



Today is my Dad's birthday. He is 80. Joe Nye is part of that illustrious group that Tom Brokaw calls the Greatest Generation. With simple values inspired by family, my Dad has lived a somewhat ordinary life but has had an extraordinary impact on those of us around him.

Joe is named after his father and grandfather. His father was a carpenter, a master craftsman, the kind of carpenter who can remodel an old house with all of its tilts and wobbles and make everything look level and hang straight. His favorite description of how he worked was "I do good work and lots of it and don't make many mistakes that I can't fix." Family legend suggests my Great-Grandfather was something of a curmudgeon who scared the bejesus out of most of his family. The two exceptions were his grandson and daughter-in-law. At 15 Joe Sr. went to work and never finished high school. My Great-Grandfather was an entrepreneur, a contractor, and at one point it was rumored that he built half the houses in Brockton, Massachusetts. He built simple 2 and 3 bedroom houses and, while charming, by today's standards they are hopelessly outdated and small. He drove an enormous Buick convertible, or at least it seemed enormous to young Joe, who frequently road shot gun. Whether he was on a mundane errand or inspecting work in progress, my Great-Grandfather enjoyed bringing my Dad along for the ride and showing him off. He was a great believer in education and those little houses helped send my father, his sister, a couple of cousins and even a few kids from down the street to college.

Before he met my Mother, my Dad had two loves; Sailing and Skiing. He began sailing at 5 when he conned a neighbor into taking him out in his Cape Cod Knock-About. It took a lot years, but he eventually bought his own catboat in 1948, fixed it up and sailed it on Buzzards Bay. Dad contends that he was the youngest member of the Brockton Ski Club. At 14 he was taking the train to Vermont for weekends on the slopes. Later he turned his love of skiing into a family passion. As kids my sister, brother and I never fell head over heels for boats. However, every weekend and school vacation throughout the winter found us, without fail, on our skis. My Mother even joined in the fun and was a regular on the Mock Turtle at King Ridge for years.

Dad's birthday tends to be overshadowed by the hoopla of Christmas, New Year's and the start of the ski season. The only thing worse than having to come up with a brilliant idea for a birthday party or gift 2 days after Christmas, is having your



birthday 2 days after Christmas. Growing up, like most little kids, my Dad's favorite flavor was chocolate. Unlike most little kids, he never got to choose his birthday cake. The reason was simple. My grandmother baked an angel food cake for Christmas; an angel food cake with a dozen egg whites and a dozen leftover yolks.

It was during the Depression and waste-not-want-not she found a cake which used only yolks. This yellow cake is known only by reputation as the birthday cake that nobody would want.

My Dad lucked out for lots of reasons when he married my Mom. I don't ever remember her baking an angel food cake, devil's food yes, angel food no. So after years of a not-chocolate cake, he finally got his wish. Of course, that's when he got a cake. The down side of introducing your family to skiing is that given the choice between skiing and baking, when the snow is flying the kitchen is empty. But 8 decades demand a celebration so we'll make no excuses and pull out all the stops. And we will bake him a chocolate cake, warn the fire department and light the candles. Happy Birthday Dad and Happy New Year to all,

Bon appétit! - Susan

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**Death by Chocolate Cake**

Reprinted from last summer's newsletter on birthdays. This cake is my niece Charlotte's favorite and a must for chocolate lovers.

- 1 cup boiling water or strong, hot coffee
- 3 ounces unsweetened chocolate
- 1 stick butter
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs, separated
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 2 cups less 2 tablespoons all purpose, unbleached flour, sifted
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Chocolate Ganache Frosting (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Butter and flour a 10-inch spring form pan.
2. In a large bowl, pour boiling water over the chocolate and butter; let stand until melted. Stir in sugar and vanilla. Whisk in egg yolks, one at a time, blending well after each addition.
  1. Stir baking soda into sour cream, then whisk into the chocolate mixture.
  2. Sift flour, baking powder and salt together and add to chocolate mixture; combine thoroughly.
  3. Beat egg whites until stiff but not dry. Stir a quarter of the egg whites into the batter; combine thoroughly. Gently fold the remaining egg whites into the batter.
  4. Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Set in the middle rack of the oven and bake for 45-55 minutes, or until the edges have pulled away from the sides of the pan and a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Turn cakes out onto a wire rack; let stand until completely cool.

**Chocolate Ganache Frosting**

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 6 tablespoons heavy cream
- 1 1/4 cups sifted confectioners' sugar, or as needed, sifted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Put butter, chocolate and cream in a heavy sauce pan and melt over low heat; whisk until smooth. Add confectioners' sugar; whisk until smooth. Whisk in vanilla; combine thoroughly.
2. Spread on the cake while frosting is still warm.