

How I Build Bonds With Grandchildren

BY VAL FARMER

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Val FARMER

During the past 17 days we traveled to North Carolina and Mississippi to be with two families with five and three grandchildren respectively. As a part of one of the trips, My wife and I rented a car and drove from North Carolina to Washington DC to give a tour of the Nation's Capital to twin ten-year-old grandchildren.

Developing and maintaining relationships with grandchildren takes time and work. We are lucky to have 12 grandchildren in three families living around us within 8 miles of where we live. Developing relationships is much easier than trying to bridge the distances between us than the 11 who live elsewhere.

If you have done the addition, we've gone from one grandchild to 23 in 15 short years. Some people are amazed when they hear 23. Fifty years ago, this would have been ordinary.

Now, in an era of smaller families, 23 seems gargantuan. With one yet unmarried son, with two or three of the families still in their childbearing years and with a possibility of adoption with one of the families, this total could rise to over 30.

I am happy. I am pleased. There is truly joy in posterity. One professional near my eye lamented that he had no grandchildren. His children haven't chosen to have children.

What have I learned about being a grandfather so far?

- Being there. I've supported my wife in being there for the births of the grandchildren. Our daughters want the special mothering they get during that time. They want to share the excitement of the new addition with their mother. When a newborn comes, both generations unite in supporting the child.

- I seek out the grandchildren to spend time with them. That means finding a way of getting together. Lately we have had the pleasure of hosting a family reunion here in St. Louis and have held two other reunions, one along the Oregon coast and another in Yosemite. These events take planning and or-

ganization. As they can afford it, our children come to visit with grandchildren in tow. The anticipation and excitement of watching their headlights approach is only exceeded by the sadness of the sight of their taillights receding as they leave.

As we can afford it, we go to them. Our children want to expose their children to some of the things they remember when they were growing up. The best way to love and help our adult children is to love our grandchildren.

One wise woman, commenting to a mother of a large family, said, "Your hands are full now, your heart will be full later." That is true for us.

- It starts very young. I love holding the newborns. They are so tiny and precious. They are a miracle from God. Robert Frost said, "A baby is God's opinion that life must go on."

- One-to-one. The relationship with each grandchild is individual. It depends on a conscious decision to personalize the time and make myself memorable in each grandchild's life.

I have a special name. "Granddad." That is to distinguish me from the other grandparents in their lives. I say it in a special and scary way to get their attention. It is a good name that I have to live up to.

Living at a distance, I take on the challenge of overcoming their natural fear of strangers. I may be strange but I won't be a stranger for long. "Whether you want to or not, I am going to have a special relationship with you."

I am in their face. I do my thing. I am dramatic. I overcome their wariness, whether it is one visit, two visits or whatever it takes. After that it is gravy.

Fun time. I play with them. I read to them. I tell improvised stories. I play special rowdy

gymnastic games, games my children remember me playing with them. I am a tease.

I take them out for ice cream. To the movies. I take them to the park. I push them on swings. I watch and "ooh and aah" over their little accomplishments. I play catch. I help them build sand castles on the beach. I build bonfires.

I try to be fun for them. I work them up. Others get stuck with settling them down.

- Not so fun times. I feed them. And when I absolutely have to, I clean them up. I comfort them. I try to soothe them. I kiss their "owies." I try not to clash with them. Distracting them works better. This kind of caregiving and nurturing helps build relationships also.

- Sharing our heritage. When we can, we attend church together. We share our heritage by example. The teaching moments come as they mature. There are times for sharing wisdom, encouragement, a listening ear, educational experiences and adventures.

- Photography is important. Someday, when they are old enough to appreciate it, the grandchildren will have a visual record of their memories. Casual photography captures those special moments of mutual delight. Hopefully, someday their emotional memories will be stirred by gifts, pictures, and tokens of the bond that existed between us.

Mainly I want the grandchildren to know, "Granddad loves me. I'm special to Granddad."

Rewards. I love being a grandfather. It is a slice of the fun part of parenting - without the hard work, the struggle or responsibility of raising children.

It brings me joy and happiness. It brings me meaning and purpose. I hope that my children and grandchildren think so too. My heart is full already...and it can only get better.

For more information on grandparenting, visit Val Farmer's website at www.valfarmer.com.

Val Farmer is a clinical psychologist specializing in family business consultation and mediation with farm families. He lives in Wildwood, Missouri and can be contacted through his website.

Knox

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and Ogallala Aquifer.

A recent U.S. State Department hearing on the proposed Keystone XL pipeline drew more than 1,000 people in Atkinson, Neb. The Holt County town lies about 10 miles from the proposed pipeline route.

The crowd at the Atkinson hearing packed the high school gymnasium in the town of about 1,200 residents. The audience included both area residents and people from several states.

Local ranchers expressed concerns about a possible pipeline leak polluting the Ogallala Aquifer, which supplies drinking and irrigation water to eight states. The pipeline supporters included union workers backing the construction jobs created by the pipeline.

Miller said his hometown and Supervisor District Three lie in western Knox County, about 60 miles from the proposed XL pipeline route.

"We are the closest (Knox County district) to the pipeline," he said. "The Holt County line is 14 miles west of Verdigre, and it's another 35 miles to Atkinson."

Miller said he didn't attend the Atkinson meeting. However, he has spoken with current and former Holt County supervisors about the pipeline and its possible impact on their county.

The U.S. State Department is expected to either allow, alter or disallow the pipeline before the end of the year. The State Department is involved with the process because the pipeline crosses the U.S.-Canada border.

Meanwhile, a group of Nebraska lawmakers met Tuesday with a Canadian pipeline company official to discuss concerns about the proposed route of the Keystone XL pipeline through the state.

Speaker of the Legislature Mike Flood and state Sens. Chris Langemeier, Annette Dubas and Kate Sullivan met with Alex Pourbaix, president of TransCanada Corporation's energy and oil pipelines.

The pipeline meeting drew protesters to Flood's office in Norfolk, Neb., according to the Norfolk Daily News.

Some state lawmakers have called for a special legislative session to address pipeline concerns.

Those legislators include Sen. Tyson Larson, an O'Neill, Neb., native and Holt County resident. Larson represents District 40 in north-central and northeast Nebraska, covering Rock, Holt, Boyd, Knox, Cedar and Dixon counties.

In a recent column that appeared in the *Press & Dakotan*, Larson said he supports a special session to address pipeline issues.

"The U.S. Department of State has announced that a decision on the permit to build the Keystone XL pipeline will not be forthcoming until the end of the year. However, the Legislature has time to act before that decision takes place," he said.

"After careful consideration and discussion with constituents and my colleagues in the Legislature, a special session is needed to address concerns with the proposed route of the Keystone XL pipeline."

Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman recently stated he opposed the route through the Sandhills and encouraged the U.S. State Department to deny TransCanada's permit to construct the Keystone XL pipeline, Larson said.

"I have serious concerns about the proposed route of the pipeline and agree with Gov. Heineman's stance," Larson added.

The pipeline issue warrants calling the Legislature back to Lincoln, Larson said.

"While I am wary of spending money on a special session, I recognize that further regulation is necessary, and such regulation should be passed prior to the decision by the U.S. Department of State on the permits," the state senator said.

"Due to my concerns about the pipeline route, I would support a special session to further discuss the regulations needed to ensure the pipeline does not cause harm to our state."

Larson outlined his pipeline concerns in the *Press & Dakotan* column.

"In the eastern part of District 40, there has been positive feedback from the first Keystone pipeline construction due to increased economic activity," he said. "However, the fragility of the Sandhills and the great importance of the groundwater supply make the proposed route for the new Keystone XL pipeline a different matter, even with the added regulations in LB629, which was passed last session and signed by Governor (Dave) Heineman."

LB629, introduced by Sen. Kate Sullivan of Cedar Rapids, adopted the Oil Pipeline Reclamation Act, Larson said. The regulations contained in LB629 will work towards ensuring an oil company will have to fix any ongoing or future land restoration issues, he said.

Two other bills requiring more regulation are also pending in the Natural Resources Committee and will be addressed in the upcoming session, Larson said.

"While I do not sit on the Natural Resources Committee, I am discussing the issues surrounding the pipeline with my colleagues and am working with them to address the concerns of my constituents," he said.

Plot

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and no one was in any danger because of the informant's cooperation with authorities.

Attorney General Eric Holder, appearing at a news conference with Mueller and Bharara, declared, "The United States is committed to holding Iran responsible for its actions."

Shortly afterward, the Treasury Department announced economic penalties against Arbabsiar and four Quds Force officers it says were involved.

Asked whether the plot was blessed by the very top echelons of the Iranian government, Holder said the Justice Department was not making that accusation. But he said the conspiracy was conceived, sponsored and directed from Tehran. The U.S. describes the Quds Force as Iran's primary foreign action arm for supporting terrorists and extremists around the world.

The White House said Obama told al-Jubeir in a phone call that the foiled plot to assassinate him is a "flagrant" violation of U.S. and international law. Obama also told al-Jubeir he is committed to ensuring the security of diplomats in the United States, the White House said, and met with his national security team to thank them for disrupting the plot.

The Obama administration has often said that no option is off the table with Iran, a position that a U.S. official said had not changed Tuesday. But the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the policy publicly, said the emphasis now is on increasing diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran.

The alleged target was Al-Jubeir, a commoner educated at University of North Texas and Georgetown who was foreign affairs adviser to Saudi King Abdullah when he was crown prince. A month after the 2001 attacks, in which 15 of the 19 Arab hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, Abdullah sent al-Jubeir to the United States to rebuild Saudi Arabia's

image in the United States. He was appointed ambassador in 2007.

Shiite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia are the Mideast's two most powerful countries and have long vied for power and influence across the region. Saudi Arabia and other countries like Bahrain have accused Iran of trying to create dissent in their countries this year, during democracy movements across the region.

The Saudi Embassy said in a statement that it appreciated the U.S. efforts to prevent the crime. "The attempted plot is a despicable violation of international norms, standards and conventions and is not in accord with the principles of humanity," the statement read.

Mansoor Arbabsiar, a 56-year-old U.S. citizen who also holds an Iranian passport, was charged along with Gholam Shakuri, who authorities said was a Quds Force member and is still at large in Iran. The Treasury Department listed addresses for Arbabsiar in two Texas cities — the Austin suburb of Round Rock and the Gulf city of Corpus Christi — and prosecutors say he frequently traveled to Mexico for business.

The complaint filed in federal court says Arbabsiar confessed that his cousin Abdul Reza Shahlai was a high-ranking member of the Quds Force who told him to hire someone in the narcotics business to target Al-Jubeir. U.S. authorities described Shakuri as Shahlai's deputy who helped provide funding for the plot. Shahlai was identified by the Treasury Department in 2008, during George W. Bush's administration, as a Quds deputy commander who planned the Jan. 20, 2007, attack in Karbala, Iraq, that killed five American soldiers and wounded three others.

Arbabsiar, Shakuri and Shahlai and two others — Qasem Soleimani, a Quds commander who allegedly oversaw the plot, and Hamed Abdollahi, a senior Quds officer who helped coordinate — were sanctioned Tuesday

by the Treasury Department for their alleged involvement. The department described all except Arbabsiar as Quds officers.

The complaint alleges this past spring that Arbabsiar approached the DEA informant, who he believed was associated with a well-known Mexican drug cartel with access to military-grade weapons and explosives and has a history of assassinations. Justice Department officials say Arbabsiar initially asked the informant about his knowledge of plastic explosives for a plot to blow up a Saudi embassy. But through subsequent meetings in Mexico over the past six months in which they spoke English, secretly recorded for U.S. authorities, Arbabsiar offered \$1.5 million for the death of the ambassador. He eventually wired nearly \$100,000 to an account number that the informant provided, authorities said.

The DEA informant is no stranger to criminal activity — the criminal complaint reveals he was charged with violating drug laws in the United States but the charges were dismissed when the informant cooperated with several drug investigations. The complaint said the informant has continued to provide reliable information that has led to numerous drug seizures and is paid for his work.

According to transcripts of their recorded conversations cited in the complaint, the informant told Arbabsiar he would kill the ambassador however he

wanted — "blow him up or shoot him" — and Arbabsiar responded he should use whatever method is easiest. The plot eventually centered on targeting Al-Jubeir in his favorite restaurant and Arbabsiar was quoted as saying killing him alone would be better, "but sometime, you know, you have no choice." Arbabsiar dismisses the possibility that 100-150 others in the restaurant could be killed along with the ambassador as "no problem" and "no big deal."

Arbabsiar was arrested Sept. 29 at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport and was ordered held without bail during his brief first court appearance Thursday afternoon. Prosecutors said he faces up to life in prison if convicted.

The complaint said that after his arrest, Arbabsiar made several calls to Shakuri in which they discussed the purchase of their "Chevrolet," and Shakuri urged Arbabsiar to "just do it quickly."

No one answered the door Tuesday at Arbabsiar's two-story home, decorated for Halloween, at the end of a cul-de-sac in the Austin suburb of Round Rock. A neighbor said he frequently saw Arbabsiar walking around smoking cigarettes and talking on a cellphone in a language the neighbor didn't understand. Public records show Arbabsiar has been married at least twice and has a history of arrests in Texas for offenses that include evading arrest and theft.

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Thursday, October 13
7:40 a.m. Yankton Conv/Vis Bureau (Lisa Scheve)
8:15 a.m. Yankton Chamber of Commerce (Carmen Schramm)

Cameron-Hoff
Shannon Cameron and Randy Hoff were married April 30, 2011, at St. Benedict Catholic Church, Yankton, SD, with Fr. Ken Lulf officiating. Parents of the couple are Scott and Maria Cameron of Yankton, SD, and Donald Hoff of Kenosha, WI, and Lynnette Hoff of Chandler, AZ. Maid of Honor was Lindsay Cameron of Yankton, SD. Bridesmaids were Emily Johnson of Sioux Falls, SD; Jennifer McGinley of Mesa, AZ; and Heidi Hoff of Gilbert, AZ. Best man was Doug Lunsford of Greenwood, CA. Groomsmen were Riley Cameron, Ben Cameron, and Hunter Cameron of Yankton, SD. Music for the ceremony was provided by Camille Massing of Littleton, CO, and Marilyn Kathol of Yankton, SD. A reception was held at Minerva's in Yankton, SD. Hosts were Jeff Healy of Weatherford, TX, and Karen Sorenson of Millersville, MD. Guest book attendant was Renee Hoff of Kenosha, WI. Flower pinner was Diane Cameron of Yankton, SD. The bride attended Yankton High School and graduated from South Dakota State University College of Pharmacy. She is the Pharmacy Manager at Walgreens Pharmacy in Mesa, AZ. The groom attended Mountain Pointe High School in Ahwatukee, AZ. He works in the meat and seafood department at Fry's Food and Drug in Chandler, AZ.

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