ONE HERDSMAN'S FATHERLY ADVICE – MARYLIN NEASE - TEXAS

My father was a herdsman all his adult life, meaning for his career he was someone who bred, raised, and cared for large herds of cattle. Daddy had graduated from Oklahoma A&M (now OSU) in 1939 with a degree in animal husbandry, which is agriculture focused on the care, management, and breeding of domestic animals. True to his education, he worked as a herdsman on a ranch near Fort Worth, Texas; then on another ranch near San Antonio, Texas. Next, near Lawton and Fort Sill in Oklahoma, he taught agricultural science to high school boys and to veterans returning from World War II; that is, my father taught teenaged boys and grown men how to cultivate crops and raise livestock to feed and support families. Later, he managed three farms near Chickasha, Oklahoma. In his last 30 years, he ran his own White Lightning Ranch near Okemah, Oklahoma.

Along the way through many years, he was also a herdsman for his four daughters, caring for them lovingly and wisely. Linda, his first daughter, became a physician and a surgeon, helping others as doctors had helped her during and after her recovery from polio in the years before the Salk vaccine was available. I, Marylin, his second daughter, became an English teacher of junior high schoolers for six years and of high schoolers for 35 more years. My goal was always that they would become productive, contributing citizens. Frances, his third daughter, became a mortgage banker and spent her career guiding her customers in how to save and manage their money wisely in order to become successful home owners. Luna Rose, his fourth daughter, became a business woman and local leader. She owned a restaurant, was a bank vice president, and served four terms on city council, one of those as mayor. Daddy called us his "four queens."

In his later years, my father continued to guide me. One afternoon he and I were taking a walk along a road and across a pasture on his beloved ranch. He was in his mid-70s, with moderate dementia, not the man he used to be but still my father. To make conversation, I began telling him about one of my students who was struggling in class. I talked; Daddy listened. When I finished my tale, Daddy spoke, his voice softened by age and illness. "Work with him. He'll come along." That's all Daddy said, but his few words were all I needed to hear. He was telling me what he'd learned in his lifetime of herding cattle and students and daughters: "Be patient. Give him time to grow. He'll turn out just fine."

May we all listen to and learn from our parents and from our teachers. They are the herdsmen and herdswomen in our lives. May we all pass wisdom forward one generation to the next. May time let our wisdom grow as we walk on the road of life, each in our own turn.