

# Opinion: Father's Day matters even without dad

By Kathryn Reed

This is my sixth Father's Day without a father – at least physically without my dad. He died April 28, 2010.

We were never close. It was hard to talk to him. He was of the generation to be the provider – at which he excelled at. He was of the generation where demonstratively showing love or even doing so with words was frowned upon. This, too, he excelled at.



Don Reed

I love my dad. (Yes, I say it in the present tense.) And I know he loved me. I know we actually said, “I love you” to each other – but probably less than a handful of times.

Lately, I have wished he were here. When we did talk, it was usually about serious matters. I've had some serious issues to deal with in the last year. No immediate family member has been there for me, at least in the way I would have liked. It's been a learning process. I've learned I have incredible friends.

Ironically, I have “talked” to dad more in the last year than I feel like I did at anytime when he was alive. Maybe it’s because I get to hear what I want and not what might have actually been said. But I doubt that. I’m not one to conjure up false memories or false “what ifs”. Truth be told, I haven’t heard much. But it felt good to talk.

Dad was always the voice of authority in our house growing up. It was oppressive and stifling at times. It was authoritarian. It was a household essentially of don’t speak until you are spoken to. It was a household of where asking questions, asking “why” was verboten.

What an irony (or not) that I chose a profession where the overriding question is “why?”. I still don’t always get my questions answered, but I keep asking them. I joke that “why” is my favorite word. Maybe it’s not really a joke.

Dad was the oldest of four kids. I’m the youngest of his four kids. I was never daddy’s little girl. There were three “big girls” before me. But that’s another story. Or not. It has a lot to do with what I’d like to talk to my dad about if we could visit for an hour or two.

Dads have a special role in every child’s life – or at least they should. Even without my dad physically here, he still plays a role in my life – and it’s still evolving. I never expected that.

I’m spending today with my mom. Our relationship has changed without dad, as it has for all of us kids. I’m guessing it does for most families when one parent dies. Our relationship was always good. (Well, there was high school and when I bought a one-way ticket to Europe in my 20s – but we got through all of that). The relationship has been strained lately. She made a decision I don’t think dad would have made. Intellectually, I know it’s for the best. Emotionally, it’s been incredibly difficult.

I hope today we can move forward. Life is short and precious. Misunderstandings and differing opinions need to be acknowledged. But forgiveness is the most important thing. No one will do everything we want, but that doesn't make their decision wrong, it just makes it different than we might have chosen.

Happy Parents' Day – that's how I now see this third Sunday of June.