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John Furr passed away last night.

To tell you the story of my father, John Furr, I must start at the beginning with his Father, and his father.

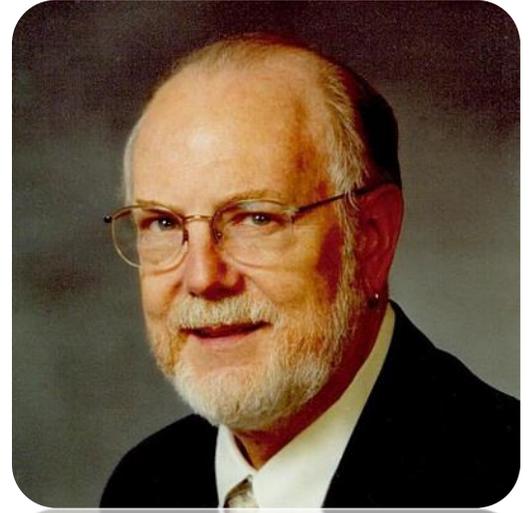
Edgar Furr was a good looking guy with charm to burn and a passion for Christ that brought him to a life of becoming a small town preacher. I don't know if it was typical for a family that starts the gospel right out of the Great Depression, but Edgar couldn't keep a job. Each year he would convert all of the wrong people and after a year he would pack up and move to the next small town in need, and start over again. My father was born in Brownsville but grew up in every other small town in Texas. He has fond memories of them all but when it came time for Edgar to settle down for a spell, he pulled John aside and asked him if he wanted to go to high school in a small town or a big city. John was surprised that his father would take his opinion with such weight and asked for another few years of small town life.

Edgar agreed and took a cut in pay so that John could graduate from Ingleside High School in the top 20 of his class. He was always proud of this accomplishment since the total class consisted of 20 people. He has enjoyed the Ingleside High reunions for years and found that, without exception, everyone that graduated that year "Did it their own Way, and made a place for themselves in the world." Once Dad had graduated High School and headed off to Stephen F. Austin College, his father came up with a new kind of job security, "Summer Camp." That idea which consisted of several run down army barracks in that became the "Sabinal Texas Normal Singing School." This is where boys from all over would come to learn to read music, carry a tune in a bucket, and write their first song, so that someday, God willing, they could lead singing in church. This also became the reason for my existence.

One of the local girls, Barbara Matheny, married a military guy that was "good with tools and fixing airplanes" and she talked him into farming in Sabinal. They later went on to have seven kids, 6 girls and one son, all very good looking and soon everyone in town recognized the "Matheny family car" because of the precious cargo it toted around town. My mother, Paula, was the oldest of this bunch.

My father and one of his friends were spending their summer college break in Sabinal helping Edgar teach classes and saw the Matheny car had a flat tire. He told his friend to help him change the tire so that they could meet one of the Matheny girls. His friend chickened out and John was by himself when Paula caught him in the act and insisted that he "put that down and stop fixing that tire because I don't have the money to pay you." John said, "Don't worry, you can pay me later." I asked my mom if that was the most expensive tire in history and she would laugh and say "45 years you have no idea" and laugh again.

Well wouldn't you know – Paula refused to go out with John. He was 20 and some "old college guy" and she was 16 in high school so she wasn't going to consider any such thing. He starting writing her letters for the next two years and after she graduated he married her 3 weeks before her 19 birthday. When I ask him about it he told me "I made her an offer she couldn't refuse, marry me and I will send you through college." She said "you're on!" When I asked her about it later she said "I married my best friend because I knew that no matter what, we would always have a good time."



They moved around for another couple of years before he got a radio job in Austin Texas where Paula went to UT and eventually he ended up moving his bride to San Antonio so he could work for KTSA. They bought a sprawling 900 sq ft house they could barely afford with one whole bathroom that became the "Furr Bed and Breakfast" to everyone that needed a stop along the way. The small house was no problem because the 2nd beautiful Matheny girl, Caroline, had married Ken Driscoll who was "Good with Tools" and had it fixed up for them to live in the next 35 years.

Around 1972, they joined Sunset Ridge Church of Christ, meeting two of their best friends, Lynn and Randy Rutland (my Godparents). My folks had waited seven years before they had me, but Paula had been sure to wear maternity dresses every time she went to Sabinal for those 7 years so the old ladies could have something to gossip about. The oldest 3 Matheny girls all gave birth to their first born within a few weeks of each other and if that wasn't exciting enough, my father was promptly fired from KTSA. I often tell this story because what often seems like the worst thing frequently isn't and our Father has a better plan than ours. John went on to become the cluster Chief Engineer at Clear Channel (WOAI, KTKR, KJ97, etc.) and met another one of his best friends for life, John Barger who was the head honcho at the time.

Wouldn't you know it they both saw diamonds in the rough in each other and built a partnership of trust and mutual respect that resulted in a modest broadcasting empire that included ownership of KONO here in San Antonio and several other small Texas Radio stations.

Another great side note is the impact that John Furr had on the radio industry. He got tired of drafting all of the engineering by hand (and trying to figure out where his kid had misplaced his stencils). So he created computer programs to short cut the process so that an engineer could spend more time looking for a place to build a radio station instead of being trapped at his drafting board beating his head against the wall in frustration. His software was adapted by the Radio Engineering Industry and is still in use all over the United States today.

He also found that everyone in the Radio Business had white hair and when Clear Channel sent him all over the US to start up new stations, he would wait for that one unsuspecting young soul to wandering into the transmitter room and say "What are you working on?" John would promptly teach them how to fix a transmitter like fixing a car and say "Congratulations! You are now the Chief Engineer of this station! Call me if you have any questions, I'm going back to San Antonio." This happened so many times that anytime I would call a radio station anywhere in the US for some minor information, the conversation would result in "Are you related to John Furr? I thought I was going to be a DJ and he talked me into being a broadcast Engineer, that was 30 years ago and he changed my life. Wow! Nicest guy I ever met."

In 1992, the same year his daughter graduated from High School by the grace of God, John Furr received the Texas Assoc. of Broadcasters "Associate Engineer of the Year" award and in 2011 was inducted into the Texas Radio Hall of Fame.

I don't really know where he found the time to be a Deacon of Foreign Ministries to go to ever corner of the globe to tell the world about his Father and how much he enjoyed being a "follower of Christ", but he did. He would drag a motley crew of friends to Honduras, San Salvador and Haiti because he just knew that even the smallest efforts would be appreciated in desperate situations. He learned Spanish to overcome his severe stuttering and would use this gift to translate English sermons at the homeless shelter into Spanish for anyone that needed it.

He adopted more friends and extended family than I can count. Mentored and prayed and listened and showed up when he was needed. John never became a full time Church Of Christ Preacher like his older brother Joe Ed, much to their fathers chagrin, but found a way to mix his love of sound waves, soldering irons, good books, laughter, love and God all into an experience of a lifetime.

I didn't know a flat tire would give us all such a great ride, but it did God, and thanks for the little things you do every day that we don't understand until we live the rest of the story.

And thank you for listening to mine.

Amanda Furr, Aug 21, 2012