



Eulogy to My Dad (August 21, 1916 – June 12, 2003):

What can I say about a man that his family and friends don't already know? I think dad set the standards for us all to follow when it came to being kind, gentle, giving, forgiving, considerate and loving.

Of course, we can't forget his wonderful sense of humor, either. He always had a stale joke to tell and a prank to pull on some poor unsuspecting soul. It was that eternal little boy inside of him always trying to sneak out.

From what I understand, only weeks ago dad was playing tricks on his friends at the Cancer Support Group with a whoopee cushion. After catching them off guard with it a few times, he thought it would be a great idea to try it out for himself. He knew if he filled it up with as much air as possible he'd get better results. Well, he certainly did that. A combination of too much air in the cushion and trying it out on too hard of a chair resulted in a loud BANG as dad pounced on it with all his weight.

I didn't need to be there to see that "little boy" look on his face after he realized what he'd done because I'd seen that look a thousand times before. I also didn't need to be there to hear that impish laugh because I'd heard it a thousand times before too. It was the silly little things that brought great joy to dad and to others around him. If there's one thing I learned from dad it is to never lose the young person trapped inside my ever-aging body.

It was these qualities combined with his inviting smile and charming personality that made us love him the way we did... especially the women. I don't think it's a stretch of the imagination when I say that dad probably knew more women than even Hugh Hefner of Playboy fame. In fact, I think Hugh could've learned a few lessons from dad. We always ribbed him about his being quite the ladies man.

Heck, right before Linda and I left Australia just a few short weeks ago we stopped by the hospital to say our goodbyes as we headed up to Melbourne to catch our flight. He took one look at Linda and said, "You know, you've got quite the personality." Of course, he flashed that little boy smile at her and she just melted and gave him a big sloppy kiss... no, make that several big sloppy kisses.

Of course, I say this all in jest. Make no mistake about it, dad's heart and unwavering devotion belonged to only one woman... his lifelong companion and wife and our mother, Patricia.

At the beginning of our recent stay, dad reminded me of when I was a little boy and how I always liked to go fast. Whether he was pushing me along on his push bike or on my tricycle or in the go-cart he had built for me, I'd always tell him, "Faster, dad, faster!" So it was only fitting that as Linda and I took him from the parking lot into the hospital in his wheelchair he turned around to me to say, "Faster, John, faster!" Finally, dad was able to get his own back on me.

Dad always found humor in the face of his pain and suffering. What courage that man demonstrated. He never wanted to let his suffering be a burden to anyone. Even as we were shuffling him around from one doctor's appointment to another on our last trip he kept apologizing for ruining our holiday. We reminded him the reason for our trip was to do exactly the things we were doing. When I told him he'd be doing the same for any one of us he quickly replied, "You'd better believe I would!"

One of dad's greatest acts of love and kindness came 50 years ago. After having lost their respective spouses, mum and dad began their courtship, fell in love, and were married a short time after in December of 1953. While most men would've shied away from taking on the responsibility of an instant family of five children, dad's unwavering love for mum and her children left no doubt in his mind what he wanted to do. Even after I came along, dad counted his blessings because now he had six of his "own" children. I'm so grateful that mum and dad found each other. Because of their act of love, I ended up with four sisters and a brother whom I love dearly and would do anything for.

Unfortunately, my sisters Jane and Marilyn can't be with us in person today because of having lost their own battles with cancer. However, I know they are here spiritually to help comfort us and to escort dad on his journey to meet up with our Heavenly Father.

So, Jane and Marilyn... until we're all together again as a united family, you are now dad's guardians. Take good care of him and warn all the other angels about his antics!