

Remembering those little things with dad

Mark Pavilons



?A father is a man who expects his son to be as good a man as he meant to be.?

Frank A. Clark

Fathers and sons have an unusual relationship at times.

At a certain age, hugs are replaced with high-fives, fist bumps or shoulder nudges.

The teenager in the car with me in the mornings says little about school, his studies or his friends. He loves to crack a joke and when he laughs, he makes everyone around him smile.

He doesn't seem overly touchy feely ??maybe none of today's teens are. I?like to keep him on his toes and challenge his thinking.

My dad was a unique person; definitely very old school.

My parents lived through the Second World War; began a new life for themselves in Canada; worked hard; raised a family. My better half's family often said he had a bit of a ?stone face? and he was never very emotional or free with his feelings.

I?remember he used to like trimming my moustache for me. Maybe it made him feel useful and he thought I needed some sprucing up from time to time. While it may sound weird, these were bonding moments, times when it was just the two of us, shooting the breeze. Strange how I thought of this just recently. It made me smile, but it also made me sad.

He had an annoying habit of clinking his spoon against his coffee cup, ad nauseum. Whenever I?hear this sound, I?think of him.

He never had much patience for things like milk cartons, sweetener packs or those small cream cups ??he often made a heck of a mess every time he tried to open one. This is also makes me smile, and a little bit sad.

His sneezes would rattle the rafters and his voice boomed. Much like mine when I call my son, so I am told. He had a funny habit, during my teen years, of standing back to back with me, to see how tall I was getting. My wife made me and Liam do that recently. My eldest daughter Lexie has, unfortunately, inherited some of those Pavilons traits. Dad would be proud.

He managed to hold her in his arms when she was an infant. They had very little time together but I?know his heart filled with joy that only grandparents fully understand.

He never got to see my son, his only grandson. That makes me more than a little bit sad. And he never knew about our third born, Kyleigh.

He would have cherished Liam, told him wild tales and walked with him among the pines and spruces. He would be over the moon at the young woman Lexie has become and her list of accomplishments and selfless acts. He would be encouraged to tickle Kyleigh and cuddle with her on the sofa.

Maybe, in the mystery that is the great beyond, he has an inkling of what's happening here on terra firma. That thought makes me

smile.

I sometimes expect to see his large hands descend from above to hold me one more time, or hug the stuffings out of my kids. Oh, how I long to hear his voice or look into his eyes. I'd even be happy accept some nonsensical fatherly advice.

It's been almost 18 years since I felt his presence. Wow, 18 years. I rarely flip through the family photo albums (there were no digital photos of us). I seldom well up when I think of him.

But there are times, when I'm alone with my thoughts, that he's there. There are dreams, those lifelike nocturnal experiences, where he's as real as real can get.

And there is Father's Day, when there's no one on my left; no one to share a cold one with.

But that's how life is, and pretty much how it's supposed to be.

We expect to lose our elderly parents.

We don't expect to lose a child.

I know the parents of one of the young men who was killed in Wasaga Beach recently, and went to the visitation. Despite my penchant for words, I had nothing to say, nothing to express but sorrow.

I could see the pain, the deep, inconsolable suffering that rests in their hearts. I can't imagine what they are going through.

I lost my sister to illness at a relatively young 45. She suffered and in some ways, she was set free.

I've heard that dying is easy. It's living that's hard.

The living are guardians of all that is important. We must keep those memories, thoughts and even quirks alive and well. It's our heritage, our history and there's no escaping it.

Ideally, it's nice for kids to enjoy their grandparents. I think it gives them a different perspective and provides them with just a glimpse of what our childhoods were like.

My kids knew my mom, but our youngest, who grew close to her near the end, feels somewhat cheated. She misses her Oma immensely.

As do I.

I don't know how I rate on the fatherhood scale. I hope my kids become better souls than I am. From what I've seen so far, I think that's true.

Does mean my work here is done? Not likely.

I still have so much more sarcasm to dish out. I am compelled to embarrass them every chance I get. The other day I wore a yellow Hawaiian shirt with conflicting, but equally eye-scorching, yellow shorts, just to see if anyone noticed!

Maybe my brand of fathering is different than my father's.

This Father's Day I will be surrounded by my wife and children. I will enjoy a steak with my son.

And I will raise a glass to my father, who helped set all of this in motion. Trust me, smiles are worth way more than sadness.

If you are lucky enough to share this day with your father, give him an extra squeeze.