

Missing my dad on Father's Day

Dear Dad;

Boy, has a lot happened since you departed in 1998.

Twenty-six years, 9,490 days. Untold events and memories.

I remember the year well, because that's the year our first-born, Lexie, came into the world.

Luckily, you were able to hold her in your careworn arms a few times. And then, never again.

I often catch myself turning around, feeling a hand on my shoulders. Could it be you, or just my imagination? Can you ask the Big Guy if it's permitted to drop me a line, or send me a signal from time to time?

I hope there is a way for you, mom and Angela to catch a glimpse of us down here on occasion as events unfold. I heard, that the love you have inside, you take it with you as you transcend.

That's comforting.

Down here, the work continues, and sometimes it feels like I'm wading through waist-deep water, desperately trying to reach the shore.

More often lately, I think of simple, less stressful times. Despite being an average family, my early life was pretty decent. I took almost everything for granted.

I still remember that fateful summer evening when you pulled me close to your chest and uttered a final piece of advice: "You have a beautiful family. Take care of them."

I have tried, almost daily, to fulfill that directive.

Let me tell you about them, and how far we have all come.

Your oldest granddaughter is now 26, a beautiful, young woman, a force to be reckoned with. She's currently taking her Master's Degree, while working for the summer as an intern with a government agency. This one will go places, let me tell you.

In fact, she's already been half-way around the world. With a heart of gold, and a tenacity to match, this one has been on several humanitarian missions - visiting African countries twice! She's seen the world's poorest souls and summoned her own inner strength to make a difference.

That, she will, I have no doubt. I can see the edges of your mouth curl up in a proud smile. I'll pass it on to her.

She will never get to hear your laugh or hold your hand. She has missed out on something quite special. Again, it's something I took for granted, but now makes me long for that touch, just one more time.

I try to share stories about you and pass on tidbits and things you taught me. But those 9,490 days have blurred some of them out, and made my memory falter.

But some of these nuggets do surface from time to time, and I celebrate silently, in my own mind and heart.

Do you remember her?? Maybe you took some of her warmth with you, and kept it close, embedded deep within your eternal soul.

Dad, I'm happy to say your only grandson, Liam, has turned into quite the strapping young man.

He arrived in 2001 and I'm sure you would have been over the moon at the sight of him. He was quite the handful as a child, and has grown into an intelligent, thoughtful young man.

I worry about him almost every day. If I had the power, I would give him just a morsel of your inner strength, the same strength that kept you alive and brought you to Canada after the war. He would have cherished talking with you, even playing a game of chess or two. Undoubtedly you would have been great pals and spent your days on long walks in the woods or country lanes.

You would have added a certain je ne sais quois to the Pavilons mix, this cocktail of generations.

I can no longer toss him up on my shoulders, as you once did to me. Funny what we remember.

You jostled and jiggled with me atop that special perch, moving back and forth in the hallway as mom made dinner. I can still hear my giggles, echoing in the distant past, drawing fainter and fainter.

Your third grandchild, Kyleigh, is now 18, a beautiful young woman.

She loves animals and cares about people. She's quite witty and seldom backs down from an argument. Through this all, she's destined to go far.

I can't help but feel at a loss. I think had you and mom stayed a bit longer, just a few more precious years, they would have benefitted in some way.

I know in my heart that you would have loved all three of these angels with every fiber of your being.

We all lost when your time was up.

They will never skip stones on the river or make a walking stick out of a tree branch.

I look at them and feel sad. Sad because those past 9,490 days have gone so quickly without you. Granted, you would be 105 today.

I am now a bit of a grumpy, old man. It's my own fault and yet I can't really recall how I got here and how I ended up in this state.

I've had some health issues in the past year, something I know you are familiar with. My fate is largely in the hands of medical professionals and God himself.

I'm starting to get a handle on this fatherhood thing. It only took me 26 years to begin to understand all the nuances. There is much more to come, I'm sure.

It would have been so nice to share a dual Father's Day with you. Two generations gathering to celebrate the warmth and love that surrounds them.

For me, it's a bit bitter-sweet to be sure.

I don't feel I deserve the attention, and yet, I know we'd shower you with affection if that empty seat at the table had you in it.

If you have any minor miracles to share, now would be a good time.

But I get it, you'd have to ask the powers that be.

Hey dad, I'm sorry for the things left unsaid, and those things you fought in your head.

I?get it now.

Your Son,

Mark