



## Hi Dad!

Back in early April, it happened that a Story A Week Sunday matched up with my daughter Himi's birthday, and today it's the turn of another family member ... my father! This year is no particular milestone for him - that comes one year from today - but for one more year, he can enjoy being 'only' a septuagenarian ... he's 79 this morning.

What an interesting ride through life he has had so far! He grew up in a one-parent family - something he shares with my mother - and at a quite young age left school and began to work. He was very lucky in the timing of his birth; war was raging in Europe as he became a young adult, but just as he reached the age to be conscripted into the armed forces, the conflict finished, and he faced no danger.

Over the sixty years since then, he has worn so many hats, and in so many different places, that it is impossible for me to keep track of all the things he has done. Just the other day I was listening on the BBC radio to a program about British post-war dance bands, and yes - they played one of the records made by the famous band he played in at that time. It's hard to visualize one's father as a young musician playing every night to crowds of screaming young girls, but he was there!

How I wish he would follow my lead and write a Story A Week! Actually, because of his peripatetic lifestyle I'm sure he's got enough material to do a Story A Day! He and my mother have lived in dozens of places over the years, from the north of England, then London, over to a couple of different cities on the Canadian prairies, to the west coast of Canada, to Toronto, then to Australia, back to England, and then back to Canada again ... and I'm sure that there are more stops that I don't know about.

And the jobs he has had! From a clothing factory during the war years, to the dance bands, then to military bands, a stint as a restaurant owner, freelance studio musician, home renovator, college instructor, director of children's bands ... and again, many that I don't know about ...

We hear sometimes that the relationship between a son and a father can be complex and difficult. There were certainly no difficulties between us in my childhood years; I have a huge grab-bag full of warm memories: learning to ride a bicycle with him pushing on the seat, playing with the wooden toys he made for my brother and I, playing in a pond with a little blue boat that he 'helped' me make ...

As I approached adulthood things became more distant for us, as they do for many fathers and sons. I had dreams of being a musician, something that must have given him very mixed feelings, because he could see - as I couldn't at the time - that I just didn't have very much innate talent for it. He kept such feelings to himself of course, and stood aside while I made my run at it.

The two of us seem to share a degree of manual skill; I make a living with my hands these days, and he has built and fixed up any number of houses for his family at steps along the way. But because I engage in more 'intellectual' pursuits than he does - computer programming, writing essays, and suchlike - I think he sometimes has the feeling that I look down on him for his lack of such skills. I don't of course, not in the slightest. In fact, the more years that pass by, the more my feelings of respect for his life and accomplishments grows.

He and my mother, through years that were not always easy for them, did a wonderful job of making interesting and productive lives for themselves, while always providing a perfectly stable support framework for their three children to grow up in. I can't imagine how my childhood could possibly have been any better.

Dad is ferociously healthy, is active both physically and mentally, and is pretty obviously going to be with us for a long time yet. I'm looking forward to writing the Story A Week on the next time his birthday falls on a Sunday ... his 90th in 2017!

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