

Friday, May 20, 2005

*Remarks by Angus Davis at the Memorial Service of Robert Spink Davis*

I was the first of Grampa's grandchildren; he was 58 when I was born. This was a blessing because there are a lot of interesting things a 58 year-old guy can do that an 80 year-old is simply unable to do with his grandson. Grampa would row me out to Ding Dong Bell, a large buoy off Poppasquash Point, and let me climb onto it and swing all around to make the bell ring, all while hoping BB was not watching lest we get into trouble.

I have many such wonderful stories to share, but today I would rather speak with you about how Grampa will affect my life going forward in a more profound way.

A few years ago I learned a lesson I want to share with you today about something called the theory of the Psychic Contract. Basically the Psychic Contract talks about fathers and sons, and how sons are programmed to want to do as well or better than our fathers. There are several obvious measuring sticks for one's life success in pursuit of fulfilling your Psychic Contract, such as educational achievement (what college did you get into) or career growth (how much money to you earn), etc. The Psychic Contract is a fixture in modern society, and the subject of many books on relationship technology and the studies of eastern religions in places such as India.

Let me give you an example. Grampa Spink went to Andover, Yale and Harvard Law. His son, my father, went to Andover, Yale and Harvard Law. This is an example of fulfilling one's Psychic Contract. It wasn't really that simple, because Dad's diploma was left blank and this was the source of much consternation in his family. But eventually he handed in some late papers within a few months of graduation and the diploma was signed and the Psychic Contract in his mind with Grampa Spink was fulfilled. So you get the idea. Do as well or better than your dad.

Right around the time I was thrown out of Andover and subsequently decided I would not even go to college, it would be apparent to nearly anyone that my Psychic Contract was shaping up to be a real doozie.

Yet despite these missteps, Grampa Spink was a consistent supporter, even with my apparent wayward pull on the family's otherwise good record. Of course he was concerned, but he was very tolerant, even offering to invest in a small company in East Greenwich where I had found an after school job and decided to work for a year in lieu of college. The investment ended up as a washout.

Why wasn't Grampa ashamed of my business failure? I was already an educational failure, and now the business was a failure too... I was certain I could not measure up.

Undeterred, Grampa Spink was supportive and offered his advice when I went off to work in California. And when I found great success in California, Grampa was proud, but the tone of his letters hadn't really changed much from the times when I was falling short of the mark others were measuring their lives against.

In truth, Grampa never cared whether I was a mountain or a molehill on that yardstick so many others use, because he had little use for it. He considered a person on the basis of his "goodness," for lack of a better word, rather than his wealth, his social standing, the

color of his skin, his nationality, etc. Grampa Spink didn't care terribly if I were filing an S1 to take my company public on the stock market or a Chapter 11 to go bankrupt. He cared only if I was a good person. A big measure of goodness in his eyes was driven by one's commitment to love and care for one's family, and by character traits such as integrity, honesty, tolerance and kindness.

Quickly, Grampa began to shatter my concept of my own Psychic Contract. It was becoming increasingly clear to me that for me, the ultimate Psychic Contract could never be achieved through any dollar figure of financial success or any number of column inches of positive publicity in the Wall Street Journal.

Grampa Spink opened my eyes to this. The yardsticks so many of us use to set goals for our own lives are often set to the wrong scales. His yardstick had measurements like: years of faithful, loving marriage to Gramma, years of loyal brotherhood to Pete, decades of parenthood to two loving children. Countless: children, cousins, friends, colleagues helped. Dozens: worthy causes served. Coming to understand the way Grampa Spink measured his life was an awakening for me, and I remember pondering...

How can you help your friends? How can you better love your family? How can you seek to understand God? How can you help those less fortunate who don't have someone like a Grampa Spink in their lives?

I found answers in the lessons Grampa Spink taught me, best summarized by these two passages from the New Testament:

Jesus said, "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all." *Mark 10:43-44 (NASB)*

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." *Philippians 2:3-4 (NASB)*

Grampa's success along the measure of some popular yardsticks was purely incidental to his career as a good person. Speaking for the grandkids, I can tell you that Kendall and I will both forever live in awe of Grampa's goodness as we each try to live up to the example he set for us – quite a challenging "Psychic Contract." Grampa has left us with a very tough act to follow, and we will always be grateful for having learned from him those things that truly matter most, in this world and in the next.

Thank you.