

**Celebration Service for
ROBERT MILTON VAN HOUSE
May 8, 2004
Newcomer-Farley Funeral Home
Kettering, Ohio**

2 Timothy 5-8

As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrifice; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Paul was near the end of his ministry, writing from being a prisoner in Rome. He knew that his earthly ministry was nearing its close. He wrote a letter to his protégé, Timothy saying that he has finished his race. In another letter, he mentioned that one who races looks toward the goal line and disciplines his body in order to win a crown of wreath that will deteriorate. But as one who trains for a goal that never rots nor rusts, he puts his entire focus on winning the crown of life.

Berniece, do you mind if I pick up Robert's crossbow?

You can see the skill and workmanship that he put in designing and making this bow. He told me that it was the fastest bow in the world. He designed and built it himself. It is made with laminated wood and the gears that he planned. He made it so it would collapse into a small unit and the handle becomes the carrying tool when folded or the hand grip for preparing to launch the arrow.

When you are using a bow and arrow, or a crossbow, or living a life, you can only do good if you hit at what you are aiming. If you are not aiming at anything, you will hit a lot of miscellaneous, but little that means anything. Robert was focused on making the most out of his family. God was important to Robert, and his family was almost as important. His work with General Motors showed many innovations that he brought to the company as he focused his aim on the work at hand. God, family and career were in his sights, and as family, we know he hit the mark. He, like Paul, used his efforts to seek a lasting reward.

When you are going to be a marksman in hunting in the woods, or in life, you have to use the best you have. I asked Robert why he didn't make it of metal and he patiently explained that the laminations gave the wood more strength and flexibility than he could get out of metal. Then I asked, "How did you measure the speed of the arrow?" He had laser beams that recorded the speed on the computer when the arrow was launched. He had the fastest bow in the world at that time and this is it. He made the best he could with this crossbow, and he did the best within his abilities with his family.

Using the best you have includes using your mind. Robert used his intellect and curiosity to fashion many innovations. His creativity benefited General Motors as well as his family. Using the best you have calls for you to use your body up to its potential. Your best also must be strengthened with your spiritual aspect. The Bible says that you are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, body and spirit. That is what God uses to laminate strength and flexibility in our lives that is stronger than steel. Letting God guide you in using your physical resources will bring you closer to being all that God wants of you for the sake of others.

To be a good hunter or family man, Robert must have sensed that you don't waste what you have. Wasting your minds on targets that are not worthy will leave life unsatisfied for having missed the mark of what could have been. If you waste your body on that which weakens your strength or heart, leaves you knowing that you might have been able to do more for your family and those with whom you work. Wasting your spirit on that which is less than the perfect target of God is to fall short of the glory that God wants you to have. Robert did not waste what he had.

His stroke robbed him of his brain. It took his strength. It left him confused. But it was during his lifetime that he prepared for that which life nor death could cheat him: the spiritual goal that Paul would recognize as a crown of righteousness. It doesn't mean that Robert was perfect any more than Paul, but he knew the one who was perfect righteousness, and that outlasts all else.

An expert archer has faith in himself. He knows his strengths and when he must be flexible. He had faith in his family that was his main target in life, and he did not miss the mark of helping them be whole persons in their own right. He had faith in God that was revealed in Jesus Christ. He had no fear of life. He could identify with Paul, the apostle who said, "I have fought the

good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

“What can separate us from the love of God? Can tribulation or distress or persecution or famine, or nakedness or peril or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor strokes, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things resent, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.