

FATHER CHRISTMAS: VAN SNOW- LIFE OF A SALESMAN

VAN LOUIS WAREGHEM SNOW- BORN FEBRUARY 23, 1930, THE YOUNGEST CHILD OF ISAAC NEWTON SNOW, A WORLD WAR ONE VETERAN FROM LYNCHBERG, VIRGINIA, AND INEZ THOMAS SNOW FROM BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI, IN ST. CLAIRSVILLE, OHIO. VAN HAD TWO SISTERS, BERNICE AND DORIS, AND THREE BROTHERS, ROBERT, FRANK AND WILLIAM. ON HIS MOTHER'S SIDE, VAN DESCENDED FROM A LONG LINE OF MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST FRENCH, SPANISH AND CREOLE PEOPLES. HIS ANCESTRY IS COLORFUL AND NOTABLE. ONE OF HIS GREAT GRANDFATHERS COMPOSED THE NATIONAL ANTHEM FOR A PRE-SWEDISH NATION. ANOTHER TRADED FURS WITH THE INDIANS AND TRANSLATED THEIR LANGUAGE FOR THE FRENCH. ONE ANCESTOR WAS A PRE-COLONIAL GEORGIA LEGISLATURE IN SAVANNAH.

VAN WAS A 7TH GENERATION DIRECT DECENDANT OF URBAIN BAUDREAU DEGRAVELINE OF FLANDERS, WHO WAS EMPLOYED BY THE KING OF FRANCE IN THE LATE 1600'S TO PROCURE THE FIRST SETTLEMENT OF MONTREAL CANADA, WHERE A STATUE NOW STANDS IN HIS HONOR. URBAIN'S SON, JEAN BAPTISTE BAUDREAU DIT GRAVELINE WAS COMMISSIONED BY THE EXPLORER D'IBERVILLE TO TRAVEL UP AND DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER FROM CANADA TO THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST WHERE HE WOUND UP ASSISTING D'IBERVILLE IN COLONIZING OLD MOBILE (FT. DELA CONDE MOBILE) AND DAUPHIN ISLAND. JEAN BAPTISTE HAD ALSO TAKEN AN INDIAN WOMAN FOR HIS WIFE. SHE WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A GREAT CHIEF, PERHAPS OF THE BILOXI OR PASCAGOULA INDIAN TRIBE.

GRAVELINE (JEAN BAPTISTE) LOST HIS SIGHT IN THE 1750'S, BUT NOT BEFORE HE UNSELFISHLY RENDERED EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE TO FRANCE. GOVERNOR VAUDREUIL PRAISED HIM TO MAUREPAS SAYING THAT HE HAD DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF "...SINCE HE HAS BEEN IN LOUISIANA IN THE DIFFICULT JOURNEYS THAT HE HAS UNDERTAKEN, BOTH TO MANAGE CERTAIN INDIAN NATIONS FOR US AND TO SUPPRESS THE INSOLENT OF SEVERAL OTHERS, HAVING MARCHED AGAINST THEM AT THE HEAD OF THE MILITIA, OF WHICH HE IS THE OLDEST CAPTAIN, WHENEVER WE HAVE FORMED AN ARMY TO FIGHT THEM."

VAN'S HOBBIES INCLUDED TAKING PHOTOS WITH BLACK AND WHITE FILM AND DEVELOPING THEM IN HIS OWN DARK ROOM WHILE STATIONED IN GERMANY AFTER WWII. HE ALSO LEARNED TO SPEAK FLUENT (?) GERMAN DURING HIS ARMY STINT. IT WAS HERE WHERE HE LED OVER ONE THOUSAND TROOPS TO SING FOR GENERAL EISENHOWER. VAN WAS A VERY GOOD SINGER, WITH A DEEP, RICH VOICE, OFTEN COMPARED TO NAT KING COLE. VAN LOVED TO TRAVEL. HIS LAST ROAD TRIP WAS A VISIT BACK TO NEW ORLEANS, HIS FAVORITE DESTINATION. HE WAS ABLE TO GO WHILE BLIND AND IN HIS WHEEL CHAIR ALONG WITH HIS WIFE LEAH AND DAUGHTERS NANCY AND MOLLY. THIS WAS PRE-KATRINA IN JUNE 2004. HE LOVED EVERY MINUTE OF IT!!!

HE DIED ON DECEMBER 5TH, 2005 FROM PNEUMONIA AND COMPLICATIONS RELATED TO HIS STRUGGLE WITH HEART DISEASE AND CANCER.

DECEMBER 5TH IS THE EVE OF THE TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC FEAST DAY OF ST. NICHOLAS, AND VAN SURELY WAS FATHER CHRISTMAS TO HIS FAMILY, ALL OF WHOM SPENT EVERY SINGLE CHRISTMAS EVE WITH HIM SINCE THEY WERE BORN, OR JOINED THE FAMILY, SINCE HE AND HIS WIFE LEAH HAD THEIR FIRST OF ELEVEN CHILDREN IN 1954. CHRISTMAS EVE, HE AND LEAH WOULD SERVE LASAGNA FOR 40 OR 50, AND VAN WOULD WEAR A RED TUXEDO JACKET, INSIST THAT ALL THE KIDS DRESS UP FOR THE EVENING, AND LEAD THEM IN CAROLS. THEN HE WOULD SING "CHESTNUTS ROASTING ON AN OPEN FIRE" TO ALL THE KIDS.

BORN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION, VAN SAW HIS FATHER SOON LOSE HIS JOB AS SALES MANAGER AT AN AUTOMOBILE AGENCY, AND THE FAMILY STRUGGLED FOR SEVERAL YEARS AS DID OUR COUNTRY. AT ONE POINT, THEY MOVED ONTO THE GROUNDS OF THE LOCAL CATHOLIC CHURCH WHEN ISAAC, A CONVERT, TOOK A JOB AS CUSTODIAN, IN ORDER TO FEED HIS FAMILY. INEZ, RAISED NEAR NEW ORLEANS, INSISTED ON THE CHILDREN'S RECEIVING A CATHOLIC EDUCATION, AND THIS MADE IT POSSIBLE. YOUNG VAN'S BOYHOOD HEROES WERE HIS DAD THE SALESMAN, HIS OLDER BROTHERS WHO SERVED IN WORLD WAR TWO, THE DEMOCRAT PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT, THE CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND NUNS HE CAME TO KNOW, AND THE FOOTBALL PLAYERS OF WHOM THEY SPOKE WHO PLAYED FOR THE FIGHTING IRISH OF NOTRE DAME. THESE EXPERIENCES SHAPED HIS LIFE.

HE ALSO LOVED THE POPULAR MUSIC OF THE DAY, AND HAD A RUN-IN WITH ONE OF THE NUNS WHO WAS TEACHING HIM TO PLAY PIANO, BUT CAUGHT HIM PLAYING "SILENT NIGHT" TO A SWING BEAT!

HIS BIG BROTHER BILL WAS A DANCE INSTRUCTOR AND TAUGHT HIM SOME STEPS, WHICH LED TO A LIFELONG LOVE OF DANCING, WITH BOTH HIS WIFE AND HIS DAUGHTERS.

AS A BOY, VAN HAD MANY JOBS SO HE COULD HELP HIS FAMILY. ON ONE OCCASION HE, AS A MEAT CUTTER WORKING THE SLICER IN A GROCERY STORE, BECAME SO EXCITED AS HE LISTENED TO THE NOTRE DAME-ARMY GAME ON THE RADIO, THAT HE SLICED THE TIP OF HIS FINGER OFF! HE ALSO SOLD NEWSPAPERS IN RESTAURANTS AND TAVERNS. HE WOULD OFFER TO SING SONGS IN EXCHANGE FOR THOSE SALES, AND FOUND SOME PEOPLE WOULD KEEP BUYING MORE PAPERS AS HE SANG MORE SONGS!

A DEVOUT ROMAN CATHOLIC WHO MISSED SUNDAY MASS MAYBE ONLY A HANDFUL OF TIMES IN OVER SEVENTY YEARS, VAN ENTERED THE SEMINARY AT ONE POINT TO JOIN THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE FORTIES, PRIOR TO FINDING HIS TRUE VOCATION: FAMILY MAN AND SALESMAN.

ON A SNOWY NIGHT IN LATE 1950 IN DAYTON, OHIO AT THE CHATTERBOX RESTAURANT, HE MET THE BEAUTIFUL W. LEAH HAULDREN FROM ADAMS COUNTY, OHIO, WHOSE CHILDHOOD NICKNAME WAS SNOWBIRD. LEAH'S FATHER WAS A WORLD WAR ONE VETERAN, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNTY REPUBLICAN PARTY, AND THE METHODIST MINISTER, BUT IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT, AND THEY WERE MARRIED MARCH 10, 1951... AS TIME WENT BY, LEAH WOULD BECOME A CONVERT TO CATHOLICISM, AND VAN WOULD BECOME A REPUBLICAN!

AT THE WEDDING, VAN'S AND LEAH'S FATHERS REALIZED THEY HAD SERVED AT THE SAME TIME IN THE SAME SMALL TOWN IN FRANCE DURING WORLD WAR ONE. THREE DAYS AFTER THE WEDDING, VAN ENTERED THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO JOIN THE VERMONT GREEN MOUNTAIN BOYS. IT WAS DURING THE KOREAN WAR, BUT VAN WAS DEPLOYED IN GERMANY TO AID IN THE OCCUPATION AND RECONSTRUCTION FOLLOWING WORLD WAR TWO. HE WAS WITH THE 172ND INFANTRY REGIMENT OF THE SECOND ARMY, IN THE SERVICE COMPANY. IN THIS CAPACITY, HE WAS FOUND TO BE A MAN OF IMPECCABLE INTEGRITY AND GREAT LEADERSHIP QUALITIES, AND WAS PLACED IN CHARGE OF THE SUPPLYING OF 5000 MEN, AND AS SUCH WOULD NORMALLY HAVE BEEN AN OFFICER, BUT AT THE TIME RANK WAS FROZEN IN THE ARMED FORCES, SO HE NEVER HELD A HIGHER DESIGNATION THAN PRIVATE FIRST CLASS BY THE TIME HE RECEIVED HIS HONORABLE DISCHARGE IN 1953. MEANWHILE, VAN HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SING WITH LIVE BIG BANDS, ENTERTAINING THE TROOPS, AT U.S.O.-TYPE SHOWS, AT THE BASE. HE NEVER FORGOT THE LOVE OF COUNTRY, THE DISCIPLINE, AND THE DIVERSE CULTURES HE LEARNED ABOUT DURING HIS TENURE.

AS SOON AS VAN RETURNED FROM OVERSEAS HE CALLED HIS OLD BOSS, JIMMY SMITH, AT TRADE RITE COMPANY, WHO IMMEDIATELY REHIRED HIM TO RESUME HIS SALES CAREER. VAN THEN RELOCATED TO CINCINNATI, OHIO WHERE HE AND HIS WIFE LEAH SETTLED AND EVENTUALLY RAISED ELEVEN CHILDREN.

WORKING DAYS AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AT NIGHT, VAN ATTAINED AN ASSOCIATES' DEGREE IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION FROM SALMON P. CHASE COLLEGE, AND SOON WENT TO WORK AT NATIONAL CASH REGISTER COMPANY, WHERE HE COMPLETED SALES TRAINING COURSES AT THE FAMED SUGARCAMP SALES TRAINING INSTITUTE AT N.C.R. WORLD HEADQUARTERS IN DAYTON, OHIO. HE BEGAN SELLING IN DOWNTOWN CINCINNATI AND NORTHERN KENTUCKY AND WAS SOON RECOGNIZED AS THE YOUNGEST SALESPERSON IN THE HISTORY OF THE COMPANY TO ACHIEVE A TOP AWARD.

OVER THE YEARS VAN ALSO WORKED FOR PEERLESS FURNITURE COMPANY AND CULLIGAN WATER CONDITIONING, BEFORE GOING TO WORK FOR RAINSOFT WATER CONDITIONING OF LOVELAND, OHIO IN 1977, WHERE HE WORKED FOR 25 YEARS BEFORE HIS RETIREMENT IN 2002. A POPULAR SPEAKER AT SALES MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS, HE WAS CONSIDERED SO PROFESSIONAL AND EFFECTIVE AS A DIRECT SALESPERSON THAT HE WAS THE FIRST FIELD SALESPERSON EVER INDUCTED INTO THE INTERNATIONAL RAINSOFT HALL OF FAME, AN AWARD WHICH WAS PRESENTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMPANY AT THEIR INTERNATIONAL AWARDS BANQUET AT THE OPRYLAND HOTEL AND CONVENTION CENTER IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE ON MAY 11TH, 2002.

A REMARKABLE FACT IS THAT VAN, FROM GLAUCOMA AND A SERIES OF STROKES, WAS TOTALLY BLIND AND PARTLY DEAF AND SPEECH-IMPAIRED LATER IN LIFE, YET CONTINUED HIS SUCCESSFUL CAREER, MAKING PHONE CALLS AND GOING ON SALES VISITS WITH HELPERS, FOR SEVERAL MORE YEARS BEFORE HIS RETIREMENT. HIS SELF-DEPRECATING SENSE OF HUMOR AND NEVER-SAY-DIE-SPIRIT OF THE FIGHTING IRISH WAS A TREMENDOUS INSPIRATION TO THOUSANDS OF SALESPEOPLE AND BUSINESS LEADERS AROUND THE WORLD, AS WELL AS TO HIS FRIENDS AND RELATIVES IN THE GREATER CINCINNATI AREA.

VAN AND LEAH HAVE BEEN MEMBERS OF THE GOOD SHEPARD ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MONTGOMERY, OHIO FOR MANY YEARS, BUT EARLIER WERE VERY ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE ST. VINCENT FERRER PARISH IN KENWOOD, WHERE VAN ORGANIZED THE BLUE AND GOLD BANQUET FOR CUB SCOUT TROOP 619, COOKED HIS FAMOUS LASAGNA DINNER FOR THE ARCHDIOCESE'S PRIEST'S ANNUAL FORTY-HOURS DEVOTION, SERVED AS COACH FOR YOUTH BASEBALL, HELPED FOUND THE SVF LITTLE THEATRE GROUP, AND DIRECTED, PRODUCED AND STARRED IN MANY OF THEIR PRODUCTIONS IN THE 1960'S AND 70'S, AND SERVED AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC MEN. IN FACT, HE ONCE WAS INTRODUCED AS "A MAN WHO HAS DONE EVERYTHING HERE AT ST. VINCENT'S EXCEPT SAY MASS AND HEAR CONFESSIONS," AND SOME EVEN GIVE HIM CREDIT FOR HEARING A FEW OF THOSE, TOO.

VAN WAS PRECEDED IN DEATH BY HIS PARENTS AND FOUR SIBLINGS, AND HIS DAUGHTER, BARBARA. HE IS SURVIVED BY HIS SISTER DORIS M. TATONE, OF SARASOTA, FLORIDA, HIS WIFE OF 54 YEARS, LEAH, AND HIS OTHER CHILDREN: SPIRO AND HELEN KRITIKOS, BETH AND DAN MOORE, MATT AND PATTI, TIM AND SUSAN, DAN AND MELODY, MOLLY AND BRADY, NANCY, ANDY AND LORRAINE, JONI AND BRIAN BARRY, STUART AND LEIGHANNE, AND PETE AND KATIE, AS WELL AS SEVENTEEN GRANDCHILDREN AND SIX GREAT GRANDCHILDREN, AND MANY MORE FRIENDS AND RELATIVES.

VISITATION: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8TH, 2005 FROM 6PM TO 8PM AT CRAVER RIGGS FUNERAL HOME IN MILFORD, OHIO. MASS OF THE RESURRECTION WILL BE FRIDAY AT NOON, DECEMBER 9TH, 2005, FOLLOWED BY BURIAL AT GATE OF HEAVEN CEMETARY IN MONTGOMERY. THEN THE FAMILY WILL HOST A CELEBRATION OF VAN'S LIFE AT HIS SON'S HOME: 319 HEIDI LANE, MILFORD, OHIO 45150. ALL ARE WELCOME.

VAN AND LEAH STRUGGLED AND DENIED THEMSELVES TO SEE TO IT THAT THEIR ELEVEN CHILDREN ALL RECEIVED THE BENEFIT OF A CATHOLIC EDUCATION, AND SINCE THEY PUT ALL ELEVEN THROUGH ST. VINCENT FERRER GRADE SCHOOL, A FUND WAS ESTABLISHED IN VAN AND LEAH'S HONOR AT S.V.F. TO ENABLE A WORTHY FAMILY WITH MORE THAN ONE CHILD ATTENDING THE SCHOOL TO RECEIVE SIBLING TUITION ASSISTANCE, THROUGH "THE VAN AND LEAH SNOW FAMILY STUDENT TUITION ASSISTANCE RELIEF" (STAR) FUND. AN ANNUAL BENEFIT, WITH LIVE ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCED AND PERFORMED BY THEIR CHILDREN IN THE TRADITION OF THE SVF LITTLE THEATRE GROUP, AND VAN'S DAYS IN THE SERVICE DOING U.S.O. SHOWS, IS HELD IN THEIR MEMORY EACH YEAR AT ST.VINCENT'S.

REMEMBRANCES MAY BE OFFERED IN HONOR OF VAN SNOW; MAKE PAYABLE TO ST. VINCENT FERRER CHURCH, AND ON THE MEMO: SNOW FAMILY S.T.A.R. FUND. SEND TO THE CHURCH: MONTGOMERY ROAD, CINCINNATI, OHIO 45236

DECEMBER 6, 2005