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To a Hunter Dying

Because Sloux braves thought life after death was similar to life before death, they looked forward to hunting in the afterlife.

I'd like to think a local hunter, Perry D. Welch, now is stalking whitetail deer in deep, dark woodlands that only the dead can enter.

You may have read about Perry's fatal accident in the New Castle sewage treatment plant. You may have shook your head. He was only 36.

To Lynda Welch, Perry was much more than a name on The Star Press front page. Married 17 years, she and he had four children.

Lean, rugged and boyish, Perry wore whiskers as untamed as his spirit. He loved country songs by singers who put rebellion and romance into lyrics.

Although he would have preferred being outdoors, Perry worked to put bread on the table to go with the game he brought home.

Had he been born 200 years ago he would have been a frontiersman. Whenever Perry, in his teens, wasn't in school, his friends knew he was hunting or fishing, said a classmate who attended

The Outsider



Hank NUWER

Shenandoah High School with him.

"Perry just had to be outdoors," she told me during Perry's wake.

The minister presiding over a short service in Middletown didn't know Perry. He relied upon friends and family for reminiscences to brighten a talk meant to comfort the survivors.

Perry could be "or'nery," they told the minister. Indeed, co-workers who came to comfort Perry's wife expected to meet a 300-pound woman.

Young

Memorial fund: New Castle city employees have begun a fund to assist Perry Welch's wife and children. Contributions may be sent to Lynda Welch and Family, c/o Ballard & Sons Funeral Home, 118 S. 5th St., Middletown, Ind., 47356.

The dignified woman in black who greeted them, however, was slender.

Perry had just been being Perry when he described Lynda as huge, said amused co-workers.

I went to Perry's wake, but not as a journalist. My younger boy and Perry's son Karl played for Harvest Supermarkets in Middletown's minor league three seasons ago.

Perry and I got acquainted at the first practice. Because his son was the team's youngest boy and my son the smallest, we were both nervous dads. Fortunately, Middletown parents cheered for both teams and called encouragement to kids who were batting impaired. Games were fun, not torturous.

The two boys often sat together in the dugout. Perry's boy was quiet, mine a chatterbox.

Working then in Indianapolis, I drove to the games and was conspicuous in a tie. Changing clothing would have meant missing precious innings.

Perry and Lynda sat in the bleachers near my wife and me. Perry wore the clothing I preferred to wear.

Karl hadn't yet learned to drive a baseball. He often struck out. Before entering the dugout he looked over at his father for consoling words - and always got them. Later in the season, when a more-confident Karl reached first base, he gave his dad shy, triumphant grins. Those exchanges revealed the solidity of their relationship.

Perry's relationship with Karl and the other three children was forged in the outdoors, said the minister at the funeral. Perry gave his children lessons in hunting and lessons in life that would last to the ends of their lives.

Next to Perry's coffin was a corkboard with photographs of him hunting and cavorting with his family. The music of Hank Williams Jr. and other country artists played in the background.

Lynda, the loving "300-pound wife" who knew her man best, refused to dress him in a suit, knowing her man would chafe for all eternity.

Perry Welch wore his hunter's camouflage gear when he went into the ground.

Not even a Sioux hunter could have a more fitting sendoff.