

Dads to be Grateful For

by Lori_Borgman

My father is a man for whom the glass is always half full. Maybe even more than half.

I have often wondered if this attitude comes from being a boy during the Depression or from serving in the infantry during World War II. Perhaps it comes from growing up on a farm with eight brothers and sisters, resourceful parents, open skies and rolling prairies. Or perhaps it is simply the way God made him.

“It’s not the problem that matters, it’s how you deal with the problem that matters,” he has always said.

It was no surprise that when the doctor told him he had a mass on his pancreas, he met it head on, like a soldier in full gear, determined to make it over the next hill. After the initial diagnosis, my 79-year-old dad came home from the med center, fired up the Weed Eater, and trimmed the yard. He called me that night and said, “You know, we’re all going to die. Even the doctors are going to die.” He says this with a soft chuckle, mildly amused by the irony of it all.

“The doctor says I’m as healthy as a 55-year-old man. But I want to say to him, “If I’m so healthy, why do I have cancer?” Then he laughs a robust laugh that nearly shatters the phone.

“Your mom and I had 13 great years of retirement. Thirteen years of good health, enjoying ourselves, traveling. My dad never had a single day of retirement. Not one. We have a lot to be grateful for.”

That’s another standard line for him we have a lot to be grateful for and he means it. Learning of his cancer has not prompted him to re-examine his life and make drastic changes. He has always appreciated each day and lived it to the fullest.

I have spent considerable time with my dad in recent weeks, looking at old pictures and letters together, taking walks, watching finches at the feeder, deadheading roses, washing the car, listening to the big band sounds of Sammy Kaye and Guy Lombardo, or Bob Wills, the king of Western swing. Dad knows the words to all the standards . . . “Molly and me, and the baby makes three. We’re happy in my Blue Heaven.”

My father is a man dearly loved and deeply respected. Like many men of his generation, he has earned these honors by simply being there. By being reliable and dependable, the kind of man you can count on, the kind of man who looks you in the eye, whose word is good and whose handshake is firm.

In the evenings, I sometimes overhear him on the phone, talking to far away friends and family members who have called to inquire. He tells them the news and that he has “limited time,” never in a morose way, or with a hint of self-pity, but in a simply stated, matter-of-fact way.

Dad does not finish a phone call without asking about the caller. “What’s happening with you? How are your kids? Your grandkids? And then he again assures them that he is great, just great.

He is great. He is a great man, a great friend, a great father and grandfather.

If you have been blessed to know a dad who is anything like mine, well, we have a lot to be grateful for.

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