

February 15, 2008

Dear Family and Friends,

To all of you who already know that my dad Roger J. Maurer, Sr. passed away on February 4 and who have in any way expressed your sympathy or who have prayed for him and for his family, please accept my sincere thanks.

To those of you who are just learning of his death through this letter, please accept my apology that I did not tell you before this. The days since he left us have been difficult ones, and it has been hard for me to communicate the news by writing.

Following the cremation of his remains the first U.S. funeral Mass for my dad will be offered this coming Wednesday, February, 20 at the 8:00 A.M. at St. Henry Catholic Church in Pompano Beach, FL where he and Mom lived year round for the last 4 years. For Michigan family and friends another funeral Mass will be celebrated this summer at St. Rose Catholic Church in Hastings, Michigan (the "ancestral parish" where my parents were married), with interment following at the parish cemetery, Mount Calvary, in the Maurer family plot. I plan to be the celebrant of the Michigan funeral Mass. We will give family and close friends plenty of advance notice about the date and time.

My dad had suffered a physically debilitating stroke in September 2003, which made it difficult to walk. It also affected his speech a bit, but it did not affect his mind or his memory. Apart from these disabilities he was generally in good health. But in October 2007 he came down with two infections that weakened him and aggravated some of the damage done by the stroke. He was hospitalized three times from October to December, and each time he returned home to the retirement village in Pompano Beach, FL where my parents lived hoping that he had shaken the infections and gotten stronger. When it seemed possible to us that he might not have many weeks to live, my twin brother Dave in Ypsilanti, MI and I in Vladivostok, Russia were able to take time off from work and fly to visit him and Mom and Rog in Pompano Beach, FL in mid December for a week.

In January he was hospitalized a fourth time with the same infections. Just two days before his death it finally became sure that he could not survive much longer. I am told that when this was evident to him he accepted the news peacefully.

Dad died just before 5:00 PM on Monday, February 4. He was conscious until shortly before his death, and Mom was with him at the time. My older brother Roger had been there by his side the entire day, but had gone for a break about an hour earlier. Mom said that she was talking to Dad and praying with him right up until the time he left us.

Please pray for eternal life for my dad and the comfort Faith for my mother in this time of sorrow.

Many of you reading this letter did not know my dad. Let me tell you about him. He was a very good man, and a wonderful husband and father. Born in 1925 he was the oldest of 14 children of two of the most special people I have ever met, truly the salt of the earth, John and Germaine Hebert Maurer. They were a struggling farm family in central Southern Michigan during the Great Depression. Dad badly damaged his knee in a high school football accident. Because of the severity of the injury he knew that he could not make his living doing heavy farm work. But coming from these humble beginnings he knew there was no way that he could afford to go to college, yet he also knew that he had great ability and drive.

Shortly after his injury the U.S. Government announced the G.I. Bill of Rights, which provided scholarship money for all surviving war veterans to receive a higher education. He was technically exempt from serving in World War II because of his injury and the importance of farm work for the war effort, but out of patriotism and the possibility of receiving a higher education, he enlisted in the Marine Corps during the war. During this time his knee was re-injured on an obstacle course in training but even that did not stop him. He was sent on combat missions in the South Pacific, mostly, he explained, flushing out straggling Japanese soldiers on Guam and other re-conquered islands. On these missions he was assigned to carry a 90-pound flame thrower. (Leave it to some Marine Corps officer to assign a flame thrower to a man with a twice severely injured knee!) He survived the war with no combat injuries, and enrolled at Michigan State College (now University) as an agricultural economics major. Working a full time factory job during all his time in college, he graduated in 2 3/4 years rather than the usual 4 years. (Years later I tried to work very part time as a student at MSU but resigned after only one quarter, and it took me 4 1/4 years to graduate.)

In 1948 while a student at MSU he married Mom. (If he had lived another 5 months they would have been married 60 years.) They had met much earlier as members of the Catholic parish of St. Cyril in the village of Nashville, MI. Upon graduation he accepted a job in Hart, Michigan as the head of the local branch office of the National Farm Loan Association (based in St. Paul, MN), which later changed its name to the Federal Land Bank Association. It was in Hart that his three sons were born. A few years later, in 1954, Dad was transferred to St. Joseph, Michigan as the head of a bigger branch office, and the family bought a house in the neighboring town of Benton Harbor, where we were raised. Dad and Mom lived in that town in two successive houses for the almost 50 years. It was in Benton Harbor in 1959 that they received into their home their foster daughter Carol, known as Candi.

As a farm loan officer my dad broke every company record for money lent and successfully repaid. If I remember right, the company only needed to foreclose on one of the loans he made in all his 12 years working there because he had such a good sense of how much the land could produce and how diligently the owners might try to pay back the loan. The story is told that when he would go out to a farm to appraise the need for a loan, if the wife or any kids old enough to work were still in bed past 9:00 A.M. they would get no loan from him!

Not satisfied with his career prospects in the Federal Land Bank Association, and having been introduced to the stock market by selling mutual funds part time, Dad made a risky career move in 1961 when he joined the only stock brokerage firm in Southwestern Lower Michigan, Wm. C. Roney and Co. of the New York Stock Exchange, in Benton Harbor. It soon became apparent that the risk was well worthwhile. He broke every sales record in the entire history of the tri-state firm (Michigan, Indiana, Illinois). He developed his own mathematical formula for telling if a company's stock was likely to increase or decrease in value, and he used it effectively along with his friendly personality and his boundless energy until his retirement in 1995 at the age of 70. During those years he made a lot of money for a lot of people, and he always did it honestly and conscientiously. Growing up, occasionally we boys would hear bits of the stories of how he lost this or that customer (never named) because he refused to do something dishonest or illegal that the customer insisted he do. He was the best example to us of how to be an honest and responsible man.

My dad was always serious about his Catholic Faith and very respectful of the teachings of the Church and of the clergy and religious. He and Mom attended Mass every Sunday, taught us to pray, sacrificed to send us to Catholic schools, and showed us how to put our Faith into practice, keeping the 2 Great Commandments, the 10 commandments and the 5 commandments of the Church. I always felt that Dad supported wholeheartedly my vocation to the religious life and priesthood.

Dad loved to spend time at home with his family. Even though he was a successful businessman his family was by far his greatest priority. His daily work ended at 4:30 and he was always home with us by 4:42. And he loved to play games of sports (especially baseball and in later years golf) and cards (especially duplicate bridge at which he achieved the rank of life master). He taught us how to play all the sports and games he knew. (Even though I did not take to sports as well as my two brothers, these skills came in very handy later in boarding high school and afterward.) He coached our baseball teams in the neighborhood little league program. He became our Cub Scout and Boy Scout leader. He always helped us with our school homework and volunteered for many after school activities. He was active in other community service projects that would give us a good example, such as Junior Achievement and the YMCA Uncles program for disadvantaged children.

Dad loved to go back home “to the farm” as a family to visit his parents, brothers and sisters, nephews, nieces and cousins (literally by the dozens). Some of my earliest memories are making that 2-hour drive from Benton Harbor to Nashville, which we did about once a month, I’d say. Or sometimes we would meet the family half way, in Kalamazoo for Visiting Sunday with his sisters (my aunts) in the convent. When I went away to high school seminary he and Mom always came to visit me on Visiting Sundays. When we three brothers were all students at MSU at the same time he bought season tickets to the home games every year and he and mom would visit us there and then attend the games. In everything about his family and his extended family, Dad, helped by Mom’s constant cooperation, always did more than his share to get together, to invite family over to our house, to plan reunions, and to make sure that others could attend. He kept this up all his life, almost right up until the end. In late July 2007, just three months before his final illness, my brother Roger and my mom brought him by plane from Fort Lauderdale to Detroit and then drove him to the Maurer Family Reunion where over 150 of his close relatives gathered for three days. (How many people can say that they have over 150 close relatives!) He was a major initiator in holding these bi-annual, multiple-day reunions. There, surrounded by members of his family (his wife, all of his sons, all 12 of his living brothers and sisters, most of their spouses and many of their children), one could see how much he loved being with them and how much they loved being with him.

My dad had so much to give, and he was always very generous in giving it – faith, solid upbringing, love of family, enormous energy, sharp intelligence, good sense and practical knowledge in so many fields, financial success, the love of the game, neighborliness and community service. Everyone who met him liked and respected him intuitively. We are very blessed to have known him, and I am very proud to be his son.

Sincerely yours,
(Fr.) Dan Maurer

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Roger John Maurer

Maurer, Roger John, 82, died Monday, February 4, 2008 at Holy Cross Hospital in Ft. Lauderdale. A funeral Mass will be celebrated at St. Henry Church in Pompano Beach on Wednesday, February 20th, 8 AM. He will also be remembered at the monthly service in John Knox Village, Pompano Beach, where he and his wife, June have lived for the last five years. Roger was born on May 1, 1925, in Lansing, MI to John T. Maurer and Germaine Hebert Maurer. He was a member of the U.S. Marine Corps and served in the South Pacific in 1944-45 and upon returning attended MSU, East Lansing, MI. He graduated in 1948, married, became Sec. Treas. in Hart, MI with the Federal Land Bank. He was later transferred to St. Joseph, MI and joined Wm. C. Roney & Co., brokerage firm, where he was manager until he retired in 1995. He and his wife, June, became snowbirds and enjoyed Florida winters until his stroke in 2003 when they became

permanent residents of John Knox Village. Roger was a devoted husband and father. He and his wife, June, have three sons, Roger, Jr. of Pompano Beach; twins, Rev. Daniel L. Maurer of Vladivostok, Russia and David L. of Ypsilanti, MI and foster daughter, Candi Boersma of Coloma, MI. He enjoyed golf, bowling, bridge and many other activities with his many friends and family members. Roger is also survived by his brothers, John, Julius, Joseph, Thomas, Richard, Victor, Edgar; sisters, Alice, Sr. Gertrude, Martha, Germaine and Susan, and was preceded in death by one brother, Donald. His final resting place will be Mt. Calvary in Hastings, MI when his son, Fr. Dan comes home to do the last rites and burial.