

REFLECTIONS ON A NOBLE SOUL

Seeds for new life and understanding

It seems like yesterday, though it's been exactly a week since I accompanied my sister-in-law Grace and their children to the funeral home in Rochester, Michigan. Through varying waves of tears, we caringly helped one another move the process forward to yield to my brother Forrest a resting place attended by proper ceremony.

The whole affair turned out in its way as a work of art. From visitation day, to reminiscences, to the honor-guard rifle salute—Forrest was a Vietnam vet—I can't conceive of a better release for a finer being. So many friends and loved ones came, thank you so much. Grace, my nephews and nieces, my mother, and sister were all so wonderful. Here are some parting words that have been put into print:

- An obit I wrote
- Remembrances from his daughter Brenna
- A eulogy I penned when first notified of his passing

I mentioned to someone that Potere-Modetz did such a fine job that if I weren't doing cryonics (freezing) for myself, I'd give them my business! But I don't want to dwell on the generally satisfying details of the "American Way of Death" for this good man.

Before I forget, a memorial Website has been started, with the address ForrestSWright.com. Please wait a couple of weeks for postings.

During the ceremony and in the reception following, I found myself oddly rejuvenated and reenergized—ironic, considering Forrest had a disease that progressively depleted him. There were such signs of life all around: his grandchildren, friends long unvisited, and family peers including some formerly estranged now reconnected.

On Grace's side of the family, I was fortunate to have many positive political conversations. "We the People" seem to be staging a comeback, singing in the same voice for resurrection of democratic freedom. I felt like I'd wandered into the rebel camp on the set of the first Star Wars movie (Episode IV: A New Hope).

So where am I going with this?

My own story of rejuvenation, courtesy of my brother, is duplicated for every other friend or loved one of his, uniquely:

Forrest's son Cameron, heading to Romania for the Peace Corps, renewed his passion for helping others. Wesley, having just graduated from engineering, appears to be fast-tracked into test driving performance cars for Chrysler—I know he'll bring to the task Forrest's sensitivities to Nature.

Brenna runs a Web business that designs and sells maternity clothes; I feel in contemplating her father's tenderness, she's reinvigorated as part of the "new life" process. Elaine, an attorney in the Thumb area who often provides professional help to victims of state aggression, carries with her my brother's care for many of society's outcasts.

His wife Grace as she continues to track through management of an international corporation rededicates herself conscientiously to the ecology of commerce. So many of Forrest's extended family, all his friends from business and the university, are deeply moved by his loss to move forward with recommitted integrity. And the many students at Oakland University, and so many children, who looked up to him, are reinspired to do their best.

Of course, even with all these renewals going on, we'd rather have Forrest back!

I conclude this reflection back in my own crib, caused by something that happened the other day as I rested in the half-awareness between sleep and waking:

Once when Forrest and I were maybe 7 and 8, we had captured a bunch of fireflies in the backyard of our suburban Kansas City home. For some reason I felt they had to be let go, so I opened the jars and set them free. He was distraught. So in sympathy I drew with crayons my image of fireflies as they might appear back in the jar.

Well, as I'm lying there experiencing his loss, I feel once again I must do something analogous to representing the fireflies, something to bring him back into our lives.

I had been working on a 12-step program for "healing our world,"^[1] and I wanted to work it into my rewrite of *New Pilgrim Chronicles* where I describe what's happening in the Free State on the leading edge of the freedom movement. Catalyzed by Forrest's character, particularly his naturalism and love of children and animals, I reached an epiphany of sorts.

I jumped out of bed to record my thoughts on the 12 steps. I've only the seeds of them finished today. But for those interested in what's coming, you may click on the work in progress; I'm trying to make a correlation to chapters in the book as well as the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous—not exactly straightforward.

I'll call it something like *Ladder of the Firefly Restoration*.

[1] *Healing our World in an Age of Aggression*, by Mary Ruwart—A practical how-to manual on the free society, the best book yet on how a world of liberty works toward the health and well-being of everyone.