

# Dads

As a kid growing up, my Dad took me everywhere. To his second job where he worked as a rate clerk in a truck terminal. I'd stay behind at his desk and watch as he went out to the yard and gave direction to the truck drivers. I remember that these men, hard men, hung on his every word. He shook their hands then came back inside, his hands now full of grease.

Later, after he was promoted to a managerial position with a big office in a St. Louis high rise, he would take me to work on Saturday mornings. I'd watch as he greeted the janitorial staff by name, often bringing donuts for them to share, but only after taking two for himself.

On the way home we would often stop at Catholic church in a bad part of town and take a minute to pray with a group of nuns called the "pink sisters." Then to his mom's house for a lunch of her legendary mac & cheese... how he loved her!

That was my Dad.

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In my early twenties, I married Tom Murphy's daughter. He was an Irish cop, chief of detectives in St. Louis, about 6'3" tall with a mop of black hair, always with a cigarette. He was intimidating. He'd stop by my work driving this beast of an unmarked police car and take me to lunch at some dive in the projects. The customers would stop eating and great him with "Murph!" He didn't need to order; the waitress just brought out his "usual." Often he'd leave me at the counter while he went and talked to some character out back.

As a young father, he would come to my house to help me fix plumbing problems, once teaching me how to install a water heater by testing for gas leaks with a cigarette lighter. He bought me tools, showed me how to put brakes on a car, and fix all sorts of home repair problems with duct tape, super glue and a carriage bolt from his workshop. Always patient with me, a hopeless, all thumbs, want-to-be handyman.

That was my first father-in-law.

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In my fifties, I married Sam Rothschild's daughter. He was in his 90's then, a mensch's mensch. Of small stature, with grey hair and beard, he was not at all physically intimidating. He was, however, intellectually intimidating. Upon meeting Sam, you knew at once that Sam did not suffer fools. He was wise to the ways of the world.

My wife tells me of the time, as he was teaching her to drive, that he advised her not to use her turn signals explaining, "Never let the enemy know of your intentions." I remember another afternoon, as he and I were waiting on a bench while my wife shopped, he coached me how to manage money, where to invest, the perils of debt. His advice to my wife, and to me, was right on point.

At the independent living facility where he lived, other residents stood up when he entered the dining hall. Even after he turned 100 years old, his children went to him for advice. He would often ask his children, "What have you done today to make the world a better place?"

That was my second father-in law.

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Now I watch as my son, my stepsons, my son-in-law, my brothers, my brother-in-law and my nephews, good men all, raise their children.

They all do it differently, not necessarily as Art Hollenbach, Tom Murphy or Sam Rothschild would, and sometimes in ways that are mysterious to me. But all with the shared goal of bringing good people into the world. All leading by example, loving unconditionally and providing their children a path to be successful.

I want to close with a message to these Dad's.

I understand that you sometimes worry if you are doing this whole Dad thing the right way. You second guess your decisions, wonder if you are making any difference at all and if your kids are even paying attention. I know I did.

Well, quit worrying.

From where I sit, in my old man perch, this new generation of Dad's that I know are every bit as good, and probably better, than the Dad's that came before. And on this Father's Day, in a world gone crazy, you people bring me hope. Thank you.

Happy Father's Day!

**That's all I'm sayin'**

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