

THE THERMOS

My father grew up towards the end of a country road - their lane started where the road turned and curved around an old white church. Six siblings grew up there, and as my dad said to me one time, "We were poor, but the family on the next ridge were even poorer." I want to tell you one of the stories that got us to our 20th Year at McMichael Realty and that is where it started.

When Dad, Scott and I were going through the first years of McMichael Realty, we did everything ourselves. We never felt like we had the time to slow down and hire anyone to do anything, like put up our larger signs. So, there we were on a crisp, sunny day in early spring or late fall, listing some land. The three of us went together to place a sign on a section of the land, so it was visible to people passing by on the highway.

This was one of our larger signs that required two 6-inch posts to be dug in the ground at just the same distance apart, so the middle piece - the sign - could be attached. We were out there in our coats and gloves for over an hour digging, holding and adjusting. When Dad closed the tailgate, we were finally done. He then walked to the passenger side of the truck and got out a thermos, came back over to us, and asked if we wanted some coffee. Now, I'm not a coffee drinker, but it sure sounded good as Dad unscrewed the top of the thermos making one cup and looked through his truck for his morning McDonald's coffee cup. As we leaned against the truck and took a drink, Scott said, "Henry, where did you get this thermos, I have never known you to carry a thermos before."

"Well..." Dad said, "It's kind of a funny story..."

Scott and I looked at each other and my Dad started laughing, as he went on to tell us about getting his McDonald's coffee that morning. When he pulled up to the traffic light by McDonalds, he noticed a thermos on the back bumper of the truck directly in front of him. So, he flashed his lights a few times, trying to get the truck's attention, but the light changed and the truck sped forward making the thermos fall off the truck. When Dad saw the thermos fall, he jumped out and picked it up. He then rushed to get behind that truck before it stopped at the next stop sign a few blocks up. Dad said he honked and tried to signal at the gentleman, as the truck turned onto a country road. Dad followed him for a few miles - all the while still trying to get his attention by honking and flashing his lights - the guy never noticed. Dad finally gave up and headed to work.

Those of you who know me, know that by this time I was freaking out! I don't even like anyone drinking out of my glass, and I certainly would not drink out of someone else's.

Case-in-point: Years ago, we were coming from a listing and stopped at Sonic for lunch, and since Dad does not like

Sonic coffee, he did not order anything to drink. As we got on the highway - where I couldn't turn around - Dad was in the backseat desperately asking for a drink of my Diet Coke! Now, we all know - but he doesn't - that he can't eat without drinking something. I live for my daily Sonic Diet Cokes, and he was asking to ruin my entire drink! As he was trying to convince me - with a lump in his throat - that he would even turn the straw around... if I would just give him a drink. What was I supposed to do?

That day... I had to give up my Diet Coke. I wasn't going to drink anymore after that, and if asked today - I'm sure - he would still say I'm the ridiculous one... because he needed that drink!

So, here we are drinking out of another man's thermos that we don't even know, and my dad is perfectly fine with it! Scott asked him if he even knew what was in the thermos before he offered us the coffee. Dad looked at us confused and said, "No, not until we poured it, but what else would be in a thermos?" I had quit drinking it by now, Scott didn't know what to do, and we both just looked at each other as Dad kept drinking.

Everytime we tell this story - and yes, I still find it disgusting - we laugh. I've thought about this so many times over the years, and always find myself thinking about my Dad. It takes me back to this... no matter where life has taken him or how old he gets, he has always been humble enough to drink out of another man's thermos. And no - he doesn't care who the man is.

As for me, I see the lesson here... but I still can't bring myself to do it!

