

Craig Wentz Funeral Talk by Jon Wright
January 24, 2015

I'm honored and grateful that the Wentz family has asked me to share some recollections of Craig. Like many of you I have shed some tears in recent days.

The scriptures teach us to "cheer up your hearts"(2N10:23), "be of good cheer" (Matt 14:27), "rejoice" (Matt 5:12). Clearly these admonitions apply even in the midst of the storms of life. Elder Ochoa said, "Remember that in reality you are here in this life to develop your faith, to be tested, and to learn and *be happy*." Craig was beautifully cheerful. For Craig, it was not just a personality trait; it came from a heart full of gratitude and love. His joy and hope came from love of his Savior, love of his fellowmen and love of the Gospel.

For years he dealt with bouts with pain. He bore that burden with patience and faith. It was hard to get him even to talk about it, and then he would minimize it. Sometimes the fires of affliction consume, and sometimes they refine. They refined Craig's character.

Cheerfulness was such a core attribute with Craig, that even when his illness was taking its toll, the wonderful brightness of his personality shone through. For so long even his terrible illness couldn't extinguish that.

Through this adversity Mary was a stalwart by his side. When it became difficult to drive, she drove him to our activities. She worked tirelessly to take care of him.

Craig loved humor. When he became less mobile we chatted occasionally on the phone to share a little humor. Craig, how many gorillas does it take to change a light bulb? How many? Only one, but it takes lots of light bulbs. His hearty laughter was therapeutic for me.

One time on the mission Dean Hughes and Craig were stopped because the taillight on Craig's bike was out. The officer asked Craig about the light, and Craig played dumb. He acted as though he understood very little German. He did a lot of nodding and saying things like, *Ach, ja. Lichte aus* with his best American accent. The officer told him to get it fixed and let him go. The very next day they knocked on a door and a sleepy-eyed man

answered. Craig gave his usual door approach in perfect German . The man said, “Weren’t you on a bicycle last night? The man didn’t give him a ticket, but slammed the door.

Craig was an exceptional professional. Lawyers he worked with had similar comments...“good and genuine man” “I had great respect for his legal skills”

Bart Kunz, a colleague at the law firm in Salt Lake, remembers Craig.

“Craig was a mentor for me, and I’m a better lawyer, and a better person, for it. One of the many lessons he taught me was not to confuse the attorneys who worked against us with my negative impressions about how they sometimes did their jobs. Professional antagonism didn’t have to mutate into personal animosity. Time and again I saw Craig befriend opposing attorneys in our most heated cases, when the arguments were forceful and when sometimes we felt the other side had slighted us. I would hear Craig on the phone with them, talking about their families and laughing with that big, quick smile. I think that to Craig life was too wonderful a thing to dwell on what he called “greasy kids’ stuff.” I was fortunate to work with Craig, and I’m grateful for his lasting influence on my career and my life.” endquote

That puts an interesting spin on “love your neighbor as yourself”.

Bill Gates, father of Bill Gates of Microsoft fame, and managing partner of the firm when Craig worked there said: I am very sorry to hear of Craig's passing. He was an exemplary lawyer, friend and citizen. I feel fortunate to have known him. Bill

Elder Spencer Condie, missionary acquaintance and emeritus 70 said, “Craig, like Nathaniel of old, was completely without guile. The private man and the public man were one and the same. Your name was always safe with Craig. He made everyone feel like his very best friend and he was loyal to all of his friends”

Craig thrived in his mission to Germany. He loved the language, the people and the opportunities to serve, learn and grow. He was an excellent missionary.

Ross Boundy shares this recollection: “On one occasion Craig was called upon to translate for Ezra Taft Benson, who had served in President

Eisenhower's cabinet and was then president of our Church's European missions. Craig stood next to President Benson at a podium set for his tall height, which meant that Craig had trouble reaching the same microphone. As I recall, he made some comment about the awkward arrangement, which prompted President Benson to quip: "My boy, never forget that the only measurement in life that's important is from the neck up!" It was a lesson Craig never forgot."

If we were all transformed in physical stature to the size of our character, intellect and personality, we would see Craig as a giant among us.

By the way, it's high praise to be selected to be an interpreter for someone like Elder Benson.

His playful nature, quick mind and love for German were expressed in many ways. In German one can insert modifying phrases within modifying phrases until sentences become very long. Some of us liked to banter back and forth to see who could make the longest, most complicated, convoluted sentences. No one was better at that than Craig.

I don't think he ever addressed correspondence to me as Elder Wright. It was always elder Rightig (right as in correct) or Elder Rechts (as opposite of left).

We missionaries all loved and respected President Gardner. Several years ago Craig and I drove down to Richfield to visit President Gardner who was suffering from Shingles at the time.

The drive was a wonderful time to chat about a lot of things and to enjoy some laughs too as tends to be the case when one is around Craig. In those hours traveling together I learned about his great love for Mary and his children and his hope that they would have an abundant life- an abundance of joy and an abundance of faith in facing life's tests.

I recently reread this quote by Samuel Smiles and thought of Craig.

"'Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey towards it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us.' ... Hope sweetens the memory of experiences well loved. It tempers our troubles to

our growth and our strength. It befriends us in dark hours, excites us in bright ones. It lends promise to the future and purpose to the past. It turns discouragement to determination.” 8

Craig, I love and miss you- we miss you- and will rejoice to see you again. Our lives are better because our paths crossed; you were such a wonderful example to me of faith in our Savior, of hope and of charity. Thanks for the fun. Thanks for the example. Thanks for the memories.

It's interesting how traditions of retaining memories of loved ones across the generations have evolved. Many years ago memories of our ancestors were mostly kept in oral tradition augmented by basic facts on headstones. Then we added photos that looked a little like wanted posters because subjects had to freeze their expression in front the camera. For my grandparents generation there may be some brief written history. Fast forward to now. We have wonderful tools for collecting, compiling and passing on written, photographic and even audio history on Family Search. As the Wentz family records precious memories, future generations will be able to look back and learn about in great detail and be inspired by the memory of this great man and his wonderful companion and sweetheart Mary.

Among the many bright recollections I have of Craig, let me share two. I first met Craig over fifty years ago when he and I were serving as missionaries in Germany. On one occasion Craig was called upon to translate for Ezra Taft Benson, who had served in President Eisenhower's cabinet and was then president of our Church's European missions. Craig stood next to President Benson at a podium set for his tall height, which meant that Craig had trouble reaching the same microphone. As I recall, he made some comment about the awkward arrangement, which prompted President Benson to quip: "My boy, never forget that the only measurement in life that's important is from the neck up!" It was a lesson Craig never forgot.

Perhaps ten years later Craig sent in his resume when I was on the firm's hiring committee with Roger Shidler, Bill Gates and Chris Genis. Roger introduced Craig's candidacy with something like: "This Wentz fellow looks very good on paper, but he's a Mormon. With all due respect to present company, we're got one of them, and that's enough for the moment." He was about to pass on to the next candidate, when one of us called for a vote on Craig. There were three immediate votes in his favor, to which Roger quickly responded, "Let's make it unanimous."