

It seems a daunting, even impossible, task to embody one's father in a few pages of reflections. Perhaps, though, that is the beauty of it. For as little as I may be able to state now, I know there will be a trove of other reflections that will enrich my years ahead—that period of life without Dad.

So, to focus on a few:

GENTLENESS

There is a point in a child's life when the child begins to reflect on the personalities of their parents. We notice what is distinctive in how they act towards us, but also what is distinctive in how we are being raised. I can recollect those moments as a young child with ease.

And so thinking about Dad now, just a few weeks after his death, what stands out for me and has always stood out for me is his gentleness. That gentleness was practically universal. One would notice it whether watching how he engaged with a fellow attorney or how he spoke to a clerk at the local grocery store. He was always courteous, he almost never raised his voice and, most of all, when confronted by someone acting inappropriately he showed equanimity.

I think it is fair to say that this gentleness was a core part of his success. It's what made him a fine father, a fine lawyer and a good friend. It attracted people to him and it was a welcome balm to others during tough or difficult times. In the many tributes our family has received in the two months since his death, it has been a pleasure to note how so many of Dad's professional acquaintances remarked that Dad said just the right thing during a difficult time. One example, that gives me a little glee, was to hear an attorney, relate how Dad helped ease her worries about a reactionary Secretary of the Interior, James G. Watt. Dad stated that the environmental movement would easily outlast Mr. Watt. Given the number of environmental leaders who are gathered today at this service and given how Mr. Watt met an ignominious end and appears to have hardly been heard from since, I'd say Dad was not only a soothing guy, but prophetic as well.

On a more personal level, I can look back on Dad's gentleness and recollect how critical it was to my own—and my siblings—growth. What stood out for me as young boy and a young man was how our father was unlike the predominant male character-type in our community. He didn't engage in masculine antics. Whether we were at the local YMCA, at the Little League ballpark or at a Boy Scout gathering he always exuded calm and regard. Among other things, this left me with a healthy and mature attitude towards the opposite sex. As I progressed into adulthood, I felt fortunate; both because of our father's example and because of our mother's direction, that I didn't have to unlearn a dominant male attitude, one that was quite prevalent in my younger days.

I can't think of or speak to Dad's gentleness without noting how it was inextricably linked with his resolve. As noted earlier, his gentleness fostered equanimity, and that enabled him to keep focused on the matter at hand, whatever the obstacles. Once I joined him at a proceeding in front of a District of Columbia District Court Judge on the Trident

case. The judge was dismissive and rude to Dad in a way that shocked me. (I was a naïve and young man at the time.) When I expressed to Dad my reaction to the judge's behavior and asked how such is allowed to happen, he urged me to put my concerns aside. I noticed how the exchange didn't distract or derail him from moving the case along. That example stayed with me. I believe it is fair to say that that Dad's gentleness was a key ingredient for ensuring that his children and his grandchildren did their best. And it undergirded much of his success in leading others in forging new pathways in the legal profession.

NATURE

I almost hesitate to discuss Dad's love of the outdoors. Nobody needs to be told of it. One would know of it within five minutes of reading something about or by him. But there was a side to this that I found both odd and fitting. I never tried this, but I wish I had: that would be to pull a leaf from an oak tree and a maple tree and ask him if he could identify each. Odds are he would only be able to guess one of them—and I do mean guess. He truly was an American Transcendentalist, both in philosophy and in character. His love of nature never did venture into the scientific, unless it served as evidence for a legal argument. He had no more curiosity about species identification than he had about current TV listings. He loved nature in a way just as Thoreau or Emerson had urged us to.

This trait has an enduring, rather comical legacy at our Catskill place. At one time, probably within just a year or two of buying the property, he and our mother must have ventured into the State Forest Preserve that borders our property and discovered the vast patch of coniferous trees growing up on a long-ago abandoned subsistence farm. The trees are White Spruce and were planted by the CCC boys. But somehow our father, who had a penchant for applying pet names to natural features on the property, called this grove of trees, The Pines. I withstood that misnomer, if memory serves me correctly, until my twin brother Alfred came back from Audubon camp and informed me that they were Spruces, not Pines. And ever since then, it has been one of those features I can't talk about without fumbling over what to say. Do I ask one of my nieces or my nephew whether they want to walk up to the pines (honoring Dad's pet name), the spruces (which they actually are), the CCC plantation (give proper homage to the rural works of the New Deal, the old Edwards place (that's the name of the family that had the had operated the farm) or just avoid it altogether and say something bland, such as, "want to go for a walk up the hill."

I don't want to dishonor our father, but accuracy has its place. Whatever my quandary, I will forever treasure the irony of one of our country's leading environmentalists having less taxonomic knowledge of the natural world than a confirmed couch potato.

Contrast this with his encyclopedic knowledge of mountain topography and related details on elevation. If one were to climb a mountain in the Catskills or Adirondacks with Dad, odds are he would have had pointed out the name of every mountain within view and, likely, the height of most of them. He knew the all this so well because a favorite pastime was to pour over topographic maps.

I can seem him now, staring intently at a topo map of some region of the Catskills, which landforms he had not yet committed to memory. He would likely be noting a tributary of the east or west branch of the Delaware, follow that tributary upstream, consider its twists and turns, note the spacing among the adjoining topo lines and then, in his mind's eye, form a vision of how the land would look were he walking on it.

That now formed vision of the land would not only suggest a place to explore, but would connect Dad, at that moment, with nature's life force. Wordsworth (his favorite poet) saw nature as a teacher, guide and healer. Dad saw it the same way. It is where he went to regain his vigor, to sort a problem, to heal his wounds. I remember him saying to me years ago (referring to then Speaker of the House and the then President), "If they would just go take a walk together in a quiet park they could sort this issue out." To Dad, the land was a constant wellspring, a place that could reconnect all of us with what was beautiful and what was right.

PHYSICAL LABOR

In order to be a fully vetted member of the Sive Family you have to be willing to do physical labor. Certainly, Dad lived that way, not to mention our Mother, who still carries this out. While Dad may have been a reluctant dishwasher (and not very good at) he would dive right in to a messy and unglamorous outdoor task, particularly at our family's Catskill place. At a young age, I learned to pitch loose stones out of the mile-long dirt road up to our place, or to dig out ditches to improve drainage. I believe Dad took on this work with such relish because it could make up for his decided lack of ability with any of the finer arts of home management; for example, carpentry, plumbing, electrical work. (There is still a section of paneling he installed at the Catskill place that I find hilarious in its approach.)

Indeed, one of Dad's well-known expressions when involved in a fix-it project was, "Just tell me where you need unskilled labor." It was an interesting mixture of equal parts generosity and false modesty. Dad rather loathed using power tools and equipment. However, he would work for a whole day in the woods surrounding our suburban home, methodically cutting large fallen trees with a hand bow saw into neat little piles of firewood.

For better or worse, my siblings and I have not a moment's hesitation to lasso one of the nieces or our nephew into some hard physical task. Do I get some pleasure out of this? Yeh, a little. But isn't that my payback for all those stones I pitched out of the road during my tender years?

PERSONAL EXPRESSION – WRITING

As we all know, Dad blended his passion for nature's preservation with a skill at the rhetorical arts. I am not qualified to speak to his ability in oral argument, as I only saw him in the courtroom a few times. And one would not see this skill in personal exchanges, as his day-to-day comportment was very much non-confrontational.

However, when it came to writing, my siblings and I knew that to write well was an essential skill to develop. Nowhere was this better imparted than through the many, many letters he wrote to us. I have scores of them filed away—letters written when I was at camp or in College or testing myself in the professional world. Those letters were my own wellspring; they not only filled me with love, but also brought lightness to my day and filled me with a resolve to do better. Through reading them, I learned how rich life could be with the simplest of things—just paper and (well, not so simple) a Mount Blanc pen.

One of my stronger memories from early youth is of the times when Dad would take his three boys into his office on a Saturday. He would sit Alfred and me down, give us each a long legal pad and request that we write letters to our cousins. I can see it now, staring at a blank pad, not having a clue of what to write beyond a few stock phrases. But I think those early letter writing sessions placed in me a recognition that no good writing comes easily—that to write helps us to clarify our mind and order our thoughts.

Dad rarely critically reviewed our written output, but I do remember him once making a comment that stung (appropriately so). I was sharing a college paper and he was pleased with the presentation and argument. However, when we finished our discussion on the substance, he remarked off-hand, but clearly, “I hope you will take care of the grammatical errors.” He didn’t say where, but I pored over that paper and found two instances of subject/verb disagreement.

Whether it was conscious or not, in that admonition to write and keep writing, our Father stressed the important of making sure our lives were not un-examined. That premise about the need to write is now thankfully shared by the next generation in the family. Perhaps it’s part nature as well as nurture. In any event, to have my nieces and my nephew recognize and practice this is a thrill to me, particularly in a culture that seems to be beset with un-reflective and self-centered communication.

LOVE

Anyone who has lived long enough knows that the most mature form of love knows no bounds. It asks us to move beyond determining who should receive the best of us and instead be willing to offer our best selves to everyone. Dad lived that way; it was an example by which all of us learned. His lessons weren’t overt. He rarely counseled on matters of how one should be in the world, but his kindness to everyone left a lasting mark on all of his children.

I grew up thinking everyone was equal—that was a function of Dad’s consideration and courtesy towards everyone he met. But his humanity ran much deeper than that. Dad accepted everyone. Yes, like all of us, he had his biases. As well, his interests were narrow and, thus, he was not a particularly adept conversationalist. But whomever he met, he never shrank from engaging with him or her. He never let himself feel he didn’t belong, and he never once considered someone unworthy of his attention. It was a wonderful framework in which to be raised.

The great benefit of all this, was that my siblings and I grew up forming no serious prejudices. All of us have always looked at everyone as equals. None of us worries about whether we are in the right or wrong social milieu; we simply know that we should be kind and true to everyone.

Dad's love, though, was revealed not just in how accepting he was, but in his everyday countenance. He always had a warm and approachable way. He was the father you didn't hesitate to introduce to a newfound friend, be it a guy—or a new girlfriend. Indeed, it could only help to strengthen the bond you had to the person you were introducing. Do you know how many women have remarked me to me “your father is so nice, and he's so cute.”?

The foundation for all of this was a constant faith. Being around Dad, one would never lose confidence that we all could do more—collectively, to protect the planet, but also individually in how we engaged with whomever we met.

Surely, if Dad were here now, he would give each of us a warm hug, encourage us to connect with each other—if the moment required it, counsel us to put aside our differences but not our beliefs—and then suggest we go for a walk.

Thanks Dad. I'm certainly going to be doing that.