

The Spark Path

By Dennis Berry

As a young boy, I was blessed with the companionship of my Grandfather Berry. I have since thanked my parents for allowing me to spend as much time with him as I did. When I was about 5 years old, Da (Grandpa Berry) instructed me in the proper way to safely remove and sharpen a lawn mower blade.

We walked down the hill from the house to the grounds shack just above the pond. I can still remember the meter of his voice when sharing valuable instruction with me. It was his way of conveying to me the weighted value of the information he was providing.

He disconnected the spark plug wire. He then removed the spark plug and stood the mower up exposing the underside of the housing where the blade was mounted. Backing the mower against the wall, he anchored the mower to the wall of the shack by its handle. Using thick leather gloves, he proceeded to place the blade in a bind against the mower body with a wedge of oak. A few turns of the ratchet and the mower blade was free of its mount. We walked towards the house as his shop was under the basement steps.

We entered the cool darkness of the basement shop. He reached up and turned on the light that was mounted on the rafters above his workbench. For the area lit, the bulb was inadequate. The lighting was dim at best. He turned on the grinding wheel and struck the blade against it. The spark path of hot steel embers illuminated the room as they flew from the edge of the blade. I can hear his voice saying, "Denny, come here and put your hand in the fire."

Common sense dictated that I refuse. But I knew Da loved me and would never knowingly harm me. With eyes open wide I approached the spark path and stuck the palm of my hand into it. I could feel the heat from the embers as they struck my hand, but there was no lasting effect.

It was not until years later, after my grandfather's passing, that I realized the lesson I learned that day. I also did not appreciate the friend I had in Da until

after his passing. I took for granted the time spent with me, including our summers traveling these United States, were included in the duties of being a grandfather. Little did I know at the time that his acts of devotion and companionship were far above and beyond the call of duty.

The lesson I learned that day was that trust overcomes fear. I did not fathom the depth of this lesson until I was searching the depths of my soul for the source of my inner strength. Over the years I have made a stand to bear witness to that which I have become aware of. The acts have exposed me to ridicule and attack; yet I continue unafraid.

What I discovered through intimacy with my true self is that I trust myself. I make mistakes, but I have come to trust in my true intentions to carry me through those mistakes. It is this trust in myself and my inner light that allows me to overcome my fears and stand to bear witness to that which I suspect to be true.