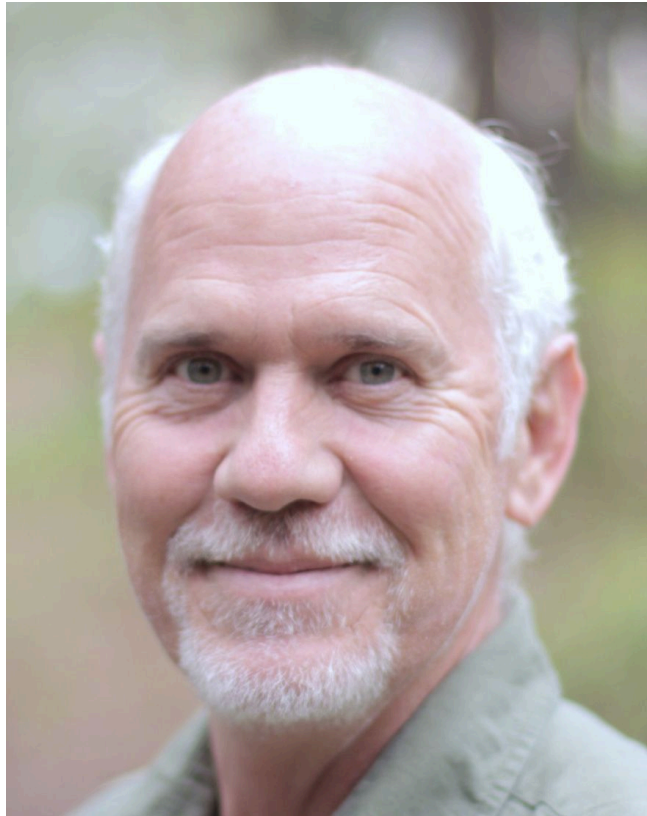

In My View: An untimely Death and a Family Farm

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Inevitably death comes to us all. The way people respond to death is the only variable.

Recently the mass media provided nonstop coverage of the fate of the tourists who paid a quarter million dollars each to risk their lives to go 12,000 feet deep into the ocean to see the Titanic wreckage.

At the same time there was almost no mention of 700 refugees who drowned when their overcrowded fishing vessel capsized off the coast of Greece. These people were risking their lives trying to improve their future.

Do these 5 rich people matter more than the 700 immigrants who died?

Every death affects somebody. We just don't know their stories.

All Deaths Matter

Over the last three years nearly seven million people have died from covid worldwide. More than one million have died in the United States. The death toll became a daily statistic that we could follow like a sports score.

During the pandemic, there were people who rationalized that allowing some deaths was acceptable to protect their freedom to not vaccinate or take responsible precautions to reduce the spread of this deadly disease.

I had to remind myself that all these people who died from covid mattered to someone. They were sons and daughters, parents, and grandparents of families who mourned their death.

We are more impacted by the death of someone we know. It is even more devastating when they are young.

Jonah Dovre

On June 20, 2023, a nephew on my wife Jill's side of the family was killed in a tragic farm accident. His name is Jonah Cecil Dovre, and he is the son of my wife's brother Neil and his wife Sandy.

Jonah was born on July 4, 1996, and raised on a farm in Cottonwood, Minnesota. He graduated from high school in 2015 where he was active in basketball, football, track, choir, band, and class plays.

Jonah attended college but could not pass up the opportunity to live and farm his grandparents' farm.

Jonah made a deal to buy the farm and in partnership with his father, began running the farm in 2017 at the age of 21.

Jonah took great pride and joy in farming, loved to work the fields, and felt honored to carry on the family legacy. He proved to be a natural born farmer and was blessed with the ability to tackle the challenges of farm life.

Old Country

My wife's family are Norwegian Americans. Their ancestors immigrated from the old country to America to find a better life.

Between 1825 and 1925 more than 800,000 Norwegians immigrated to the United States. This was about one third of Norway's population.

The main reasons for leaving Norway included religious persecution and social inequity, but Norwegian immigration through the years was predominantly motivated by economic concerns.

Compounded by crop failures, Norwegian agriculture was unable to keep up with population growth. As farms were generally passed down to the oldest children, this left many without land of their own to farm.

The Homestead Act of 1862 opened fertile flat land in America that was suitable for farming. Most of the Norwegian immigrants settled in the Midwest. The Dovre family landed on the prairie of southwest Minnesota.

Family Farm

The Dovre family farm includes over 1000 acres of prime Minnesota farmland. This is the farm that my wife Jill grew up on, along with five brothers and sisters. Jill's parents, Ralph and Norma, purchased the farm from Jill's grandparents, Nels and Inga and built the farm into a profitable business.

Before Ralph retired from farming, he worked alongside Jill's sister Carol and her husband Mark, as they took over management of the farm operation. Carol and Mark ran the farm until it was time for them to retire.

It was expected that the farm would transfer to Jonah who, in partnership with his father, could continue to carry on farming on the family homestead. But God had other plans.

With the untimely death of Jonah there is no clear successor who can continue to manage the family farm.

Life Goes On

Across America, family farms are being subsumed by large scale corporate agriculture. As with death, it feels more significant when you know the family personally.

It is my hope that the Dovre family can figure out a way to keep the Dovre family farm operational, but for now I share the parents' sadness and grief at the loss of their young son Jonah.

I am grateful to Ralph and Norma Dovre for raising a wonderful daughter, my wife Jill Dovre. I am fortunate to have met her. Though Jill is no longer directly involved with the family farm, her parents instilled in Jill the strong work ethic and common sense that continues to serve her well today.

God Bless

The Dovre family is deeply religious, but not in a preachy, judgy way. Rather they express their devotion to God by adhering to the superseding commandment, "Treat others as you would have them treat you."

I pray that God will comfort Jonah's parents and the rest of the Dovre family during this time of mourning.

I dedicate this column in tribute to all the family farmers who keep food on our table and in memoriam of Jonah Dovre.

Now you know Jonah's story.

Rest in peace Jonah

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