

Reflections and Memories of My Father and Mother

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My earliest memory of my parents is Christmas Eve when I was two years old. We were living in a small white house built by my dad in Trask, Missouri. I faintly remember a recital at a church when I was eighteen months in which I recited a poem learned from my mother.

When I was three, we moved to California, leaving a huge extended family of relatives, entering a new world! Dad began his career life as a carpenter, but he had many jobs and was a Jack-of-all trades: He worked as a police officer, a mobile bread salesman, a border patrol agent, and finally settled as an electronics engineer for the California University System where he retired after twenty years. He missed the computer age, but would have loved the Internet as he was an avid historian and loved reading and learning. In fact, he was up every night, typing, until the wee hours, creating a sleepy day schedule. He had insomnia and could not create a remedy for it.

Dad loved to travel! He went to many countries during his life, and had just returned from Bolivia and Peru when he died. There were entries in his last journal that told of building a church for the Indians high in the Bolivian mountains among ancient ruins. In all of his travels, he was most distressed by India and its caste system that left so many people starving and poor. When he returned from Peru, he brought beautiful alpaca jackets and flutes to us and beautiful currency with flowers in bright colors.

Dad died one afternoon after watching my boys play their first Little League games. They say that he had a heart attack, but his journal tells of a recent fall on stone steps in Bolivia where he hit his head.

One of the tiny girls that attended my dad's funeral was his little side-kick, Andrea Fenbris who followed Dad everywhere. Today, Andrea is a rock star on MTV, a friend of the rapper, Puff Daddy.

Dad knew famous people. He ate at Denny's Restaurant with Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panther whom he had met at church after Cleaver returned to the United States. Dad's funeral was attended by more people than I have ever seen at a

funeral. Lines left the church and went down the sidewalks.

My favorite memories are the funny things that he did and the inventions that he created. He built a car with a real engine in it for his own kids, but forgot to add the brakes to its design, so we went around corners on two wheels, bouncing up and down curbs! He built an airplane for his grandchildren telling them of the places that they could go when the plane was complete. That plane was never completed, for how could he spoil their dreams? As a senior in high school, my son was astounded when I told him that it was never meant to fly! Such was the power of my father's dreams. His favorite outfit was either an old Stetson hat and boots, or a Russian Cossack hat and cane, depending upon his mood. I loved this about my father! He was his own person, never bending to the will or expectations of others and he taught us well. We hold no one above us and yet we respect all people if they treat us well. His dreams and self-esteem are the things that I want to pass to my children and grandchildren. To me, he passed a love of life-long learning and a curiosity for everything scientific.

When I think of my mom and dad, I think of them, separately, for they had their own lives which they often lived alone, while living together.

My Mother

What can I say about my mother? She is probably the best human being that I have ever met. She cares for everyone and shows it! Throughout her life, she cared for over three thousand children in her thirty-five years of private school administration. She was a pillar of our California community and helped many poor youth with college and text books. One is now an employee of Disney Corporation and travels the world. Another is an administrator for the largest county in the United States, giving speeches to the California legislature. She bought clothes for refugees from Russia and took in autistic children.

My mother was the "star" of our family and I was always in her shadow. This was difficult when I was young and I felt that I could not match her achievements. Today, we are closer than we have ever been and she is still giving...to her church, to her grandchildren...and to her community. As a young woman, my mother always took a stand for what she believed in, even if it was not in her best interest to do so. She did it because it was the right thing to do. This is what my mother passed to me; courage to believe in one's self and ideals.

At eighty years old, my mother is still a physically-beautiful woman with grace

and poise. She is artistic and creative and this reveals itself in her home and her appearance.

My favorite memory of my mother is when she attended a rock festival with us in the late Sixties! There were thousands of “hippies” in Palm Springs, California and the radio was saying horrible things about them all over Los Angeles. Mom took the stand that these were interesting and well-behaved kids for the most-part and she did not leave when the police told us that we had to do so. In a restaurant, John Mayhall, a rock musician, asked Mom to sit with him. I was fired from my job when the boss found out that I had attended the concerts, but it is still my best memory of my mother, because she wanted to share something important in our lives from our perspectives.

Mom has always been our best “cheerleader” for our dreams and has helped us in many ways.

My parent’s decision to move us to California was important and gave us a perspective that we could not have gained in Missouri. As “Disney” kids in LA, we felt we belonged to a much larger society that made us feel a part of the multiple cultures of the world. In Los Angeles, all dreams can come true! I loved my life in California and I would never trade my experiences for those of another human being. My life has been so full! From the mountains of San Jacinto, to the coastline of Big Sur, from Sand Dollar Beach to the Mexican village of Olvera Street and Chinatown, I have left a piece of myself and these places reside within me. Thank you, Mom and Dad. The journey has been a pleasurable one.