

## My Dad

My dad was born on June 22, 1913. Life was pretty simple back then but it was changing fast. Just over 10 years earlier the Wright brothers took their first flight. In the streets the popular horse and buggy was rapidly being replaced by Henry Ford's Model T's and America was getting ready to fight its first world war.

Waves of immigrants were leaving Europe for the safer shores of America. In Holland Taunta and Marie Vander Veer sold their family store and boarded a ship to New York. During the two week voyage Marie met a dashing young man named Harmon Taconis. Later they married, moved to Branford and had four daughters; Catherine, Jessie, Martha and Winnie.

Meanwhile my dad was growing up in the exciting and fast paced era of the twenties. Life for him though wasn't as easy or carefree as a character from a Fitzgerald novel. In 1924 my dad's father died from a heart attack. My dad was only eleven years old. It must have been terrible for him.

Time marched on. The stock market crashed and a long national depression set in. My dad dropped out of school and worked odd jobs. He finally settled in as a clerk with the First National grocery store in East Haven. He married my mom, Jessie Taconis, in 1942. Like the rest of the country they started having kids and on April 13, 1955 I was born. I was number five of six boys. My mom always wanted a daughter. Were it not for my mom's stubbornness and my dad's willingness I might not be here today.

My first recollections of my dad are from when I was 4 years old. It was on a weekend and my mom had gone shopping. I wanted to be read to so I picked up a book and went to my dad. He was pretty reluctant to read to me but I guess I talked him into it. He picked me up with his big strong arms and put me on his lap. Together we struggled through a story about a little green car and all its troubles in the big city. My dad had a tough time with a lot of the words because like so many other people of his generation he never formally learned how to read or write. But we had a great time anyway and I think we each learned a lot that one afternoon.

On Sundays our whole family went to church. My brothers and I had to go downstairs to Sunday school while my parents attended the services in the sanctuary. My mom sang in the choir while my dad sat in the balcony. I was usually bored with Sunday school and couldn't wait for it to end. When the hour was finally over I rushed upstairs to the balcony to sit on the soft, red velvet cushions next to my dad and brothers. I like it when everybody stood up and sang, especially around Christmas time because then I understood the songs. But what I liked best was when my dad put his arm around me and held me close. His hands were big, strong and calloused from years of stocking shelves and bagging groceries. Sometimes I'd fall asleep with my head on his chest during the middle of a sermon. I'm sure everyone understood when he couldn't get up to sing.

My teenage years were difficult for both my dad and I. I was a child of the sixties and I did many things I'm sure my dad didn't approve of. Many people lost faith in me and told my dad to toss me out of the house. But neither my dad nor my mom ever locked the door on me. They believed in me even though I'm sure neither understood why I behaved so outlandishly.

About eleven years ago my mom found a wonderful blue stuffed rocking chair at an auction. She had it re-upholstered and it took up residence in our living room right next to an old wooden end table on which sat a nice, bright reading lamp. A typical Sunday

afternoon would find my Dad or I sitting in that soft blue chair with our feet resting on a hassock. My dad would take a nap while I read the newspaper and my mom would either be reading or knitting sweaters for a relative or the church fair.

About the same time we got that wonderful blue rocking chair I went back to school. Like my dad with his groceries I worked hard. Eventually I earned both a Bachelors and a Masters degree. I don't think my dad understood why I spent so much time reading and studying. Books didn't mean a lot to him but I did. As he got older he needed to rest more. During the day he would often nap while sitting in our favorite blue chair. But when I came home he would always get up so I could sit there and read a book or do a little writing.

Two days ago my dad died while napping after lunch in our soft and comfortable old blue chair. Like his dad he died of a heart attack. He died quickly and with dignity in the warm surroundings of his own home. I miss him. So do a lot of other people.

My dad and I were born into and lived in worlds that were more often than not, very far apart. We didn't share hobbies or go fishing or go to baseball games together. My dad never bought me a car for graduation or was able to lavish gifts upon me. But that's all right because he gave me the best gift of all; his love. My dad didn't always understand me or agree with me. But he always accepted me and he often went out of his way to make my life easier or more comfortable. He took pride in my accomplishments and was happy with what I had done. I owe a lot to my dad and I'm proud to be his son. May he rest in peace.

Tim Brockett  
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