

Father's Day

By: Hazel Gay Lee ©2014

Father's Day is a wonderful day to celebrate the special fathers around our world who knows what it takes to be a "Father." To all those great men I salute you and tip my hat in great admiration, because being a father is no picnic. It is a downright rough and dirty job at times. The reward for your hard work is recognition on this special day. Your legacy for your sacrifices are children who adore and appreciate you during your lifetime and beyond.

My father did not know how to be a father. He did not have a good role model to teach him what fatherhood was all about, which left him very emotionally needy. Being the oldest of eight children he married my mother, who was the oldest of fourteen children, and they brought fourteen of their own children into this world. They were just kids when they married and became parents. He was nineteen and she was sixteen, but they did the best they could and I admire and appreciate their endless effort.

My mother grew up a lot faster than my father. She never learned how to drive so her days were spent working in the fields or cannery, but mostly taking care of her children at home. She continually asked God for his strength to help her be the best mother and wife she could be. We love and appreciate our mother for her unconditional love, selfless and giving heart, deep faith, and her faithful devotion to our father and us. She never asked for anything for herself and only thought of others. The only thing she asked of our father was to quit drinking, gambling, and womanizing. My father eventually gave up the drinking and gambling, but he couldn't leave the woman alone. He looked for love and approval in all the wrong places until just before he died. He was richly blessed with a loving wife and a multitude of healthy children and grandchildren but he could not see his fortune.

Near the end of his life my father told my mother that he never knew what love was until he met her. Even so, he did not know how to cherish what he had or give unconditional love in return. Love is not blind like people think. Quite the contrary. Love is when we can look at someone and see all their faults and weaknesses and still love them despite their shortcomings. That is how my mother loved my father. That is how I love my father too. I love and honor him for his good. He provided for his family the best he could, stayed with my mother until his death, kept a roof over our heads, clothes on our back, and food in our table. Sure, the Salvation Army and welfare department can do that too, and sometimes they did help us during our tough times, but they cannot make a person feel loved or give emotional self-esteem. My father worked hard to supply our physical needs but did not know how to supply our emotional needs or show love in an affectionate way.

I am writing this Father's Day tribute to remind fathers everywhere to cherish their role as a father. It is not an easy role to have, but a very rewarding one. Spend a lot of time with your children. They should be your top priority. You are their guide and example so be the person you want them to be. Set your expectations high for yourself and they will follow your footsteps. Cuddle and show them love so they will know how to cuddle and love their

children too. Give them security and self-worth so they will have their emotional needs met. Raise them to be ready to step into your shoes when it's their turn to be a parent.

There is no greater occupation on this earth than being a parent. It is the most demanding and unappreciated job we will ever have, but someday when the work stage is over and the benefit stage begins, it will be the most rewarding and satisfying job we will ever have too.

The day my father turned sixty he told my mother that he had lived a very lonely life. What makes his words so dynamic is that he was telling the truth. He did live a lonely life despite having a houseful of active, creative, and intellectual children who could have filled his heart and time full and overflowing. He financially did his best, but emotionally he was not there. My siblings and I grew up without his involvement or support in anything we did. He didn't know how to give advice, he gave instruction and spanked us if we didn't agree or listen. He didn't know how to give hugs and encouragement. He spoke discouraging words that put us down. His words tried to destroy our self-worth but he was too emotionally needy to understand what he was doing. He did to us what his parents did to him. I am sorry my grandparents did that to him, but they were just as emotionally needy as my father was.

I think about the father my father could have been had he been raised by a real "father." I think he would have enjoyed the sporting events of his children, the activities we were involved in, the many successes that we've had, and the legacy he leaves behind. My siblings and I did well in life, thanks mostly to our mother who taught us to forgive, love, respect, and believe in ourselves. She gave us emotional security and self-worth that our father couldn't.

I am sorry my father lived a very lonely life when he didn't have to. Those words came from his heart. He never had a chance to change things even if he wanted to. He died from a massive heart attack twenty-four hours later. His emotional heart was already broken before his physical heart stopped. It wasn't just his loss. We all lost by his emotional absence and putdowns. He left a void in all of our hearts and lives that only he could have filled.

So fathers, enjoy your children while you can. Take up the challenge of fatherhood. It is an endless and hard job, but the best one that anyone could ask for. Give your family all of you and not part of you. Look for love where it is and not where it is not. Encourage your children and lift them up to the high standards and expectations you have for them and yourself. Show them how to self-love. Teach them to be a parent so when they become one they will not be emotionally needy and fall short of the responsibility they have as a parent.

Happy Father's Day. May today be the beginning of something truly wonderful and amazing!