



## William & Clara Houck

January 29, 2011

William "Bill" Houck May 25, 1914 ~ January 29, 2011 Clara Metcalf Houck August 10, 1916 ~ February 2, 2011 Bill Houck, 96 and Clara (Metcalf) Houck, 94 of Chittenango passed away last week. Bill was born in Hamden, NY, the son of Willmott and Anna Armstrong Houck. He drove a school bus, worked at Metcalf's Hardware Store, and was the owner of Bill's Fix It Shop. In addition to his love of fishing, hunting, caning chairs and digging ginseng, he was a trustee of the Chittenango United Methodist Church, volunteered at the Canal Boat Museum and supported the American Field Service (foreign exchange student) in central New York, guiding and assisting youth in our village. Bill was predeceased by three brothers, Charles, Raymond and Willmott, & two sisters Hila and Ida. Clara was born in Chittenango, NY, the daughter of Benjamin Franklin and Mildred Metcalf. She was a lifetime resident graduating from Chittenango High School in 1934 and SUNY Albany in 1939 with a degree in Library Science and took additional classes at SU School of Information Studies. Clara worked for 25 years as an Elementary School Librarian in the Chittenango Central School District where she acted not only as an educator but as a guide and mentor to the youth of Chittenango. She was an active member of the United Methodist Church, O.E.S. Beatrice Chapter No. 398 and Silver Star No. 21, Chittenango Canal Boat Museum, CNY Postcard Club, Madison County Historical Society as well playing a major role in the growth of the community. Clara, with her love of reading and children, played a critical role in the establishment of the Sullivan Free Library

and her passion for L. Frank Baum and the Wizard of Oz led her to initiate the annual tribute that has taken place for the last 32 years. Clara enjoyed history and genealogy serving for many years as genealogist for both Madison County and the Village of Chittenango. Clara was predeceased by a brother Walter and a sister Lucille.

They are survived by three sons; William (Joyce) Houck, Jr. of Brant Lake, Ralph (Mary) Houck of Port Matilda, PA, and Raymond (Sharon) Houck of Chittenango; a daughter Barbara (Robert) Sgroi of Canastota; Bill's three sisters Eva Bailey of Dowling Park, FL; Thelma Palmer of Bainbridge and Harriet (Robert) Wisse of Bullock, NC, and Clara's sister Frances Grasmeyer; nine grandchildren Russell, Roger (Melanie), Heather (Sterl), Kirsten (David), Karl (Angie), L. Catherine, Ami (Mike), Brandon and Kyle; four great grandchildren Stephanie, Holden, Trace, and Zoe; cousin Charlotte Houck of Binghamton, numerous nieces and nephews. Other family members include: Steve Merritt of Apache Junction, AZ, Clement (Lydia) Obonyo of Kampala, Uganda and Bent Jensen of Viborg, Denmark. Bill and Clara were married for 69 years. No family or community was ever so blessed.

Memorial services will be 11 am Saturday, February 12th at the Chittenango United Methodist Church, 205 Falls Blvd., Chittenango. Arrangements by the B.L. Bush & Sons Funeral Home, 10 Genesee St., Camillus.

In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to the Chittenango United Methodist Church, 205 Falls Blvd., or Sullivan Free Library, 101 Falls Blvd., Chittenango, NY 13037.

Please sign their guestbook online at [www.BLBUSH.com](http://www.BLBUSH.com)

# Tribute Wall

LH

“ Bill and Clara Houck were many things to many people but to me they were just Grandma and Grandpa. I would sit on Grandma's lap while she read me stories. I remember sitting at the dining table at 289 Genesee while Grandpa would start our family grace. Bill and Clara welcomed a wonderful foreign exchange student from Uganda named Clement. This man would change our lives forever. After a few decades we thought he was dead. Then a miracle occurred and he was alive! Grandma and Grandpa were elated and cried. In Oct. 2008 Clement Obonyo and his wife Lydia came to visit. Their son had returned. So many people remember Grandma for her large contribution to OZ and Grandpa's bus driving and Fix-It shop. Some consider them a institution in Chittenango, and maybe they are. To me they will always be grandparents first, with Grandpa's tighter than tight hugs and Grandma's dry sense of humor. So here is a toast to Bill and Clara, toothpicks and plastic baggies in hand. May we all live a fairy tale as beautiful as theirs.

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**Laura Catherine Houck** - February 21, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DP

“ Bill Jr., Ralph, Ray, Barbara, Unfortunately due to a work related issue I was unable to attend Uncle Bill and Aunt Clara's memorial service to personally give you my condolences. I was fortunate enough to have been able to visit with them in January of this year with my mother, Gloria and Ray. Just visiting with your father brought back many fond memories. I still enjoy remembering many the Thanksgiving weekend hunting adventures with the Houck family when I was a kid. It was times like those that have given me a life long love of the outdoors. One of my most fondest memories of Uncle Bill was taking him turkey hunting to one of my favorite places in Bainbridge and having him shoot his first turkey, just like being with my son when he shot his first buck. We all have been blessed by being fortunate enough to be part of the Houck family. As the generation of our parents moves on to better places it now becomes our job to emulate what they modeled for us. What a great job of modeling Uncle Bill and Aunt Clara did. I know they are happy again in heaven and we are all better people for having had them in our lives. May God bless you all in your time of sorrow as well as your mother and father as they journey to heaven.

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**Dale Palmer** - February 17, 2011 at 12:00 AM

RW

“ Ray, Gerry and I never had the pleasure of knowing your parents, but know of their history in Chittenango. Madison County as a whole has lost something wonderful and precious. Bless you and your family at this sad time.

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**Robin and Gerry Weisbrod** - February 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

EP

“ My sympathies go out to the entire family at this time. Please know that my thoughts and prayers are with you Barb, and your siblings. May your memories help you through this time of great loss.

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**Eileen Pisegna** - February 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM



BE

“Living in Chittenango and being lucky enough to know Bill and Clara Houck on a couple of different levels will always be something I will treasure. Bill was my elementary school bus driver. As a child, you sensed right away that he loved children. Later on I knew him as Clara's biggest fan and protector. Clara was my librarian at school, and I remember how excited she got when she read to us or worked with us in the library. She was also a friend of my father's as a child, and having lost him at age 6, was one of the few who kept memories of him alive for me. As Clara's eyesight got worse, Bill would worry and tell me that now HE was her eyes. He couldn't really see any better than she could! But “mother was having trouble seeing” and his answer was that he would do it for her! He appreciated people saying things about Clara and honoring her and her work. I always felt like the first thing he conveyed to you without words after he thanked you was, that he was glad you were smart enough to know how much you owed to Clara. Again, he WAS her biggest fan! I loved listening to Bill play the harmonica, and enjoyed the look on his face whenever he presented a special hand-made cane to one of the munchkins or special Oz guests. I admired Clara greatly as a historian as I got older, and enjoyed going to her for information. We had great talks about Oz at the library and at her home. She was pleased that I was interested in the Baum/Oz history in Chittenango, and hoped that it would keep on in her absence. During one of our talks in the library where Clara felt so much at home, I promised her that I would do all I could—when I could, to do the work she loved and felt so compelled to make sure would go on. I believe many of us have tried to make sure to the best of our ability that we didn't let Clara down, and keep her good work going. As we come to this day—the day we've all been dreading, I'm glad things ended the way they did. Bill and Clara were a part of each other, and thankfully, didn't have to spend much time apart. If any of us have learned anything from Bill and Clara, it is to be true to yourself, and if you believe in something, do it as completely and as best you can. If you do that, others are bound to take something away from it, and in the case of Bill and Clara Houck, make the world a better and happier place just by them

*being in it. To Ray, Sharon, and family, I'm so sorry for your loss, but congratulate you on having your parents for so many wonderful years. Thank you so much for sharing them with the community. As our community goes on, let's honor Clara and Bill in the best way possible by being proud of where we come from and keep her life-long dream alive. Chittenango, NY is definitely the birthplace of Oz, but it's also where Bill and Clara Houck lived.*

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**Barbara Evans** - February 11, 2011 at 12:00 AM

SC

“ *Devotion to the end..what a beautiful love story. I was fortunate to know Mom and Dad in their later years and had the utmost respect and love for them. Please accept my sincere sympathy. I cherish the walking stick Dad made for me as a reminder of both of them. I am also fortunate to know the family during their care. I am unable to join the final tribute, but please know I am thinking of all of you. Sincerely, Suzanne Cuomo*

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**Suzanne Cuomo** - February 10, 2011 at 12:00 AM

SC

“ *Clara was a kind and generous friend to me when I was a child, as I shyly approached her with my budding interest in L. Frank Baum. I will fondly remember her sending me clippings and news from the Oz festival and her sharing knowledge about the Baum family of Chittenango. “Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.” Baum and Oz enthusiasts around the world have benefited from Clara's dedication to keeping one candle lit in Central New York. My sympathy to the Houck family on the loss of Clara and Bill.*

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**Scott Cummings** - February 10, 2011 at 12:00 AM

MR

“ Mrs. Houck was the librarian at my elementary school, Bolivar Road, Chittenago. I will never forget that beautiful woman who stirred the wonderful world of the written word in me. She guided me to the great authors in children's and young people's books. I am 57 years old now and I can still remember her face. I can't say that about very many people I have come into contact with. My deepest sympathy to your family. I am sure she will never be forgotten. I will always remember her.

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Michele Longden Rossignol - February 10, 2011 at 12:00 AM

RH

“ Well family and friends, it is, as they say, pretty much "all over but the shouting". Mom and Dad would scold us for being sad, so our shouting should be from happiness, relief, and pride. They certainly gave us reasons for all of these. We are happy that they are together, as they always have been. It's exactly what they planned. We are so relieved that the days of pain are over. Pride? Oh yes! I am so proud of their accomplishments, and as their kids, I'm proud of ours. Mom and Dad often talked about how happy they were about the four of us, and what we had become. We could just as happily respond the we "knew where we came from". We all gave them everything we could, because they surely gave us all they could! Our individual memories are many and wonderful, and the family ones are a treasure. We are a lucky family! We know that they had this all planned. You can just bet that the "Ancients" were successful again. See how they got us all together? Let's make sure we keep it this way! So if you see tears in my eyes, and you surely will, celebrate them. It is a good thing. Thank you all for being part of our lives.

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Ralph Houck - February 09, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DL

“ *If I am ever asked to make a toast at a wedding, it will be a blessing for the bride and groom to have the marriage of Bill & Clara. I wish them even greater peace and love in their new life together!*

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**Doug Liebman** - February 09, 2011 at 12:00 AM

PQ

“ *We are so sorry for your loss, you are all in our thoughts and prayers. Pat & Mike Quirk*

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**Pat & Mike Quirk** - February 08, 2011 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ *Our hearts are heavy and life will never be the same without them, but we thank God for blessing our family and the countless others who were privileged to know our Mom & Dad, with so many years of their love, devotion and guidance. We are all better human beings for having them in our lives. We picture them sitting side by side in heaven, holding hands and smiling, just as they have been doing for the last 69 years or so, secure in the knowledge that they are pain free and will never be apart again. That is surely a cause for celebration. We will miss them terribly but are comforted by the fact that their love, kindness and values will live on in me, my 3 brothers and our children and grandchildren. Thanks for being our Mom & Dad and we know you'll be watching over us till we are all reunited in heaven one day.*

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**Barbara Sgroi** - February 08, 2011 at 12:00 AM

SG

“ *Hey Cousins, And the rest of the family. My thoughts are with you. Stuart*

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**Stuart Grasmeyer** - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

LB

“ To Ray and the Houck family Our thoughts and prayers are with you at this difficult time. Remember the beautiful memories you have shared with Mom and DAD, they will last a life time. I am sure there are many. God Bless Lena, Louis and Mary Bishop Beebe

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**Lena Bishop** - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

LB

“ To Ray and Family To Ray and Family, Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. Yuor Mom and Dad sounded like super parents who helped their community and family.I am sure you have fond memories of both. God Bless Louis Bishop, From TC Tremor's Softball Teams and the BAGSAI Board , Binghamton

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**Louis Bishop** - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

JF

“ Ray and family so sorry to hear of your parents passing, how fortunate you were to have them for so long...I am sure they are very happy to be together....God Speed to all of the Houck Family

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**JANICE FETTERLY** - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DR

“ Ray, Sharon and family, am so sorry to hear of your loss, my prayers and thoughts are with all of you during this time.  
Debbie/Dave

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**Debbie Ruland** - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

CD

“ As a young boy in the 1950’s and through my teen years, I was one of the privileged to be welcomed into the Houck household for a meal at the family table. I have always been grateful for the love and respect that Mr. and Mrs. Houck showed to everyone regardless of their standing, color or creed, for the examples that they set, and for the reading of the Bible after the meals. I remember Bill’s Fix-It Shop; always neat and half full of caned chairs. I remember how proud he was to have corn for sale by the 4th of July. I remember how welcome Mrs. Houck always made me feel in the family home. I remember how proud I felt just last year when I visited the new library and saw what they had done for their neighbors. I treasure every moment I have spent with Mr. and Mrs. Houck, Ralph and Raymond, Bill and Joyce, Russell, Roger and Melanie. I share their loss. The world is a better place because Bill and Clara Houck passed through it. I am proud to say I am from the Chittenango area, not because it is a nice community and was once the home to the author of the Wizard of Oz, but because it IS the home of the Houck family. As they begin their new journey in another world, witness all that Mr. and Mrs. Houck have left behind. May each and every family member be comforted in this time of loss with the knowledge that nature is always in balance, for with loss there is gain. After the sadness the joy will come as we remember we were among the fortunate to share moments of our lives with William and Clara Houck. Chuck DeVaul, Williamsville, NY

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**Chuck DeVaul** - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DM

“Chittenango without Bill and Clara Houck? It will just never be the same. They seemed to be indestructible and one hoped they might go on for many years to come. They were the driving force behind the annual Oz festival, particularly Clara who was literally the “founder” of the now 32-year-old event. I was very saddened when I received the news of Bill’s death, one of the great people of this world who loved playing the harmonica and fashioning walking sticks (I still have mine!) among other things. Sadder still was the news of Clara’s death so soon after Bill’s, but now they will always be together somewhere over the rainbow. I was honored to be asked to speak at a stamp cancellation ceremony honoring Clara organized by Barbara Evans and held at the Chittenango High School on June 5, 2009, the Oz-Stravaganza weekend. I have a lovely picture of the three of us together at the event. In addition to her expertise as a librarian and educator, Clara was also an expert on the Baum family even writing a brief, but concise history of Baum titled “Journey to Oz” published in 1983. She was always willing to share her knowledge and research to anyone who came knocking at her door unannounced to “pick her brains. One of her favorite past times was clipping Oz-related newspaper articles and preserving them in dozens of scrap books, which she eventually donated to the Oz Museum (now housed in the Sullivan Free Library, an institution which Clara was instrumental in establishing) along with many of her Oz collectibles. What I remember most, however, is the many, many years of sitting on Bill and Clara’s porch on Main Street to watch the Oz festival parade and sample the snacks that Clara always generously provided. Later they moved to senior housing in Manlius to be better taken care of, but still often came to the parade through the kindness of their son. I’ll still attend the festival, but somehow the visit will always be tinged with sadness because Bill and Clara will only be there in spirit. My condolences to their large family and legions of friends who are surely richer for having known these two wonderful people. David Moyer (New York City, NY)

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David Moyer - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

CJ

“ Barb, My thoughts are with you and your family during this difficult time. Now there are two angels up in heaven to watch and guide you on the wonderful journey of life.

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**Carrie Jaynes** - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

JD

“ Bill, Joyce, Roger, Russell, Melanie and family, We are sorry to hear of your loss and know that this is a difficult time for your family. We both hope that you all will be sharing memories of the happier times together, remembering once loved, love is never lost. Jess and Shane

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**Jessica and Shane Dillon** - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

EF

“ To the Family: Please know You are in our thoughts and prayers. Thank you for sharing Your folks with us: They have so made the World a greater place. XXOO

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**Earl the Barber Devendorf Family** - February 07, 2011 at 12:00 AM

SF

“ What a joy to know both Bill and Clara. They were generous with their time, knowledge and love of the world--everything from ginseng to L. Frank Baum. Clara and I had a great time talking about the Baum family. She was always there to answer a question, celebrate a discovery, or to keep pushing me forward. I only wish I had gone digging ginseng with Bill! How wonderful that Bill and Clara will get to journey together to whatever God holds next for them. My condolences to everyone.

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**Sue Ferrara** - February 06, 2011 at 12:00 AM

EG

“ My sympathies to the whole family. I cannot remember a time when I didnot know Mr and Mrs Houck. From school, church and Girl Scouts. Mrs Houck would visit the troops to tell us about the village history. I still have my notes.

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**Elberta Gardner** - February 06, 2011 at 12:00 AM

RB

“ Bill and Clara, your smiling faces, your joy of all things Oz will be missed but never forgotten. Though we must travel on alone, we know your spirit will guide us To that Wonderful place we all seek, Somewhere Over the Rainbow- Where Your dreams and ours will really, really come true! For you see, all roads Yellow or not- Lead to Chittenango, New York Home to Frank and Maud Baum. Where your passion and unending support has made Oz a real place and not just a dream! Bill and Clara, thank you for making Our journey down the Yellow Brick Road so full of love and imagination, You both are truely Royal Citizens of Oz!! Many thanks from the Baum Family

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**Robert Baum** - February 06, 2011 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ It was my privilege to know both Mr. and Mrs. Houck. Mrs. Houck was my librarian and Mr. Houck drove a number of buses I rode. My memories of both of them are reverent! My sympathies to the family in this time of grief.

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**Michael Grinnals** - February 06, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DP

“ I just want to express my deepest sympathy to Mr. & Mrs. Houck's entire family. This type of loss cuts deep but we must find peace in the happiness that they shared throughout their years with everyone that knew them. Let their love live on in all your hearts. May God bless all of you with the comfort of knowing they are in God's hands. Sincerely, Darlene

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**Darlene Panebianco** - February 06, 2011 at 12:00 AM

CC

“ I am so sorry for your loss. My heart goes out to you now and in the days ahead. May your memories bring you comfort through this difficult time.

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**Carrie Chick** - February 06, 2011 at 12:00 AM

RB

“ We want to express our condolences to the Houck Family. Bill and Clara were icons of small town America. He was our bus driver for both school and Summer day camp and she was our school Librarian. What a role model they were being married 69 years, when today's statistics point the other way. May God Bless them. Ron & Sue Beagle

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**Ron & Sue Beagle** - February 05, 2011 at 12:00 AM

LB

“ Lovely messages. I never had the pleasure of meeting Bill Sr or Clara, but I can see where Bill Jr got all those special qualities from now. Blessings and healing to each family member.

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**Les Barker** - February 05, 2011 at 12:00 AM

HW

“ *Bill and Clara was a wonderful brother and sister-in-law. Since I am the youngest sibling of the family I have fond memories from my childhood. Their children and grand children are in our thought and prayers.*

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**Harriett Wisse** - February 05, 2011 at 12:00 AM

AJ

“ *it was with a great sense of loss when we heard of the untimely demise of clara and william houck,we want to let you know that you have our greatest sympathy.grandma and grandpa houck were more than just wonderful people,they were terrific individuals and they will be sorely missed.We know that their passing will not only leave a gaping void in our lives but also in the hearts of all those who were touched and experienced the HOUCK kindness.The goodness and purity of their hearts will always be an enduring memory in our hearts never to be forgotten.Our sincere thoughts and prayers are with the grieving family.Your pain is our pain.With our deepest sympathy,anthony obonyo for the obonyo family in uganda,east africa*

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**anthony obonyo jabwor** - February 05, 2011 at 12:00 AM

MH

“ *I am privileged to have gained two new grandparents when I married into the Houck Family. I so enjoyed our visits with Grandma and Grandpa. Grandpa would show us his mugs, share hunting stories, and they would both share stories of the pictures on their walls. Grandpa was hilarious and Grandma always patiently humored him. I'll never forget Grandpa always telling us that he knew a lot of people in life but could never find a woman as good as Clara. What a powerful testimony in this crazy world of the way love SHOULD BE. We look forward to seeing them again someday in Heaven!*

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**Melanie Houck** - February 05, 2011 at 12:00 AM

BH

“ For the past year or two I have sent weekly letters to the folks— mostly about the news in Brant Lake. This past week the important news came from Chittenango and we all realize how hard it is to accept and understand what has happened. This week’s letter is to you who have had the advantage, as I have, of their example, support, and love. Much of the success we all have can be traced back to their effort. The magnitude of their combined interest in things, people, and feelings show on a world map. You all know this stuff. This actually is a thank you note. They both would want to acknowledge the effort and love that supported them so well during these last few years. As it says in the above paragraph it was what they showed everybody with their lives. I am sure we all believe they deserved the return they received. This is the best way I can thank everybody whoever loved and helped my parents. Bill Houck  
Brant Lake, NY

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**Bill Houck** - February 03, 2011 at 12:00 AM

AE

“ I read a Granparent has silver in there hair and gold in their heart. That describes My Grandfather quite well. My Grandpa gave me unconditional love, kindness, patience, humor, comfort, and many lessons in how to live a long happy life. I spent time with both he and Grandma together on a daily basis throughout my childhood. Those are now the times I truly thank God for blessing me with. They influened so much of who I am today. Especially as a parent and someday God willing a Grandparent. There was nothing better than to be so blessed to see him play with my children and making them laugh in many of the same ways I remember from my childhood. I will miss him, I do already. My heart is full of love for my Grandpa Houck.

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**Ami (Sgroi) Edge** - February 02, 2011 at 12:00 AM