

STORIES AND QUOTES COMPILED BY
STUART GUSTAFSON, "THE LEGACY DOCTOR"

remembering our parents

Stories and sayings from Mom and Dad



In Memory of Stella (1917 – 2012)

ALSO BY STUART GUSTAFSON

Non-Fiction:

Parables for Life in the 21st Century

[with Robyn Freedman Spizman]

Questions to Bring You Closer to Dad

Questions to Bring You Closer to Mom

Questions to Bring You Closer to Grandma & Grandpa

Fiction:

Missing in Mexico

Sydney Murders—SOLVED!

Disappearances in the Mediterranean

The author's books are available in stores, online, and at www.stuartgustafson.com

REMEMBERING OUR PARENTS . . .
Stories and Sayings from Mom & Dad

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FOREWORD

I first met Stuart Gustafson in late 2008, when he and his wife came into my Elder Law Firm seeking information about how to properly plan for their family. The three of us talked about their goals, concerns, and what they wanted to accomplish. We discussed how to properly plan to address those concerns and the legacy they wanted to leave their children. We ended up working together to put a plan in place. A couple months later, Stuart brought his mother in to see me to prepare an elder-focused estate plan for her. Stuart impressed me from the beginning of our relationship because he grasped the fundamental concept that as people get older, their needs change, including their estate/asset protection planning needs. Stuart understood that general estate planning simply is not adequate to address the specialized needs of people as they get into their 50's, 60's, and older.

Stuart also impressed me because typically in our society, it is the eldest offspring that ends up being the primary responsible person for making sure that everything is handled properly for the parents. But Stuart was decidedly different. It was clear that he had a very close relationship with his mother, and he recognized his mom needed a specialist. Stuart had the type of relationship with his mom where she listened to her youngest son's advice, yet he was completely respectful of her wishes. Even though she was 91 when I first met her, Stella maintained her independence and autonomy.

Stella was quite an impressive individual and it was obvious Stuart loved her very much. Stella passed away in January, 2012, and left a legacy which her entire family appreciates. Her attention to all members of the family in putting together a thoughtful plan epitomized her generous and loving spirit.

As an elder law attorney, many of my clients suffer from serious, chronic health issues such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's, Lou Gehrig's disease, and many others. Coping with these health issues is incredibly difficult. When the family must address legal and financial issues, such as how to pay for incredibly expensive long-term care, the situation often becomes overwhelming. I've learned that we can all gain from the experience and knowledge of those who are older and wiser than we are. I am constantly impressed by the strength, wisdom and fortitude of my clients and their families, as they deal with some of life's most difficult challenges, and do so with grace, humility, and humor.

The dictionary defines legacy as "something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor." While often used in a financial sense, the concept of passing on a legacy more importantly refers to something much more enduring. How we deal with life's most challenging circumstances really defines our values and who we are. It is this concept of legacy – something more than the transient nature of physical wealth – that has an enduring influence on our own lives and on the lives of those around us. We need only examine our own lives to realize that our parents left an indelible legacy on us. The question then becomes, "What is the legacy that we're going to leave behind?" This is a question worth asking.

In this, *Remembering Our Parents*, author and speaker Stuart Gustafson brings together over five dozen stories and sayings from people of all walks of life. These stories will make you

reflect and ask, “What is my legacy?” You’ll see that not all parents gave the best advice. Some gave great advice, but didn’t follow it themselves. No matter the circumstances, the legacy these parents left behind provided a framework for a healthy child to grow up, mature, and navigate the adult world. *Remembering Our Parents* will bring out a variety of emotions in you, but these stories will not leave you unmoved. And perhaps, just perhaps, one or more of these stories will resonate with you, and change your life as well as the lives of those that you influence, helping shape your own legacy.

To your legacy – may it be strong, enduring and truly reflective of you!

Peter C. Sisson, CELA, EPLS*

Boise, Idaho

August, 2012

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* Board Certified Estate Planning Law Specialist

PREFACE and ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Why should we care about things that our parents said or did so many years ago? After all, that was “their generation,” things that “old folks” said and did – those don’t apply to “us”; we’re the “new generation.” At least that’s what one soft drink manufacturer wants us to believe. But is that really so?

Who is it that makes up the current generation? That really depends on who is doing the asking. My generation is the set of baby boomers, those who are in their late fifties to mid-sixties; so this is the current generation to me. We are the ones who’ve seen our parents get grayer, older, and more frail. Some have entered retirement homes, assisted living residences, or nursing facilities. Some of us are even moving from our own homes into one of these places that can take better care of us than we can for ourselves. And, sadly, many of us have seen our parents, spouses, and even siblings, pass away. Such is the cycle of life.

What, then, are we to make of the sayings we heard from our parents over and over again? And why do we care about repeating some of the stories about them; why do those portraits in words seem so real and alive today as if our parents were standing right next to us?

How do we make sense of the things our parents said and did many years ago? They’re from a generation that was raised without all the technological advances that are in the world today. So, how relevant can what was important to them be important to us? Remember, “they” are from the older generation; “we” are from today.

There are more questions that can be asked, and perhaps should be asked. But this is not a book of questions; it is one that provides clues to the answers of our many questions, if not the answers themselves. The purpose of this book is to remind us all of the importance of **legacy**. One standard dictionary definition of legacy is that it’s a legal term that refers to a willed gift of money or personal property. Another one, the more relevant one, is that legacy is what’s been handed down or passed along from an ancestor or a predecessor.

Now that we know what legacy is, our questions all get folded up into one six-word question, “Why should we care about legacy?” As you read through this book, it’s my hope that your answer to that question becomes clear. I have an answer to it, and I’m pretty confident that my answer will be different from yours because we all have different pasts, presents and futures. The legacy that I’ve received from my parents isn’t the same as what you’ve received from yours. You might even have some legacy from aunts, uncles, and grandparents. I don’t because our family was the one family out of six on Dad’s side and three on Mom’s side that moved frequently – Dad was in the Navy, and changing assignments meant we moved every two or three years. But I loved it!

Let me tell you why I think that legacy is important. Recall what I said earlier: “Legacy is what’s been handed down or passed along from an ancestor or a predecessor.” *What this means to me is that our parents’ knowledge of life and how they went through it has shaped us to be who we are.* Some people may revolt from that, some may embrace it, and some may just continue on as if the legacy was never there. The simple truth, however, is that your legacy is there, and it has helped mold you into the person you are, you want to be, or who you don’t want to be.

It's up to you to decide how you want to deal with the legacy that's been passed along to you. Given that each of us is a unique individual, combining that with the completely different legacy that each receives, the odds are staggering that any two persons would have the same response to the legacy that's been given to them. The United States Census Bureau has estimated that the world's population is about 7 billion. So if you multiply 7 billion (the number of unique individuals) times 7 billion (each of us receives a different legacy), the total number of possible reactions to those legacies is 49,000,000,000,000,000. For the sake of "simpler math," let's round that number up to 50,000,000,000,000,000, meaning that the odds of any two people reacting in the same way to their legacy is an extremely small number: 0.000000000000000002%.

Given that small number, it's safe to say that how you react to your legacy is different from how I react to mine. I think it's also safe to say that many of us don't even think about our legacy until we start to see the passing of parents, siblings, friends, people our age. That was essentially how it started with me, although the path to get there was long and different; here's how it went.

The summer of 1964 was going to be "my summer" with Dad. My elder brother was at college on an NROTC summer assignment, and my other brother had graduated from high school. I had just completed 11th grade, and was looking forward to my last year in high school before leaving home for college. It was a typical hot summer in the Imperial Valley in Southern California; temperatures of 110° were not uncommon. What helped to make this summer different was that my grandparents were coming from Florida to visit us. Grandpa and Hedwig (Dad's step-mom) were in their early 80s, but were still full of life, and they drove across country to stay at our house for a few weeks.

The excitement ended shortly after they arrived, however. I think they got to our house on a Tuesday or Wednesday. That weekend, on Sunday, July 19, 1964, Dad took Grandpa, my brother, and a friend to go fishing after church. Five miles out of town, Dad's car was hit head-on by another car – Dad and Grandpa were killed instantly, as was the other driver. Tests showed that the other driver, whose family I've recently connected with, had a blood alcohol level that was double the legal limit. My perfect summer ended that day when we received a telephone call from the hospital; that was the first we knew anything was wrong. There were no cell phones or smart texting devices back then; you relied on word of mouth, mailed letters, and dialed telephone calls to communicate.

Fast forward 41 years to 2005 when it dawned on me that there were a lot of questions that I wish I'd been able to ask my dad. From that realization came a short self-published book that morphed into a nationally published book from Adams Media, *Questions to Bring You Closer to Dad*. That was followed by *Questions to Bring You Closer to Mom*, and then *Questions to Bring You Closer to Grandma & Grandpa*. The main goal of each of those books was to help readers begin the conversation with the ones they love, and who love them. I heard from many readers who used the book to help them re-connect with dear family members.

I began to use the *Questions to Bring You Closer to Mom* book with my own mother as she was then 90 years old. We would start talking about one of the questions, and then she would begin telling me some story about her childhood – that was far more important than the actual answer to the question. I didn't realize it at the time, but Mom was passing along her legacy. Mom died in January 2012 at the age of 94. We never completed the *Questions* book, but I

continued to learn more about her as we talked, sang songs, and watched some of her favorite TV programs. Mom's legacy continues on even after her final breath, just as Dad's is still with me.

As the title says, this book contains stories and sayings from Mom and Dad – stories and sayings that have been contributed by many people. The stories are what the authors remember about their parents, typically stories that have inspired them to do what they've done, to become whom they've become. Some of the stories were harder to write than others – they brought out the emotions, the tears, and the sorrow of having lost a loved one. But the strength from the stories is what has enabled these writers (some are professional writers; some write just for themselves) to push on despite obstacles thrown in their way, to take a less-traveled path, and to realize that life is meant to be enjoyed. These people who've been willing to share their emotions with you have embraced the legacy that's been bestowed upon them, and they want to share their experiences with you.

There are also sayings in the book, and not all of them are from “our parents.” Some of them are from notable people who have expressed a desire to share their own personal thoughts on legacy. You might agree with some of these sayings; you might not. The intent of them is to ask you to think about **legacy** and what it means to you, or what it might mean to you after you've had more time to consider its meaning.

I am extremely grateful to all who've made a contribution to this book. Particular thanks go to the well-known, talented, and extraordinary people who've sent me sayings for the book. These people are busy, and they're deluged with so many requests; their willingness to share some of their time and sincere thoughts show that they truly believe there is a strong value in knowing and preserving legacy. As you read their sayings, try to picture how you can incorporate them into your own thought processes. In alphabetical order, my thanks go to Bobby Allison; Rubén Amaro, Sr.; Ian M. Baker-Finch; Bruce Baumgartner; Dirk Benedict; Lance Burton; Anna Fermin; Colonel Wesley L. Fox, USMC, Retired; Bernie Kopell. While you may know of these people in their public persona, their contributions to this book are also an indication of their acknowledgement of the importance of legacy.

A gratitude that is impossible to measure is also extended to the people who were willing to share their precious stories with you. To give them more credit than just a name in this front part of the book, I've included a short bio of the contributor, along with the QR (Quick Response) Code symbol for each person's website. The purpose of the QR Code is so that you can scan it with your smart phone or other scanning device and jump instantly to the website. A sample QR Code symbol for the website LegacyDoctor.com is given at the end of this section. In alphabetical order, I offer up my sincere thanks to Denise Altman; Rubén Amaro, Sr.; Paige Arnof-Fenn; Mary Bailey; Ezechiel Bambole, Jr.; Christine Baumgartner; Mary Anne Benedetto; Robert Bennett; Suzanne G. Beyer; Karen Braun; Marlene Caroselli; Bill Corbett; Brittany Crawford; Shara Darden; Douglas Esper; Fred Fields; Pat Foy; Tina M. Games; Cornelia Gibson; Mary Greenwood; Alison Hodgson; Stephanie Legatos; Jim Levy; Cathie Smith LoCicero; Marjorie Lombard; Carolyn Mattocks; Shari McGuire; John Morella; Millie Reddig; Suzann Robins; Jennifer Rosenwald; Carol Round; Nancy Schimmel; Randall Shelton; Christine

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A final “Thank you” goes to you, the reader. Your interest in legacy is important, and its value will be revealed in case you haven’t already seen it. Life is one continuing journey, and I wish you well on your travels!

Stuart Gustafson

*“I had an inheritance from my father;
It was the moon and the sun.
And though I roam all over the world,
The spending of it’s never done.”*

Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

The Travel Gene

Some folks were born with a risk-taking, exploratory spirit, while others have no desire to ever travel beyond the confines of their own town or county. The homebody types may only be at ease in their own home environments and choose not to forge into new territory. My parents definitely could not be categorized this way. They had pioneer-style adventure flowing through their veins.

Although they were both born and raised in western North Carolina, I, their second child, entered into this world in Bedford, Ohio. From the time of my birth, we lived in the following locations: Bedford, OH; Elizabethton, TN; Hudson, NC; Flagstaff, AZ; Palmdale, CA; Costa Mesa, CA; Orange, CA; Hesperia, CA.

These moves were all prior to my tenth birthday, and the Arizona and California relocations were within a six-month period. When I tell this story, people tend to inquire, “Oh, was your dad in the military?”

The fact is that my parents were seeking the ideal place to live – one that was not too hot, cold, humid, overcrowded, cloudy, foggy or congested, and where they could earn a good living. In Hesperia, California, they discovered a high-desert town that would keep them grounded and not packing to move again for seventeen years. Their nomadic encounters ended, and they opened and expanded their business interests in this location, becoming active, stable members of the community.

Despite the fact that they had settled in, they continued to experience large doses of wanderlust. They loved to explore surrounding areas, and when time would permit, we visited a variety of points of interest from San Diego to San Francisco and beyond.

My parents had a bad habit of falling asleep in the living room right after dinner, waking up in the middle of the night, taking showers, and then going to bed at some crazy hour. I can remember more than once when they woke up in the living room on a Friday night and decided to spend the weekend touring some location in Arizona or who knows where – they’d wake me up and say, “Pack your suitcase. We’re going away for the weekend.” It was the funniest thing because I thought that’s the way everyone lived. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that this was actually a somewhat unusual behavior – not so much the travel aspect, but the spur-of-the-moment concept.

The truth is that it instilled in me a love for exploring other towns, cities and countries. It enabled me to almost spontaneously, and with virtually no apprehension, visit several regions of Italy with three girlfriends when I was fifty-nine years old.

Travel is in our blood. It’s the excitement we feel when we choose the clothing and accessories that will accompany us on a particular trip, and while we carefully pack our necessities. It’s the enjoyment we find in extensively researching destinations and anticipating our departures. We wonder, “What lies ahead? What interesting people will we meet along the way? What treasures will we find?”

I extend an enthusiastic thank you to my parents, Ralph and Clara Greene, for passing along the travel gene to me. The explorations and side trips in my life have offered unique experiences

that I will never forget, and I am incredibly grateful for the wanderlust that transferred directly from the veins of Mom and Dad to my own!

Mary Anne Benedetto is a speaker, blogger, Certified Lifewriting Instructor, and author of fiction and nonfiction publications. Her main passion is helping people preserve their life stories. Find out more about Mary Anne at www.awriterspresence.com.



“Memories are so very precious – do everything you can to preserve them.”

Bernie Kopell,
Actor,
Proud supporter of the Alzheimer’s Association

Retrospective Perfection

My mother stood in the doorway on that Easter Sunday afternoon, tilting her head to visualize my presence through the murky cloud of macular degeneration. An ocular stroke in her left eye and the ravages of eighty-three years had left her legally blind. The expression on her face revealed the simple life she had chosen to live. Deep wrinkles and random age spots were tattooed badges of survival. Her graying brown hair was slightly whiter around the edges than the last time I was home. She still curled it with pink sponges in her ever-simple way.

She was never glamorous, always uncomplicated. Her dress, worn in the vein of a plain, life-long uniform, was a light-blue, small-flowered pattern with food stains on the front, undetected by her ailing eyes.

My family was already loading the car, and as I subtly tried to pull away, I could not let go of my angry disappointment. Her name had finally come to the top of the list at a nearby senior housing unit; but despite her life-long desire to live in a new place, she denied herself the luxury. The threadbare linoleum in the narrow hall reflected her choice to remain within her own familiarity. Fear of change had taken away another dream.

A couple of years earlier, when Mom had suffered the stroke, she began to hint that she might be best off in a nursing home. I suggested that all she really needed was a roommate with healthy eyes. She assumed I meant the company of a man and shook her head, "I'm afraid I'd get a talker." My dad had the Irish gift of gab, and when he went into assisted living, she may have enjoyed the peace of being alone.

But now, torn between my waiting family and her sweet, vague farewell expression, I blurted out, "I've got to go." Despite her diminishing strength, she pulled me back into her musty apartment, chilled by her frugal thermostat-setting and shadowed by the curtains that were forever pulled shut, as if life had closed upon her vision, to say her private good-bye. Her family were stoic Norwegians, so a nod and a wink would always do for a hug.

"I tried to do my best," she said. "There were a couple of things that I didn't like about myself. I was a jealous person, and I wish I'd known better how to show my love." Then she hugged me hard, a hug that's lasted forever.

A week later on Monday night, she died in the hall on her way to bed. Looking back at our final moments, I understand the meaning of perfect parenting. I've never felt the need to be jealous, and although I express my love daily, it's never enough. But I have no regrets.

"My mom is a never-ending song in my heart of comfort, happiness, and being. I may sometimes forget the words but I always remember the tune."

~Graycie Harmon

Patrick J Foy, DDS, practices general dentistry in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and has written numerous articles in professional journals and general interest magazines, and he's also penned several short stories. www.drpatfoy.com.



"It always amazes me that a golfer who has just missed a fairway 50 yards wide, thinks he can hit a ball between two trees 18 inches apart."

Edward S. Fields (1913-1975)

Submitted by:

Fred Fields,

The Weekend Golf Pro

www.weekendgolfpro.com



Born to Build

“But, honey, I love my work! And besides, this is all for the family!”

How many times would I hear that declaration coming from Dad’s den, in answer to Mom’s call from the living room, “Mike, can’t you get off the phone now and come and relax?”

The clock says 8:30 PM; six kids have finished their homework; the two younger ones are already in bed; Chicago streetlights are on, and Dad is still working. Phone calls. Making sure men and materials are lined up for construction jobs the next day. Solving knotty problems.

Catch that word, “love.” That’s Dad’s legacy. Heart and mind, he was fascinated with his work and gave it his all. Dad was young when he fell in love with construction.

For two years he had already been helping his father finish their home just outside Elkhart, Indiana. Nailing laths, plastering, hanging doors, putting in flooring. Young Mike was very handy and learned fast. He had arrived from Italy with his mother in 1911, five years after Grandpa left his pregnant wife in their mountain village in southern Italy to make a new life and new home for her and the baby in the United States. It took longer than he expected to save enough passage money to send for them. Grandpa had managed to purchase the shell of a home which needed the inside to be finished, and he was proud to bring the new arrivals to it. Helping to finish the home gave Dad his first experiences in construction.

But there came a special day when his enthusiasm soared and he began to dream and work toward becoming a builder. That morning Dad talked his mother into letting him walk by himself the two miles into Elkhart to do the weekly shopping. Already he was a negotiator: “But, Mom, I’m big enough. Give me a list, and besides you have better things to do.” The seven-year old succeeded in persuading her and began the trek, pulling his little red wagon.

A most unusual sight caught his attention, carpenters framing a home. He hadn’t seen construction from the ground up! Fascinated, he veered off with his wagon and sat close to watch. Time passed. He’d notice the workmen needed something, a tool, another two-by-four, and would jump up to get it for them. At noon the men sat with him and shared their lunch. Dad stayed the whole afternoon and didn’t budge till the carpenters left the job.

When he finally walked into the store in town the shopkeeper gasped, “Where have you been? Your mother’s been in and out four times. She’s looking all over town for you!” Suddenly his mother flew in the door. Dad remembered that she gave him a breath-taking hug. He wasn’t sure if she was expressing her love or if she wanted to kill him! But one thing he was sure about that day – he would be a builder.

Going forward he began to take notice of how porches were constructed, cornices, roofs. He gathered tools and built a workbench in a section of their tiny basement. When he wasn’t at school, or working at many jobs around their homestead, with chickens, cows, pigs, a large garden; or jobs in town, washing windows at a hotel, washing dishes in the hotel kitchen, then becoming the cook’s helper – he was building. A wagon, a scooter, a sled, birdhouses, a dog house. Radios were coming out. Most people could only afford to buy the chassis. Dad built a cabinet for his family’s home radio and others took notice. Soon he was building cabinets for all of the neighbors.

Love also has its challenges. Dad was shocked when Grandpa took him aside after his eighth grade graduation and informed the thirteen year old that it was now time for him to go to work. Grandpa had landed a job with the New York Central Railroad upon coming to America. He saw this as steady dependable work and insisted that Dad get a job there, too. Having experienced the economic vicissitudes in Italy, Grandpa wanted security for his son.

Dad had planned to go to high school, then to college. All he could do was swallow his anger and disappointment, work daily at the railroad, punch his punching bag furiously, and start night classes in construction in Elkhart. His teacher noticed his avid interest in the classes and connected him with a local contractor who offered Dad an apprenticeship. Grandpa considered carpentry solid, secure work and finally gave his OK. The way was open to the future Dad had dreamed about!

Even as an apprentice, he was put in charge of jobs. After moving to Chicago, becoming a journeyman and pursuing night classes at Chicago Technical College, his steady, hard work, ability to lead others, and problem solving skills were quickly recognized. He was superintending sizeable jobs at 19 years of age. The future challenged him in many ways – providing for a growing family during the Depression, guiding massive government projects during World War II, helping companies he worked for succeed, then forming his own company with his sons.

That love and enthusiasm and dedication to his work were hallmarks of his career. What he did and how he did it spoke a clear message. Kids having a contractor for a father often miss the closeness they would wish for – but with Dad, each of us had the example of a man who gave his heart to his work – in construction, in church and community activities, and in working to meet family needs, too – whether to help build a school for a handicapped son, or put in a special porch and concrete walkway for a grandchild confined to a wheelchair.

Love what you do and give your best – a beautiful example to remember – and a goal to pursue.

In the teaching field for more than five decades, Marjorie Lombard still works part-time with a small, private school in Montana, and also does some writing. You can view her dad's memoirs, *Born to Build*, at www.FamilyResourceMall.com.



“Even a blind squirrel can occasionally find an acorn during a snowstorm.”

William Emory Smith (1919 – 1994)

Baseball – It’s Just a Game

I was originally going to transcribe a beautifully printed hand-written submission from former Major League Baseball player Rubén Amaro, Sr. But as I copied those words from his pages to my computer, I realized that the feeling and the intensity that were there didn’t naturally follow. So I’m asking you to indulge me as I’ve put his story, exactly as he wrote it, on the following two pages. I know it might be harder to read than reading words from a computer, but the effort to read it will be re-paid in the warmth that you receive from it.

The following postscript note was included with his story, an indication of what family and legacy means to him, *“Thank you for the privilege to once again remember Santos & Josefina.”*

Rubén Amaro, Sr., was a Major League Baseball shortstop and first baseman, playing with four different teams in his 12-year career. He’s served on the board of the Baseball Assistance Team, a non-profit organization.



April 24th 2012 -

To: Stuart Gustafson

From: RUBEN Amaro Sr.:

Lost my Dad at 92 yrs old. Born in 1908 Havana, Cuba (City: Aguacate) Lost my Mom at 96 yrs old, Born in Veracruz, Veracruz, Mexico (Spanish grandparents, both sides)

Dad: African, Cuban (None) Mom: Very fair Light Brown Eyes. (Spanish all the way) Mexican by Birth & Soul.

Mom: Member of the only all female travelling baseball team, Dad came from Cuba in 1929 alongside a group of exiles and young baseball players. They met in a baseball field & started our Amaro-Mora legacy in baseball (Santos Amaro & Josefina Mora) & siblings Mario Born in 1931 and Ruben Born: in 1936 (Mexico) we are proud Mexicans that also study in Cuba half of our lives - (Dad played in the Mexican (Summer) Professional League & in the Cuban (Winter) Professional League, before Castro and until 1958. - Then, we moved to Mexico in 1951 not to return to Cuba ever - to date except that my brother stay in Havana to continue his medical career - until Batista

CLOSED THE UNIVERSITY. -
 THE BASEBALL LEGACY is my Dad, a very special human being that was known to the world & to us as a pure gentleman. His struggling life made him very aware that an education for his children was the answer, no baseball, no gloves, bats or balls. He wanted to see books. We both followed his advice (you couldn't argue with your Dad, then,) specially if he was 6'4". We only grew to be 5'10 1/2 both of us, maybe too many Mexican tacos - or my mom was only 5'1" but she was the one that we practice our baseball skills with. - Baseball in Cuba was the 7th art. - Winter Baseball in Cuba mixed together in the 1940's the best American M.L. players, with the best black players from the Negro Leagues in the states as well as the best native (Cuban players) divided into one stadium in Havana and 4 teams (no travelling) and when they open the new stadium in 1946 - was much better facility than the M.L. stadiums. -

Study. Be a good citizen & contributor, be honest, cautious, discipline & responsible, THE BASEBALL if you love your Mama as we love ours & she is able to play like Josefina sis, no problem areas - THANKS DAD, THANKS MOM WE WILL CONTINUE TO RESPONSIBLY, & WITH LOTS OF RESPECT KEEP BASEBALL IN OUR LIVES. -
 Ruben Jr. -

“Always over deliver – Do your best always!”

Ian M. Baker-Finch,
TV golf analyst, former PGA player,
1991 winner of The Open Championship

Point of No Return

Tompkinsville, in Staten Island, boasted the biggest outdoor pool in the New York City area. Actually, it wasn't just one pool, but three. One was about the size of a football field, 3-feet deep with aqua green water, and held every kid on the Island. The baby pool was always pale in color and very warm. And then there was the deep blue water of the diving pool, with its two 1-meter boards, and the 3-meter high dive. The inviting pools shimmered in the rising sun.

Dad and I shared special times together once a month on sultry, summer, Sunday mornings. Most Sundays, we had the three pools to ourselves and took every advantage by jumping into each one and racing from end to end. We saved the ultimate, the diving pool, for last. While I was a mere 10-year-old novice diver, Dad had been an accomplished college gymnast who now put his athletic abilities to good use on the high dive.

He began with a flying arched swan, then performed a rigid jackknife, back jack, tight somersault, and ended with his grand finale – the handstand! I loved looking at the swimmers' faces when they saw Dad's handstand. He placed his hands on the tip of the board, kicked his legs skyward and pointed his toes. At the count of ten, he'd let go and slip quietly into the water, without a ripple, without a sound.

I always chose the 1-meter board and confidently marched to the end, put my arms over my head, and fell in head first. However, this one Sunday morning, Dad suggested, that is, insisted, "Suzie, dive from the 3-meter board!"

Knowing I couldn't, I climbed the high ladder anyway, and with a pounding heart I shuffled my feet to the end of the board. I had jumped before, but never dived and felt I was way too young to even try. Dad encouraged from way down below. I held my ground, put my hands over my head and slightly bent over. And that's where I stood, frozen in fear, staring at the water so far down.

Dad, who had been patient to this point, yelled, "People are lining up to use the board. Hurry up!"

"I'll jump; that will be quicker," I called back, now trembling all over.

"No, Dive!" yelled Dad. "This is your chance."

Now I faced a dilemma. Should I please Dad and kill myself? Or should I just jump and let the people in the line behind me take their turn. I adored Dad and knew I'd be upset if I let him down. How proud he'd be of me, if I dived. How disappointed he'd be if I jumped. After many minutes, which felt like hours, the choice seemed clear. Dive!

I bent over far enough that my weak, shaking legs left the diving board and I was on my way down for the fatal fall...belly first!

My loud screams let everyone know I'd landed. But when a beaming Dad hauled me out of the water, the pain magically eased and the tears began to disappear. I knew my day was complete, thinking of what story I'd tell my friends. That dive, however, ended my diving career off the 3-meter board.

When I turned 15, At Dad's suggestion, I took diving lessons. I learned the swan, jackknife, inward jack, one-and-a-half back dive, and my favorite, the handstand. On weekends, Dad and I

dived in unison...he, on the 3-meter board, and I, on the 1-meter. At the count of three, we placed our hands on the end of the board, kicked our legs up to where they were perfectly straight, and pointed our toes. We counted to 10, then slipped from the board quietly into the water, without a ripple, without a sound.

Suzanne G. Beyer of Bothell, WA, serves as Associate Editor for Seattle's *Northwest Prime Time* magazine. Read about her co-authored book, *The Inventor's Fortune Up For Grabs*, at www.theinventorsfortune.com.



A Mother's Care

"Mothers are God's angels on earth" - Carolyn Mattocks

What would one do without a mother's care? From the moment that I came out of my mother's womb, I knew that God had placed me with the greatest of gifts—a mother's care. My mother, Mae Bell Mattocks, has this care.

Mae Bell Mattocks was born in Edwards, North Carolina, to Sucfronia and Lem Williams on December 24, 1933. I have heard through the years that my grandmother always proclaimed that this was the "happiest Christmas of her life." When God brought my mother into the world that day, he created a future mother that would be there to comfort in times of pain and be a light in darkness.

As a child, my mother honed her nurturing skills due to her mother's chronic illness. She literally had to become the lady of the house as early as age 9. She cooked, cleaned, and maintained the household while taking care of her mother in order for her father to continue working. I believe that although it was a lot for someone of her age to handle, it was God's way of preparing her for the future.

My mom did not just nurture and care for us. She cared for and nurtured many children from the community and surrounding areas. I would feel safe in saying that she contributed to the economic success of many neighboring households, because had it not been for her charging such a small fee for caring for children in her home, many mothers would not have been able to work. She was a blessing to many because the fee in no way equaled to the quality of care. Over the years, we had many surrogate brothers and sisters, and none were loved less. Even after their care was not an issue, mother would keep in touch. Today, she has numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren and so on; not related by blood, but by the spirit that only the love of a mother can convey. They honor her kindness by calling her "Mama Mae Bell."

Today as an adult, I often observe kids who eat fast food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. This causes me to reflect on my childhood and how my mother's care was demonstrated through her love of cooking. I was very fortunate to have a mother who was able to prepare wholesome meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. She made sure that we got the proper amount of vegetables and fruits. Even now as an adult, when I visit, my mom sends me off with food to take back to my home.

Despite having only an 11th grade education, my mother has always emphasized the importance of reading and getting a good education. I have often heard her say that she read a lot while she was pregnant with her children. Perhaps this attributes to why I like to read so much. As a child, I can remember my mom purchasing numerous alphabet tablets. She would sit with me and make me write my alphabets as well as recite them every night. She would also help me with my multiplication tables. All of this "home" schooling enabled me to advance very quickly academically. My mom would make me do all of my homework before watching television or going outside to play. She would also discipline me if I did not perform well in school.

When Dr. Maya Angelou wrote her poem, “Phenomenal Woman,” she was talking about my mom. My mom is definitely a “Phenomenal Woman” full of Grace and the love of God. At age 79, her glowing care extends to her grandchildren who receive the care that I did as a young child and even now as an adult. The ageless face and soft spoken voice of wisdom helps shape another generation. What would one do without a mother’s care? I am so fortunate that I did not have to experience this because God blessed me with the sweetest, nicest, and most caring mother.

Thank you, Mama, for your unique strength, comfort and care; for without you my legacy would be incomplete. I SALUTE YOU!!!

Carolyn Mattocks is a native of Edwards, North Carolina with a B.A. and M.P.A. She is the CEO/Founder of the “I Can Do Anything” Organization, Inc. View her website at www.icandoanything.us.



“Dime con quien andas y te diré quien eres.”

[“Show me who you hang out with and I’ll tell you who you are.”]

A common quote, frequently said by

Lilia Sanchez Tenes (born 1932)

Submitted by Darlene Tenes

Professional Event Planner and

Founder of CasaQ, geared to those who embrace the Latino culture

www.CasaQ.com



Let the Children Shoulder Their Own Problem

Growing up in another culture unlike that of the United States, I have seen a great range in forms of parental discipline. As strict as my childhood culture was with regards to acts of disciplining children, subsets (tribes within) of the larger culture still managed to make the rest of us uneasy with the extremism of their disciplinarian practices. For example, a common practice of one of the tribes for disciplining their children was to rub extremely hot pepper sauce on the child's skin, and force the child to stand for extended periods of time in the equatorial sunshine. The temperature could very easily be upwards of 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and the terrible burning sensation from that hot pepper sauce definitely sent a powerful message.

While I might possess the undeniable tendency to side with you and agree on the level of cruelty, I hesitate. I do so because it is no doubt that some of the toughest and bravest individuals I have ever known were members of this particular tribe. Ancestral fishermen by skill, members of this tribe, particularly the men, would frequently fish the unforgiving high seas as a group and in a simple carved out wooden canoe. While discipline does not necessarily produce bravery, it certainly does character.

Discipline, as defined by Webster 1828 dictionary, is subjection to laws, rules, order, precepts or regulations. Correction; chastisement; punishment intended to correct crimes or errors; as the discipline of the strap. Although there was a strong subscription to "spare the rod and spoil the child" in our home, what I remember most are the disciplinarian words of my father. Those words were "Let the children shoulder their own problem."

My siblings and I never really heard Anne and Ezechiel Bambole, Sr., fight such as screaming words at each other. While Mom had the tendency to talk more when she was upset at us children, Dad would never allow the argument to escalate and preferred to sit quietly and listen. Mom had definitely yielded to him as the primary disciplinarian of the home and as such would frequently describe the behavior of the child in question with some aggravation. And in most cases, which no doubt in my mother's and the eyes of the children, the behavior surely warranted a strong spanking or equivalent response from my father. However, that is when in response to my mother those famous words would be uttered "Let the children shoulder their own problem."

You see while many may say my father was a passive person that is a far cry from the reality. Another frequently used and accompanying statement spoken by my father, along with the subject phrase of this story specifically to us children was, "There is a long rope between you and me, and you have just cut a piece of that rope today." In other words, with the unwise behavior/act warranting discipline that child just took a step closer to the moment of truth and confrontation with my dad that would surely see a more severe disciplinary action.

The reality is what my father deliberately succeeded in creating for each of his children is the learned ability by each of us to maturely examine our behavior and make corrective actions rather than guidance by the use of the rod. The saying, "Let the children shoulder their own problem" really means that the child is responsible for taking a retrospective and introspective look at the problem and behavior, with clear awareness that neither mom nor dad is thrilled –

then he or she is expected to make the proper adjustment to fix or assure the act is never repeated. My father seemed to defuse the reactive tendencies in us.

I am incredibly proud of my father for the brilliant and innovative thought in a culture that frequently pursued the more aggressive action when it came to acts of discipline. I am also equally as proud of my mother for submitting to her husband, noting how frequent his responses were against her desires, especially due to the gravity of the situations. Together they raised a group of children that have seen tremendous success in life skills and transitions. Neither of us have any good or bad addictive behaviors (alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc.) of any sort. We do not possess the propensity or ability to scream or argue in aggravation nor do we completely withdraw from the situation. We have also been greatly fortunate to maintain our marriages and careers with a sincerity of high integrity and hard work.

Most importantly, and this is something that was not known to us at the time it was being shown to us, we desire very strongly to pass on this balanced approach and our parents' legacy to the next generation to the best of our abilities. This story ends by saying none of this is by chance, but I can truly say in my adult years now, "Let the children shoulder their own problem" absolutely worked.

Ezechiel "Zeke" Bamolo, Jr. is the author of the book, *The Firstborn Son: a Curse, a Gift, or a Calling*. He also speaks on the strategic nature of family legacy; visit him at www.thefirstbornson.com.



“Leadership begins with the parents; without it, young Americans are left with their choice of the road to undertake.”

Colonel Wesley L. Fox, USMC, Retired.
Medal of Honor recipient; Bronze Star; 4 Purple Hearts;
43 years’ of service to the United States of America

Once Upon a Lap

I grew up in a house full of sadness, flavored with sudden, angry outbursts and later, dramatic scenes of remorse. The tricky part was that you never knew when one of these moments would happen. You might wake to the sounds of a shattered mirror, or be pulled out of bed in the early hours to serve as judge and jury for an adult conflict.

The one island of safety and comfort was reading aloud. My mother's voice became different when she read aloud, softer and somehow magical. When she opened the cover of a book, we soon lost ourselves in the halls of Toad Hall, or 100 Acre Woods. I believed she was all the characters at once and saw amazing pictures in my head, in addition to the few illustrations scattered in the book.

As I grew, the reading didn't stop. We voyaged to dark lands like Treasure Island where the memory of the black spot still brings back a chill. In high school, I perched on a counter, reading aloud Paul Gallico's *The Snow Goose* because dinner had to be cooked and we couldn't bear to be torn away from the story's end.

I was well-trained by my mother. I loved riding the waves of words, liting them, toying with them, delighting in their fun as well as the way they could provoke tears as only a book could.

Some of our best times were volunteering at our little village library. Housed in a brick building it was both stately and cozy. Even though the floors were linoleum, the check-out desks were old and the stamping system antiquated, the smells of faraway were in that mix of dust and paper, and the sounds of books being checked-out promised new adventures.

My children brought me such joy, but insecurity too. Would I be able to do an even okay job without having a clue about what good parenting looked like? I drew comfort from the thought that there was one thing I knew - sharing books with children made an island of peace. With books as my compass, I knew I could navigate this strange new life course. And I began to know them as mood changers, and remembered them as sources of comfort and pleasure – my children quoting hunks of their favorites, my husband's first read-aloud tears and a small elbow landing a swift blow to my ribs and a small angry voice saying, "Mom, you're reading in your sleep again." Best of all, I loved sharing the books that my mother once shared with me.

I remembered the nurture of my mother's liting words and returned to reading aloud when her Alzheimer's made conversation difficult. The chapters of *Winnie the Pooh* were too long so I chose illustrated fairy tales. She'd once loved King Lear and seemed pleased with William Hook's *Moss Gown*, a North Carolina version with a heroine reminiscent of Cordelia. I carried books to doctors and dentist appointments, or we cuddled in bed together, this time I initiated the literary lullaby, rekindling her remembering with Kristen McDermott's pop-up *William Shakespeare: His Life and Times*.

Sometimes I could convince Mom to read so her cadences would transport me across temporal miles back to my childhood, her words again a balm.

I typed up poems from the silly (Lear's *Owl and the Pussycat*) to the sublime (Wordsworth's *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*). These word snacks once carried us through a dismal seven hours

in the ER. And we'd walk the halls of her dementia unit reciting together and relishing sounds like "runcible spoon."

One day as I read her poems, my mother's eyes lit and she said "We have the same...the same...the same..." Often I responded by filling in her blanks, but that day, I restrained myself. Just as I was accepting that fact that the perception had slipped away, she completed her sentence, "...we both have the same rhythm."

I shivered, stored this verbal treasure and told her. "Once you read aloud to me, and now, I guess I read aloud like you."

Her smile meant more than words.

Chapel Hill writer Susie Wilde has shared books with children and adults for 30 years. She's presently working on a memoir, *Tangled: Her Life and Mine*. Learn more on her website: www.ignitingwriting.com.



Mom, the International Traveler – Not!

My dad died when I was very young and my mom became, and has remained, my best friend. One thing I observed about her is that she was one of those people who just worked very hard through life and nothing particularly of note ever happened to her. You see, Mom was not much of a traveler. Oh, there was the one trip up East to visit relatives when I was young. Nothing out of the ordinary except for us driving her nuts! But, when it came to international travel, well, that was her Achilles' heel, and she certainly could have used some expert advice (not that she would have listened to any of it).

When she was a teenager, my grandfather (her father) was a professor at West Texas Military Academy, a well-known college prep school in San Antonio, Texas. In addition to being the Dean of Math, he was also a dorm dad. His family lived in a big corner room, which I got to see when I was a student there in the mid 60's. Young men came from the four corners of the world to attend WTMA. Two of them, the children of a Senator from Mexico, became close friends with my mom. One summer she was invited to visit Mexico and tour the country with them. Of course, she agreed and they were off. Not so fast! Remember, this was the mid 1920's. Many things were done very differently back then. When they crossed into Mexico, all three were quickly arrested. Yup, arrested – the two boys for crossing an international border with a young woman for the purpose of prostitution, and my mother for being the prostitute. Obviously this was not the case, and it only took one short phone call to their dad, the Senator, to clear things up. Not only did my mom proceed to have a great time, and with a devilish twinkle in her eye, she'd take great pleasure telling all my friends that she was arrested for being a prostitute. The laugh that followed, from my mom as well as from all my friends, was numbing. She loved it. They did too. Actually, so did I! But that was not her only international experience.

In the early 1980's, I was about halfway through my Navy career and was living in Japan. My wife and I invited my mother over to visit us. The adventure begins. Mom, with my 10 year old niece in tow, went through the pain of securing passports and all the other necessary documents to make the trip. Again, nothing out of the ordinary as they completed preparations and flew to the land of The Rising Sun. Once the plane landed the fun began. She got off the plane and grabbed my niece's hand and off they went. The first sign of trouble was her inability to understand the Japanese customs agents. To hear her tell the story, they went back and forth with my mom on the losing end of the conversation. Finally my niece got mom's attention and said that they were in the wrong line. My mom told her to be quiet; the other line is for "aliens." It took some convincing but mom eventually got to the correct line, went through customs without complication, and met us on the other side of the wall, an hour later.

Mom never took another international trip, but the memories of that trip to Japan, and her story about being a prostitute, have been a source of joy and tears for all who have heard them over the years.

Jim Levy is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, retiring after serving 20 years in aviation. He's also retired after flying 20 years for a major parcel delivery service company.

*"There is a divine moment in our lives when we become One.
It is called pro-creation and it is reborn continually and forever in the future we call children.
They are our destiny and we are theirs.
The extent to which we fail as parents...
we fail as God's Children."*

From Actor & Author Dirk Benedict's book
Confessions of a Kamikaze Cowboy
www.DirkBenedictCentral.com



Business Lessons From Dad

Although my dad, Ian, spent his career in Corporate America, much of the advice and lessons he taught me apply to entrepreneurs like me as well. Here are the most valuable business lessons he taught me.

Pay Your Dues. Ian worked a lot of late nights, weekends and holidays. He had packages of mail and paperwork delivered to him at the beach, and took conference calls in our hotel room while we swam in the pool. He instilled in me a strong work ethic that has served me well in my career. His father used to have a sign on his desk that read: "The harder I work, the luckier I get!" I guess it's in our DNA.

Do Work You Enjoy. If you love what you do, it doesn't feel like work. When I'd get up and watch him get ready for work, my dad always seemed excited to go to the office. He bounced out of bed in the morning, full of ideas and energy. His enthusiasm was contagious. He found a career that was a great fit for his talents and skills and moved quickly through the organization. I think it must have been hard for others in the company who had to drag themselves to their job every day and work along side my father, who was having a ball finding creative solutions to the latest problems they were facing.

Walk and Talk. Ian walked the halls every day and he knew everybody's name, not to mention their kids' and pets' names, birthdays--you name it. His door was open and he always had coffee or tea available so people could stop in with news, good or bad. Being accessible and approachable is important if you want a culture where people can admit they don't have all the answers and need help in a certain area.

Lead by Example. Never ask people to do things you wouldn't do yourself. My dad worked in every department of the company during his career, so he knew why and how each group was important to the overall success of the organization. I think his experience and strong moral compass gave him a lot of credibility throughout the company. His colleagues didn't have to wonder where he stood on issues--he was consistent in doing the right things for the right reasons.

Share Success. When good things happen, make sure everyone who contributed is acknowledged and rewarded, not just the people at the top. In order to learn from every experience and not repeat any mistakes, it's important to share the lessons you learn, too. If those around you feel part of the process, they'll work even harder to guarantee a positive outcome.

Give Back. Be active in your community. Business leaders must stay connected to the local organizations and should encourage their colleagues to get involved, as well. Local hospitals, schools and non-profits can all benefit from business leaders' advice and support, so be generous with your time and resources.

Stay Positive. Ian is one of the most upbeat and optimistic people I've ever met. He has a great attitude and people love being around him. I think it makes them feel better about themselves. He always has a kind word or encouragement and smiles a lot. There's something very magnetic about people who exude happiness.

For someone who has never started his own company, Ian sure has a lot of great advice for those of us who can't imagine doing anything else. So for all of the great men in your life who have had a positive impact in your journey, don't wait for Father's Day to thank them for their support and advice!

Paige Arnof-Fenn is Founder & CEO of Mavens & Moguls, a global marketing firm. She's a graduate of Stanford University and Harvard Business School, and is grateful for her parents' love and support. View her website at www.mavensandmoguls.com.



“Don’t dream of marrying a doctor, but strive to become one yourself if you want a doctor in the family.”

Amber Murchison (1934 – present)

Submitted by:

Cornelia Gibson, Ed.D.,

Mother, author, and Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist

www.survivingbrokenpromises.com



Happy Shoes

The earthy scent of sawdust and wood glue wafted into the kitchen through the creaky screen door. The garage had been his workshop for as long as I can remember. As the homey fragrance invaded my nostrils, he stepped into the house while whistling a Glenn Miller tune. Our dad was always whistling. He slipped his arm around my mother's slim waist, spun her around, and planted a kiss on her delicate neck. He called it "honey-hozzling." We girls giggled as we secretly watched from the dining room, peering over the half-wall in a line.

It really was like this in our house. It wasn't until decades later that we learned that not all households were like that. It wasn't "Leave It to Beaver," but our home was always a safe, loving place filled with laughter and nurturing.

Our favorite days were Saturdays. All of us girls had our jobs to do. We all stripped our beds, the laundry was going, someone was ironing pillowcases...this was before permanent press was invented. A few were doing dishes and someone was dusting. When we finished creating a clean and organized home, Dad would come down the hall from the bedroom, whistling of course. Dangling from his muscled fingers were his powder blue deck tennies. We all called them his Happy Shoes. Whenever he wore them it meant we were going somewhere fun together. Dad seemed especially happy in those shoes. We'd go sightseeing in the country. We'd go to our favorite ice cream parlor or for a drive around the point. Piled into the wood paneled station wagon, arguments between the sisters were inevitable. Just a look from Dad and everyone simmered down. He knew how to be firm enough to create peace, but not too firm.

All those years with six girls and one bathroom led to my dad becoming an expert on women. Teenage angst came in all forms...boys, broken curfews, broken hearts, and who borrowed whose clothes...this went on for years. He had to be tough for some of those years. Later on as we became adults, we'd catch him bragging about all his girls.

Dad was one of those guys who knew everyone in town. They called him "Yuppy." "Hey, Yup!" we'd hear almost every time we went out. Friend and helper to many, our dad was also one of those guys who could fix or build anything. All we'd have to say is, "Da-ad?" and he'd start drawing up the plans for a new bookcase, table, or desk. We are all proud to display his handiwork in our homes.

As a young man, he built an ice boat, joined the Navy SeaBees, and became state champion in table tennis.

Funny sayings, dancing a jig, running his fingers through our hair, which he called "deetling"... this was our dad. Lover of animals, the Packers, beer, and peanut butter. A family man, not only with our mom and his girls, but he shared most of his life with his brother. They lived two blocks apart and built cabins next to each other in northern Wisconsin where they spent weekends for the past forty years.

Even as his body began to disappear before our eyes, Dad kept his positive attitude, funny sayings, and an appetite for peanut butter cups. He was a true example of grace.

Our dad, Tom Jape, lived a good long life and knew how to love. He will be cherished forever by anyone who knew him.

And you can bet that he is wearing his Happy Shoes.

Karen J. Braun is an Equine Bodywork Practitioner, Writer, and Teacher from southern Wisconsin. She shares her life with her husband, five horses, two dogs, three cats and eight chickens. View her blog at www.sixhundredfenceposts.blogspot.com.



Destined to be Me

I'm a seventy-year male, so I've had many years to think about my parents, now deceased. I was in my late teens when my mom died and in my forties when my dad passed. Their parents emigrated from Sicily. My parents never went to formal school, not even one day and, yet, I was fortunate to earn a Ph.D. in Psychology. So in one generation, my family's educational climb was significant. Where did my desire for education come from and what did I learn from my parents directly or indirectly?

The answers are both simple and complex. I learned nothing directly from my parents; no talks about achieving, doing well in school, seeking a career, sex, dating, marriage, religion, or the meaning of life. No wise counsel was given. What I did learn was always indirectly provided from observing them. They spoke little of their harsh, improvised youth, and I never really understood how their daily lives were connected to their pasts. I could only observe them and try to learn. In spite of no education, my father taught himself to read, perform basic math, and became a successful business man, devoting over 70 hours a week to making money for his family. Having gone through two depressions, he hoarded money. Having five children, he gained a "work force" to achieve his goal of never having to experience hunger and poverty again. My mom was the devoted Catholic and a master of great cooking that would put any Italian chef to shame.

We didn't take vacations, we seldom ate in restaurants, we never went to movies as a family, holidays and birthdays were marginally celebrated, my parents did not attend parent-teacher conferences or their kids' sporting events. However, as a child or teen, I never felt neglected or angered; it was simply accepted. It wasn't until I had my own children and gave to them what I missed as a child, did I begin to resent what I missed.

My mother gave unconditional love, my father gave strict discipline. I quickly learned that if I was going to achieve, I had to be self-taught, along with assistance of my older siblings and my wonderful teachers. I think I've been a hard worker, a good husband, and a caring and loving father. Much of what I was as a young adult and now, I owe to my parents in what they taught and what they didn't do. So much of my adulthood has been "self-giving" in what I missed as a developing child.

I wish they would have given me direct wisdom but they kept it locked-in; perhaps their scarred childhoods prevented them from doing so. I would have known them better. They would have known me better as well.

Not hard to figure out why I became a psychologist, huh?

John R. Morella, PhD, is a retired academician and psychologist. He is the author of two non-fiction psychological (self-improvement) books written for the layperson. Visit his website at www.johnmorella.com.



“My Dad was the best Christian man I ever knew. When I wanted to race I used a different name. He found out and told me to use my own name, but do it with Honor!”

Bobby Allison,
Legendary race car driver,
“The Leader of the Alabama Gang”

Greek Life Lessons

While I'm supposed to be writing about remembering, I find that my intuition is drawn to forgetting. Not forgetting as in sweep it under the rug, don't tell anyone about it, clamp it under lock and key in your heart, allowing it to become a lump in your throat. No, not that kind of forgetting. L-e-t-t-i-n-g g-o. You see, of all the phrases my parents said and lived by, two most come to mind: From my mom, Anna: "Let bygones be bygones." From my dad, John: "Forget about it."

Remembering and forgetting - two sides of the same coin.

What I'd like to forget: that they've both died, within 1 1/2 years of each other - he at the age of 90+, she three months shy of 87. Their deaths - a moment in time. Their lessons lived and shared - a lifetime of practice.

Anna was born in 1924 in an ethnocentric Greek, urban neighborhood just outside of Boston. A challenging start: her mother dying from childbirth complications within 3 months of her birth, she was "adopted" by a kind, compassionate, and childless couple who lived upstairs. John was born in 1919, setting out for the Merchant Marines out of need to help support his family. The U.S. became his adopted country - out of need, responsibility and obligation - never out of desire. They worked hard and enjoyed life. Community was always a critical focal point.

I remember a particular day (and oh, believe me, there were many in my younger years and as I got older) when I "just couldn't believe what so and so did" where I worked. I came home in tears from my position at a corporate catering company. The person with whom I worked most closely made it even more abundantly clear that he was doing sales and customer account management because he knew how to do it. And, by the way, wasn't it time I started those quiches and sandwiches! They listened, patiently, to my raging tale of not being appreciated, being under-valued, putting up with insult after insult, having to work in a non-collaborative environment with someone who had no interest in feedback and another perspective.

Then, they simply said their favorite things: Let bygones be bygones... Forget about it.

Saying these things was not just lip-service. They knew both the value of not wasting one's energy/life force, as well as the choice before us in each moment. I'm reminded here of a sentence in a recent article on empowerment: Give your energy to those things that deserve it. My parents seemed to be able to discern what deserved their energy and what didn't. They embraced the power of choosing not only in how they would respond, but how their energy could be focused on what they cared about and valued.

Again, it's not that they didn't have values or boundaries. My dad was a keen observer of people. He valued himself and earned respect by focusing on the important things and forgetting the petty things that abound in our daily lives. People trusted and respected him because they knew he would tell it like it is - when, and only when, it was really worthwhile to have that conversation. My mom's slogan was a constant reminder of the value of community (family and friends) in our lives, and the flexibility with which it was important to approach people and life. In other words, don't get caught up in the small stuff - remember that bonds are stronger than petty occurrences and that those bonds are critical to a satisfying life.

These sayings - among many other memories - keep my parents alive to me. And, they continue to teach me how to live.

Stephanie Legatos is a Certified Professional Resume Writer and a Career Counselor & Coach at Be Well Partners; her passion is to help anyone be a success. You can view her website at www.bewellpartners.com.



Please Pass the Wisdom

My dad's 80th birthday was fast approaching and my brothers and I were unsure of what to get him for such an auspicious occasion. Long ago my parents had banished all gifts that they would have to store or get rid of. "We're too old for things. We are at the point where we are giving things away, not getting more," they explained. So it had to be a "non-thing" gift. Meaningful enough to honor this incredible man, yet nothing store bought.

After much discussion we decided to write a book. Not any book, but one that reflected his 80 years of wisdom. These were things he taught us with his words and his actions. The project launched with a lively discussion of things our dad had told us growing up. Important rules of life like, "never buy a dog you have to bend over to pet." We were all in our fifties and had not yet broken this rule. Our entrepreneurial spirit was ignited with his advice to "try new businesses. Some may fail, but you'll always learn and you may just succeed." We realized that each of us had gone into businesses of our own. Dad had certainly made an imprint on our lives.

As time went by, the project took on a life of its own. At any given hour, my phone would ring with one of my brothers recalling a bit of advice he had been given. "When I began my business, Dad told me to not get discouraged because the sale begins when the customer says, 'No,'" my oldest brother proclaimed. He also reminded me that "it is not a sale until you get paid. Anyone can give products away!"

Another time my inbox contained a memory of a time when my middle brother was involved with baseball. He was the catcher for his team and my father had been an umpire for many years. "Be aware," he told him, "that if the ball gets by you and hits the umpire, the next pitch will probably be a ball! Remember the catcher's primary job is to protect the umpire."

In conversation after conversation we recalled memories, both shared and those reserved only for us. We began to realize how he had given us advice based upon where we were in life and what our interests were. He tailored each bit of wisdom to fit our situation and encourage us with what he had learned over the years. His parenting had not stopped when we left the house and we relied upon his advice when the world threw us a curve ball. He was never at a loss for words and he made a point of telling us, "don't ask if you don't want to hear the answer." We listened closely and usually followed his guidance.

Each day we found moments that triggered our memories. While eating a healthy breakfast, I recalled how the morning meal to my dad usually meant ice cream or leftover Chinese food! How we hated waking up for school and having the pungent odor of chicken and broccoli hit us as we entered the kitchen. Walking through the mall one day, I spotted an older man taking a quick nap outside of a department store. I called my brothers when I got home and asked if they remembered how dad would nap at the oddest of places: malls, at the zoo, in his car at a rest stop, during our school concerts – if he was tired, a quick refreshing nap would restore him for the rest of the day. Perhaps this was because he was up before dawn. By the time we got up, he had already completed a long list of errands and tasks that my mother had given him the day before. His philosophy was simply this, "If you can't get to work on time at 8:00 a.m., start going in at 7:00 a.m." Then he would add that a boss should never have an affair with his

secretary and expect her to show up for work on time. Time was something to be honored for he knew that we only have so much of it.

Apparently his mother did not consider time to be of concern to her. Her life was measured in moments, not in years. As she aged, people would ask her how old she was. Leaning in towards them, she would whisper, “Can you keep a secret?” They would assure her that they could. Sitting up straight, she would announce loudly, “Good. So can I!” Eventually she could no longer keep her age a secret, because her 100th birthday was a big celebration. Slowly her memory receded and we kept the family stories safe, ready to be told to our children and someday to their children as well. At the age of 109, my grandmother left this world and made my father an orphan.

With the family longevity in mind, we realized that 80 years was not really all that old. Satisfied that we had gathered all we could to that point, we sent our words off to the graphic designer to be put into book form. On his special day, we waited expectantly as he unwrapped it and shared in his joy that his legacy would be preserved for all time in his birthday gift.

Of course, at dinner we quickly realized that the book would need to have a second edition. No sooner had we sat down, than we had yet another quotable moment. Without even looking at the menu, he announced that he was having the duck. The waitress explained that they only serve duck on the weekend and this was a Thursday evening. Disappointed as he had called to inquire first before choosing this particular restaurant, he quietly said, “I guess I asked the wrong question. I asked if you had duck on the menu and you do. I just didn’t ask if it was available.” Another lesson in knowing that the key to life is in asking the right questions.

So what began as a gift for my father, became so much more. My brothers and I spent more time on the phone laughing and sharing than we had in years. We realized how much he had taught us about life and the world we live in. The gift we gave, was actually the gift he gave to us.

Nancy Weil speaks nationally teaching people how to laugh more and stress less through her company: www.TheLaughAcademy.com. She is the author of the book, *If Stress Doesn't Kill You, Your Family Might*.



“A blind man could do a better job of washing that pan!”

Mary Catherine Tucker Shelton (1904 – 1986)

Submitted by;
Randall C Shelton,
Author and Speaker
www.onlyuno.com



He's Proud of Me

My father passed away in February of 2001. While his passing was very sad, he left me gifts that I shall always treasure. He gave me a sense of humor and a way to see the world that was both ironical and whimsical. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he taught me to face life's challenges with courage, dignity, and self-respect.

My father was a man of many talents. He was bright, compassionate, and articulate, but he was also a man who didn't discuss what he was thinking or feeling. We never discussed my disability. In some ways, I don't think he ever became comfortable with what he called my handicap. Though my Spina Bifida meant nothing to me, he always saw it as a challenge that made my life difficult. I don't think he understood, until near the end of his life, how important my various challenges were to me.

My father worried about how people would treat me and how that would affect my view of the world. When I was a child and came home from school after having had a fight, I could see the pain on his face. He knew the fights were because the other kids didn't like my "differences." He was disappointed if I received bad grades because, to him, education was an equalizer. When I wanted to play sports, Dad showed me tricks to help my eye/hand coordination so that I could more easily pitch a baseball and finesse a basketball into a hoop. Dad was proud of me and tried his best to help, and I felt respected and nurtured.

A couple years ago before his death, Dad lost the use of his left hand, and something clicked between us. Our relationship had always been one of deep love, but now we could share an understanding we hadn't shared before. From that moment on, we had many conversations about what it felt like to have challenges that most people didn't experience. Later, when he developed Parkinson's Disease, he became intolerant of even the slightest of tremors. I used my own experiences to help him understand why what he was experiencing didn't have to be a handicap.

Dad was diagnosed with a brain tumor in July of 2000. Through the course of this disease, he sometimes experienced problems with his balance. While I wasn't able to help him much around the house, because we lived in a largely inaccessible house, I was able to show him some of the exercises that physical therapists had given me over the years.

My father and I shared a particularly strong bond, one of mutual respect and, I think, admiration. Though I don't know if he ever knew it, he taught me how to be a survivor. Both of us, in our own way, had difficult lives. Both of us learned how to deal with hardships. I'm proud of my father. I'm proud of the way he took care of his family. I'm proud of the way he took time to talk to people and to make them feel good about who they were. I'm proud of the way he pushed through adversity and created beauty in everything he did. I think he was proud of me for the same reasons.

Former social worker turned writer, Robert Bennett, focuses on the needs of society's disenfranchised. He's spoken to physical therapy students, church members, and senior citizens, and has been on numerous radio shows. View his website at www.enablingwords.com.



“Work” Doesn’t Have to be a Four-Letter Word

I grew up in a mill town, Georgetown, South Carolina. Many of the town’s men were employed by the local paper mill. My dad, O.D. Altman, Jr., had worked at the mill in his younger days, but had moved on to a dairy company by the time I was born, selling and delivering milk to homes initially, and later managing several branch offices. Many of his friends still worked at the mill as I was growing up.

I remember my dad talking about his friends complaining about their jobs – how much they hated going to work and how they lived for the weekends. My dad said over and over again, “If I hated my job that much, I’d quit. Life is too short to hate what you do for a living.”

That shaped me. I’ve been fortunate (or deliberate) enough to have jobs I’ve loved most of my life. They weren’t all easy jobs, but I found a way to love them. In 2001, I started a company built around the concept of what my dad taught me. The Altman Initiative Group, Inc. (named partly to honor my dad) works with companies to help them hire people who are well suited to their jobs, not just in skills, but in temperament as well. The result – people who can enjoy their work and be more successful at it!

My dad worked for the dairy company for over 25 years, until his death at age 51. Sure, there were days when he fussed about this thing or that thing going wrong at work, but he loved his job and the people he worked with. Those people loved him back.

It seems that many people think it isn’t cool to love your job – that “work” is a 4-letter word. I’m glad my dad taught me differently.

Denise Altman is President of Altman Initiative Group, Inc., and the author of *22 Reasons Employees HATE their Jobs...and what companies can do about it*. Learn more at www.altmaninitiative.com.



“After seeing the icebergs in Antarctica, I now understand Modern Art.”

Margaret McClintock Greenwood (1916 – 2012)

Submitted by:

Mary Greenwood,

Award-winning author

www.marygreenwood.org



Put Love on Your List

Browsing through a greeting card rack at a local store, I saw this message posted at the end of the rack: “Put love on your list.”

My first reaction was, “Are we so busy that we have to remember to love? Must we put it on our to-do-list to make room for it in our lives?” In our fast-paced “me-first” society, I guess we do. However, shouldn’t love be something that comes naturally, without thinking, just doing?

My mother, who is now deceased, was an example. I never remember, as I was growing up, hearing the words, “I love you, Carol,” from her lips. I never doubted my mother’s love, even though I was over the age of 40 before I heard those words I longed to hear from her. She showed her love in other ways. She was a stay-at-home mom. She had a warm meal on the table every evening. Eating out was considered a luxury, or perhaps our society was slower-paced and we had more time to sit down at the dinner table for a home-cooked meal.

My mother, also a seamstress, made all of the clothes for my sister and me. Her talents produced dresses that only love could buy, plus we didn’t have to worry that someone else at school would be wearing the same one.

Mother’s love was also evident in the teaching of responsibility. She would post a chore list on the refrigerator every Saturday morning. Until our chores were done, my sister and I couldn’t go out to play. Did we appreciate what she was teaching us? Probably not then, but the lessons are profoundly evident today.

After my sister and I left home, our mother’s love was expressed in new ways: the sharing of recipes, making quilts for grandchildren, preparing large holiday meals for our growing families, and making jelly from wild plums and blackberries that we picked.

When Mom’s health began to fail several years ago, her ways of expressing love were no longer possible in the same ways she had before. Hands that had sewn dresses for my sister and me were gnarled with arthritis. The strong back that had allowed her to stand in the kitchen for hours to prepare a holiday meal or make jelly was now bent with osteoporosis.

Eventually, she required round-the-clock care and went to live in a nursing home. I received a call early one morning about two months after she was admitted. The nurse on duty suggested I call the rest of the family.

As I sat by my mother’s bedside and listened to her labored breathing, knowing the end was so near, I stroked her hair and said, “I love you, mama.”

She was not conscious but as the hours passed, peacefulness appeared on her face. The 79 years that had been evident in the lines on her face disappeared. When she drew her last breath, I saw nothing but the young mother who had given so much love to her daughters.

Carol Round is a syndicated columnist, Christian book author, and inspirational speaker. Her books include *A Matter of Faith*, *Faith Matters*, *Journaling with Jesus: How to Draw Closer to God*. She blogs weekly at www.carolaround.com, and you can find her books at Amazon.com.



If I Fix Your Machine, Can You Fix My Wife?

One time when I was about fifteen, my mother hurt her back while washing the kitchen floor and couldn't get up. She kept pounding her hand on the floor until at last the neighbor downstairs heard her. The neighbor ran upstairs to see what the pounding was about, and after flinging the door open, shouted, "Rosetta, what's wrong? Where are you?" Mom yelled back, "I'm in the kitchen and need some help." Back in the late 1950s Los Angeles was a very safe city, and most of us never even locked our doors.

My mother was on the kitchen floor and in a lot of pain, but managed to look up at her and say, "Please call Al. Tell him he needs to come home." So she did. Mom said she didn't know what else to do. The neighbor stayed with her until my father got home and lifted Mom up from the floor and managed to get her into the car.

They drove to the doctor's office without even calling first. To their amazement, the doctor's waiting room was completely full with more patients than you could imagine. His nurse said they were all waiting because the x-ray machine was on the blink – completely out of order. She'd been calling the repair service for several hours and couldn't get anyone to check the machine, but the patients still kept waiting and hoping the repairman would show up.

My father explained that Mom had bent over and then she couldn't get up. Unfortunately, the biggest difficulty at that moment was the broken machine. The doctor shook his head and said he needed to take x-rays so he could see what was causing the problem. To Mom's surprise, my father said, "What if I take a look at your x-ray machine. I work with electronics and I'm good with machines. If it's something I can figure out, maybe I can repair it for you, then you can fix my wife."

The doctor shook his head and said, "Oh, I don't know, Al. That machine is full of cables and all sorts of complicated things. Do you know anything about that kind of electronics?"

A big smile lit my father's face. "Doc, I work with cables and complicated circuits all the time. I'll let you know if I think I can tackle it. Keep your fingers crossed." I guess the doctor was desperate by then and told him to go ahead and take a look.

My father started to work on it and to the doctor's astonishment the machine was completely fixed in only half an hour. With his machine back in working order, the doctor was able to take the x-rays of my mother's back, said it was an attack of lumbago and told them what to do. With that under control, my father asked the doctor how much they owed him, and he patted Dad on the back. "Look Al, let's just call this visit a no charge one. We're even – you fixed my machine and I fixed your wife. Now I can help all those people in the waiting room and I owe you a big thanks."

Well, that was how my father was. He really was a genius when it came to electronics. He was in the gaming business and well known in the industry from Chicago to Los Angeles as someone who could fix any pinball machine, even over the phone. When he passed away at only forty-nine years old, *Billboard Magazine* ran a good-sized obituary and used his nickname "the Professor," because when operators had a machine no one could fix, the decision was always the same: "Call the Professor," and they did from all over the country.

As my mother said many years after he died, “He could fix anything but his health. I sure wish he could have lived long enough to see computers. He would have been fascinated.”

Award-winning author Morgan St. James co-authors the *Silver Sisters Mysteries* series, as well as writing other novels. Her short stories appear in many anthologies. Visit www.morganstjames-author.com.



"It's no illusion – your legacy is real and it must be preserved!"

Lance Burton,
Master Magician,
Has performed for millions, including the Queen of England
and U.S. Presidents

The Promise Despite 40 Years of Wandering

Is life for you a bed of sweet smelling roses, or one filled with uncomfortable thistles and thorns? Do you find yourself snuggling into the comforts of black silky sheets lost in a bevy of red and white petals embraced by a tender, pleasurable, and welcoming scent? Or have you been thrust into a hurricane of uncertainty, injustice, loneliness, bitterness, and a tormenting desperation for a breakthrough that elusively sits just beyond your reach? Does the answer to these questions lie in the hands of the circumstance in which you find yourself, or is it a myth that you truly control where you seek to lay your head?

Anne & Ezechiel Bamolo, Sr., began life together in Cameroon, Central Africa, not as a young couple lost in the uncontrollable heat and passion of suffocating love for each other. No, instead it was more the resentment and seemingly utter rejection of each other as a young couple brought together in an arranged marriage. They would then soon find themselves on an airplane to pursue life in an absolutely foreign and strange land (Liberia, West Africa), away from any comfort and support of familiar family and friends, along with their now added three-month-old daughter. By all accounts of modern marriage counseling theories, this is the well-designed plot of a marital union doomed for failure. But the young couple had embraced faith in God and the power of prayer for the promise of life, protection, and provision.

The next thirty to forty years for Anne and Ezechiel's lives would seemingly be a parallel account of the biblical wandering of the Israelites in the desert for forty years. Years of deeply committed work and service with the utmost integrity would be evinced with monumental awards for their successes. However, they would also be repeatedly robbed of the apparently more affluent evidence of their professional accomplishments by a nation's instabilities from coup d'états, civil wars, and countless other personal misfortunes. Nevertheless, the years had not failed to add three birth children to their family, as well as several other adopted children out of their sheer desire to give life and opportunity where needed. Yet like Israel's promise land, thriving before their eyes was the tormenting pursuit of an elusive breakthrough for which they had traveled so far from home.

The crowning moment of this nightmare in a bed of thistles and thorns would harshly deal one more definitive blow as if to shout at Anne and Ezechiel, "GIVE UP!" At approximately 6:30am on a September 1990 morning, rebel soldiers would surround Anne and Ezechiel's home heavily armed with AK-47 rifles and other weapons. The rebels demanded that the family exit the home, and they forcefully instructed them to leave the area without looking back. Not knowing where to go, Anne and Ezechiel led their children, praising God for no loss of life, into the nearby bushes in search of safety, food, and shelter. As you would imagine, what little possessions they had left were lost.

In what does the essence of your success lie? For you, is it in the wealth and fortune you leave your descendants? Is it in the cornucopia of plaques, medals, degrees, certificates, and other types of professional accomplishments you've amassed? Is it in the plethora of philanthropic projects you have conducted? Or is it in the Legacy (approach, value, faith,

counsel, authenticity, exemplification, etc.) of life you choose to leave your children or dependents?

At the end of the day, Anne and Ezechiel have together lived a life of abject material poverty and misfortune as an African couple regardless of their incredible commitment and integrity to their professions, and more importantly to God. However, they have lived a life of immense wealth and social satisfaction with regard to the family legacy they built and propagated. All of Anne and Ezechiel's four children have been blessed to now live in the United States of America despite a family once seemingly destroyed and condemned to failure. The legacy inherited from the lives of Anne and Ezechiel have allowed their children to thrive in this land that would seem so foreign to them.

Anne and Ezechiel also lived in the United States for several years. But as you would expect, and true to their calling to enhance life and opportunity for others, they decided to return to Cameroon, Central Africa, to complete unfinished work of continuing to build legacy into the lives of young people who need it most until God calls them home.

Noting their difficult past, does it intrigue you that Anne & Ezechiel have not chosen to sleep in silky and rose petal sheets of comfort and retirement in America? Or, do you see that they are doing what they've always been called to do, and be more focused on, and giving to, others rather than worrying about the comforts of life that they could afford and enjoy? Yes, this is the legacy of life that Anne and Ezechiel Bambolo, Sr., have passed on, and it's a great legacy at that!

Ezechiel "Zeke" Bambolo, Jr., is the author of the book *The Firstborn Son: a Curse, a Gift, or a Calling*. He also speaks on the strategic nature of family legacy at www.thefirstbornson.com.



“You only have to remember one story when you tell the truth.”

Woodrow Thorwald Gustafson (1915 – 1964)

Fix Your Own Supper!

She was a sweet little ravioli of a woman. At age 85, she was saucy and spunky and still thought she was sexy. When our local supermarket, for example, was displaying fresh fish beneath a banner that proclaimed "Catch of the Day," she strode right up to the good-looking man behind the counter and announced, "If you are the catch, I'll take all I can get!"

She was a collector; my father, by contrast, a minimalist. One day he entered her sewing room, known among insiders as "the junk room," and sadly shook his head. (Clearly, he was not familiar with Edison's assertion that "it's easy to create. All you need is a good idea and a lot of junk.") With dismay, he looked around at the amassed stacks--ribbons and sewing machines, sergers and scissors, buckram and buttons, zippers and gimp, bobbins and lace, and uncountable bolts of fabric. Then he made his logical pronouncement: "If you haven't used something in a year, get rid of it."

She dagged him with a dirty look and quickly responded, "I haven't used you in 30 years. Does that mean I should get rid of you?"

Breast cancer diminished that spunky spirit of hers, but it could never extinguish it completely. My mother created beautiful things all of her life, including the smiles that appeared on people's faces after only a few minutes of being in her presence. She even made the surgeon who performed her mastectomy laugh when she told him--just before they gave her anesthesia--"If I don't survive, make my daughter bury me next to Frank Sinatra. And have her inscribe my gravestone: 'Frank, let's do it your way!'"

But hers was not an easy life. She made dozens of wedding gowns (often free of charge because the brides could not afford to pay her). By nature, she was an emotional marshmallow, placing compassion well ahead of compensation. Of course, there have been those who have taken advantage. Like the woman who owned a building and the business it housed. She hired my mother to make drapes for every window in the place. When the work was done, she asked what the bill was. "Twenty-four dollars a window," my mother replied.

A few days later, my mother received a check in the mail for \$24....total. And she never had the courage to call and ask the businesswoman for the remainder. Then, there were those who would tell her they could not afford to pay just then as their money was in a CD and they didn't want to lose interest by withdrawing it. Could they pay her in a few months, they would inquire.

Invariably, Mom would tell them not to worry about it. And, of course, they did not. The few months passed by and it was not the customer, but my mother who was embarrassed about the unpaid bill, too embarrassed to call those customers and ask for what was due her.

But she never let these experiences diminish her zest for life. They never stunted her creative spirit. Once, she was chosen as runner-up in a national contest sponsored by the American Plastics Council for re-using plastic products. And, she wrote recipes for the George Foreman Grilling Machine. The title of her recipe collection? "Boxer Shorts"!

Her most remarkable idea, however, was an invention she sold to a major American manufacturer when she was 70 years old. In hundreds of thousands of homes across the nation, her Continental drapery rod adds elegance to window treatments. Produced by the Kirsch

Company, it has proven to be a drapery bestseller and has created work for a great many people. During the creation process, though, my father, in a slightly jealous mode, belittled her invention. "You are acting like you put a man on the moon," he told her.

When she received her first royalty check, she made a copy of it and left it with a note for my father, on the kitchen table. "Dear Pasquale," it read. "Taking my first trip to the moon. Fix your own supper!" Then she took off for a two-week vacation ...all by herself.

Dr. Marlene Caroselli is an author, keynoter, and corporate trainer. With 60+ published books, including *Hiring and Firing* and *Principled Persuasion*, her passion is art that she donates for charitable causes, viewed at www.saatchionline.com/LainaCelano.



It's Just a Bag of Peanuts

Growing up, a small bag of peanuts from an airplane meant everything to me. Little bags of peanuts meant I got to stay up late. Little bags of peanuts meant my mom would smile just a little bit more. Little bags of peanuts meant my dad, a world-traveling salesman, was coming home. It wasn't always peanuts that he brought. Sometimes it was a souvenir from where he'd traveled, a few dozen chicken wings from the local pizza shop for us to share, or sometimes it was just my dad, which was awesome enough.

Often he traveled several days and weeks at a time, and as a kid, it felt like an eternity. Before the era of cellphones and emails, all I had were those moments when Dad came through the door, exhausted, carrying his luggage and the knowledge he missed another week with his family.

My father dedicated his life to his family by spending a lot of time away from us. While we spent harsh winters in the rust belt of America, my dad was wheeling and dealing in tropical Detroit, Michigan, and hob-knobbing with executives in Danbury, Connecticut. Sure, on Wednesday my dad was letting the ink dry on a multi-million dollar deal with NASA, but on Saturday he was watching me under-achieve at my team's soccer game. He was never too tired for me, even when he passed out on the living room couch Sunday afternoon while watching Casablanca...again.

What, you think I might have told my father the story about how Mike Brooks, Justin Friedman, and I found three dollars in change in a parking lot before? How could you tell, he is smiling and nodding in amazement as I speak like I'm Big Bird teaching kids to read

What, you think it hurts my dad to see me crying when my balsawood car didn't race fast enough to make it to the finals? How could you tell, when his hand on my shoulder and words of encouragement make me feel like I won first place

What, was I out of line when I told my father I hated him and that I wished he just left me alone? When I pushed away and tried to establish myself as my own man, was I being selfish? The guy beat me at ping pong every single time he promised to buy me a car if I won, and wrestled me into submission when he offered me the title as "Man of the house."

Now that I have a son of my own, I feel a petty jealousy when I see my father spending time with his grandson. They have a strong bond that is beautiful to behold. I know my boy will grow up and learn so much from my dad and pass on our family's spirit to his children. So why, when I watch them interact, do I feel like an drifter watching a Thanksgiving feast through a large bay window?

When I'm alone with my boy, I constantly reassure him of my vow to be there for him all the time. Then I go off to work, I shut the door to my office to write novels, and everyday life finds more things to keep us apart. I also contribute to the problem, creating roadblocks between us while simultaneously complaining about the traffic.

My biggest fear, in raising my son, is to come home from a hard day's work to see him looking over my shoulder for something else, someone else. Each day my anxiety is exposed as paranoia when I open the door to see a big smile from my boy, and why should I be surprised?

What could be better than your dad walking through the door, late on a school night, carrying a bag of peanuts?

The author of two picture books for children, Douglas Esper is currently shopping his debut novel, *In The Watershed*, a character-driven suspense/thriller. View his website at www.douglasesper.com.



*“The legacy we leave is not just in our possessions,
but in the quality of our lives.”*

Rev. Billy Graham

The Bright Side of Criticism

At a recent dinner gathering of some of the most intelligent people I know, our discussion turned to raising kids. My friend, Philip, I guess looking for insight on child rearing, asked what had motivated me as a child to work so hard, to earn a 5.0/5.0 grade point average at MIT, to train at Harvard to become an Emergency Medicine physician.

This was not the first time I'd been asked that question. Each time, I pause and give it serious consideration, but then inevitably arrive at the same conclusion. I believe that my mom, unintentionally through her comments that rang like criticism during my childhood, pushed me to seek what seemed nearly impossible to achieve: her praise. This is best epitomized in my crystal-clear memory of a conversation between my mother and me on my 17th birthday, November 28th, during senior year of public high school in a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota. I literally had received my SAT score in the mail on my birthday. I had taken the test for the first time earlier that spring, in my junior year, and had scored 580 verbal, 800 math (when the SAT used to be scored out of 800 verbal, 800 math). I then spent a good deal of my free time during the summer (between working multiple part-time jobs to earn money for college) studying SAT vocabulary. I re-took the SAT that fall. On that birthday, I opened my re-take score to find a wonderful present – I'd scored 740 verbal, 780 math. I tried to hide my excitement when I showed my mother my score report. She looked at the paper for several moments, poker-faced. Finally, she declared, "It looks like your math score has dropped."

As an adult now, and a mother myself, I believe my mother always had the best of intentions. And, in the end, I am thankful that she motivated me to do my best in all that I do. I try to remind myself of this, even to this day, especially when she makes a cringe-worthy comment. "Why is he crying?? You're probably not making enough breast milk." "Your kids don't listen to you. If they don't listen now, it will only get worse when they are older." Feelings of inadequacy flood back as if I were a child again when she makes these types of remarks.

A part of us will probably always feel like a child to our parents, and a part of me will probably always still seek approval. Even now, I secretly fear my mom might be disappointed that after my many degrees and years of training, I am no longer practicing Emergency Medicine. Instead, I am working only part-time, from home, for a small mobile health monitoring company. The majority of my time is spent giving other stay-at-home moms a run for their money: singing and dancing exuberantly (as if nobody were watching) at my 2-and-a-half-year-old's music class, waving back to my smiling 5-year-old between his "stunts" at gym class, volunteering weekly at my 8-year-old's school library. (I've become impressively proficient at re-shelving books while checking in old ones and checking out new ones.)

There's no rest for the weary, though. The drive to constantly excel means that I feel compelled to take advantage of my part-time work status by tackling projects I've been intending to get to for years. I'd like to finish writing my memoir about the seemingly unlikely transformation of a "good girl" into an "ER doc." I'd like Magic Starfish, my little "for fun" company, to speed up its track record of publishing one iPhone app per each approximately three

years. I'd like to finally get our hoards of belongings organized into our "new" house that is no longer new. I'd really like to refrain for an entire day from raising my voice at one of the kids or my husband. The list goes on and on, but I only accomplish so much between chauffeuring the kids, organizing Cub Scout meetings, and orchestrating adventures to area museums, zoos, and beaches. Moreover, each list item seems, at times, dauntingly difficult. Fortunately, with my mom as my mom, I know I will persevere.

Christine Tsien Silvers, M.D., Ph.D., is a Board-certified Emergency Medicine physician, the Chief Medical Officer of AFrame Digital, Inc., and an author. She earned her S.B., S.M., and Ph.D. in Computer Science and Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and her M.D. from Harvard; she says the best thing she's done in life is "*become a Mom.*"

"Go look it up; you'll learn more by having to find it out yourself than if I just told you the answer."

Sherwood B. Seeley (1905 - 1993)

Submitted by:

Suzanne Beyer,

Author

www.theinventorsfortune.com



Forgiving Isn't Always Easy

I was raised, the oldest of eight children, in a home terrorized by an abusive father. He was a feather-weight championship boxer and took many titles in the 1960s in Boston. My mother was the recipient of the majority of the abuse that he handed out and I learned quickly how to hide my younger siblings and protect them when "terror returned home." He would disappear for days at a time, only to return to the house under the influence of some substance and unleash his abuse on all of us. Years later and with some encouragement from a few family members, my mother finally filed for divorce in 1972 when I was 14. He had been missing for several months but his threats of, "If you ever leave me, they will never find you and the kids," rang loud and clear to us over the years.

Fast forward to present day. Looking back, I cannot help but remember that I lost two siblings to suicide as adults in 1989 and 2008. These losses remind me that I am a survivor. My father remarried soon after the divorce from my mother in the late 1970s and his wife died of cancer in 2011. My mother remained a divorced woman all of these years and lived by herself. Shortly after my father's wife passing, he began to call on my mother and they began dating (she is 68 and he is 70). In June of 2011, she announced to my siblings and I that she wanted to sell her small home and move to New York to live out the remainder of her life with my father. She seemed convinced that she needed to return to his side. My remaining four siblings were appalled and announced that they wanted nothing to do with her if she moved forward with her plans. One sister even attempted to manipulate our mother's physician to have her driver's license revoked to keep her from driving to his home on weekends, as she began to do.

In December of 2011, my mother and father tied the knot in a small private ceremony in a very small community in upstate New York, attended only by my wife and me. We spent 3 long months helping her clean out a small double-wide mobile home that could have been a perfect subject of one of those reality shows that features individuals who suffer from compulsive hoarding disorder. The place sold for a measly \$14,000, just enough to pay off her debts and today she lives with my father in his small 3-bedroom ranch in the beautiful hills of upstate New York. My wife and I make the 3-hour drive every other weekend to check on them and help them around the house, and every time we see my mother, she appears to have more of the "white light" in her eyes than she did the visit before. I feel confident that my father's abusive ways have faded and he is truly a changed man. It feels a little strange however, for me to have this new relationship with a man I once called Dad, almost 40 years ago.

Life is too short to judge others for their choices or to live in the past. I choose to look forward and know that I have healed from the abuse. I am grateful that somehow the characteristics I developed through the experience of the child abuse taught me the correct way to treat people and children. I take great comfort in knowing that I put three "whole" children out into the world who are discovering their gifts that will make this world a better place to live. Later this week I will once again say a phrase to my wife that sounds so strange to my ears, "Are we ready to head to my folks' house?"

Bill Corbett is the author of the award-winning parenting book series, *Love, Limits, & Lessons: A Parent's Guide To Raising Cooperative Kids*, and is executive producer and host of the public access television show *Creating Cooperative Kids*. www.CooperativeKids.com



A Small Wooden Chair

As my sister and I bagged up Dad's clothing to donate to charitable causes, we put some favorite pieces aside for relatives and friends. We both realized the finality of our actions. Daddy wouldn't be wearing his faded overalls or the Levi's with red suspenders anymore. An assortment of creased and dirty cowboy hats, both felt and straw, would be divided among his grandsons. Some, still in their boxes, looked like new; they were special.

My father's death, while not expected, was inevitable. He had been healthy for 80 of his 81 years. Any health issues he had faced were minor compared to what my mother had suffered before her death.

Several months before my mother's passing, she mentioned several possessions she wanted given to family members. As she made her wishes known, I spoke up concerning a small chair that had been given to my daddy when he was five-years-old.

"If I do not get anything else," I said, "I want daddy's little chair."

I'm not sure why that small wooden chair meant so much to me. It's just a simple chair designed for a small child's bottom. Paint of various hues had been splattered across the chair back as if a mischievous young artist decided to decorate its plainness. My mother told me how the chair had been used as a stepstool when she needed to reach something out of range of her 5'4" height. She admitted having stood on the woven seat to paint kitchen cabinets, which explained the splotches of pale yellow and green. Eventually, the seat, worn through with age and misuse, had to be replaced.

As my father approached his mid-seventies, he was kind of like that chair. He needed knee surgery to replace the ones with which he had been born. My father entered the world in 1926. In 1931, he received a gift of a sturdy brown chair. That piece of children's furniture was not fancy; no intricate carvings graced its exterior. It wouldn't fetch a fortune if it were sold at a yard sale, an antique auction, or on eBay. However, in its simplicity, it's been a reminder of a father's love.

Carol Round is a syndicated columnist, Christian book author, and inspirational speaker. Her books include *A Matter of Faith*, *Faith Matters*, *Journaling with Jesus: How to Draw Closer to God* and the companion workbook, *The 40-Day Challenge*. She blogs weekly at www.carolaround.com, and you can find her books at amazon.com or by contacting the author directly at carolaround@yahoo.com.



"Always get your education; (unlike money and things) they can never take that away from you."

Mamie Lee Vaughan Reynolds (1925 - 2012)

Submitted by:

Neale Sournia,

Author

www.neale-sournia.com



Easter Sunday

Dad only came to church on Easter Sunday. Mom didn't give him a choice. He never liked the Episcopal service where he constantly had to get...up...down...up...down. As a Connecticut Yankee, he was used to the Congregational Church where he could comfortably settle into the pew for the entire hour of hymns, prayers and the sermon.

But this particular Easter Sunday morning, it was my mother's day to show off her entire family. And that meant full participation at the oldest church on Staten Island, St. Andrews Episcopal.

I wore a new, straw hat with a wide brim which held an array of pastel, silk flowers complementing my pale blue Spring coat. Mom wore a yellow linen suit with a matching pill-box hat draping a small veil onto her forehead. With a quick adjusting of the seams of her stockings, she looked like she had stepped out of a magazine. Dad pinned a lavender-colored orchid onto her lapel. Dad and my brother looked tall and handsome in their grey suits and starched white shirts. We would make my mother proud.

Our family always sat in the middle of the large church where I had a good view of everyone's Easter outfits. For me, a 12-year-old, it was like one gigantic fashion show. Who wore the prettiest hat? The most beautiful dress? Sometimes I'd catch a glimpse of a mink drape...you know, the ones with the beady eyes and the mouth used to fasten each side together. It was a horrifying sight and I could never imagine wearing one.

We stood for the procession and the traditional singing of "Christ The Lord Is Risen Today," which was my favorite part of the service. The music was loud and our family enjoyed harmonizing at the top of our lungs. We sat for the announcements and scripture reading and kneeled for prayers. And then it happened!

In the midst of the service, the organist played a loud chord, shooting the lady in front of us, out of her seat. She stood tall, hymnal in hand. She was the only one standing and ready to sing.

Unfortunately for Mom, Dad and I shared the same sense of humor. At that point, tears welled, my hands began to sweat, and my body trembled, trying valiantly to hold in the laughter that was erupting inside. Dad and I passed Kleenex back and forth, knowing we'd have to wipe back any sign of tears, and swallow belly laughs that were creeping up. Dad's face turned red and he looked like he'd explode.

The chord had signaled the start of the sermon, and not a hymn. Dad and I were in for a long haul.

I don't remember how we survived the next 25 minutes, but knew we didn't hear one word of the sermon as all efforts were used to suppress the laughter. We'd gulp, swallow, look at our feet, and squirm in place. What relief when the sermon ended and it came time to sing the loud closing hymn.

I often wondered how Mom felt after that Easter Sunday service and if we, her family, still made her proud.

Suzanne G. Beyer of Bothell, WA, serves as Associate Editor for Seattle's Northwest Prime Time magazine. You can read about her co-authored book, *The Inventor's Fortune Up For Grabs*, at www.theinventorsfortune.com.



Any More Rhubarb?

My father was a tall man. Indeed, he was much bigger than the six foot height his driver license and Army Air Corp discharge papers proclaimed. His spirit – his being – was at least six-foot-six, making him seem a very tall man.

Born in the Cherokee Strip in the newly settled prairies of Oklahoma in July 1916, the tenth of twelve children, Dad was raised in southern Missouri as a poor farm boy. Paradoxically, he obtained a pretty fair education, including learning to type, which laid the foundation for the man he was to become. He read incessantly, studied hard and obtained a high school diploma when such goals were difficult to achieve.

The Depression strained the large family. But the youngest son never complained, was never hungry, and was always quite content. That is, until two years after high school – the wanderlust came over him. In 1935 the hopeful young man joined three of his brothers to pursue prosperity in the West. They drove from Missouri to Washington in a very tired Model A truck. The only work they could find, however, was day labor – picking crops.

Perhaps it was cutting the broccoli, or more like the rhubarb, that spurred my father to join the Civil Conservation Corps in 1937. There he learned a trade that would serve to make his living – masonry work. But first, I must speak of rhubarb.

Imagine standing in a field of many acres, filled to bursting with mature rhubarb. The colors must have been magnificent – bright reddish pink, streaked with white, darkening to deep maroon roots topped with huge kelly green leaves, ruffled and swaying in the breeze. The smells – oh the smells must have been amazing. Rich, organic soils, moist from frequent rains – fresh, clean air, and the eye-watering, tangy to outright sour odors of the rhubarb. The foreman told the workers they could keep whatever they wanted each day, as long as the sacks were filled and quotas satisfied.

The brothers prepared rhubarb in any and every way imaginable – and likely some not so palatable. But times were tough, and one did not turn down free food nor could one waste food. So, they ate it.

My father must have told my mother this story early in their courtship or marriage, because I did not taste rhubarb until I was some thirty-seven years old and well after my parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary. My aunt, the youngest daughter, by then in her seventies, prepared a cobbler of strawberries and rhubarb. I ventured a bowl and found it to be deliciously sweet and sour. Daddy asked me to get him some of that cobbler. Mom nearly fell off the picnic bench and stared at my father in shock.

"You told me you had so much rhubarb before we met that you were sick of it," she stated accusingly.

"I may have said that, mama, but I never said I didn't like it! Elaine, get me a bowl of that cobbler, please," he said with a crooked grin and flash of blue eyes.

For over fifty years my mother avoided anything with rhubarb and for fifty years, my dad would have liked to have had some. We laughed and laughed and learned a lesson.

Dad was a quiet man with a booming voice. His bass tones could scare little children to run from the room, but his sweet nature soon had them drawing near. Reading and working the daily crossword puzzle in the Dallas Morning News were very important parts of his day most all of his time on Earth. One of his greatest crossword triumphs was the three letter word answer for the clue "chip breaker." Matter-of-fact, he loved Nacho Flavored Doritos and Queso – a cheese dip. That was the answer to "chip breaker" – "dip."

After picking crops in the Northwest United States and building who knows how many rock and brick structures with the CCC, came World War II. Dad was twenty-five in 1941 when he joined the Army Air Corps. The Air Force was not yet a separate branch of the armed forces. He was among the first and oldest volunteers so was earmarked for the Pacific.

One fine day, an officer of some sort walked up to a line of fresh recruits awaiting their orders. This officer asked if any man in the line knew how to type. My father spoke up with the proper respectful reply, and his fate was sealed. The Army immediately gave him the rank of Master Sergeant – thus he avoided combat. Instead, my Dad fought the battles of supplying the essential wartime necessities to the soldiers and sailors in the Pacific Theatre.

Logistics, it was called. Upon reflection, I believe this may have been where my father's intellect was tested, developed, and his desire for knowledge expanded by experiencing a vast array of circumstances far beyond the farms and fields of Missouri. He also found the love of his life in Carlsbad, New Mexico. My mother was a WAC. Dad was smitten by the dark-haired beauty from West Virginia. He married her before shipping out to Guam in 1944.

A great lover of music, he sang beautifully. Believe it or not, we arranged for him to sing at his own funeral. A solo, taped some years before, was played to a collective gasp in the church. Many people shed a tear upon hearing that voice for the last time. Choir director and song leader, he taught many a church member how to sing. Also, he was an avid bowler – bowling in men's league for years and in the senior league until the ripe old age of eighty-four. I learned bowling methodology in our living room – with no ball in sight. The steps and release timing are the same whether in a bowling center or beside the sofa. It worked – I am a pretty fair bowler.

But back to Dad's desire for knowledge. This man read extensively and studied all types of religious works. A pretty fair mathematician and a lover of words and thoughts, my father taught many people many different lessons. Had his youth been different, he could have been a teacher – though, arguably, he was that anyway.

At the funeral, the vast and almost unfathomable extent of my father's influence upon people became evident. Many, many people told how his example helped shape their lives. He was loved and respected. My dear ol' Dad was indeed a big man – in many more respects than in mere physical height.

A native Texan and a daughter of real hillbillies, Elaine Smith relays her unique perspective on life through her writing. She's authored several books, including *Ridin' Around*, and all of her books are available at www.blazingstarbooks.com.



“No legacy is so rich as honesty.”

William Shakespeare, *All's Well That Ends Well*; Act 3, Scene 5

Mama's Dancing with HER Star

My mother, Selma Weinstein, made her transition from this realm the day after Thanksgiving, November 26, 2010. Congestive Heart Failure was the official diagnosis but I sense that she died of a broken heart, missing my dad who preceded her by two and a half years, 'leaving the building' on April 3, 2008. They shared nearly fifty-two years of wedded bliss and were exceptional role models for love lived wondrously. They would dance in the kitchen and write each other love notes. Although I miss them both, I know they and their wisdom live on within me. I am grateful they prepared me well for a life without their physical presence; endowing me with strength and resilience to face whatever life brings.

I smile with delight when I consider the tidbits I call 'Momisms' that she offered throughout the years. One of them was "Walk in like you own the joint.", with head held high, shoulders back, solid eye contact and smile and I add "knockers up." My dad, Moish would remind me that "They put their pants on one leg at a time, just like you do." In that way, I have been able to enter any arena, personal and professional, with confidence. It also served to allow me, as a journalist, to interview hundreds of notables in the fields of art, writing, acting, music, medicine, academics, peace and social justice over the past few decades, including His Holiness The Dalai Lama in July of 2008. She was my most ardent cheerleader and on the day I did the interview, she proudly beamed over the phone "I knew you would do it." The Yiddish word for pride in a loved one's accomplishment is 'kvelling'...and kvell, she did.

My book, *The Bliss Mistress Guide To Transforming the Ordinary Into the Extraordinary*, is dedicated to them, much of which was written and edited while sitting by her bedside as we took a hospice journey together. She had told me that she wanted to read the finished book and I laughed, telling her that she needed to live a whole lot longer, because at that point, there was much still to be done. I read her a few chapters and she responded favorably. She suggested the butterfly image on the cover since it represents transformation and she told me she would come back as a butterfly.

Throughout my life, she was the one I could count on; my 'go to' person for whatever was on my mind and heart. She had 'broad shoulders' and was able to handle any crisis. I learned those skills from a master, since family, friends, clients and students see me that way as well. Her sense of humor kept me laughing even in the midst of challenges. Toward the end of her life, she would comment that she was losing her marbles. I assured her that I would retrieve any that rolled under the couch.

We had amazing conversations in those last few months. When she was 18, she and my grandmother took a bus trip from Philadelphia to Florida. The year was 1942, when bigotry ran rampant. When the bus pulled into Washington, DC, the bus driver yelled out, "All you (and he used the 'n' word that I won't glorify by spelling it out, to refer to some of the passengers of darker skin hue than his own) get to the back of the bus!" My mother turned to my grandmother and said "Come on, we're moving to the back of the bus too." And so they did. I asked what the response was when two middle class white women took a stand like that. She remarked that whenever the bus made rest stops, the military personnel who were fellow passengers,

surrounded them in protection mode. I always knew she was in favor of equality and social justice, but I didn't know how deeply ingrained it was.

She offered what I called her *Que Sera, Sera* attitude as she would respond, "What will be" when I asked how she felt about dying.

To the woman who taught me love of learning and life, called me Baby Cakes, and knew that I could do anything I set my mind to: I miss you Mama Cakes and know that you and Daddy are dancing in heaven.

Edie Weinstein is a career journalist, motivational speaker, interfaith minister and social worker. She is the author of *The Bliss Mistress Guide to Transforming the Ordinary Into the Extraordinary*. Visit Edie at www.liveinjoy.org.



THE Greatest Grandma!

What I'm going to tell you will come as no surprise and it's really no secret – I had the greatest grandma in the whole world! You never met Edna LeGendre, but I think you can imagine what she was like.

From the time my sister and I were born, Auntie Edna, as we called her, was there to help take care of us, raise us, and love us. She would always take us in when there was nowhere else to go. She taught me unconditional love.

Auntie Edna loved people and would always tell stories about the people she met along her journey in life, friends she had as a child, people she knew in Trinidad, and even people she met on the bus or train. She enjoyed hearing people's life stories and she always wanted to give helpful advice or lend a helping hand.

You may know that Auntie Edna like to "collect" things, but at the heart of it she was a true environmentalist. She believed everything had a purpose and could be reused. She kept everything! And some days this was to our benefit. One night my mom stopped for gas in a rush and drove off without putting the gas cap back on. Somehow this was Auntie Edna's fault for making her rush, so when we arrived at the destination and she realized it was missing, she started fussing. Quietly a hand reached up from the backseat and I heard my grandma say "Can you use this?" YES, she was holding a gas cap. It wasn't a perfect fit, but she definitely saved the day. I couldn't believe it. I mean who on earth carries a gas cap in their purse? That was my grandma, always there at the right time with the right remedy.

Honestly, I thought she would live forever. She was always so strong and youthful. The effects of the stroke were hard on her – not being able to speak was so tough because SHE WAS A WONDERFUL STORYTELLER, not being able to walk and come and go as she pleased was hard because SHE WAS A ROAD WARRIOR, not being able to sing or play the piano was very difficult because SHE WAS A TALENTED MUSICIAN, not being able to cook was also hard because SHE WAS A GREAT CHEF and proud of her cuisine.

She was old-fashioned and had conventional wisdom. She had experienced life to the fullest with the means that she had. SHE WASN'T JUST AN OBSERVER (though she did observe a lot). If there was food – she ate, wine – she drank, music – she danced. This was the life she lived.

Auntie Edna loved her parents and remembered them often. Sometimes she would cry and we would ask, "What's wrong?" She would say that she was remembering her mother or father. Her mother had nine children and Edna was the oldest. As the oldest she had a lot of responsibilities and she took care of all of her siblings... and probably many of you in the room today.

There is so much more that I could tell you about my grandmother – like her love for plants, how she fell asleep often, how she loved roasted peanuts and vanilla ice cream, or how she loved the ocean. I think the most important thing was that she liked to laugh and enjoy herself. "You make me laugh," she used to say. And that's how I remember her and I hope you do too. Be

good to one another, be there for your family and friends, laugh with one another and don't miss an opportunity to look your loved ones in the eyes and say "I love you".

When I would leave Auntie Edna for the night, she would say "dream of me." And I took her literally, until I realized that my dreams, not just at night but the dreams for my life are about her. They are about realizing a better life for my family and leaving the world a better place than when I got here by loving unconditionally and helping those in need. So Auntie Edna, I can tell you that I dream of you every day and I love you. Rest in the loving arms of Christ and be in peace eternally.

Shara Darden is President and CEO of Firefly Marketing & PR, Inc., whose passion is "Illuminating strategies to help your business soar!" View her website at www.soarwithfirefly.com.



"What someone gets for free he thinks is worth nothing. Always ask for what you feel you are worth."

Phillip Feedman (1908 – 1977)

Submitted by:

Francine L. Trevens,

Award-winning multi-genre author

My Dentist's Hands

During Sunday services, I stand up, head bowed, eyes closed for the Lord's Prayer, extending my hand to the elderly stranger next to me. His calloused hand grasps mine and I'm struck with a keen longing for my father, whose strong fingers held mine in the same firm grip. This somatic memory of my father's hand resonates around this simple grasp. I sense his ghostly presence with a love I haven't known for years.

Tears slide down my face. A feeling of love and joy for my father permeates me with a warm sense of grace. God has given me this unexpected, intimate moment, allowed me to touch my father one more time. I am grateful for this surreal reunion and hope the prayer will never end. At last I open my eyes to look at the man next to me. He is not my dad, but I sense the same towering tree of life. The man turns, gives me a nod, a squeeze of my hand and a small smirk. I am self-conscious of my dentist's hands, soft from frequent washings, latex gloves, a lack of manual labor.

To solve life's problems my father relied on brute strength. His arms were as thick as large oak logs. My father dreamed of the highly educated, healing hands of a veterinarian, but those dreams were slapped down by the throes of the Great Depression. He sacrificed personal goals for the urgent needs of his mother and younger siblings, plagued by the unshakeable curse of the Depression, alcoholism, job losses, floods, failed enterprises and other struggles.

He loved the soil. I cannot remember a time when my parents didn't have dirt under their nails. Their Dakota homesteaders' roots grew deep into their being, so they were constantly digging, tilling, planting, hoeing and harvesting in tune with the earth.

I stare at my hands as if I'd never seen them before -- the scar on my left thumb where I sliced my knuckle cleaning fish at our Saskatchewan cabin; the misshapen nails on my right hand where a little league baseball broke off four fingernails. My hands are tanned, soft, wrinkled, creased, asymmetrical, scarred, crossed with raised exposed veins. They appear to be foreign. I continue to examine them, hoping to find similar parental genetic traits, but my hands have not earned their history. The only features I share with my father are the sun freckles reflecting our passion for the outdoors.

Suddenly I realize that my father's labor has given me these hands, the clean nails, the small, short fingers skilled to perform the delicate procedures that allow me to heal, to be an extension of God's work.

I am looking at the hands my parents wanted me to have.

Patrick J Foy, DDS, practices general dentistry in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and has written numerous articles in professional journals and general interest magazines, and he's also penned several short stories. www.drpatfoy.com.



Business Lessons From a Stay-at-Home Mom

You never thought you'd admit it, but Mom was right. So sit up and pay attention to how her lessons growing up will help you become successful today

Now that I'm older and a little wiser, I can't help but think about all the encouragement, support and great advice my mom gave me that has helped me become successful. My mom Terri was 66 when she died of cancer less than 2 years ago. Although Terri never worked outside the home or lead a company, she ran a tight ship for my siblings and me, and managed an extended family as well as any CEO I've ever known.

Here are some valuable lessons she taught me that have helped me succeed in business today:

Watch Your Manners. Say please, write thank-you notes, and be polite. People notice and like being around you when you do these things, which is really important whether you're hiring a new team member or selling your product or service.

Dress for Success. Look the part. See what the movers and shakers are wearing for clues and find a style that suits you. Terri was a fashion-design major in college so this came much easier to her than me, but you can never go wrong with a simple, classic style. When in doubt, err on the dressier, more professional side. You won't regret it.

Do Your Homework. The best things in life are worth working hard for. There's no substitution for paying your dues. You have to learn the basics before things get interesting, so learn as much as you can as fast as you can because when you become the best at something, that's when the real fun begins.

Travel & Explore. Everyone in the world doesn't do things the same way you do. Open your mind and see a situation from another's perspective. Customs and norms are different in each culture, so understanding their history adds texture and perspective you may have never considered before. Seeing different habits and practices can make you think more creatively about your own needs.

Be Financially Independent. Understand your finances and use your brain to figure out how to make a living while also making a difference. Don't spend money you don't have. Get in the habit of saving a little bit from every paycheck.

Reward Yourself. All work and no play is not a sustainable long-term strategy, so always make sure you leave time for some fun in your life, too. Take vacations; save room for dessert--life is short so enjoy something in every day.

Look Out for Others. As the oldest child, it was my responsibility to make sure my siblings were safe and accounted for at all times. In business, you have people to watch out for as well: your customers, employees, partners, advisors, and other stakeholders. If you take care of them, they'll watch your back, too.

Respect Your Elders. You may not like those who came before you but you must show respect to their position. You can learn something from everyone (both positive and negative), so listen to their stories and learn from their experience.

My mom always told me I could be anything I put my mind to. I'm certain there are important women in your life who have had great impact and influence on you and your career,

so remember them and share those lessons generously as a tribute to them. I hope you benefit from Terri's advice as well; she would have loved that!

Paige Arnof-Fenn is Founder & CEO of Mavens & Moguls, a global marketing firm. She's a graduate of Stanford University and Harvard Business School, and is grateful for her parents' love and support. View her website at www.mavensandmoguls.com.



“Preserving family legacy isn’t a game; it’s more important than that!”

Rubén Amaro, Sr.,
Former Major League Baseball player

*"All my children want me to spend Mother's Day with THEM.
There are FIFTY-TWO Sundays in the year!
Why do they want to fight over ONE?"*

Evelyn Ryan (1917 – 2001)

Submitted by:
Cathie Smith LoCicero

You Can't Dribble a Basketball at a Job Interview

I grew up in a loving family of five and we moved around a lot because of the line of work my Dad was in. Early in his career my Dad would go into a grocery store to turn it around from unprofitable to profitable. That earned him a district manager position until the day he decided to own a grocery store with a business partner. He then was part owner of a larger grocery store. With each new position, came a new town to live in.

My Dad is a caring, loving man who has spent his life working hard for every dollar he's earned. From him I learned a very strong work ethic and I got to work in many capacities at his stores. I'll never forget my Dad assigning me to clean the meat saw (gross!), give out many food samples (I make a mean frozen pizza), and ring up thousands of groceries as a cashier. We didn't have scanners back then so I hand rung the prices from stickers on the groceries. I laugh when I remember going in the meat cooler as a young girl to get ingredients for lunch sandwiches and being terrified of the beef carcasses hanging in the cooler.

My Dad had a great relationship with his customers and liked to make their grocery shopping experience fun and memorable. One year during a promotion he created a "guess the number of peanuts in the gorilla cage contest." He created a gorilla cage complete with a gorilla suit that was rigged up for him to move the costume as if the gorilla were real when people stopped by the cage to count the peanuts. He could see the customers stopping to count the peanuts while he worked in the meat department. To up the ante on the prank, my Dad asked me (and my sister) to put on the gorilla suit and sit in the cage. I would sit really still until the customer was right at the cage and then move to startle the customer. It was hilarious.

Like any kid out there, I found myself in schools when I was growing up where the sports teams were all the rage and the kids who were the good athletes were the most popular. Because my family lived in small towns, the coaches would take any kid that tried out for the team so I joined the basketball, volleyball and softball teams when I was in Junior High and younger. I was not blessed with great athletic skills though so I was a bench warmer and played very little during games.

To make me feel better about my lack of athletic skills, my Dad would tell me "You can't dribble a basketball at a job interview." In telling me that, my Dad helped me see the bigger picture that competitive sports are a point-in-time adventure that for most people only last through high school. Once we get past high school, competitive sports begin to take second fiddle for people because fewer people have the skills necessary to play at the college level, and even fewer have the skills to play at the professional level.

Therefore, I was far better off to concentrate on getting a good education in high school and into college because future employers would want me to demonstrate knowledge and the ability to learn the job they're interviewing me for. Future employers would not ask me to dribble a basketball in the interview.

I am grateful to my Dad for his encouraging words because being a kid is challenging and he helped me see the bigger picture. I have gone on to complete a college degree, create a rewarding career, get married, and have a son. As the circle of life continues, my son who is now five years

old, loves to play sports and is very coordinated. He gets that from his Dad, my husband. Regardless of whether he turns in to a sports star or not, I will likely encourage him when he's a teenager to get a good education and have a strong work ethic because "You can't dribble a basketball at a job interview."

Shari McGuire is a speaker and the author of *Take Back Your Time: 101 Simple Tips to Shrink Your Work-Week and Conquer the Chaos in Your Life*. Get a free chapter at www.shrinkyourworkweek.com.



Parents Taught the Basic Truths

“Breakfast’s ready!” Mom’s words from the bottom of the stairway mingled with the aroma of country ham wafting through our bedroom door. The same greeting awoke my sister, brother and me every morning for the twelve years we attended school. We stumbled out of bed, dressed with the hand-me-down clothes we had picked out the night before, and ran downstairs to compete for the first spot in the shared bathroom. We learned to prepare as much as possible the night before when the heat from the wood burning stove provided the best warmth.

After the bathroom routine, we gathered at the kitchen table where a plate of fresh eggs, homemade biscuits, and sometimes a plate of gravy joined the platter of ham, sausage, or bacon Mom had chosen for breakfast that morning. As usual, the condiments of homemade jam and homemade butter set in the center of the table. The unoccupied chair at the head of the table indicated Dad had already savored the warm biscuits the moment Mom removed them from the oven. We sat in our usual places, filled our plates, and ate as Mom watched for the bus.

Mom could not drive, so we knew if we missed the bus, we missed school. If we missed school, we would not miss Dad’s wrath that night. One time is all it took for us to learn the responsibility for finding our clothes, finding our shoes, finding our homework, making sure we had lunch money or a packed lunch, and being ready when Mom spotted the bus. We had just enough time to climb the quarter-mile hill while the bus turned around.

From that simple exercise every morning we learned to respect the needs of others in the shared bathroom, to make necessary preparations for the next day, and to appreciate a mother whose most important job of the day was getting her family off to a good start.

Our property was located at the edge of the county so we were always the first ones on the bus at 7:00 a.m. and the last ones off at 4:00 p.m. Many life-long friendships and romances began on that long bus ride. Older children learned to protect the younger ones. I’ve seen my sister back down the biggest bully on the bus when he threatened my brother. If there had been a confrontation, everyone on the bus would have helped.

Mom and Dad never worried about our homework. We either finished our work during study hall at school, on the long bus ride, or as soon as we got home. We knew the consequences if the teacher called saying we didn’t turn in our work – which they eagerly did. We did not want Dad to receive that call.

Without a doubt, the simple, basic truths we learn from our parents and home life are the ones that follow us throughout our lives. Lasting friendships are not brought by a closet full of name brand clothes and shoes. Respect for the needs of others is necessary. Responsibility for the safety of friends belongs to everyone. A long ride on the bus does not destroy ones ability to learn and focus in the classroom.

I never remember thinking of my parents as mean. My parents really only punished me once – that was enough. I learned to obey “the look”, respect their decisions, and learn from my mistakes. Through their sometimes strict, but always loving discipline, I learned to accept the responsibility for my own actions.

That half hour each morning provided many of the basic truths we needed to survive in life – family is important, work and preparation is essential, love is unconditional, and time should be shared with those you love. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for those well-taught lessons.

Mary Bailey's first books, *Jesus My Son: Mary's Journal of Jesus' Early Life* and *Jesus My Son: Mary's Journal of Jesus' Ministry* offer a fresh perspective of Jesus' life through stories from Mary's heart. They are available at www.jesusmyson.com.



"Do what you LOVE and the rest will come."

Rey Fermin (born 1938)

Nida Fermin (born 1945)

Submitted by:

Anna Fermin

Singer/Songwriter of album "Someday Afternoon"

www.annaferminmusic.com



Daddy's Still Teaching Me

Life seems invincible. I'm still learning that lesson. You never stop learning. My friends are married with children. However, some people are single and carefree. Life is what you make of it.

Life became different over time. I come from a family that included my parents and two brothers. My father, Ronnie Crawford, taught me about life. Dad knew life was invincible, and taught me that lesson often.

My parents were nineteen and twenty-two when I was born. They prepared for my arrival carefully. Food, clothing, and shelter were priorities. However, one question tugged at their minds. How can we make life better for our daughter?

I was born on October 9th, 1977, weighing five pounds, one ounce. Doctors discovered my lungs were underdeveloped. My parents prepared for the worst. I fit in the palm of Dad's hand. That became the first time Dad realized life wasn't invincible. My future remained uncertain.

My parents took me home after a month in NICU. Dad always said, "practice makes perfect", but, he became concerned when I couldn't hit my developmental milestones. Doctors diagnosed me with cerebral palsy at nine months old.

Dad learned that life wasn't invincible for the second time. I couldn't die from it, but my life would be changed forever.

I became acquainted with therapists who prescribed exercises that were difficult. My Dad understood that life wasn't invincible. However, he taught me you must press on, no matter what.

Dad encouraged me to perform tasks myself. However, my family was afraid I would hurt myself. Their fear caused me to become sheltered and overprotected.

Being independent is hard for anyone with physical challenges. Dad learned about invincibility thanks to my cooking. I placed a corn dog in the microwave. I didn't realize a twist tie was in there. The next thing I knew, the house caught fire. Dad jokingly called me "his little arsonist". Although I wasn't injured, we realized life wasn't invincible.

Friendships were few growing up. Therefore, I spent time reading. Dad called me a bookworm. What else could I do? Learning and school fascinated me. My sixth-grade teacher had students write about what it was like to be in someone else's shoes for a day. I was already handicapped, but realized children had disabilities worse than mine. Dad supported me as I spent the day blind. I realized blindness could happen to anyone, proving life wasn't invincible.

The essay I wrote landed in the newspaper. Printed words thrilled me. Dad told me anyone can tell a story, but it takes a passionate person to write it down. Life was invincible on paper. Writing became my passion. I wrote poetry, essays, and short stories.

I graduated from high school in 1997, and enrolled in college. When Dad dropped me off at school, he said, "Enjoy, because this is your home for the next four years." I took my disability in stride while learning about subjects such as Composition, History, and Psychology.

Life was going well for me. I became addicted to studying, and made good grades. However, I noticed Dad hurting a lot. He stubbornly refused to see the doctor, until Mom talked him into it. However, Dad received a diagnosis that changed our family.

January 17th, 2003 is a date I will never forget. My Dad, the person who I loved and admired had cancer. I read about cancer. I watch TV shows where people died from it. Cancer wasn't supposed to happen in real life.

I lived in Arkansas when Dad was diagnosed. People encouraged me to see Dad often. I regret now that I didn't because of fear. Besides, I believed life was invincible.

Dad grew weaker each day. The few times I visited him were difficult. Food made him sick, so we ate out. He became tired easily, but tried to laugh when possible. June 16th, 2003 was the first time I realized life wasn't invincible. Mom called that morning saying Dad may not make it. Grandma and Grandpa left me with my cousin Sandy while they raced to the hospital. No, my Dad couldn't die. He had things to do. Mom and Grandma tried to protect me from invincibility. However, my Dad was dying

Ronnie Crawford lost his cancer battle on August 9th 2003. When Dad died, I fell apart. Crying, I realized that I would never see him again. However, Dad wasn't through teaching me about life. The day he was lowered into the casket, Dad taught me life wasn't invincible.

I'm still learning about life. My Grandpa died three years after Dad, proving life wasn't invincible. Grandma lives in a nursing home with Alzheimer's Disease. It's so hard to watch her struggling to remember. Grandma is one of my favorite people, but I will always hear Dad's voice saying "life is not invincible." I cherish Grandma's good days because tomorrow isn't promised to anyone.

Brittany Crawford is a blogger and the author of the children's book, *I Sit in a Wheelchair...But Will I be Okay?* You can follow Brittany and her writings at www.thepennybrownadventures.blogspot.com.



"Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without."

Malvina Reynolds (1900 – 1978)

Folk music songwriter

Submitted by:

Nancy Schimmel,

Author

Let the Words Create the Picture for You

My mother, Louise Moothart, loved books her entire life. She was a pretty advanced reader before first grade, and went on to read Edger Allen Poe before leaving elementary school. So it was no surprise that, when talking on the telephone with her 4-year-old great-grandson Breken, the conversation went as follows:

Breken: What are you doing?

Mom: Reading.

Breken: Does your book have pictures in it?

Mom: No.

Breken (puzzled): Then why is it fun to read that book?

Mom: I get to create the pictures in my mind.

Breken liked that answer, and wanted his mom to find books without pictures so he can “make up” the pictures like his great-grandmother did.

Mom’s 35-year-old grandson Kirk, a successful businessman with a multi-million dollar company, found his best suggestions for reading from his Tata. She introduced him to Ayn Rand, John Irving, Wilbur Smith, Doris Kerns Goodwin, and Colleen McCullough.

Kirk was also the person who gave Mom her grandma name. He started calling her Tata when he was about 18 months old. It took us a while to know why he called her that. This is what we finally figured out:

- Mom was always listening to jazz. She knew all the greats – Count Basie, Duke Ellington (who wrote a song about her), and Father Hines.
- With the music on, she would dance around the house.
- She also loved to cook and consistently presented her food with style and flair.

So when taking care of Kirk, she would dance around while cooking, arrange his food just so on his highchair tray and say, “TaaDaa!”

It’s all so fitting – she got her grandma name from Kirk, and he got his love of jazz from his Tata.

Christine Baumgartner is a Dating and Relationship Expert & Coach who helps people find that “perfect catch” for a healthier and long-lasting relationship. View her website at www.ThePerfectCatch.com.



The Hallways Between the Doors

One of many lessons from my father is a take on a classic: *“In life, when one door closes another door opens...it’s just hell in the hallways.”* This was one of many clever and sage-like allegories he would use to teach us about life. Dad, like many in his family, prized humor over most else in enjoying and also in coping with life. Many of the lessons he taught had a frank and practical element, one that prepared and grounded us for the realities and rigors inherent in dealing with challenges that will, and do, come; but his lessons all had a lighter side, a wry angle, and/or an “It’ll be ok” message, echoed in his delivery.

Here’s another saying: “Do you want to be right or do you want to win?” This was about how to deal with irrational people, not any scheming the saying may indicate, “right” meaning being correct, not Right vs. Wrong. We were tripped up by the frank addition to the well-worn “door closes/door opens” statement, stopped in our tracks for second, needing to factor intent from the twists in the message; making us focus (at least for a minute), making us think.

Dad’s euphemisms, those he made up or others’ he quoted, centered on the important pillars of knowledge that he felt were essential for us. The “hell in the hallways” lesson taught us to be strong by being grounded, knowing that there *will* be turbulence between the doors that close and the ones that open. The understanding of the “when” from “when one door closes” gave us the ability to recognize the timing, and to then move on. We all experience hallways in our lives; that’s just how life is. We need to accept them, be steadfast as we go through them, and recognize the character that those hallways build – that was something my father, like his father before him, valued above all else.

The crucial point to consider in my dad’s “hallways” saying is that “another door opens.” Dad’s optimism, borne of his strong and understated self-confidence, modeled for us the faith that, although we may be stumbling about in the dark for a while, not knowing where we are or where we’re going, there *is* an open door and we *will* get there. Relief, opportunity, new beginnings will be there, beyond the open door, where there’s light.

Like any normal person I’m not happy in the “hallways” – stumbling about can be bruising! – but I’ve come to accept this dark, uncomfortable part of life, the awkward transitions, the challenges that, after all, do bring growth and evolution. I know I’ll get through the hallways and to the open doors since I have faith, borne of my father’s lessons and modeling, and from my own experience that light trumps dark.

Jennifer Rosenwald is an author, speaker, business-career coach, and Certified Life Coach. Her practical approach to work and life challenges provides insight and clarity, resulting in clients having the best life of their life. Get your free training, tips, and tools at jenniferrosenwald.com.



"As you are, I once was. As I am, you will be."

Submitted by Marlene Caroselli

Groovin' in New Orleans

I traveled all over the Western States working with the design of fast food restaurants. From being on a plane a minimum of three times a week, I'd piled up a ton of frequent flyer miles, and made it my mission to take my mother on a trip for her birthday every year. Boy, did we have fun and she loved every minute of it.

We visited many cities she had only dreamed of, but one trip that stands out in my mind was our trip to New Orleans. Mom loved to travel and also loved music and dancing. I rented a car and we did normal tourist things like going on plantation tours and visiting the City of the Dead. Then it was time to sample the nightlife. Being a little cautious, I decided to book a nightlife tour instead of doing it on our own.

The tour bus took us to two clubs in the French Quarter. At the first stop we were the last ones off the bus. Therefore by the time we got into the club, people from the bus had filled all the tables.

We sat at the bar, and Mom said, "Pick out a drink for me, honey. Something that really doesn't taste that much like liquor." I decided a grasshopper would be a good choice for a woman in her high 70s who really wasn't a drinker. The entertainer was a white fellow in his 30s or 40s who sounded just like Louis Armstrong.

When the music began, there she sat on the tall barstool – a cheery little white-haired lady wearing a hot pink silk blouse, holding the frothy mint green drink by the long stem of the glass. Between singing along, swinging her feet and toasting him with her drink, she actually managed to take a sip now and then and said it tasted like a mint milkshake.

When that show was over, we were herded down Bourbon Street like a bunch of cattle until we reached Chris Owens' Club at the corner of St. Louis and Bourbon. On the way, the tour bus guide caught up with us and said, "Listen, you two had to sit at the bar at the last club, so I'm getting you seats right up front. Come with me."

He took us directly to the best seats in the house. Not bad, since we really hadn't minded sitting at the bar.

Well, Chris Owens turned out to be an entertainer who was close to sixty and rumored to be involved with one of her boy-toy dancers. She had the body and legs of a young showgirl and the energy of Tina Turner. There was a Michael Jackson impersonator in the show, too, so you know it was fast-paced and very entertaining. When the moment I call the "Welcome Grandma from Milwaukee" arrived, the time when they invite someone up on stage, the Michael Jackson impersonator made a beeline for Mom. He said, "I want this pretty young woman with the silver hair and pink blouse."

Not one moment of hesitation. Before I could blink, she was up on stage and they were asking her where she was from. They didn't expect what came next from this woman who was close to eighty. She danced up a storm with Chris and the Michael wannabe, and may I add, she kept up with them every step of the way. People were standing up and the room resounded with clapping and wolf whistles.

When it was over, Chris said something nice to her and asked the Michael Jackson guy to take her back to the table. He couldn't stop raving about this "young" woman's energy and dancing skills. Mom beamed like a 150 watt bulb. Before leaving the stage she took him around and gave him a big smacker on the cheek. Then she turned to the audience, flashed her wonderful smile and said, "Anyone who calls me young, deserves a kiss, don't you think?" She really brought the house down. That was my Mom.

Award-winning author Morgan St. James co-authors the *Silver Sisters Mysteries* series, as well as writing other novels. Her short stories appear in many anthologies. Visit www.morganstjames-author.com.



“Jala más un pelo de mujer que una yunta de bueyes.”

[“A strand of a woman’s hair has more pull (power) than a team of oxen.”]

A common quote, frequently said by

Rudy Araiza Tenes (born 1930)

Submitted by Darlene Tenes

Professional Event Planner and

Founder of CasaQ, geared to those who embrace the Latino culture

www.CasaQ.com



Driving Lessons, No Booklet Required

My father was a United States Naval officer during WWII. He later went about his relationships and parenting in much the same manner, rarely giving others a second chance.

Early in their marriage, Dad gave Mom a driving lesson in rural Alabama. When she approached several cows in the middle of the road, Mom asked, "What should I do?" Dad responded, "Pull over and stop the car." He then got in the driver's seat and the lesson was over. His opinion was if you needed to ask what to do when there were cows in the road, you weren't cut out for driving. Mom relied on him, neighbors, taxis, and later my brother and me, for transportation for the next thirty years.

When my older brother John was getting a driving lesson from Dad, the first lesson was learning the foot pedals. The pedal on the far left was the clutch; the pedal on the far right was the gas pedal. Then John asked where the brake was. End of lesson.

My driving lessons consisted of driving up and down our narrow two-track driveway. It wasn't quite straight and had a couple of places where the concrete had succumbed to heat and cold so staying on the driveway was pretty good practice. During one session Dad told me to stop the car. I started easing into a gradual stop that was sure to impress him. Dad yelled, "STOP THE CAR!" so I slammed on the brakes, disappointed not to have been able to complete my impressive stop. I had gone off the tracks and was inches away from the big oak tree close to the end of the driveway. End of lesson.

I quickly learned that I would usually get a "no" if I asked for permission to do something so I just quit asking. Mom was a co-conspirator when I saved up and got contact lenses. I graduated from driving up and down the driveway and Dad let me drive around the block with him once. I could feel him staring at me and he finally asked where my glasses were. It was always easier to tell anything but the truth so I responded that I didn't need glasses to drive (although I was near-sighted). That seemed to satisfy him and it was never brought up again.

Despite very little practice, John and I got our driver's licenses. I went to a nearby little town that had the reputation of having an easy test, just requiring driving around the block. As soon as we received our licenses, we were delegated the job of driving Mom on her errands.

John took Mom to the grocery store one day, and he parked the car and then went off to do some shopping of his own. When he went back to the car at the designated time, Mom wasn't there. He searched the store but couldn't find her. He then searched the entire parking lot where he found her sitting in someone else's car, groceries loaded in the backseat. Our car was blue and Mom just chose the first car that was the same color without giving it a second thought.

Dad enjoyed his sabbatical for nearly ten years. When John and I had both moved from home, and Dad was again Mom's chauffeur, he allowed her to take driving lessons. By this time, she was well into her sixties. When it came time for her test, she got a perfect score on the written part. But she failed the driving test three different times and had to wait for a period before attempting it again. On her fourth try, she passed and gained her independence. Not long afterwards, she bought her own car and enjoyed her freedom for several years.

Dad died suddenly right before he would have turned 65. St. Peter probably assigned him a job as driving instructor to teach him patience.

Now that I'm about the same age Mom was when she started her driving lessons, I am filled with admiration for her determination. Soon after Dad's death, Mom's health dwindled as she entered the cruel world of Alzheimer's Disease. She started having little fender-benders and again lost her independence when it was just too dangerous for her to drive. What a gift that she was able to experience the freedom that driving gives, even if for a short while.

Millie Reddig combines her artistic talents with a caring nature for animals, resulting in adorable award-winning whimsical paintings. She also enjoys donating her paintings to rescue animal organizations. View some of her art at www.milliereddig.com



p.s. Here's the painting of our dog "Rosie" that Millie created for us



Dad's Calendar

Six months after my father died I cleaned out his office. My mother was moving and I was helping her. There was so much stuff and everything in the office required special care to ensure we didn't throw out anything important. I could have tossed the calendar without a thought – Dad had been dead six months and hospitalized for three before that – but something made me take a minute to read through the pages.

My father's handwriting was atrocious, a scrawl that scabbled across the page. His preferred instrument was a thick and permanent marker, but he wasn't picky about what he wrote on. My brother's baby book has the name and number of one of Dad's business contacts from 1968 on the front endpaper opposite the inscription in my mother's light and beautiful hand on the flyleaf. We all learned to avoid leaving anything near the phone, if we wanted to be spared Dad's thoughtless graffiti. This was a source of great frustration, even resentment. "DAD!" But now, at the end of all things, I was eager to see his bold mess on anything, even something as prosaic as a calendar.

He was first admitted into the hospital December 26, 2002 and soon after his pacemaker was installed along with, we would later learn, the infection that would kill him. He was sent home for a few months to await bypass surgery. The calendar was for 2003. January through March was mostly doctors' appointments. In February he recorded the days he picked up my son Christopher from school after my daughter, Eden, was born almost three weeks early. Dad made it a little event and they always stopped for donuts. Too soon Dad wasn't feeling up to even this, but it remains a sweet memory for Christopher who was seven.

I was surprised to see anything after April 2 when his bypass surgery was scheduled. Dad's heart was so damaged a transplant had been considered but he was referred to the University of Michigan and approved there for a bypass. He made it through successfully but crashed soon after, had a miraculous recovery, but then the rampant infection was discovered and he never recovered. He was in the ICU for almost three months before he died on June 22.

A few weeks after his surgery, he was scheduled for a follow up with his cardiologist in Grand Rapids. Dad recorded the doctor's name and the time, in pen and later wrote in pencil, so softly you could easily miss it, "If I make it."

Seeing this I wept and felt such deep regret.

That he might die, that he might not "make it" was never a point of discussion, for Dad anyway, and I abided by that. It was only after he was dead that I understood that a conversation has at least two sides and knew I could have opened it.

On April 1, Mom and Dad left for Ann Arbor. On their way out of town they stopped at my house to say good-bye. Only then did it occur to me that, in the busy days of Dad's illness and Eden's early birth, we had never taken a picture of Dad with all three of my children. We were out of film, but my husband Paul obligingly ran to the drugstore and we took a beautiful picture of Dad holding Eden, flanked by Christopher on one side and a beaming, five year old, Lydia leaning in on the other.

After we all hugged goodbye I stood at the door and watched Mom and Dad walk to the car. Part of me wanted to run and hug him one last time, but I hesitated and they got in and drove away.

After Dad's death this haunted me. When I told Paul he reminded me, "But you said goodbye already. It's not like you let him leave without saying goodbye."

I had and yet I had held back too. I think of Dad's handwriting so big and bold it seemed to be crawling off the page and then the soft admission in pencil, of fear and uncertainty. His life wasn't one or the other – it was both – and so was my relationship with him.

Alison Hodgson lives in Michigan with her husband, three children, and two black dogs. View her blog at olderthanjesus.blogspot.com.



"Life is too short; take time to enjoy it with your family."

Bruce Baumgartner,
Most-decorated American wrestler, including
4 Olympic Medals, 9 World Championship Medals,
12 World Cup medals, 17 American titles

A Better Person for NOT Listening to Them

My parents would never invest in relationship counseling or therapy of any kind. It was against their religion, and while growing up religion was important, in a strange sort way. Often they would argue all the way home from Sunday Mass; most of the time the bickering never stopped. Both parents were raised Roman Catholic, Mom was 100% Sicilian and Dad was part German and part Welsh. In the 1940s, their parents reluctantly approved of their “mixed” marriage because of the common religion. I have often reflected on the fact they were married during WWII and never stopped fighting, and they stayed together 50+ years “until in death did they part.”

In spite of some negative things said to their five daughters, there were positive teachings. I avoided many of their warnings, but to others I listened. Two of the most important that I constantly do my best to practice, as well as quote to others, are: “If you don't have something positive to say, don't say anything at all,” and “The faults you find in others, may often be your own.” These are ideals I live by in spite of the fact that my parents did not heed their own words.

I decided not to pass on some of their sayings to my children, such as: “Don't do what I do, do what I say.” Others like: “Girl's should be seen and not heard,” and “A woman's place is in the home” caused me to become a feminist and eventually embrace all that's now possible for women in American society.

In the early 1960s, there were basically three careers for young women: secretary, nurse, or teacher. Few women lived on their own because they only earned 50 cents to a man's dollar. Consequently, we four sisters married between 1967 and 1975; we were all only age 18 to 21, and provided 12 grandchildren in the next 15 years – just like good Catholics! By the 1970s, the second wave of feminism changed our options. Somehow my parents seemed bitter about the opportunities that opened for their daughters; they never wanted us to leave home, and wished that we would come back home when three of us divorced. Divorce was not tolerated in my parents' generation. Both always felt their children should be there for them – in spite of their unhappiness. We did the best we could. Since the 1980s, four of us earned college degrees as first generation students, two have graduate degrees. One of my sisters and I have live-in boyfriends (as do our children; actually they led the way), and we all value peace and tranquility in our lives by avoiding fighting and disagreements.

Over the years I learned that when Dad told us, “Blow your own horn, no one else will,” and Mom said, “It is important to look good and act as if you know what you are doing,” – they were right. If I don't believe in myself, no one else will. I have to know at all times that I am doing the right thing and being the best I can be, because the truth is: too few others really care about doing a good job. My siblings and I turned out to be worthy adults, with a strong work ethic.

After teaching for decades, I became an author and relationship coach. I help people to stop and listen to what they are saying so they can make different choices. I would not be able to do this without guidance from my parents. Even if their words were hollow because they didn't follow them – they made me who I am and guess what? I like me, and I am willing to invest in

making my relationships be all they can be. I STOP and listen so I can make the best choices in all situations. Sincere thanks to Mom and Dad for teaching by their example of what NOT to do!

Suzann Robins is a teacher, community organizer, and a relationship coach. As the author of *Exploring Intimacy: Cultivating Healthy Relationships through Insight and Intuition*, she helps singles and couples to improve their communication skills. Learn more about her at www.SuzannRobins.com.



The Power of a Mother's Ripple

As I stood there in conversation with the many people who arrived at the funeral home to pay their respects to my mother's memory, it became very clear to me what Mary Games' life purpose was. The stories, the anecdotes, the tears, the laughter - it all came together. Her legacy was staring right at me.

All around the visitation room, there was evidence of "family" - of "children" - of "nurturing" - of "mothering." There were families with young children. There were families with older children. There were young adults who had spent their early years of life with my mother, and who had chosen to give their own children that same experience. There were many of Mom's friends who all remembered how she had listened to them during hard times, and who had always been a person they could trust with their most painful secrets. There were family members who recalled very similar stories of calling my mom when they needed to be heard and received without judgment.

It was very clear that my mother had been "Mother" to many. She had been the mother that so many of us desire - a mother who loves unconditionally.

Ever since I can remember, we had kids in our home - ranging in ages from a few months to the teenage years. My mother loved kids and was a natural nurturer. She was passionate about helping children learn to read and write - and strongly believed in sending them to kindergarten ready to learn. She also made sure that the basic needs of each child were met. They would be fed if they needed to be fed, or clothed if they needed to be clothed. And if their parents were struggling in any way, my Mom found a way to help them get the support they needed. She was all about "family." And to many of these parents, my mother was a part of their family - and they were a part of hers.

So it's no surprise that my mom became well-known in local childcare circles and in many community groups that involved children. For over 30 years, Mary Games was known as "the second mother" for so many children as they were nurtured in her loving care, whether it was in her home daycare business or just as a "kid in the neighborhood." For any child who walked through her door, she gave everything she had - and then some.

When she passed away unexpectedly on a wintery Friday, February 3rd, 2012 at the age of 68, I was moved by the many people who showed up at her house and at the memorial service to pay their respects. They shared stories of how my mom changed the lives of their children. They also shared stories of how she helped them be better parents. And what was most heartwarming, were the many "grown children" that had been in my mother's care so many years ago, showing up to pay their respects.

Hearing all these stories, it made perfect sense to my family and me, that in lieu of flowers, we would choose a charity that embodied my mom's passion for children and families, and for early childhood education. That part felt easy. It was the right way to honor her legacy.

The hard part was realizing the void that she was leaving behind. You never fully know the power of one's "ripple effect" until they're gone.

I can say, without a shadow of a doubt, my Mom changed lives. And I think she always knew that. Mothering was her life purpose.

Tina M. Games is the author of *Journaling by the Moonlight: A Mother's Path to Self-Discovery*, and is host of the radio show, “Life Purpose Legacy” on Contact Talk Radio. Contact her at www.TinaMGames.com.



About Stuart Gustafson

Author and speaker Stuart Gustafson writes and speaks about travel, and he writes and speaks about family legacy. It is this latter subject that has earned him the name “LEGACY DOCTOR.” You’ve already read in the Preface and Acknowledgements about how his Dad and Grandpa were both killed when he was only 16; that is a tough age to lose two key male figures in your life.

Stuart’s Mom was now the central adult in his life, as she instantly became the sole parent. This wasn’t completely new because there were years when his Dad was gone overseas for long periods of time serving in the U.S. Navy. Stuart’s *Questions to Bring You Closer* series of books not only was a way for him to express those unmet questions for which there would not be answers for Dad, but it helped him get closer to his Mom, especially during her final years. And so, 47 years, 5 months, and 23 days after losing his dad, his mom also left this earthly life.

Once his Mom passed away, writing about legacy, and offering tools and programs so others can capture their memories, became a driving force in Stuart’s life. He knew that he had insights to share with others, and he’s always ready to share – perhaps that’s his legacy, one of sharing and not being selfish? His question to many people is, “What do you want your legacy to be?” It’s usually followed with, “And what are you doing about it?”

His formal education includes a BA in Mathematics from San Diego State University and an MBA from the University of San Diego. He worked for high-tech companies for almost 29 years before taking early retirement on May 31, 2007. He and Darlene, his wife of 43 years, enjoy traveling to familiar and unfamiliar places, and then returning again to home in Boise, Idaho.

All of Stuart’s books, including his top-rated mystery novels, are described on his main website www.stuartgustafson.com.