

Butler (Bob) Beattie, W9OIB - 1911-2003 Remembrances by his daughter, Irene

This is my view of my father, Butler or Bob Beattie. It is not possible summarize my feelings about Dad, or his life of 92 years in a brief few minutes, but I will share what I can. Many of you here knew Dad through encounters with an old man, who had quite a sense of humor and loved life. As a younger man he was both the same and a different person.

When I remember Dad, words like faithful, generous, reliable, skillful and enthusiastic come to mind. I think about both his love of people and of technology.

Dad took a very practical approach to religion. He saved his abstract thinking for things like radio theory. To him faith and action were inseparable. If you loved God, you worshipped regularly and followed God's directions to the best of your ability. He was the first person to point out to me, that God gave us the 10 commandments because God knew we would be happier if we lived this way.

He was a wonderful example to me, growing up, almost never missing Mass. Equally important to me was how he treated others. Dad tried to treat all he met with respect, even telemarketers. He said to remember that they were people doing their job and should be treated as such with politeness. He would share what he had with people. When I was very young we lived a semi-rural subdivision and he had a tractor used to cut weeds and plow. As a schoolteacher he had a long summer break, and I remember many summer days he spent cutting neighbors weeds or plowing neighbors gardens and although they may have tried to pay him, I don't think they ever succeeded. It did keep him (and us) up to date on the neighborhood news. He taught electronics for many years at Chicago Vocational High School, and had students from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds. Kids were always asking him for lunch money. Not wanting anyone to go hungry, but also not wanting to be scammed (so the money would be used for cigarettes or worse) his answer was always the same. He showed them his lunch and told them that they were welcome to half of it if they were hungry.

Dad was both reliable and skillful. He fixed things that were broken. Heck, it wasn't until high school that I understood there were actual repair people. I thought that when a family's furnace or car or water softener or TV broke, their dad just went out and got parts like mine did and fixed them. He was also good about dealing with car disasters. Mom was famous for getting the car stuck in the snow. The nicest thing about Dad is that he never made her feel bad, he just got the car unstuck.

Dad loved both people and technology, a strange combination to many, but he managed to combine these loves. During the depression, he had to quit his pre-med program at the University of Illinois due to lack of money. There were no jobs. He used that time to collect junk parts and built his first ham radio transmitter and receiver and became W9OIB. Now, many radio hams like to work contests and make as many contacts as they can. Not Dad. Certainly he enjoyed the thrill of talking to an unusual place, but to him it wasn't a really good contact unless they had exchanged life stories. Ham radio brought him many lifelong friends and much fun and oh yes, a few RF burns and lightning strikes. Radio was also his way of serving during Vietnam. at age 55, through the MARS (Military Affiliated Radio Service), which passed messages from the troops in Vietnam, to their family at home, in a timely manner. (Before email this was a needed and appreciated service.)

Butler (Bob) Beattie, W90IB - 1911-2003 Remembrances by his daughter, Irene

After the depression, Dad did finish his education. He worked 2nd shift for US Steel and completed his physics degree at the University of Chicago during the day. (During this time Mom and Dad managed to sneak in a courtship and marriage.) Fourteen years after his initial pre-med studies, he acquired his Bachelor of Science. He left the steel mills and began teaching vocational electronics. We know he was a successful teacher because of the number of students who kept in contact with him over the years. In fact one of the people we notified of his death was a student who had become a good friend. Having observed Dad's radio shack and workbench I don't think his success as a teacher was due to organizational skills. I believe he was a successful teacher because of his excellent knowledge and love of the subject he was teaching and his genuine liking of the students. He had an ability to give practical explanations of abstract ideas. He gave an excellent visual finger demo on how the scan on a TV worked. He used to give demonstrations of radio wavelength to his students by turning on a transmitter, and taking a fluorescent bulb and walking around the room holding it over each student's head. Sometimes it would light up and he would proclaim that student "bright" and if it didn't light the student would be "not bright". Of course this was followed with an explanation of how there was more energy in the crest of the radio wave, and how the light would light up one wavelength apart.

Dad had some progressive ideas. When he and Mom dated she didn't know how to drive a car, so he taught her. He would answer any questions I asked, and never made me feel there were things I shouldn't do or know about because I was female. He also encouraged self reliance. When he taught my sister Cathy, and also me to drive we weren't allowed to drive on our own until we showed him we could change a tire. I certainly now can see the wisdom in not wanting his young daughters stuck at the side of the road unless they had a tire iron in their hand. In my case he also put this skill to good use when it was time to take the snow tires off the car each winter.

I admired Dad and Mom for the way they stuck together through difficulties. Things like raising and making decisions, about my brother Frank, who is severely retarded and autistic (they hadn't even defined autism yet when Frank was little.) Things like Dad's heart attacks and Mom's breast cancer. I never doubted they loved each other very much. Dad said Mom was the best thing that ever happened to him, and that he was the luckiest man in the world. I'm happy he was so lucky for nearly 63 years of marriage, but I will miss him very much.