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## **All Things Are Passing Away**

The obituary column recently announced the passing of a very old friend of mine, Roger Bramel age 99. When I first enrolled at Science back in 1957, he was Dean of Men for the Junior College. As a student I never got to know him, since he taught algebra and chemistry, not needed for my English major. It was only after I joined the Science School staff after three years of high school teaching, that I got to know Roger because he was a friend of my mentor at science, Morgan Kjer.

Morgan I think was likely the one who got me that job at Science, since I did well in his Lit and Living Books courses. He opened the door to my priceless career, teaching the great stories, plays and poems I still adore.

In the course of time I began bumping into Roger during coffee breaks, and soon realized what an expert he was in gardening. Every February he had grow Lux blue lights in his office where he was starting seedlings. I was amazed that he could plant those dust grain size petunia seeds. I found them far to tiny for my clumsy hands. So over the years I picked his brain about gardening, and he found me a good source of fishing lore. Later we both got into tropical fish, and many other seasonal hobbies.

My first impression of Roger was very positive. He was very articulate, good natured, a great teller of anecdotes, well versed in many areas of life. I also found him very much a pursuer of excellence. He was a no-nonsense kind of guy. We agreed about most things, but didn't on others. I liked a little nonsense once in a while.

Incidentally, he mentioned attending the same high school in Superior Wis. as Bud Grant, the Viking coach, although Roger did not share my respect for Bud; he thought Bud was a less than brilliant student. I argued back that all of us have areas we're good at and others, like me and algebra, that we suck at. I've never lost my admiration for Bud Grant.

I wasn't part of Roger's inner circle of greatest generation high achievers he golfed bowled, or fished with: veterans men like Dick Haskell, Merle Robertson, Joe McLaughlin, who had come through the hell of WWII. Roger had been an engineer in an outfit charged with rebuilding bridges blown up by the retreating Germans. But Roger was mum about his war experiences. That was true of many returning vets who likely wanted to forget that whole nightmare.

Roger's passing recalled a scripture likening people to grass. So I asked the Holy Spirit, "Lord, what is that scripture about grass?" and for once I got a clear answer: Is. 40:7,8.) came to mind. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.// The grass withers; the flowers fade, because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it. Surely the people is grass; the grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our Lord will abide forever."

Reading further I found that chapter a gold mine of famous phrases: some from Handel's *Messiah*, another from *Jesus Christ Super Star*: "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord." And amazingly Isaiah ch. 40 ends with that promise that some day many of us may even "rise up on wings as eagles."

I came away from Roger's farewell celebration convinced that he and many others of his 'greatest generation' may be doing a little soaring already, because they've truly earned their wings. Trust in the Lord and He will make good every promise of hope.

Gene Pinkney 08-04-2024 for The Daily News