

My Father

I've been trying to figure out how you take a lifetime with someone and put it into a few minutes.

And I don't think you really can.

Because when I think about him, I don't just think about the big moments.

I think about the simple ones.

Fishing together at Roche Lake.

Competing over absolutely everything.

It could be Monopoly. Trivial Pursuit. Or seeing who could pick the most winning football games that week.

It didn't really matter what we were doing — somehow, it could become a competition.

And neither one of us particularly liked losing.

One of my favourite memories happened when I basically stole him for ten days and took him to the Island.

He didn't exactly go willingly.

He spent so much of his life working, providing, protecting his family and making sure everybody else was taken care of that there were things in life he simply never allowed himself to experience.

I knew if I could just get him there, he would love it.

And he did.

He had the time of his life.

One morning, we were sitting on the balcony of our Airbnb at about five o'clock in the morning. It was a beautiful August morning, everything was quiet, and out in the bay we could hear and watch the orcas playing.

I remember looking over at him.

I will never forget his face.

There was something about seeing him sitting there, experiencing that moment, that will stay with me forever.

He also loved hanging out with all of my musician friends.

He loved sitting there listening to the stories about some of the artists we had all been privileged enough to play with over the years.

And you could see it on his face.

As someone told a story, you could almost watch him take himself right into that moment, like he was there with us when it happened.

And the truth is, for a lot of those moments, he was.

He was part of it.

He enjoyed the stories, the music, the people and just being there with everyone.

It was the simple things with him.

That's what mattered.

He was a protector.

He protected his family. He worked for his family. And at the end of the day, what he wanted more than anything was actually pretty simple:

He wanted everybody together.

And he wanted everybody happy.

That was him.

And then there was paving.

For probably forty years, I listened to him talk about this little paver he used to run.

If you knew him, you know exactly what I mean.

He loved that machine.

Over the years, he and I got to share a lot of paving moments together, and I can tell you that watching him work was something special.

When someone has spent their life mastering a craft, you can see it.

The movements are different. The decisions are instinctive. They don't have to think about what comes next.

They just know.

And he knew.

For about the last ten years, I had been searching for that paver he always talked about.

And finally, in June of this year...

I found it.

And I bought it.

He was so excited.

He couldn't wait to come out, get on that machine and show me all the things he could still do with it.

And he did.

My last paving memory with him happened the morning before he was admitted to the hospital.

He and I stood together on the screed of that paver.

And for one full pass...

we paved together.

Somebody might hear that and think, *That's your big poetic moment? Standing on the back of an old asphalt paver?*

Yeah.

It is.

Because if you didn't grow up watching someone who was the very best at his craft, maybe it wouldn't mean much.

But to me...

it was Shakespeare.

And I wouldn't trade that last pass with him for anything.

There are also the everyday things that I know I'm going to miss more than I probably even realize yet.

For years, I would call him on my hour drive home.

We would talk about the day.

What jobs we were doing.

What was coming up tomorrow.

How everybody worked that day.

What went right.

What went wrong.

Sometimes important things.

Sometimes absolutely nothing important at all.

I could just call him.

And he was there.

Those conversations became such a normal part of my life that it's hard to imagine that drive without them.

Thank you.

Thank you for the fishing trips.

Thank you for the competitions.

Thank you for every conversation on the drive home.

Thank you for everything you taught me about work, family, loyalty and taking care of the people you love.

And thank you for that last pass on the paver.

I couldn't have asked for more.

You were always there when I called.

And you will be missed more than I could ever explain standing here today.

So I'll finish this the way I think you would understand best.

Blue Whale for the pie.

That's game, set and match, Pop.

I love you.

— Ron