



the back page – Sheth LaRue, Middler MDiv.

My home state of Colorado is known for a myriad of things and people, depending on who you ask. The more commonly known: skiing, hiking, John Elway and the Broncos, the Lumineers, and yes, marijuana. When I meet someone from Colorado, we can skip over these well-known topics and move on to reminisce about the 'locals' things: Celebrity Sports Center, Gart Brothers, Blinky the Clown, Bishop's castle, Milton Falls, and Daddy Bruce.

That last one – Daddy Bruce – is like a secret handshake for people from Denver and its suburbs, used to effectively weed out those who are from Denver and those who are from Denver:

"Hey! I'm from Denver!"
"Are you?"
"Yeah, I am. I lived in Westminster for years."
"Who's Daddy Bruce?"
"Oh...ummm...he's...a guy... uhh...who..."
"That's what I thought...you're not from Denver."

As I was struggling to write something for this issue, Daddy Bruce popped into my head apropos of nothing - his name just showed up - and then there was a flurry of happiness and admiration which flowed over me. At the risk of being excommunicated from my state, I want to share with you the legend of Daddy Bruce.

When I was a child, I would watch the local news and around Thanksgiving there would always be a short piece dedicated to Daddy Bruce, usually showing him laboring over his barbeque pit or handing out frozen turkeys from the back of a large truck. By that time, in the mid-1980's, 'Daddy' Bruce Randolph was well into life, but age never stopped him from giving. Growing up in rural Arkansas in the early 1900's, Randolph was no stranger to the struggles of life. Passed between relatives after his parents' divorce, quitting school after third grade, picking cotton, working in bauxite mines, bootlegging during the Prohibition, working as a shoeshine, and then a janitor – he did it all. Eventually landing in Denver, in 1963 Daddy Bruce designed his own barbeque pit and set up shop in an old house, using his grandmother's recipes for his restaurant's menu.

Yet he never forgot his life's struggles, "I've seen a whole lot of raggedy days myself."¹ He took a small portable grill to Denver's City Park and began serving Thanksgiving dinners to those who needed them in the late 1960's. Starting out small, with food service to 200 people, this gift soon became a tradition for Daddy Bruce and Denver's homeless and needy. Over the years it grew to enormous proportions, serving upwards of 50,000 meals each Thanksgiving.

As knowledge of Daddy Bruce's philanthropy grew, the residents of Denver and its suburbs pitched in to help. In 1984, "...radio and TV crews announced over the airwaves that they'd run out of desserts, and the response was amazing. Within the hour, trucks showed up from nowhere bearing cakes and pies."² Daddy Bruce continued his work – both at his restaurant and in his community – until the age of 93, and he put on his heavenly apron a year later. His tradition continues in Denver - this year marks the 54th anniversary of distributing Thanksgiving food to those who need it, no questions asked, Daddy Bruce style.

There are many lessons to be learned from Daddy Bruce: we can find our calling late in life; we can serve in unexpected ways; we can give unconditionally; we can trust that others will step in to help; we can see a need and God will help us meet that need; we can express thankfulness through service.

I'm thankful that God has brought people like Daddy Bruce into the world. I'm thankful that his ministry continues long after his work on this earth was completed. I'm thankful that God's presence is still on this earth and moving through the world. I'm most thankful, though, for Daddy Bruce's unquestioning service to humanity and his unconditional love: "You can't beat love," says Daddy Bruce, "Nothing beats love."³

much love (and thankfulness). sheth.

¹ William Plummer, "Denver Gives Thanks for Daddy Bruce, Who Hands Out 50,000 Free Dinners on Turkey Day," *People Magazine*, Accessed 11/4/2018. <https://people.com/archive/denver-gives-thanks-for-daddy-bruce-who-hands-out-50000-free-dinners-on-turkey-day-vol-24-no-22/>

² Plummer.

³ Angelina D. McGowan, "Tradition to Feed Those in Need Lives on Through the Spirit of 'Daddy' Bruce", *Denver Urban Spectrum*, October 31, 2014 <http://denverurbanspectrum.com/articles/18097>

Photo Credit: <http://www.daddybruce documentary.com/moblabout.html>