

One of many things I could count on as a kid was being at our family table in time for dinner every single night. We would gather for one of mom's dinners while listening to my sisters Patty, Mary, Cathy and Liz share their latest triumphs or challenges. "Patty-Mary-Cathy-Liz", by the way, was pretty much used as a single name when ever my Dad called any of my sisters. As the youngest one at the table, my role was to be quiet and listen. While I did not pay much attention to my sisters' endless chatter, I found it quite easy to hang on to every word that my dad spoke. He would tell us how a navy jet can be refueled while in flight, how a rivet held metal together, or how these young engineers out of college aren't any good because they never took a drafting class. I remember a rare occasion when I spoke up after listening to some of my dad's stories. I asked what I thought to be a perfectly logical and honest question: "Dad, are you the smartest person at your company?" I did not understand why my sisters started laughing at me. Dad simply smiled, rubbed my hair, and said, "No, Jimmy, I'm not the smartest person. I just know a little about a lot of things."

Yes, Dad knew about a lot of things. Whether I was 7 years old, or 49 years old, my dad was always the smartest man I knew. Edgar Eugene Remley was born on September 20, 1929 in San Clemente, CA, just one month before the start of the great depression. His parents, Zita and Lucien, did the best that they could during those tough years. When their financial situation worsened, Dad and his younger brother traveled with their pregnant mom to live with relatives in Nebraska while his dad continued to look for stable work in California. Eventually his dad found a good permanent job, and the family returned to California and eventually settled in Alhambra. There they raised a victory garden and learned to recycle, reuse and reduce before it became fashionable. Those formative years would mold a man who valued self reliance, fortitude, and empathy. Even though he was often sick and asthmatic as a child, he would sneak off and play football with the neighbor kids whenever he could. Dad described all of the lovely medical experiments that they would try on him, such as the use of mercury, chlorine, and other state of the art toxins of the 1930s. During school dad worked at a library and worked to increase his forearm strength by gripping six books at a time in each hand. He would often show off his Popeye-like strength years later when we worked on some of his many project cars in our backyard. During his senior year at Alhambra High, he played on the undefeated football team that won the championship.

A few years after high school, he met a young Mary Helen Diggins, and that began a story that lasted more than 50 years. Just two weeks ago when I spoke to Dad at his house, he told me, "Make sure people know that Mary and I were always One." We know that Dad, and we are happy that you are together again.

When people used to ask me what my dad did, I always had a hard time answering. Not because I didn't know his title at work, but because I knew he was so much more than a title. He was always larger than life to me. Like a superhero. He was someone who seemed to be able to fix any problem and do anything he set his mind to. I learned early from him work is honorable, and that paying someone else to do work that you can do your self was taking the lazy way out. I still remember how guilty I felt the first time I had someone else change the oil in my car. I also remember the frustration my dad had when he finally had to do the same, many years later.

If he did not know how to do something himself, Dad would make a point to learn how to do it. Before he built the house addition, he borrowed and purchased volumes of books on plumbing, electricity, and construction. That eight bedroom house still stands proud, and contains countless memories of the family gatherings that we had there. When he bought his first foreign car, he bought a mechanics book that covered every system of that car. When we needed new furniture, he took classes on upholstery at the community college. When he wanted to advance at work, he took college classes in the evenings to learn the skills needed for his next position. And when we needed help with our homework, he would read our entire textbook, and take as long as was needed to help us understand a difficult concept. Dad was an expert craftsman, mechanic, electrician, teacher, and so much more. He had a thirst for knowledge that was never satisfied. The countless books and newspapers that he read gave him a world view that was more sophisticated than those held by most politicians or academics.

As a young adult, it was not unusual for dad to have 2 or 3 jobs at a time. Whether it was short order cook, mechanic's assistant, ditch digger, or roofer, Dad did whatever was needed to support his growing family. One of those jobs was building wooden crates at a company called Sergeant Fletcher. His hard work was quickly recognized, and he was promoted to lead the department. While taking night classes in drafting, math, and engineering, Dad continued to be recognized for his work ethic and continued to advance, eventually becoming the Director of Manufacturing Engineering over the course of his 45 years with the company.

Dad built the house addition, fixed the cars, did the woodworking and worked so hard every day of his life for one singular purpose – his family. He put each one of us before himself. For many years well after they left the house, we still referred to the various bedrooms upstairs as "Mike's room", or "Patty's room", or "Susie's room". When I asked Dad once why we still called the bedroom that I was sleeping in for the past several years "Mike's room", he said, "well, you never know if your brother and sisters may need to come home someday". I think this question is what caused him a few years later to hang a road sign at the top of the stairs that declared the hallway "Jim's Drive". Dad would welcome home any of his kids or grandkids at any time, no questions asked, and no matter how young or old they were. He knew the challenges all of us had, but would take every opportunity to endlessly brag about everything we did. He loved hearing about our days, and beamed whenever anyone of us did the smallest accomplishment. How many times did we hear him brag about Mike's time at Stanford, Susie's academic prowess, Johnny's sweetness, Patty's charitable adventures, Mary's political activity, Cathy's business successes, Liz's flying ponytail, and my ability to program the VCR. Dad bragged about his extended family as well. I know he at one point told everyone here at St. Louise how proud he was of his brother Joe for becoming a deacon in the Church. He often would say how impressed he was with the devotion his brother Noel showed to his wife.

When one of us had a crisis, however, it weighed heavily on him. For most of his life his only regrets were the few small crosses he could not bear for his kids. For years, he lamented not being able to afford braces for Cathy when she was younger, having to rely so much on Mike at a young age, and questioning if he could do more for Johnny. Even though these concerns seem trivial to us now, to Dad, we were everything. Dad was devoted to my mom and each of

us so strongly that I believe he could not at the end understand why all of us are not still living in the same house that he built for us.

Dad showed this devotion in his own way. Every birthday and holiday was a big event that required immediate and extended family to assemble at the house. Every summer our family went camping, usually by a lake. His custom built camping patrol box would be strapped on the roof of our station wagon while all of us crammed inside for the trip up the mountain. These camping trips made all of us kids appreciate and love God's gift of nature. His legacy of camping continues with many of his grandchildren, including my own two boy scouts. He often would do things to get closer to us quietly and without any fanfare. For many years, one of our chores was to wake up early and make breakfast for my dad before he went to work. For some of us it was torture, and for some of us, it was what dad intended: rare one on one time between just one kid and Dad.

I remember a weekend a few weeks after I received my driver's license, Dad told me, let's take a drive. That "drive" turned out to be a 700 mile trip to Carmel and back. We talked about his teenage years, and the cars he used to drive. He talked about the time he spent in a garage, and how he could swap out a flat head motor in just a couple of hours. I only caught him looking at the speedometer once, and he never mentioned anything about my driving skills. I believe that one of the greatest gifts that Dad gave us, besides his unconditional love, was the passing on of self reliance.

Despite working multiple jobs and raising a family, Dad always found time to volunteer. He and mom were one of the founding families of St. Louise, and Dad was here with Father Walsh when they broke ground for what was the first Church building. He served in whatever roles Father Walsh asked him to do for many years. Neighbors would call on Dad to help with whatever projects they were starting in their houses. And, of course, later I saw my brother-in-laws' final acceptance when my sisters called on him for help in their houses.

In many ways, Dad was full of contradictions. Despite being sickly as a youth and losing some hearing to Scarlet fever, he made the varsity football team in high school and spent a lifetime performing hard work. He could not have found someone more different than himself to marry, yet he and mom complemented each other in their unique way for 55 years. His tough exterior would easily melt away and expose a tender heart. Great grandkids were known to have been especially adept at exposing this heart. And as important as hard work and self reliance are to him, he also showed us that empathy trumps everything else.

I hope they have some interesting stamps in heaven, Dad, and I hope there are no speed limits.

Thank you Dad, for all that you given us, for all that you taught us, and for all you have been to us. You will forever be my superhero.