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To the leader of the band - A reflection on appraisal career

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I received a very nice note from Ben Summers, a friend of my father's, a couple of days ago. It was hand written came in an NEREJ envelope. In it he commented on how much he was enjoying reading my articles and how it brought him back to the days when he and my father would write frequently for the paper: Dad once a month and Ben every week.

I was reminded about all the people who have gone before us and contributed so much to this profession, in establishing standards, educating new appraisers, and writing new courses. People like Peter Tetreault, Chet Nicora, Leon Boudreau, Dick Dennis, John Cena (the older), Rich Goulet and Jon Avery. I know that I am naming only a few, but like so many others, these are people who took the time and had the presence to be leaders and mentors in a profession that was to say the least was and is extremely competitive.

I joined the profession in 1981 as the result of a challenge my father threw out to me as he was starting his own company and I was flailing around trying to figure out what to do with my life. "Why don't you try appraising real estate, and in six months, if you don't like it you can go and do something else."

And so it began 34 years ago, in my parent's kitchen, dad teaching me and I doing the basic research needed for him to produce reports. For me, it was a chance to work with a person who I admired and respected, a chance to capture time with a person who I had known all of my life but with whom I had not spent an incredible amount of time. Growing up in the 50s and 60s, father's work was creating security and wealth and mother's work was providing a stable and healthy home and kids were a part of the home duties. In those days dad was a real estate broker, the owner of a small real estate firm: Simmons Real Estate. We were taught early how to answer the phone professionally, how to take messages that were legible and understandable, and never, never, NEVER, to awaken dad from his after dinner nap before returning back to work in the evening.

The offer that he made 34 years ago turned into a life long profession initially in the private sector as an appraiser and eventually in the public sector as an assessor. In the course of my professional career, I had the opportunity to give back by doing some of my own mentoring, teaching and leading.

I have to take this opportunity, near Father's Day, to thank my father, for his advice, support and his mentoring. The late Dan Fogelberg said it better than I ever could in his song "The Leader of the Band," and with apologies, I will make one small change (I never referred to my dad as "papa").

"I thank you for the music and your stories of the road

I thank you for the freedom when it came my time to go

I thank you for the kindness and the times when you got tough

And dad, I don't think I said I love you near enough

The leader of the band is tired and his eyes are growing old

But his blood runs through my instrument and his song is in my soul

My life has been a poor attempt to imitate the man

I'm just a living legacy to the leader of the band"

Dad turned 93 on May 20, the ongoing conversations we had on real estate, real estate valuation, ethics, the income approach, the direct sales approach the economic principles, the seemingly endless conversations that would go on until my mother would exclaim "can't you two talk about anything besides real estate?" are now at an end. Our conversations are limited to "Dad how are you doing?" "Terrible" he exclaims with a smile, he has always been such a contrarian.

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