

How do you describe a man who you love and adore? And cope with the reality of his passing and the memories you must now store? There is a new void that fills his place, and so much sadness not to see his loving face. How do I write the thoughts and memories that I hold so dear? Please don't make this reality be real!

From my earliest memories I remember my Uncle Dennis asking, "Who is your favorite Uncle." I would jokingly reply Uncle Mike or someone else. I love all my Uncles, but I can never find one that I like or love more than "Uncle Dennis".

My Mom told me that Grandma Barney once said I reminded her of Uncle Dennis. I could never have been prouder. I'm sure I must have been sleeping when Grandma Barney thought of that because it was probably the only time I was kind and gentle like him.

Trips

Uncle Dennis bought a motor home for a trip to Mexico. I remember thinking we were the luckiest people in the world to ride in such a fancy machine. We could walk around and not wear seat belts. I remember eating donut balls and feeling awful special.

There were many times I was privileged to ride horses in the mountains with Uncle Dennis. Some were uncomfortable rides like the 3 day mule ride from Strawberry to the Ranch (I remember commenting on how far it was and hearing him say real cowboys ride that far all the time). Other rides were beautiful, like the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. However, nothing to me was more beautiful than the rides through the meadows or up the side of our newly discovered Mormon Wagon trail to Woods Canyon Lake.

I will always cherish the time I had to drive to Colorado with Uncle Dennis and asking him how he started out (selling carpet for mobile homes). I think I asked him a million questions on that trip. Oh how I wish I had the chance to ask them again.

Uncle Dennis sayings

"Ladies before Gentlemen" - What better man to teach you how to act with ladies in the room?

"Slicker than snot" – One of my favorites that he was embarrassed he said many years ago on some icy slick Pinetop road

"Top of the morning to ya" – Seems like every morning for breakfast I would hear these words

"Muss Hogs" – One of my favorite nicknames he gave us boys

"Howdy partner" – Fun greeting

"How do you lead from the rear?" – Teasing Kenny in Italy since he was suppose to be our Tour Guide

Acts of Service

Praying the horse I was riding down the side of the mountain would make it and promising to buy me a bigger one if it did (which he did).

Always including me on his horse rides

Taking the time to play cards with my daughter Cailyn at the table after we laid pavers at the old ranch house (even though he was tired and Cailyn likes to win).

Buying the Blazer for the ranch so we could have something fun to drive up there. Also sharing it with my Dad when there were more teenage drivers than vehicles in our household.

Misc Memories

Grilling steaks on the back porch at the new ranch house. Always trying to make sure we were included and had something to eat.

Giving hugs instead of handshakes

Recent General Conference Priesthood Meeting in Utah. I remember walking with Uncle Dennis and having many people come up and shake his hand. I remember I was very proud to be his nephew.

Conference with him when I was 12 and I got to sit by him in the plane.

Uncle Dennis having us give him five. I remember him saying "harder", "harder"... It didn't matter how hard we tried, we could never give him five hard enough. All we would come away with was a red hand and a bruised ego.

On my mission hearing about how he threw down some drunk Indian at a Waylon Jennings concert and Uncle Mike getting ready to throw down too.

Spending countless hours and money on the "old ranch house" so we could have something nice to stay in at the ranch too.

Mom always saying how Uncle Dennis never hit or treated her unkind. Wish I could say the same thing about the way I've treated my sister.

Teaching

Dirt in Bryan or Justin's mouth when they said they had watered the garden and hadn't

Putting our nose in the carpet when we misbehaved on the old, dirty, ranch carpet

On a recent trip to the ranch I mentioned to Uncle Dennis how nice "his" new ranch house and everything was and him promptly correcting me by saying "our place."

Hauling up the toy hauler for a place to sleep at the ranch for the "Muss Hogs"

Seeing him get the Golden Rule Award at the Interfaith Banquet

Watching him leave early Sunday morning or late Saturday night to make it home for his church responsibilities and then returning back to the ranch.

Story from Mayor Steve Berman about how “Dennis was the Bishop” even if he wasn’t LDS. “You don’t have to be a Mormon to have a Bishop.” Uncle Dennis dropped food off for 3 days when his dad died.

When I tried to do something nice for him and haul his saddle he would say, “You are so good to help me” even though he could do it himself.

Coping with the Loss

Sitting at my Mom’s house not wanting to go to the Barney’s and face it. Just sat crying in the chair.

Going to the Barney’s and embracing so many family members. How everyone loved you Uncle Dennis.

Seeing Uncle Dennis’ mortal body down on the floor and not believing one of my heroes had gone on to the other side.

By Matt Copple