

Uncle Buddy's Eulogy by Benita

Rick asked me this am if I was only going to talk a minute because he said, "I know how much you love a captive audience". Well, I promise it will take longer than a minute but will take less time than 6 verses of Just as I Am.

In this situation, birth order has its privileges. I am the oldest grandchild so while my perspective is no better than any of my cousins, I did ask my mother and uncles if I could say a few words and since they have never told me NO I am here.

This school year will begin my 31st year of being in Special Education. Uncle Buddy was my inspiration for wanting to work with individuals and families with disabilities.

Being the oldest grandchild, I spent a lot of time hanging out @ Mema's and Granddaddy's. Buddy had chores he had to do everyday just like his brothers and sisters.

*Water the mules; grinding corn; many other jobs. He did take out time in the middle of the day to watch the Soap Opera Days of our lives and if I ever missed an episode, or two or three he could always catch me up. His memory was unbelievable and in today's TV terms, better than TIVO.

So I learned at an early age that being around Uncle Buddy made me want to try harder, be better, give more, be thankful, and NEVER, NEVER, NEVER give up–Did I say never give up? Because this man NEVER gave up!

He lived in complete simple acceptance and if he ever felt sorry for himself I would be surprised if anyone ever knew it...

Don't be shocked by this, but my Uncle Buddy was somewhat of an

opportunist. He never missed an opportunity to collect money for his favorite charity United Cerebral Palsy OR if he was sitting @ Kelley's Crossroads and someone bought him a Dr. Pepper he would push that one out of sight and someone else would come along and say, "Buddy you want a Dr Pepper? Of course he said yes! I bet he didn't have to buy a six pack of Dr. Pepper his whole life__MCE_ITEM____MCE_ITEM__J.

I will never drink a Dr. Pepper that I will not think of him, I will never smell Juicy Fruit gum that he won't come to mind because while he was able he kept Juicy Fruit in his pocket giving pieces away to everyone he met that wanted one, or two or three pieces, he didn't care.

I am going to miss how tickled he would get and his sweet crippled hand would come up to his mouth and he would laugh uncontrollably. We would laugh at him laughing!

When I wrote my dissertation, there was an opportunity to share acknowledgement, this is what I wrote in 1994;

To the Gilliland family, my grandmother, granddaddy, mother, aunt and uncles. Lois and J.E. with the help of their six children raised their first born son with Cerebral Palsy. In poor rural Coosa County, without parent advocacy groups, internet, literature about the disability, or PL 94-142, using only God's guidance and old-fashioned common sense they raised Buddy. What is so exceptional about what they did is that by treating Buddy like all of their other six children he became a survivor and an inspiration for hundreds of people, especially me. Sixty -three years after Buddy's birth, special educators have learned that it is pretty effective to treat students with disabilities like their peers. You, Uncle Buddy, are the reason I went into Special Education.

Uncle Buddy died on the 20th Anniversary of the American's

with Disabilities Education Act. If he had been born years later he could have been a banker, because few people I ever met could count money in his head like he did or roll coins faster with limited hands than he could. Also, he could have been a politician because he could get more out of people without then even knowing it better than anyone I have ever met

In closing – Mama, Uncle Donald, Uncle Robert, Jimmy Uncle Joe, and Aunt Elizabeth (pointing to Heaven), You have all been models of faithfulness beyond anything I have ever experienced – You finished the course well and demonstrated love for your mother, Buddy, and each other in ways that cannot be measured in this world. GOOD JOB! Way to Go! Everyone as you leave today please have one, two or three pieces of Juicy Fruit gum that is in the back foyer and remember Uncle Buddy.

