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10,560. To you, most likely a random five digit number. To me, a number that compels tears.

My grandfather founded Broadway Christian Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa, then served as its pastor from February 3, 1928 through January 1, 1957 – 10,560 days. On June 6 of this year, I will have served First Christian Church of East Moline from July 8, 1985 through June 6, 2014 – 10,560 days.

"10,560." In no way and under no level of duress would I ever dare to equate my years with you to grandpa's years at Broadway. I know only family stories about his ministry at that church – selling vacuum cleaners on the side; accepting food and other goods in lieu of a salary – but the magnitude of his iconic role in my life long ago rendered petty any attempts to compare his and my years of service.

He died when I was seven, which means I carry only a handful of significant memories of his life in mine. But his profound impact and mythological companionship throughout the majority of my adult life each defy a description worthy of the place I reserve for them.

Until this week – actually, until I wrote this column – I could not have offered much of a guess as to how a man I knew so briefly had reached such lofty heights. But as I wrote the preceding paragraphs I realized that my adoration of grandpa has its roots in the first years I spent in seminary in Lexington, Kentucky. Prior to that time, I don't know that as an adult I had ever visited his grave site. But sometime in the middle of my twenties I began making annual pilgrimages during which I would sit at the stone, speak to him, grandma, and even my Uncle Clyde, their son, who when still a young boy back in the 1930's drowned in the Missouri River. Invariably, part of my solitary confinements at that grassy sanctuary were reverent tears formed deep in my soul that would pour out for several minutes until the emotional intensity relented enough to permit me to kiss their names and move on with the rest of my journey.

That's still what happens during my cemetery visits today, 30+ years later; if anything, these days I cry harder and long for his company more deeply than ever. To melt into emotional soup all I really have to do is think about the moment when in Heaven I will first lay eyes on and throw arms around him.

The cemetery sojourns began around the time I started seminary, in the season of my first steps of the same calling he had answered sixty years earlier. I think I make those grave site visits because I know I need every assistance I can find. When I was a child I'd sit on grandpa's lap and kiss his puffed-out cheek, an act that left me feeling connected and loved. I think his gravestone has become the surrogate cheek I continue to kiss in search of that same love and connection.

You may have figured out that I wrote this column more out of personal need than pastoral instinct; thank you for making it to the end. Please pray for me on June 6, when I will drive to Council Bluffs, spend an hour or so in the building he built, and then an hour or so at his grave site, no doubt crying wildly, longing passionately, and kissing his stone deeply, hoping that somewhere, in some way, he will be celebrating day 10,560 with me.