

ENTRUSTING TRUTH

The logo for Entrusting Truth, featuring the words "ENTRUSTING TRUTH" in a bold, distressed, sans-serif font. Below the text is a circular emblem with a textured, metallic appearance, containing the letters "ET" in a stylized font.

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On January 16, 1923, Francis Perry Cunningham gave birth to her and John Newton Cunningham's second child, a boy. One of Francis' friends who was helping with the birth thought it would be a good idea to name the newborn Laverne so he was named Arthur Laverne Cunningham. Now then there were no birth certificates, so that was not recorded anywhere official. However, the name he was called by all that knew him was Buddy. He got that from his dad, a WWI vet, who called him his little buddy.

6 years later Arthur Laverne was sitting in class the first day of the first grade. The teacher was asking each child their name for enrollment. She asked the little girl in front of Arthur Laverne her name and she replied Laverne and then the rest of her name. Then it was dad's turn. The teacher asked his name. Arthur Laverne Cunningham stood and replied, "John Arthur Cunningham." No way was he going to be a Laverne!

That early vignette demonstrated one of the core qualities that defined my dad, he was quick to analyze a situation and quick to take decisive action.

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I am not clear on when this happened but it was, I think, around that time. There was a tent revival in Iowa Park. Dad was curious and wanted to go. His mom said he could not. That was not much of a deterrent – so I came by that honestly. Dad snuck out and made his way to a hill overlooking the revival. He told me there were people there doing all kinds of things that he had not seen in the Methodist church. Several were slain in the spirit. As dad was watching a farmer came out of the tent and walked to his t-model pickup. He turned the crank to start it and being a great Ford product it started right up... Problem was it was in gear. The farmer barely jumped out of the way and the truck slowly rolled into and through the tent. Dad said the people that were slain in the spirit jumped up and got out of the way really fast. He said, “I learned a whole lot about being slayed in the spirit right then.”

Dad started at North Texas State in September of 40. While there he delivered drugs for one of the drug stores. Some of those to whom he delivered were, in his words, women of ill-repute. He was deeply impacted by the squalor in which they lived. Which he described in great detail. I am convinced that experience along with his trusting Christ shaped his morality and character. His education was interrupted as was many of his age by WWII.

Two years into WWII dad was inducted into the US Army. He chose the Signal Corps. He went to training in Washington state and was assigned to the 65th Signal Battalion as a supply sergeant. He was offered a commission but declined – the army noticed his ability to analyze and take quick action. He left for Europe on October 14, 1944 arriving in England 11 days later October, 25. He

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arrived in Rouen, France December, 27, 11 days after the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge. They traveled to Nancy, France where they became part of the XXI Corps and 7th Army, their mission was to install, operate, and maintain the communications for the 12th Armored division, the 3rd, 28th, and 75th infantry.

Dad remarked that when they got to Nancy they were placed under the French First Army. About that he said, and I quote, “We fought and they held parades.”

From Nancy they crossed the Vosges mountains into Alsace and liberated Colmar. It was there that they experienced the heaviest shelling.

They crossed the Rhine over the Patch Bridge east of Worms and made their way to Bad Tolz and Degerndorf. On the way there they arrived at Dachau the day after it was liberated – about Dachau, dad would not speak for many years. After I started to go to his unit reunions after mom died, he would begin to open up... He could never talk about that without breaking down in tears. It was a lot for a 24 year old to process.

One side note dad’s unit was the first that was credited with shooting down a German jet. Further, towards the end of the war the 65th mission changed to monitoring the Russians.

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The war ended. The men of the 65th looked forward to going home. But there was more work to be done. The first order of business was to round up the German rocket scientists. The German speakers in the group would offer them a place in the US Science community or they could go with the Russians. 100% chose the US. They said it was the easiest sales job they ever had. But still they did not go home.

Dad saw an opportunity. He made a deal with a local tavern. He would supply them with adult beverages if they would allow the men of the 65th to unwind there. Then to help matters along dad would drive the supply truck through the streets to pick up the French girls who might want to meet the GIs and deliver them to the club...Laverne would have never done that...John Arthur did, quick to analyze and act.

Still the men were stuck in France. They had enough points. They had survived. They wanted to go home. Dad wrote President Truman. A few weeks later he was called to the office of his CO. The CO incredulously asked dad, "Did you write Truman?" After dad's affirmative answer he was handed the phone. The major on the other end of the line instructed dad when and where to lead his men to the train that would take them home. Analyze and act.

Home and reenrolled at North Texas State. While there he worked as a soda jerk in a drug store, and later for the Denton Water, Light, and Sewer Department. He met and married the beautiful Mary Jane Wolfe. Still living in vet village on campus, 2 days after Jane's birthday, their first child

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was born, who is eternally grateful that John was the name handed down to the third generation and not Laverne.

Dad took a job at Mobil Oil Corporation shortly after their first son was born. He, Jane, and I moved from one south Texas oil patch to another for two years before landing in Dallas. To suggest that dad had a stellar career with Mobil would be an epic understatement. He rose rapidly – they recognized his analytic and decisive nature. He was tasked with leading the computerization of Mobil's financial and accounting systems. In the midst of this hectic, meteoric rise he and mom welcomed their seventh child Kent. I say seventh because mom miscarried five children after I was born.

Dad grew up in the Methodist Church. I remember devotions from the Upper Room, this week as I was cleaning out his office I found My Daily Bread. He had us in church every Sunday. He served on the Official board of the Methodist Church, of which I was unaware until going through his papers this week.

One of the more vivid memories I have of dad involved our Methodist church. One Sunday evening we were at the church for the evening service. There was a guest speaker, I have no idea who it was. Ginger Jones and I were sitting together toward the end of the row away from our parents. We were not paying attention but were either whispering, writing notes, or whatever. Our lack of attention was pierced by my dad standing up in the middle of the guest speaker's talk saying,

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“You need to sit down, you have no idea what you are talking about.” Again, analysis and action. I was embarrassed until many of the church members sought dad after the service and thanked him for his action.

Dad was assigned a special temporary duty at the New York headquarters of Mobil in the summer of '64. They wanted him to move there. But he declined. He and mom did not want to raise us in New York.

He became the controller of first the Corpus Christi division, followed by controller of the Houston region, and the Houston Division. In the fall of 1978 dad called and told us he and mom were moving to Connecticut. He has accepted a position in New York headquarters. I asked him what had changed since they had been refusing to move there for years. He said, “They made me an offer I could not refuse.” They valued his analytic and decisive manner. At one point he supervised about 200 people. Many of those who worked for him told me that he was the best boss they ever had.

They moved to Connecticut and purchased a home in Fairfield. He went to closing and when it came time to pay he pulled out his checkbook. The Yankees were shocked.

“You can't pay for this with a personal check!”

“Why not? I have paid for all of my other houses with a personal check?”

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“That was local. In Texas.”

Dad replied, “Do you consider Virginia Local? That’s how far it is from Corpus to Dallas.”

They had no response... They called Republic National Bank, the bank assured them that dad’s check would clear.

Dad and mom were in Connecticut from 1978 to 1984. Dad refused to get a Connecticut driver’s license. When his TX license expired, he called TXDOT and convinced them to renew his license. He has always said, “You never want to ask a man where he is from. For if he is from Texas, he’ll tell you, and if he’s not you don’t want to embarrass him.”

Dad retired in 1984 and he and mom moved to Elkins Lake. He loved golf. Playing golf. He used watching golf as a sleep aid. He served on the ELRC board.

As our children were born he and mom delighted in watching them grow and develop. They came to soccer games, piano recitals, band competitions, graduations, and weddings. One of the highlights each summer was golf camp. The kids would come down to Nambie and Granddaddy’s for a week. They would fish, golf, swim, take long rides in the golf cart, and fall deeper and deeper in love with these two remarkable people.

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Remarkable. That is a barely adequate description. Kent and I are both graduates of A&M, me barely. It would be impossible to count the number of Aggies mom and dad fed at restaurants or in their homes in Dallas, Corpus, or Houston over that 10 year period. They came to every home game, every Mother's Day, every event that a parent could attend. They spent more time here than they ever did at their alma mater. I also cannot count the number of my friends who dad tutored in accounting.

Four years ago we celebrated dad's 90th birthday. During the meal he had trouble swallowing the chicken. I was in the middle of the presentation and noticed he had left the room. Two weeks later we had a diagnosis of stage 4 esophageal cancer. We were told that he had six months to live without treatment, 20 months with treatment. It's four years later. He fought hard. He did all that the doctors told him to do. He was meticulous with his records. For the past two years he has not had a chemo treatment the last visit the doctor told us that the cancer was still shrinking. She said that MDA was not doing anything for him it was his body. No, it was prayer. For the past four years my brother Kent has carried most of the weight of dad's care.

At the end of September he had a vehicle accident. Both vehicles were totaled. He sustained broken ribs that inhibited his already compromised breathing. He had to start on oxygen. He had to have help at home. In November, he had to have emergency surgery. On New Year's Eve, he had to go to the hospital – he was really struggling to breathe. Last Wednesday, Jenny and I were

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driving down to join Kent to take dad to get for his Thursday restage appointment. Kent, called from the doctor and told us we needed to instead take him, as soon as we got to Huntsville, to the MDA ER.

Through all of this dad never complained. Rather, he would say often how blessed he was by God.

Friday evening Ranae got to the hospital and spoke with dad briefly. At about 0520 Jenny rushed down to my room and told me dad was in respiratory distress. I got there about 10 minutes later. About five minutes later John Arthur Cunningham was in the presence of Jesus. Mom was there to greet him. He met the five children she had been with for the past 10 years. He met his great grandchild, I am jealous. Paul told us in Philippians 1:21 that to die is gain... I am beginning to understand that passage as more of our family has preceded us.

In the past few days people have told us over and over how sorry they are for our loss... It is not a loss. James tells us in 4:14 that we are a vapor, we are here and then vanish like a mist. But as a believer dad is with our Lord for eternity. He is with mom, those five kids that she carried between Kent and me, and with John and Morgan's child.

Dad left our family a remarkable example. It is an example of faithfulness, compassion, friendship, and frugality. We have been told over and over in the past few days that he was a true southern

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gentleman. He was always kind and polite. He was successful with style. Kent and I have a lot to live up to.

We rejoice not only for the life of this remarkable man but also for the privilege of being with him in the presence of our Lord for eternity.

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- ~~Kent born~~
- Berchtesgaden Band of Brothers
- ~~Russian~~
- Assigned to lead a part of the group in as a diversionary tactic
- Casa View
 - ~~Sit Down!~~
 - ~~Methodist Board~~
 - Lake Highlands Methodist
- Example
 - Faithfulness
 - Compassion
 - Friendship
 - Frugality
- ~~Fought hard~~
 - ~~4 years into the 20 months he was given~~
- ~~Into the presence of Jesus~~
 - ~~Welcomed by~~
 - ~~Wife~~
 - ~~Five children~~
 - ~~Great Grandchild~~
- ~~Not a loss a great privilege~~
- ~~Feeding Aggies~~
 - ~~Games~~
 - ~~Corps Trips~~
- Kent has carried the bulk of this burden

Tax docs
Year end
Med expenses
Will