



Craig's Journey

Craig's life reminds me of something I have come to believe more deeply as the years have passed: none of us arrive in this world with a blank slate. We inherit gifts from those who came before us, but we also inherit wounds. Sometimes those wounds are visible, and sometimes they are hidden so deeply that even the people carrying them struggle to understand their influence.

Craig's father belonged to that remarkable generation of Americans who answered the call during World War II. He served his country honorably and was part of the generation that carried the weight of battles such as Midway, one of the defining moments in our nation's history. He was a good man who loved his family deeply, and Craig admired him immensely. In many ways, Craig's own decision to enter the United States Navy was an effort to honor the man he loved and respected.

But children inherit more than stories. They inherit strengths, values, fears, and sometimes wounds. Craig inherited all of those things. Like many men of that era, his father carried burdens that were not always spoken aloud, and some of those burdens found their way into the next generation.

Craig served his country as a submariner, a role demanding courage, discipline, and sacrifice.

During that service, he experienced events that would affect him for the rest of his life. Although he was not physically injured, he was deeply wounded by what he witnessed following a devastating fire. He was tasked with carrying the bodies of fellow sailors, an experience few people can truly comprehend. Such experiences do not simply disappear when military service ends. They become part of a person's story and often shape the years that follow.

Like many people who carry deep wounds, Craig struggled to find a way to live with them. Some of the choices he made along the way made life harder than it needed to be. Yet every struggle exists within the context of a larger story, and Craig was never defined solely by his difficulties.

The Heart of the Man

As a psychologist, I have spent much of my life studying trauma. Trauma explains many things. It helps us understand people. But trauma never tells the whole story. If all we see are the wounds, we miss the person. Craig was far more than the wounds he carried.

What defined Craig was the goodness that remained within him despite them. If you knew Craig, you knew his generosity. He would give you the shirt off his back. If you needed help, he would help. If you were hurting, he cared. If he had something and you needed it more, there was a good chance it would become yours.

One of my favorite memories speaks to that generosity. There were times when Craig had very little money himself. Yet one Christmas, when most people would have understandably scaled things back, Craig went out of his way to make Christmas special for Ashley and Gregory. The gifts he gave were remarkably generous given his circumstances. Looking back, I realize it was never really about the gifts. It was about love. He wanted them to know they mattered. He wanted them to feel cherished.

There was also something uniquely special about Craig's relationship with Ashley. Some relationships are difficult to explain. There was simply a bond there. Through the years, Craig was in her corner. He believed in her, encouraged her, and stood beside her. He celebrated her successes and remained supportive during difficult seasons. His loyalty never wavered.

That spirit of generosity was woven into who he was. It was part of what he inherited from his father, and it remained present throughout his life. He loved deeply. He cared deeply. And in the end, what mattered most to him was not himself, but the people he loved.

The Final Gift

In the final days of his life, I had the privilege of sitting with Craig and talking about what mattered most. What struck me was not fear. What struck me was gratitude. Craig knew his life had been complicated. He knew he had experienced both triumphs and failures, joys and

regrets. Yet when he reflected on his life, he said something simple that I will never forget:

“I had a good run.”

There was wisdom in those words. There was honesty in those words. And there was peace in those words. They did not deny the hardships he endured. Rather, they revealed a man who had reached a place of acceptance and gratitude for the life he had been given.

Even more importantly, his thoughts were centered on the people he loved. He spoke with deep affection about his sister Leah. He spoke with pride about his niece and nephew. His concern was not what he was losing. His concern was what he was leaving behind in the hearts of those he loved.

And that brings me to what I believe was Craig's final gift.

In his final days, Craig showed us what courage can look like. Not loud courage. Not dramatic courage. Quiet courage. The courage to face reality. The courage to acknowledge both the beauty and the brokenness of one's life. The courage to express love openly. The courage to leave this world with gratitude instead of bitterness.

When a person reaches the end of life and chooses gratitude over resentment, love over fear, and peace over despair, that becomes a gift to everyone who remains behind. Craig gave us that gift. He reminded us that a meaningful life is not a perfect life. It is a life in which we continue to love, continue to show up, and continue to care for others despite our imperfections.

Today we say goodbye to a brother, an uncle, a veteran, a friend, and a man who carried more than many of us ever knew. We honor both his service and his struggles. We remember his kindness, his generosity, and the love he gave so freely. And we give thanks that in the final chapter of his life, he reminded us all of what matters most.

Thank you, Craig, for your life. Thank you for your love. Thank you for your courage. And thank you for the final gift.

Fair winds and following seas, Craig. Your watch is ended. Rest well, brother. We will carry your memory forward with gratitude, love, and respect.