

Early one morning in 1948, Bill Turner boarded the bus in New Orleans to ride from home to work. He took a seat and kept to himself, thinking about the weather. Behind him two lively voices spoke about a name from the obituaries in the *Times-Picayune* that morning. One voice said, "That man who died – he lived in our neighborhood." The other one said, "I don't recognize his name." The first one said, "You know who he is. He's the little old man who used to walk to mass at Our Lady of Lourdes every morning." That evening, when Bill Turner got home, he relayed this conversation to his bride of one year. "Alice," he said, "When I die, that would be a nice way to be remembered." My mother was horrified that her new husband was already planning his obituary, but before long, the two of them, still in their 20s, started going to daily mass. That is the way they started their day as a married couple for over 50 years.

Dad would never boast about this. Dad would never boast about anything – his army record, his education, his knowledge of cars, his skills at baseball, the devotion of his wife or those he befriended from beggars to bishops. He kept to himself and wondered about the weather. He was a frugal man, but not a cheapskate. He was tight with money, not to hoard it, but because he had no use for it. He rarely bought anything. When my sisters selected the outfit for him to wear tonight, they didn't have much to choose from. They opened his closet and saw six sport shirts and two pairs of pants. Seven words nobody ever said to my father are, "Bill, you sure have a great wardrobe."

There wasn't much need to dress up. He's been retired for the last 20 years. People respected him as a businessman; they loved him at Braniff. But he really blossomed in retirement. He was born to be a grandfather.

The six children he and Mom raised all became well-educated, if a bit eccentric, individuals. The Turner family has influenced the Kansas City area in law, business, education, social services, religion and a number of kids' sports teams. The two reasons most of you are here tonight are you live in the Kansas City area and you know one of the Turners. I want you all to understand this. The reason our family made these connections in Kansas City is because of one man. My dad. In 1954 his company asked him to move from New Orleans to Kansas City. He brought his wife and children here. In the Old Testament, God asked Abraham to leave his homeland for

the promised land, where his descendants would number as the stars of the sky. Bill is the patriarch who brought the Turners to Kansas City.

And I'll guarantee you this. He did not come here with a plan to make a personal lasting impact on the landscape of local society. He came here with a much smaller purpose: To work a job, to raise a family and to serve God. He never swallowed the belief that money buys happiness. His dreams were noted for their depth, not their extravagance.

My dad started keeping a daily journal in 1986. Every so often he'd ask if we knew what happened on this date in such-and-such a year. Each day he entered the weather, the headlines, and the events that he thought were important, whether they concerned his family or the world. Over the last few months, our family noted some disturbing dates in our own mental journal of dad's health. September 11, 2002: Dad attended daily mass for the last time. October 2, 2002: Dad wrote an entry in his journal for the last time. And the event that really tipped us off about how precipitously his health had declined, November 2, 2002: Dad, sitting in his chair in the living room, reached the remote and turned off the Notre Dame football game in the second quarter.

Dad, who was Abraham for our family in 1954, becomes Abraham again in 2002. God is calling him to leave his homeland to reach the promised land, a place where he will have daily communion with God. He is our patriarch, the first of the Kansas City Turners to make this journey, and he has no greater plans than to do God's bidding and to bring his family along. I think the lesson from my dad's life is this: If you do small things well, incredible things can happen. Follow your goals and avoid distractions. Set time aside for God every day, even if you work full time and have six kids. You won't need possessions; you won't even need the land of your birth. Keep life manageable, and you can find everything you truly wanted and more.

Tonight, every one of us ought to scrutinize our lives. We ought to know what it is we hope for, what we hold valuable, how we spend our time in the early hours of the day and how much we keep in our closets. If we value busyness, the glitter of life, property and possessions, then we disparage what we should prize the most, the people we love and the faith we share.

Bill Turner died peacefully in his sleep early in the morning on November 19, 2002, members of his family asleep nearby. In life and in death, no one fully saw him. This humble man, fascinated by the weather, died beneath the most spectacular meteor shower of the year, an event that no one fully saw under the glare of a full moon. God granted him a quiet exit, all to himself. He couldn't have had it better. And neither could we.