

**Remembrance of Oswald (Ozzie) H. Goering**  
**Written by Kathryn Goering Reid (daughter)**  
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I have a confession to make that will not surprise some of you. I am a Daddy's girl. The evidence of that was first seen when I barricaded the front door at the White House at Bethel College in a vain attempt to keep my dad from going to work. Unfortunately, I forgot about the back door. Over the years, my dad has been my model, my inspiration, my support, my sounding board, and my advisor. He was warm, caring, loving and tough at times. He was generous with contributions for causes he loved. The greatest punishment for me as a child, the hardest burden for me to bear was to disappoint my dad.

What kind of home produced a humanitarian like this? How could a modest farm family outside Moundridge Kansas be the seed bed for such an amazing man? How did this simple farm home become the starting point for six amazing siblings?

My dad integrated the values he learned at home into his life. In the home of Henry and Mary Goering there was a strong and deep faith. Mary memorized hymns and scripture. Henry got a degree from Moody Bible School by correspondence. In addition, there was thoughtful reflection and critical thinking. I remember Grandma Goering telling me to study the Bible, but always take the Apostle Paul with a "grain of salt" as he didn't understand women very well. This was an industrious family where hard work was expected of all. But it was also a creative home where carpentry and quilting produced works of art. Most importantly, it was home that reached out to those less advantaged. Mary made soap and quilt for MCC and both Henry and Mary traveled to help with disasters or with the Mission School on the Hopi reservation in Arizona.

Ironically, Grandma wanted a minister in the family and she thought Ozzie was her best chance. He almost went to seminary, but his deep love of the outdoors called him to recreation and outdoor education. He picked a wonderful field for his academic work. I used to always be jealous. Who ever heard of a doctorate in camping, canoeing, and mountain climbing?

During the war, Dad was a conscientious objector and he did alternative service rather than serve in the military. This experience took him to the Black Hills of South Dakota where he was the breakfast cook and that left all day for hiking and exploring the forests. In Mulberry, Florida he saw for the first time incredible poverty as he dug latrines for rural families. Most importantly, Dad always said that what changed his life was his experience in Puerto Rico where he taught recreation. When he came back to Bethel College to finish up his degree, his values had solidified. During his first two years before the war, he only maintained his football eligibility, but when he came back, he was a serious student setting a course for his life. He wanted to make a difference in the world, he just didn't know where and how to do that.

Mennonite Central Committee gave him an opportunity to serve and at the same time a chance to figure it all out. Elaine and Ozzie resettled war refugees in Paraguay from 1949-1951. This was an adventure in South America. Dad would always describe the animals (several of which are mounted and on display in the Kauffman Museum and the wilderness). Most importantly, he would tell stories of the incredible hardship and suffering of the people whose lives were devastated by the war in Europe. Ozzie and Elaine made many life long friends in this volunteer work.

After their term in MCC, Ozzie decided to do graduate work in recreation at Indiana University. He then spent several years as a dean of men at Bethel College, but his big chance came with a position on the faculty in a unique outdoor teacher education program at Northern Illinois University. Our family moved to Illinois where we started attending the Church of the Brethren. When dad retired twenty-one years later, he was head of the department at the university and had many major positions in the Church of the Brethren.

He often struggled with whether he was in the right position. He was tempted when Goshen college offered him a position (and they didn't even demand that he become "Old Mennonite") and the Kennedy administration offered him a position designing the training program for the new program called, "The Peace Corps." Dad often said that while he thought Christian colleges were important, it was also important for people to be strong Christian witnesses in secular settings. Meanwhile, the theme of service continued. For example, during his sabbatical year in 1963-64, he spent both summers coordinating work camps for the Church of the Brethren and visiting Heifer project sites.

In 1988, Ozzie's life changed when he discovered that he had survived a major heart attack. He had waited too long to see a doctor and the specialists felt that there was nothing they could do except restrict Dad's activities. They told Dad he might have five years or less to live. He bargained with God that if he could live, he would dedicate himself to service. One of the most painful farewells with my father was when our family was living in Hawaii on Steve's sabbatical. Dad came to visit his grandchildren for what he thought was the last time. That was 1988.

It was in this bargain with God that he cooked up his recipe for success. Ozzie had a long term relationship with Dan West, founder of Heifer International and he had joined Rotary in 1979, but now he saw a way that he could connect the two. Over the years, he has applied for thirteen Rotary foundation matching grants to start new Heifer projects around the world: Uganda, Vietnam, Dominican Republic, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, and most recently, Thailand.

There are some things that not everyone knows about my dad.

- Ozzie had strong faith and was a committed Christian, but he was not afraid to question or be critical of simplistic answers. He was a Universalist. He believed in the inherent goodness of all people and believed that all would be reconciled to God. He knew that the loving God he believed in would gather all the peoples of the world in the end.
- He believed in peace. He was not just a conscientious objector in WWII, but he counseled young men in the draft during the Vietnam War and supported strongly his young adult daughter in her anti-war activities. Most recently, he was outspoken about this senseless war in Iraq.
- He believed in justice. He took on causes not his own. His heart ached for those excluded from the church. I remember stories of him coming again and again to the microphone at congregational meetings to push congregations to become more open and accepting. He dreamed of day when all people, including those gay, lesbian and bi-sexual would be welcome not just in our congregations, but in all levels of leadership in the church.
- But most of all he believed that the world needed to be changed. If one child was hungry, if one family lived in poverty - that was too much. And he was smart enough to know that he could not do it along. So he engaged others in his causes. His enthusiasm for the Kauffman museum, KIPCOR, Bethel College, and other important institutions seemed endless. His love of Heifer International was contagious.

In the last few years, as Dad's body failed him, I have taken comfort in remembering him in many ways. A strong, almost six foot tall, physically fit man who could climb in the Alps. I want to remember my Dad on the top of mountain peaks, hiking through the woods, and canoeing through forest streams.

But I also know that he would be disappointed if we weren't reminded that there is unfinished work. Children around the world and even in this country are still hungry. There are still communities that need heifers or other farm animals. Humankind has still not learned that war never solves anything and that peace is the only way for us to survive. The human race still does not understand that as stewards of this magnificent world we have a responsibility to recycle, stop global warming, and preserve the nature that Ozzie loved. And perhaps most importantly, Ozzie would want us to love each other more, not just those who he called "our people" or "Switzers", but he himself was a bridge builder around the world. It has been a comfort this week to read the messages from around the world: German, Ukraine, Russia, South Africa, Uganda, Vietnam, and Thailand -- all across this world from people who call themselves friends of Ozzie.

Yes, there is unfinished business and he would remind us to celebrate, to take time to love each other, but also to get busy - there is work still to do.