

Celebrating a Life of Passion: My Dad's Journey Through Farming and Adventure

My dad lived a life rich with experiences, challenges, and a steadfast love for farming. Throughout the years, he reinvented himself multiple times, yet his passion for agriculture remained the cornerstone of his existence. From his humble beginnings in California to his impactful career in Washington, he cultivated not just crops, but also deep connections with people from all walks of life—from migrant workers to Presidents of the United States.

Roots in Agriculture

My dad's love for farming blossomed during his teenage years in Winters, California. His family had moved from Tracy to Winters where my grandfather worked as an engineer on the Berryessa Dam. Transitioning to a small town was tough for a young boy, but everything changed when he discovered Future Farmers of America (FFA). This organization became a refuge for him—a place where he felt seen, valued, and inspired. It ignited a lifelong passion for agriculture, giving him the confidence to navigate challenges, including his struggle with dyslexia.

Despite these obstacles, he thrived academically and earned a degree in Horticulture from California Polytechnic State University, one of the state's top agricultural schools. His journey was far from conventional, leading him to enlist in the Army to avoid being drafted during the Vietnam War. As an officer, he served alongside South Vietnamese troops, an experience that profoundly shaped his perspective on life.

A Veteran's Gratitude

My dad's time in Vietnam was marked by hardship; he was wounded in action and awarded a Purple Heart. Yet, amidst the chaos of war, he found beauty in the culture and farming practices of Vietnam. He returned home with a renewed appreciation for life, having narrowly escaped death. This experience instilled in him a deep sense of gratitude that resonated through every aspect of his life.

Adventures Abroad

In the 1980s, my dad sought to blend his love for adventure with his commitment to agriculture. He took a job with USAID and moved our family to Yemen. For him, Yemen was not just a job; it was a thrilling chapter in his life. He thrived in the arid climate, working closely with local farmers. He taught, learned, and collaborated, immersing himself in a different culture. His ability to connect with people and share knowledge was a testament to his passion for farming and his love for humanity.

After Yemen, he took a job in Santiago, Chile working in the grape industry once again blending his love of adventure and his love of farming. When hearing about our travels as a family, people would ask me what my dad did for work as we moved from one country to another. They often guess military or business. But the truth is far simpler and more profound: my dad is a farmer. His journey took him from Yemen to Chile, where he blended his love of adventure with his passion for agriculture.

My dad's love for farming goes beyond planting seeds in the ground. It's about nurturing growth, both in crops and in the hearts of his children. He taught us to appreciate the beauty of nature and the hard work that goes into producing food. He was always there, sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm.

A Legacy of Generosity

Throughout his life, my dad was known for his generosity. In Washington, he often visited friends bearing gifts of fresh produce, embodying his belief in sharing the fruits of his labor. His dedication to growing food and feeding people was evident in both small arenas and larger contexts, showcasing his commitment to community and connection.

Conclusion

My dad's life was a tapestry woven with resilience, adventure, and an unwavering passion for agriculture. His journey—from a young boy finding solace in FFA to a man who changed lives through farming—reminds us of the power of pursuing one's passion. As we remember him, we celebrate not just a farmer but a father, a veteran, an adventurer, and a friend who truly lived a full life.

Written by

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