

## ***This Father's Day: Celebrating Dads One Grandpop at a Time***

It's been said that it takes a village to raise a family. I would add that if not a village, then at the very least, a grandfather.

My dad retired a few short months ago, and I can honestly say that I've never seen so much of him. When I was growing up, my father worked a lot. As in, a *lot*. He always made it to our games or performances and we certainly took family vacations together, but he was raised to believe in hard work and hard work is what he did.

It's a different world for my children. They will never remember my father as a man coming and going at odd hours to get to job sites. They won't know him as someone who often couldn't make it home for dinner. They won't know him as the hard-working father he was to me.

Instead, they know him as their *grandfather*, someone who builds tree-houses and takes them to Dino's for lunch and entertains them for hours with games of hide and seek and tickle monster. As someone who will talk to them, love them, and protect them. As sentimental and cheesy as it sounds, it seems author Alex Haley was right on when he said, "Nobody can do for little children what grandparents do. Grandparents sort of sprinkle stardust over the lives of little children."

But the relationship between my dad and my children doesn't just benefit them. It benefits him as well. Though I've been watching my parent's transition into their new roles for the past several years, it has been since his retirement that I've really seen my dad enjoy it. (While he has been an active part in the lives of my children since they were born, suddenly it seems, we don't go a day without him. Even our dog seems forlorn if my dad isn't over our house daily.)

As for my father, he seems younger, funnier, more relaxed. Sure, this could be attributed to a shockingly well-suited life of

retirement, but I swear it has something to do with the kids. While they are exhausting him (he was recently forced by my four year old daughter to carry her around the block on his shoulders in 80 degree heat), they are also keeping him young. They make him laugh. They make him sweat (see above walk around the block). They make him tell stories—about my sister and I when we were kids, about him as a young man, a soldier, a boy scout, and about when he met my mom. They truly consider him their own.

And he is needed now, at 65, as much, or even more than when he had young children of his own. My children need him—their grandfather—as well as their own father. Because while their *father* is responsible for the entirety of their lives (including discipline, rule setting, and limits), their grandfather isn't constrained by those limits. He becomes their friend, their ally, their confidant. He becomes, along with my mother,

their secret candy dispenser, partner in crime, vacation planner, and biggest cheerleader. It is nearly impossible for him to tell them, "no".

But he's also able to help them grow in way that's different from the way my husband and I guide them through life. He's more able to see, with a whole lifetime in his rearview mirror, what's really a big deal and what's not. He's got the advantage of hindsight at his disposal and he uses it wisely. My children are the benefactors of this wisdom.

My father was a great dad, though like everyone else, far from perfect. As a grandfather, though, he is nearly Rockwellian. And this Father's Day, I'd like to thank him. For being a terrific dad, yes. But for adding to that and embracing grand-parenthood with all he's got...absolutely. Happy Father's Day, Dad.

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