This is not a story about a war hero or a professional athlete. This is a story about a man who worked hard to provide for his family and millions of people across the United States of America. Wayne Cox was a born farmer who loved what he did. He also was able to balance his love for farming with his love for his family. Wayne had 3 kids with his wife Cathy and was given 7 grandkids. Wayne cherished every moment of his life whether it was in the field planting corn for the people of the U.S. to eat or sitting in his shop talking with people he had over or playing basketball with his grandkids. I once asked him to tell me his story and this is what I was told:

One day when I was about 10 years old I was staying the night at my grandma and grandpas because my parents were going out. We had watched movies all day and I had gotten bored so I asked my grandpa, “What is your story?” I could tell this caught him off guard but he was up for telling me. My brother, sister, and grandma had already gone to bed so we had the whole room to ourselves to talk. My grandpa was a man that I will always have an image of. He was always wearing a cowboy hat, button up shirt, jeans, and his cowboy boots.

“Well Danny,” he said “I was born on April 20, 1949. My parents names were Mytron and Fern Cox.” I knew my great grandma Fern, but my great grandpa had died when my mother was 4 from a heart attack so I never got to meet him. “I have one sibling named Willo, but you
obviously know that because you see her every Christmas. I have 3 children: your mother, your Uncle Steve, and your Uncle Clint.”

My grandpa’s main legacy was his farming. He was a farmer his whole life and that is what he lived and died for. “I became a farmer because I grew up in it. My father was a farmer and his father before him. But I didn’t become a farmer because of my father. I became a farmer because I truly loved it. It was truly what I wanted to do with my life.” At his farm, my grandpa has 8 large grain bins, over 20 tractors, and 1 $500,000 combine. The price of those tractors is upward of 15 million dollars if you put the price of all of them together. So, how can he afford all this stuff? He owns about half of the 2,500 acres of land that he farms. He doesn’t farm all this land by himself. My grandma, and men he hired helped him out.

As a child, Wayne was involved in 4-H where he found his love for horses. Wayne trained all of his animals that he showed which is something only a professional can do. His love for horses was shared with his cousin Gary and many of their other buddies. Him, Gary, and their friends would ride their horses 20 miles at a time whenever they could. They would haul their horses up to state parks and trail ride, which was his favorite thing to do. When irrigation became a thing he would ride his horse, Flash, to go turn them on and off, or just simply to check them. Wayne passed his passion for horses down to his kids. The one who shared this passion with him was my mother. When she was old enough she would join Wayne on his horse rides to state parks and to check irrigators.

In high school, Wayne played basketball for 4 years and football for 2 years. Wayne was a well rounded student which is the reason he was accepted into Ball State University. His father only had an eighth grade education, so it was important to him that Wayne and his sister got a
full college education. After 4 years at Ball State Wayne graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Management of Finance. After college, Wayne’s father made him start working in a bank so he had experience outside of the farm so Wayne could expand his knowledge of money managing which would prove beneficial in the long run. Wayne did not like being cooped up in his cubicle however. He would wake up early some days so that he could work ground before he went to work. Also, everyday after work he would go right into the field for as long as he could. On August 22, 1970, Wayne married his high school sweetheart Cathy who he would spend the rest of his life with.

In April of 1974, Wayne quit his job at the bank to start farming full time. Unfortunately in November of the same year Wayne’s father passed away from a sudden heart attack. This meant that Wayne had to take over the farm he grew up in.

When Wayne wasn’t in the field he was involved with many groups that dealt with agriculture. In the Ag Advisory Committee for Representatives Wayne worked with Joe Donnelly who was a local representative in Indiana. Wayne was said to be “Respectfully outspoken and honest about the needs of his community.” Wayne was also involved in the Laporte County Row Crop Food Producers where he helped educate the youth of Laporte County by helping set up the Laporte County Ag Day at the Marquette Mall. He also helped plan field trips for kids to go out and see how much agriculture affects their lives and the lives of everyone in the world. He was also involved with the local Lions Club where he helped expand knowledge of the people of his community. As a child and as an adult Wayne was involved with 4-H. After his time in 4-H as a kid, Wayne’s daughter Laura also got involved in horses and showing them in the Laporte County Fair. To stay involved with something from his childhood, Wayne became
a member of the 4-H Board. As a member, he helped set up the fair by building stalls and horse barns. He also helped make decisions to keep the fair safe and to make the experience of the Laporte County Fair a good one. For his time on the Board, Wayne was given a memorial bench with his name on it by one of the horse barns he helped build.

In the Summer of 2009, Wayne was diagnosed with Stage Four small cell lung cancer. Through all the good things in his life, Wayne had one fatal flaw. At a young age he became addicted to smoking cigarettes. After his diagnosis, Wayne was giving 6 months to live. This didn’t put him down though. Wayne had been in plenty of fights before and he wasn’t going to let a disease determine how long he got to spend with his family. He fought bravely through the chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Wayne accepted the consequences of his choice to smoke and never felt bad for himself. He was in and out of the hospital but he never gave up. He realized that his choice to smoke would stop him from being able to be able to be here for.

On December 31, 2010, after an 18 month battle with a disease that gave him a 6 month maximum life span, Wayne Cox passed away at the age of 61 years old. This was a day in my life that I will remember until the day I die. Wayne passed away in the early morning of New Year’s Eve 2010 after battling stage four small cell lung cancer.

At his wake, for the 5 hours it went, the funeral home was packed with people. People who I had never seen in my life were coming up to me and telling me how great of a man my grandfather was. The death of Wayne was hard for all of my family to handle. It still bothers us today. But, Wayne wouldn’t want us to grieve on his bad choices and the hardest part of his life. He would want us to remember the good times we had with him and all of the good memories he shared with us.
Like I said, this wasn’t a story of a man who carried 75 men off of a ridge in World War II or a man who scored the winning touchdown in a Super Bowl. It is a story of a man who did what he loved for his whole life with no regrets. A man who persevered through the hardest most lethal disease known to man. This is the story of a man who cared for his community and spreading his knowledge of agriculture to the youth and adults of Laporte County, a man who helped build the Laporte County Fairgrounds into what they are today. This is the story of my grandfather, Wayne Cox.