

My Parents (for Dad's 90th & Mom's 87th)

Elaine Vanden Born, 27 August 2022

My parents are two truly amazing and incredible people. Together they have weathered difficult and tragic times. They have also enjoyed and celebrated numerous blessings. They are truly a unit and after 64 years of marriage they are best friends and remain completely smitten with one another. The love and care that they show one another, their family, friends, community, neighbours, and strangers is something that I have had the privilege to witness over and over and over again. It is really quite impressive!

This is supposed to be a birthday tribute, however, not an anniversary tribute so I will diverge and briefly describe both of them. As we all know, I am a wordy individual, so I hope that this tribute does not go on so obnoxiously long that it lulls anyone to sleep.

As today is my Mother's actual birthday, I will begin with a few words that describe her and then one experience that exemplifies one of those words. Being this **BRIEF** will be quite a challenge for me, but I will endeavor to do my best.

My Mom is a woman who has been blessed with many gifts and talents. She is wise, thoughtful, loving, quiet, beautiful, a family person, and a woman of faith. I admire her integrity and her ability to be both a fabulous cook and homemaker. She appreciates the arts as well as the trades! . She appreciates the finer things in life, but will rarely indulge in them. She is **an** incredibly loyal, discreet, determined, and hard working person. She is also an amazingly **STRONG** person. Mom has experienced more than her share of both emotional and physical pain but I have very, very rarely, IF EVER, heard her complain or be bitter about the extremely tragic and painful things she has experienced. She loves to read, play cards and word games and she is most impressive when it comes to using her iPad, a computer, as well as the PVR. I would hazard a guess that very few of her contemporaries are as capable as she is in these arenas.

One thing that many of you may or may not know, is that she continues to be a very good listener and there are times when I wonder if she feels trapped in her chair and cannot escape from me when we are chatting. If she does feel that way, she has never, ever let on. She patiently listens to me on a regular basis and both she and Dad are immensely supportive and an amazing blessing to me in my daily life. I could say so many more things about you Mom – and I hope we can have a day just like this one for you very soon..... sooner than your 90th birthday! I love you dearly and you mean so very much to me. I am grateful for all of your love and support and I wish you a very Happy Birthday!

Now, onto the Professor Emeritus, my wonderful father. As with Mom, there are so many characteristics and attributes that he has been blessed with, which I greatly admire. My Dad is quite simply a brilliant individual – particularly blessed in the areas of Math, the Sciences and languages. 40 years after he took Calculus, he tutored me, with unbelievable ease. It is only due to his tutelage that I was able to obtain a good grade in that dreadful class.

Dad is disciplined, detail oriented, efficient, gentle hearted, thoughtful and generous. He is remarkably even tempered, calm and logical. In my 51 years, I have NEVER heard him YELL or even lose his temper. Procrastination is not part of his DNA. He is reliable, dependable and a

man of his word. If he says he will do something, you can 100% count on him following through with whatever he has committed to doing – and doing it to the absolute best of his ability.

He contributed to his work place, to West End Church and to the CRC denomination as a whole. Over the years I think he has lost count of how many different times and he has been involved in and on numerous boards and committees – often being the chair of these committees. Dad is a life long learner and he is likely the most well read person that I know. Try as we might, he will rarely join Mom and me in watching a movie, and certainly never a TV show..... other than the news. He is up to date on world events, as he reads 3 newspapers regularly – the Edmonton Journal, The Globe and Mail, and a newspaper from Holland.

In addition to the above, Dad is a technology wizard. I believe he created some sort of tracking/spread sheet for Joan and Andy's original law office that was in use for numerous years and may very well still be in use. I cannot count the number of times he has helped me with different details on my various computers, printers and phones. He is also quite handy, and I remember him coming to my condo so many times to put up blinds and curtains, fix plumbing and/or lighting issues, help me hang art and photos (photos that were enlarged images of his photos, which he had previously helped me frame), assemble numerous items of furniture (my bed frame, desk, kitchen table, a dresser..... and this list could go on and on, but I think you get the picture.

His willingness to help others in any way they might request, especially his children, grand children and church family is also incredibly impressive. One almost has to be careful when asking him for help because his typical M.O. is to immediately stop whatever he is in the midst of and immediately help whomever has requested help. Again, having lived with them for such a long time, once again I cannot count how many times I have walked into his office, asked him for a favour or his help, and he simply stands up immediately and begins to either assist me or complete the task solely on his own.

A particular characteristic of Dad's that I really admire is his compassion and thoughtfulness. When one of our neighbours was suffering from a long, drawn out battle with cancer, Dad would visit with him and his wife. Asking them first if he could do so, he also prayed with and for them, and they gratefully accepted his kind offer. He made sure to keep in touch with them and despite hardly knowing them, it was clear that they were deeply touched by his care and compassion.

On a similar note, Dad is exceptional at making sure that new people from the neighbourhood, the university and church feel welcome (Mom also excels at this). If Dad sees a new person in church he makes a bee line to go and talk with them and welcome them. In past years newcomers would often be invited over for coffee or dinner. He is also extremely mindful and thoughtful about sending cards – whether it be sympathy cards, birthday cards, anniversary cards, congratulations cards.... And the list goes on. It is not at all rare for people to call him, text him, email him, or come up to him at church to express their surprise and appreciation for his thoughtful (and beautifully handmade) cards.

Along with Mom, Dad was a tremendous source of support to Grandma Harriet. (A shout out to Jean and Clarence for being much the same, simply from further away). Dad would plant bedding plants every year for Grandma Harriet while she lived at Summit Village. He also did her taxes and managed her finances for many years, changed the filter on her humidifier seemingly millions of times when at Emmanuel Home and this list could go on and on!

Grandma Harriet was blessed with wonderful loving, loyal and supportive children and in-laws – here in E-town, Calgary and Down Under.

I could go on for several more pages about the numerous wonderful attributes that Dad possesses, but that would take more than a day. I will end with how nurturing and caring he is, and yet again, I could have pages of examples of how he has nurtured and cared for me – particularly in the last 10-15 years. As a kid I remember him teaching me how to ski, specifically how to snow plow, turn and become adept at the basic fundamentals of downhill skiing. With me being so much younger than my siblings, we often did ski trips with either just the two of us, or the two of us joining other friends at the hill. I can vividly remember going up the t-bar with him, and the bar would be closer to the back of his knees, thus providing him very little support, while it was exactly where I needed it. I have so many memories of him always carrying 90% of our downhill skiing gear. He would carry both of our sets of skis, the backpack with our food and mitts etc., while all I had to carry were our two sets of poles. Similarly, when we went on a hike to Berg Lake with Karen and Helen when I was in Junior High, although I did carry a hiking pack, I think it only had my clothes, and maybe a little bit of food and water in it. Dad not only carried both of our sleeping bags, but also the tent and probably the vast majority of cookware and my portion of food.

In recent years, when I have been quite ill, almost every morning/afternoon he inquires as to how I am feeling, how I have slept and if I would like him to make some eggs or other breakfast for me. On particularly bad days, he will deliver my breakfast to me in bed. He will also regularly pop into my room just to check on me during those bad days. When I tell people that I live with my parents, they tend to think that I am the one helping them and doing some care taking. I quickly have to correct their thinking and explain that it is definitely the other way around.... I play the role of “care receiver”. As one might imagine, these kinds of interactions are always monumental confidence and ego building experiences. In all seriousness, I know how fortunate and blessed I am to have Dad (along with Mom) who have housed me and my dogs, fed me, and kept me company during what could have been an experience that left someone less fortunate homeless. I am so grateful to have such a generous, caring and nurturing father.

Dad, you have been a blessing to everyone in this room in so many ways. Your roles as a husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, grand father-in-law and great grand father are roles that you excel at. I am so happy that your mind remains ridiculously sharp, that, on the whole, your body is holding up well, and that you have such a beautiful and deeply committed relationship with Mom. You are a man of faith, who has been blessed with many talents. Your strength through the trials you have faced inspires me. I am grateful for our strong bond, for getting to know you so well in the past 10 years as a person, who also happens to be my father. Thank you for being the person you are! I deeply admire and respect you. More than anything, I hope you know how deeply you are loved and appreciated by so many people. Speaking for myself, I love you with all of my heart!!

Wishing you an early Happy 90th and may God continue to bless you in the days and years ahead!