toward the authority of the time, they were called Antinomians, and later they became Quakers. The first several generations of Bordens in America were Quakers.

Portsmouth, where they settled, is known for something else – it is known as the birthplace of Democracy in America, because of the Portsmouth Compact and the early democratic practices that took hold there. And our Borden ancestors were a big part of that.

Now, counting my granddaughter Grace, there have been 14 generations of Bordens spanning 368 years in America. There are many interesting stories that I don’t have time to tell you now. But there are many that demonstrate how our Borden ancestors’ contributed to their religion, to their community and to their government and the military at all levels.

We should be proud of our ancestors, starting with dad. We should keep their stories alive for our children. We should live by their core values and we should hold our children to those values. To do so is necessary to ensure that there is a next “greatest generation”.

Dad was great, for his everyday contributions to us – his family and friends – and to his country through his military service and to his community through his work at the bank. Today we reflect on what he was; what he gave us, - and we should also take time to reflect on what we shall give back to our children, to our community and to our country.

May God bless Dad, and all of you whom he loved.

Stephen Borden