

This is the eulogy I wrote about my father and read at his funeral. Footnotes have been added for the benefit of readers who may not be familiar with my family.

When Mark and I and our kids first arrived here today at Eden¹, we went to visit with our other family members² that are already here. My father is in good company. His parents and his mother's father are here as is his mother-in-law and one of her sisters. From the other side of the family, there is my father-in-law who was a good friend of my father's and my father-in-law's parents. And lastly, he is now here with his granddaughter³. It is quite a crowd; with my father they now make a minyan⁴.

As you know, my father was 87 years old when he passed. Living to the age of 87 is quite remarkable, even more so for my father if you consider that both of his parents died at the age of 72 and that his younger sister died at the age of 56. Fortunately for him, modern medicine could provide my father with the tools necessary to overcome the manageable health conditions that had contributed to his parents' and sister's deaths and to live a much longer life. Even so, in recent years he would say that the golden years are not so golden. In the last couple of years, he lived with varying degrees of pain caused by spinal stenosis, while at the same

¹ name of cemetery

² those also buried at Eden

³ my first child who died at 6 months in 1994

⁴ quorum of ten Jewish adults required for certain religious services

time my mother began to depend on him more and more as a caregiver as her cognitive abilities began to diminish. My father found the news of the passing of a friend or acquaintance, or even a celebrity who was younger than him, to be very unsettling, not only because of the loss but because my father was older and still alive.

The last few months were challenging for my father. Back in October, he fell, and although no bones were broken then, he did have some lingering muscle spasms in his back that, along with his spinal stenosis, caused him quite a bit of pain. While he seemed to bounce back from that incident, he was moving slower and at times would use a walker in the house. Then just before Thanksgiving, my father came down with pneumonia which caused him to be hospitalized for several days. Thankfully, he was home in time for the annual Lipschultz⁵ family Hanukkah celebration which the family brought to my parent's house. That night brought back memories of when the celebration was typically held at their house, in a time before the challenges of four rambunctious grandchildren necessitated moving the event to a larger venue. And again, while my father seemed to bounce back after the pneumonia, he was more tired and moving around even slower still.

Then shortly after midnight on December 12 I got a phone call from the caregiver who was staying with my parents. She told me that my father had fallen, said that he had pain in his hip, and that she was going to call 911. X-rays

⁵ my maiden name

confirmed that he had broken his hip and that he would need surgery. It took over 36 hours to get him medically fit for surgery. While the surgery was successful and a post op check two weeks later showed that the hip was healing well, my father's overall health began to fail and this time he was not able to bounce back.

Not typically a vain man, my father had expressed concern on several occasions in the last two months to both my sister and myself that he did not want his grandchildren to remember him only 'like this'. Despite our efforts to reassure our father that would not be the case, he did not seem to be convinced. My sister told me that one evening while she was visiting with our father when he was in the hospital with pneumonia, that Dad had spent the better part of two hours rambling on and on about events in his life. During some of the rambles, he expressed pride in the life that he and our mother had built for themselves and for us, and at other times, he was apologetic for perhaps not providing well enough for his family. Bonnie⁶ told me that it was mostly a one-sided conversation and he seemed to ignore many of her responses and assurances that all had turned out well. When she told me about this, it seemed to me that he thought that only grand gestures would be remembered and that our father had lost sight of the impact that all of the small gestures had made.

To remember him only as he was in the last two months would not be possible for any of us because of the whole lifetimes of memories we each have,

⁶ my sister

that are actually beyond our own lifetimes because of the stories my sister and I heard about him from our grandparents or the stories he told us or his grandchildren about himself when he was growing up. Apparently, my father was prone to retelling some of the stories over and over again to his grandchildren who fortunately learned to sit politely and listen to each retelling as if it was the first time they had heard the story. Many of those memories and stories have already been shared with you but I have a few more you may not know about.

I can recall my grandmother telling my sister and me about the some of the mischief our father would get into as a young boy. Nothing very scandalous, just the typically boy stuff for the time I guess. One story that comes to mind was about a time when ran his hand along some picket fences as he walked home from school and wound up with a hand full of splinters. Another story was how he had gotten into trouble in school from dipping the pigtails of the girl sitting at the desk front of his into the inkwell on his desk. When we looked at our father for either denial or confirmation of these wrong doings, he would only shrug his shoulders as if to say “not me”. How often have Bonnie and I seen our sons make the same gesture?

My father was only three years old when the stock market crashed in 1929 and the Great Depression began. His family struggled financially as did most families of that time. From his parents he learned the importance of a good work

ethic as well as the importance of family as they lived in a multi-generation household. As a young girl, I remember hearing stories of my dad learning to drive when he was 12 years old and helping my grandfather with his milk truck deliveries. Like I said before, my father enjoyed sitting with his grandchildren and sharing stories about his life. Not long ago, Benny⁷ recounted to me a story his grandfather had told him about having to make a delivery to a club of some sort that was run by the mafia. The encounter included a pat down search for hidden weapons and a shady money exchange. My dad was probably about 15 or 16 years old at the time so perhaps it is Ben's age that brought this story to mind for my father. I had never heard that story before and I asked Ben if he knew what prompted Grandpa to tell him about that event. He said that Grandpa had been talking about how things had been different when he was going up and how he had worked with his father.

Moving forward in the story of his life, after graduation from high school, my father enlisted in the Navy and served during WWII. During this time, his parents and sister moved from Chicago to Los Angeles and after his discharge he joined them. He attended Los Angeles City College and earned an Associate of Arts degree. He and my mother were set up on a blind date in 1948 and long story short; they married in 1952, bought their first house in 1956, and welcomed me into the family a few years later. Bonnie made her appearance a couple of years

⁷ my son

after that and the Lipschultz family was complete. Their last move landed them in house they have owned since 1965.

Like with the stories I told you about my father as a young boy, I have often thought about what each of my parents must have been like at different times in their lives. Picturing in my mind what they were like while they were dating, when they first got married, bought their first house, became parents. I have no actual memories of these times; I can only rely on stories that I have heard or my own imagination. More recently I have been thinking about my parents at about the age my sister and I are now, sandwiched between raising their children and helping their aging parents. At one time, my father's parents had been our regular babysitters, like my parents had been for their grandchildren, but that stopped when my sister and I were in our early teens and our grandparents' health began to fail. I remember going to visit with both my dad's parents and my mother's mother nearly every weekend. I have a new appreciation for challenges my parents were facing back then. But because of their efforts, I also learned the importance the role grandparents can play in a child's life. It was from this experience that I knew I wanted my own children to have their grandparents involved in their lives. I think that Jo and Ben, as well as Josh and Melissa⁸, hit the lottery with Grandpa Ted. As you have already heard, he was a fun grandpa and a

⁸ my sister's children

bit of a push over. Each of his grandchildren was special to him and they were all his favorites.

To me, my father was both old fashion and a man ahead of his time. Growing up I never heard him use a swear word. His substitute word of choice was 'sugar' as is OH SUGAR like someone would use a different S-word. In an era when social norms were changing, he disliked seeing young people walking around in bare feet and would not let my sister or I wear flip flops. Even though my father was in his thirties when rock and roll first started, he did not embrace this new style of music. But on the other hand, I knew him to be a hands-on dad when many of his friends had more 'traditional' fathers. He had changed our diapers, would sit up all night with us if we were sick, and was nearly always available to be a driver for a Girl Scout event. You see, his side career as 'chauffeur' began long before he had grandchildren.

I often wondered if he felt cheated because he only had daughters and did not have a son. It seemed natural to me that a man would want to have a son but when I asked him about that, he assured me that it had not matter to him and that he was happy to have daughters because that was what my mother had wanted.

This brings me to the one thing about my father that I think has had the greatest impact on me, the role he played as husband to my mother. While there may have been some of the traditional division of the household duties in our

family, my father was not like the fathers I saw on TV shows or like the fathers some of my friends had. He did not come home from work expecting to relax while final preparations were made on his dinner. In fact, from the time I was 6 until I was 12, my father was the one to make dinner (or at least reheat it) because my mother worked in the evening. He viewed my mother's job and salary as equal in value to the family as his own. She was his partner. Nothing was 'mine or yours', it was all 'ours', there was only one bank account and they both had equal access to it. My father rarely, if ever, made a unilateral decision. More often than not, he would defer to what my mother wanted and he was happy to do that. He could have been the poster child for 'happy wife, happy life'. Some may have seen this as a sign that he was a pushover, or perhaps whipped, but I came to see this as a sign of the strength of devotion to her that he would give my mother anything he could to make her happy. I know that the one thing that troubled him the most about facing death was that he was leaving my mother behind. If she was not with Bonnie or me when we visited with him, my father would always ask 'how is your mom doing?'

As the family sat talking last night about some of their memories of my father and recounting some the stories you have heard today, I realized that these memories and stories highlight the best of my father's traits. Because of the time he spent with all of his grandchildren, they will remember him for values he taught them and the enjoyment he brought to their lives. He was a kind hearted man of

great strength of character; dependable, reliable, and devoted to his wife and to his family. While he may have not earned any note worthy accolades, my father was a good and honorable man who left a lasting impression on many people and will continue to serve as a role model to his grandchildren.

You did ok, Dad. Rest easy.