

The family returns the favour, in spades

by Mark Pavilons

The following is a submission from the Hesketh-Pavilons clan. It came on my recent September 2 birthday.

'We figured we owe you one from all the years you spent writing about us,' my family members said.

Here are their reflections.

From Kyleigh:

'If I had to ever tell someone about you as a father growing up, well, I would start with the good times. I'm reminded of all the things we did.

'Recently, you brought me home from work, and we went to the car show. After that, we went to get slushies, and I had mentioned how much I like and miss our 'little outings' because I enjoy our time together when it's just us.

'I think it's because in a lot of ways, we're alike. And it got me a little nostalgic about all the times we used to share together (even though it was your job and you were working, but it was made more fun when I came along with you).

'I actually really enjoyed it when we used to go out all together as a family.

'As well, when I was a kid, you always thought of me or things I would like, and you would always bring me along. I remember I got knocked in the head by a horse while posing for a picture for you to put in the newspaper! We tried different soups at Soupfest and met very talented artists.

'Although I never really read the paper much, whenever I read one of your columns, I always wondered how you took in a bunch of things that happened in a day and then picked a few really good pictures and put it all together so well 'into a beautifully written piece that was almost poem-like.

'I know you are a journalist, but you're one of the best!

'I also wanted to tell you just how grateful I am for you and Mom in my last year of high school. It was a really hard time for me in so many different ways.

'I genuinely couldn't have done it without you guys always there to support and help me, and at my graduation when I walked across that stage and heard you scream for me? I smiled so hard! I didn't care who was looking, and neither did you because you were proud of me, and I could hear it in that moment, and it really meant a lot to me.

'You mean a lot to me. I love you very much and I'm eternally grateful for everything you have done and continue to do for all of us.

'For what it's worth, I think your Dad would be more than proud of you now and all you have accomplished. Your Mom? Well, she was always your number one fan and mine! She was always in the corner watching over us.

'You know, when I was in Germany, it didn't matter where I went. I would catch myself in places, stuck in time, looking at a forget-me-not flower (one of her favourites) or an old woman's ring or a garden. I felt her in every little thing ' she was there with me. I could feel it and I saw her in everything. I recognized the signs and it was beautiful.

?I think that although people can be physically gone from our lives, the energy of their soul and the love they leave it never dies. It stays with you and energy is a big thing to feel! She may not have been there with me physically, but she was there with me the entire time! Just like she was with you when you were little.

?Dad, me and you have to go to Germany together!?

From Liam:

?Dad, as I look back over the years I can't help but remember how much fun we've had. So much fun at all of your work events, sports events, and the Delawana, for over a decade! So many restaurants (Hogan's and Rockfords), trips with the Scouts, the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum and sleeping in the hanger.

?I have tons of memories of Bridlefield and you BBQing and playing all the cool vibes music ? the Gypsy Kings, UB40 and of course Cold as Ice by Foreigner.

?So many LONG talks about anything and everything under the sun, from space to advances in medicine and aliens, our ancestors and how we got here, conspiracy theories and not conspiracy theories (normal stuff), politics, religion and everything in between.

?Dad, thank you for it all ? you have given me and taught me so much!?

From Lexie:

?Some people aren't lucky enough to have a dad, or grow up with a father figure who sets the stage for the good life to come.

?I consider myself lucky to have been raised by someone like you, Dad. Lucky enough to have a weekly horn-honker and ?Go Lex' yell at every soccer game; lucky enough to be one of your plus-ones to every media event or theatre production you got tickets for. Lucky enough to taste test and vote on the best soup with you at Soupfest, or eat wild boar at Feast of the Fields.

?Lucky enough to admire the old classics with you at car shows; lucky enough to catch candy with you on the cold curb every year at the Santa Claus Parade, then warm up in your office later.

?Lucky enough to ride my bike with company; lucky enough to feel calm being in the water because you would always float on your back with your toes up high right next to me; lucky enough to try and fail at playing chess, lucky enough to land on a good movie rental at the video stores ? as long as I got my free bag of popcorn!

?Lucky enough for pontoon boat rides, and the Delawana.

?More recently, I?was lucky enough to see you hard at work and share ?Wing Wednesdays' on your lunch hour; lucky enough to have you roll me around the block in my transport chair while I was in a cast but still wanted the fresh air.

?Lucky enough to have a Dad who invests in the excursions I embark on, and wants to write about every one ? who never misses a moment to be curious about my missions to serve, and to help me fundraise for them.

?Lucky enough to witness you rock a different Hawaiian t-shirt every day as if you woke up in a tropical place every morning.

?I don't want you to be sad that you can't be all of this for me or for us, forever, because the support you've already provided, has been more than enough, Dad.

?And it will always be enough. No one supports me like you dad, and that will always be carried with me in this life (and probably

the next one).

?I don't pray to change you one bit ? I pray for more time with you ? more laughs, more hugs, more alien movies and food lover conversations, more dad jokes and more little random emoji text messages, or email forwarded events.

?A Dad plays a huge role in a family ? Gorilla glue has some competition with you here. And you have fulfilled your role more than you know. Thank you for always making me loved, heard, cared for, and supported.?

From: Kim

?I've spent more than half my life with you, and celebrated more than half your birthdays, too.?It's crazy when you think about it, but what a ride it's been. From long talks on the bench your dad made outside your Duffy's Lane house ? that's where it all started?

?We've had our ups and downs, our struggles and challenges, but through it all, we've made it through ? together. It hasn't always been easy, but it's certainly been fun, and oh, so memorable.

?We've shared so many wonderful experiences ? the Caribbean, Bahama Mamas, booze cruises, conch fritters, frosty tasty beverages by the ocean, sunburns, sunsets, and sunrises.

?Our years at the Del, Stage West adventures, unforgettable Media Days at Wonderland (and those chocolate chip cookies!), Second City, New York, New Jersey, Detroit?

?Soupfests, chili fests, Canada Day celebrations, Christmas in Schomberg ? the list goes on.

?We are truly fortunate and blessed to have found one another, to have built a life together, and to have raised three beautiful, healthy children who tug at our heartstrings, test our patience, and make us proud all the same.

?And then there are the dogs ? six over the years, with three still by our side ? each one adding their own love and chaos to our story.

?What a journey it's been. And I wouldn't trade a single moment.

?We've had us a time, husband ??