

My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 63

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Our bodies record our history and reveal glimpses of even our most distant past. Skin tone, hair color, eyes, and stature make the most general disclosures about us. Whether we tend to stoop or stand upright, move lithely or stiffly, will betray our age. Though often misleading, our initial interactions will normally commence with a quick mental assessment of a person's physical qualities based on a visual sweep. Well before I had taken a DNA sample and sent it off to [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com), I

was at a Christmas party and chatting with an old friend, Ky Mazur, who is a hand surgeon. He caught sight of my palms and asked to look at them (I love receiving free consults). I set down my glass of Zinfandel and presented my hands. The skin on my palms was contracting, like a bow string being pulled back. I had always thought I had injured my hands fishing or while engaged in some other manual labor. Ky set me straight. He informed me that I had "Dupuytren's Contracture," a genetic gift passed along from my "Viking" ancestors. Knowing the history of those Scandanavian raiders, I retorted that it must be the original "Mark of Cain." About a year later, I sent off my DNA, and when the results came back, sure enough, my body had provided a hint of a mysterious past lost to history and distant time. Maybe this is why the ancient poem of "Beowulf" sings to me so insistently.

We know so little. We arrive in this world blissfully ignorant of history and as time passes, we know only the stories recounted to us. Our families try, but we all live in the midst of furious change and we forget more than we remember. Even momentos saved from our family's past, physical markers of our history, can lose their stories, meaning, and value as memories fade, and the storytellers pass from this world to the next. What had been preserved as the most precious keepsake, memorializing a moment of friendship, deep love, or parental heart, may be neglected, put aside, and eventually given to charity or thrown in a dustbin.

And it seems, as we age, our bodies hide more than they reveal. When sitting one morning at breakfast with my father and his friends, I could never have imagined that the old fellow sitting across from me had piloted nearly 250 combat missions in WWII over the "Hump" in Burma. Or that the gentleman sitting next to him had, as a young Marine second lieutenant on Okinawa, been awarded the Bronze Star for pulling a wounded Marine to safety under the vicious raking fire of a Nambu machine gun. Or that the frail and stooped grandmother had been in the OSS, and then later the CIA, barely escaping KGB assassination during the Suez Crisis in 1956. When she first told me her stories, the details were so incongruous with her physical appearance, I politely listened but later had to ask my father if they were true. They were, he assured me.

The world values these stories, and yet, while their highlights may be preserved, mostly they will be forgotten. How much more is this the case for our lives, ones the world discards? Who will remember our days on MFT or as missionaries, if we do not tell the stories? Our bodies may say something about us, but they can't disclose the full panorama of our existence. Maybe our backs reveal the injuries sustained carrying boxes of candles. Our knees, or their replacements, might disclose something of the hours we spent running stretches of strip malls along rural highways, or up endless staircases in urban apartments. But really, the details of our efforts, the sweat that dripped from us, the tears we shed, the heat and the cold of the days we endured, the fear and anger we triggered, and the love we shared as brothers and sisters on teams and in regions, most all of this will be lost to time and preserved only in the memory of God. Of course, we embody our history, and like Moses descending Sinai, we emanate the radiance of our Heavenly Parent's love. But also like Moses, the details are shrouded in mystery, in darkness, and lost to our descendants.

We must tell our stories and our stories must be told, and retold. Our time remaining is always uncertain. Many of those brothers and sisters we cherish from our MFT past have passed on. Who can be certain of the time we still possess? Much of what we had to say has already been forgotten, slipping from the grip of our fallible memories. But maybe this is how it should be. Genesis tells us we are created in the image of God. We know God heart to heart, and experience Him as our Heavenly Parent, from moment to moment. Still, God remains shrouded in mystery.

Maybe, for us to be in God's image, we too should express our love from moment to moment and yet, remain essentially mysterious - our stories serving as flashes of revelation in the mystical darkness.