

Remembering My Father

By Carol L. Munroe

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As a young child, growing up with John and Dorothy Munroe as my parents, I saw the world as a harmonious whole, with family at its center and the university as the dominant other presence in our daily life, because that was where my father and so many of my parents' friends worked: his teaching, departmental work, and research serving as both his job and as a great source of satisfaction. The main campus of the university was right across the street from our house, after we moved to South College Avenue in 1955, and we were increasingly surrounded by other university properties and fraternity houses. I have many happy memories of walking over with my father to his office in the history department in Hullihen Hall, and he seemed to share mutual liking and respect with everyone we met.

Relishing my father's company and his attention, I learned that the best way to hold onto it was to ask him questions or get him to tell stories. He seemed able to explain anything simply, clearly, and with warmth, giving pleasure to both listener and teller, whether about books, history, geography, politics, or languages, and he was an excellent storyteller. My father's love of stories and his equally strong sense of duty and drive to accomplish demanding goals were traits clearly inspired by his own parents.

My grandfather Munroe, Irish by descent and an iron molder by trade, was a prolific talker, a great companion to his son on outings of all sorts, and an extremely good-natured friend, husband, and father. My grandmother Munroe, of a German immigrant family, was a stricter parent, with high expectations and also great interest in music, books, and other forms of cultural life. She helped imbue my father with a strong sense of duty and seriousness of purpose. She also fiercely protected his health, after he was diagnosed with a serious bleeding disease at age 11, and in compensation for a regular course of injections he had to endure, started buying him a book each time, encouraging

his already great love of reading. His illness led to even more time spent alone with books, and restricted his participation in active sports, but he eventually outlived the disease.

In years to come I remember my father similarly bringing me a book to comfort me when I was upset. From early on I felt drawn most often to the world of books, and my father's books, example, and conversation helped me find new paths into that world. As I became excited about the magic of new languages, both my parents helped me find additional ways of learning their rudiments, whether finding me a Latin tutor, persuading high school teachers to let me double up on courses, or finding me a babysitting opportunity that opened me up to the delights of Italian along with wonderful new friends. Later, as I began to travel abroad, my parents were quick to come visit me. While my mother was busy teaching, my father and I enjoyed a memorable trip together across Sicily, from Palermo to Syracuse, and later Andras, my future husband, and I enjoyed showing my parents around Istanbul. My father had so many places he wanted to see for historical reasons, and my mother was always ready to join him in a new adventure and to conquer the logistical challenges caused by my father's increasing difficulty with arthritis.

My father's interest in travel was just one aspect of his intellectual curiosity and his engagement with people and knowledge. In his later years, when moving around become difficult for him, he continued to read widely, to carry on correspondence with friends, former students, and colleagues, and to follow the world of events and ideas. His love of his family, his state, and the wider world will be part of us always.