

EULOGY FOR LESTER WINNER POLLOM

Written by Barbara Colyer Pollom, his -widow, who was residing in Lawrence Kansas as of February 2003.

A eulogy, by Webster's definition, is a commemoration of prond, prond praise. This is not a eulogy in that sense, though it well could be. This is an opportunity to share a few special cameos of Les' so that we might leave here feeling we have known this private man a little better - that we may be given an opportunity to catch a small glimpse of the journey Les traveled.

Les was what we refer to as a "loner," but he was a joyous loner as a little boy. He lived on a farm north of Topeka where he had what most boys would love to have - a forest of trees, a little stream of clear water, sun perch, trout, frogs, grassy trails and ant hills to explore - all the wonders of nature.

He was awake at dawn every morning with such excitement about the coming day. He built houses for the wrens, he loved his pet pigeons, and best of all he loved his best friend, an old black mongrel dog. He said he named him 'Prince' because this ugly dog needed something to help his self-image.

He later confessed he figured out by observing, pondering and exploring that forest and its natural beauty, the sunrises, the entire wondrous delight of the world about him that there must be a creator, a God who was in charge of all this creation. He came to conclusion by his own deduction and God's appointed logic since he had little or no religious instruction at home.

Besides this development of awe for universal beauty, Les, at the same time, was feeling and finding his love for music and studying the violin. Many old friends have recounted that Les, this big, strong, powerfully built man could stir your soul with his music. Music was in his very being. His favorite selection, which he loved to play, was 'Meditation' from the opera 'Thais' by Massenet.

When Les was 11 years old his father gave him a small hunting gun at Christmas. Immediately he ran outside, loaded it and ran into his beloved woods back of his home. Instantly before him was a small rabbit - he aimed - he fired! At that moment something in Les changed. He was appalled at what he had done. This small creature tying still at his feet was no longer part of his forest world. He ran back to the farm and put the rifle in the corner. Fifty years later when he was called home at his father's death, he found the gun still there, rusty and covered with the cobwebs of time.

At the age of twenty-three he enlisted in the paratroop corps of the United States Army and became a first lieutenant in the 82nd Airborne Division. He was quoted in the Journal-World when he was interviewed in 1994, "It was brutal training, only 25 percent of my class made it." These men were immediately shipped to England. Three months after arriving and training his troops, he had orders to board his plane for the Normandy invasion. He was a demolition expert with 100 pounds of vital equipment attached to his person - guns, ammunition, maps, dried food, explosives, plus TNT. As he walked out to the tarmac toward plane number 23 out of the 250 planes revving up, he heard a glorious song coming over a loud speaker. The voice carried to every corner of the field. The song - The Lord's Prayer. He later said that was the song he carried in his heart as he and his men jumped into the blackness of the night amidst the bursting flak of German shells.

This gentle man, whose heart was moved by a small dead rabbit was appointed by destiny to defend his country, to fight for an honorable cause, to kill, to blow up bridges, and to

finally give his ultimate — the gift of himself. He and another paratrooper volunteered to swim across a swollen flooded river, two miles wide, to try to get plasma for their dying men on his side of the river. Under a constant barrage of enemy fire, Les and his companion swam over and back, bringing the life-saving blood to his men. For this event and others, he was awarded the Silver Star.

Les lived a life aware of the awesome universe, with music in his soul, bravery in his heart. When he came home he grew to know the ultimate reward and meaning of it all. He came to know Jesus Christ and to have a personal relationship with Him.

This was Lester Winner Pollom.