

Tributes



DAD'S EYES DANCED WITH CANDLE LIGHT

Dad's eyes danced with candle light,
As children waited in pure delight
For tales he wove of his childhood years—
Of smashing pumpkins on Halloween,
And being chased by police
Through alleys and streets,
Of stealing pies from a neighbor's porch,
And scaling a water tower on a three-dollar bet.

Dad's eyes danced with candle light.

He slapped his knee as the
Room filled with laughter.
The children imagined
The boy they never knew.

Dad's eyes danced with candle light,
As children pleaded, "One more, Daddy,
One more story, please!"

Dad's eyes danced with candle light.

Lisa Holmes

A BOND BUT WITH REGRET – A 9-11 MEMORIAM

We went to work that day,
A day like all the others
But as the day would come to end
We would reach out to our brothers.

Everything turned upside down
As we saw those towers crumble
Our hearts were aching inside out
Our nation was made humble.

Ghostly figures in the dust
Darkness everywhere
Rubble, dust, and agony
A nation in despair.

Expressionless gray faces
Searching aimlessly through rubble
Searching, wandering, desperate
Buildings down to rubble.

We pulled ourselves together
And our freedom was relearned
And as the ashes cleared that place
The world watched in concern.

We have rebuilt that city
But never will forget
The day that our great nation
Found its bond
But
With
Regret.

Polly Baker

THE ROCKING CHAIR

My Grandma had a rocking chair, and she sat in it all the time. She got it from her mother and loved it so much that she wouldn't let anyone else sit in it at all. Then she got sick, and she wouldn't eat at all. She passed away, and so we put a candle in the rocking chair. We didn't know it, but she had written some poetry. We put it in the rocking chair with the candle. It just sits there in the window, and no one sits in it at all, but her spirit.

Sherri Flynn

PRAY

Each time I lay down to pray
I thank God that you want to stay

Without you in my life, it would be hell
I'd never want to leave this cell

If you weren't in my life, I'd cry
In fact, I might even want to die

My love for you is still strong
I want to love you forever long

Being without you now is all I can bear
So, please say that you'll always be there

I hope you'll be with me when I return
'Cause that's what love's all about

I'll say "I love you" so loud
That it can be heard in a cloud

My love for you will never shrink
And with you, I'm tickled pink

I know the wait may be long
When I return back to you, I'll never do wrong

Tracy Bodnar

MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY

My favorite holiday, to be honest, is my children's birthdays. They are the most favorite times for me. I remember when my children were first born and when I held them for the first time. Now I spend time with them each year on their special day doing special things to make each year more memorable for them. We celebrate their birthdays for four days straight. We usually have a day set ahead of their birthdays called a mother and son day or a mother and daughter day. That's where we spend time together doing what they enjoy even if it's just talking, laughing, and acting silly. That's what we do.

My children enjoy their birthdays with me. It takes us two days to prepare for the day of their birthday. First, I go to the store to buy their special foods. Then, I get the cake, balloons, and other gifts they might like. Also, I get their favorite movies. We play games and play music, and we dance for hours. It's so funny because the children are trying to teach me the latest popular dance steps. Later they start to tease me and imitate my moves. We laugh, sing, and play throughout the festivity. We stay up all night until the day after that person's birthday has passed.

Their birthday is also a day with little or no restrictions. My children can pretty much go crazy having fun. I cancel everyone out of this special day. I will not have any hindrance or infringements on our time together.

Also their birthdays are a time to reflect and share the moment and the previous year's joys, pains, and expectations. Sometimes we allow other people to join in the celebrations but not too often. My children like it when it's just us. Each year on my children's birthdays we get closer; our relationship becomes much deeper. It's not often children sixteen and thirteen can hang out with their parents and be open and free. It's a good time for me also because I

can act like a kid myself. I enjoy our discussions, the laughs, and the disagreements.

I really enjoy my children to the fullest and I enjoy their very different personalities and traits. My children are a treasure from God, and I never take my job of raising them lightly. We are each other's strengths, hopes, and dreams. I hope and pray our special birthday tradition doesn't stop when they both turn eighteen years old.

My children's birthdays are a favorite holiday for me. We build a strong bond each and every time they have a birthday. So I advise you to build a bond and create a memorable time with your children. "They will thank you later!"

Lori Clemons

WHO'S THAT PERSON?

Who's that person who stands before me?
Who's strong and courageous and full of love for God...
Whose face is very pleasing to look upon...
Whose eyes look wisely to see the problems of others...
Whose ears gently listen to every single word...
Whose mouth speaks words of praise to God and words of
reassurance...
Whose shoulders carry many burdens and take the weight off
others...

Whose arms caress so tenderly with hugs that lift your
spirits...
Whose hands have a special touch but also discipline...
Whose legs and knees bend constantly, faithfully in prayer...
Who is this person that God did make that stands before me?
I thank you, God, from the depths of my soul for making this
person my mother.

-- *Dedicated to Mary Watts*

Delores Wong

MY BEST FRIEND

My best friend is always there for me when I need her.

When I need someone to talk to, she is there.

When I need someone to listen to me, she is there.

When I need help with something, she is there.

When I need a shoulder to cry on, she is there.

When I need someone to have dinner with, she is there.

When I need someone to have fun with, she is there.

When I'm having a bad day, she is there.

When I'm sad and need someone to love me, she is always
there.

She is there whenever I need her, and I call her Mom.

She is the world to me.

Bobbi Sassen

DEAR MY FIRST ESL TEACHER

It has been almost 3 years since you've retired. I am still attending that ESOL class at the same site. This is my 5th year, and I'm still not confident with my English skill. Almost everyday I cross my fingers that Sarah won't bring hard homework for me to modify.

I want to thank you for asking about Sarah in your latest Christmas card. It has been 3 and a half years since you attended Sarah's IEP meeting. Speaking of the meeting, I can't thank you enough for being there and comforting me after the meeting. You weren't a direct teacher of Sarah, nor mine at that time. You showed up to help an old student whom you taught 10 years ago. I still remember vividly what you taught me when you saw me struggling with Sarah; "The wheel grinds slowly." This is one of a few American proverbs that I can always recall because I can feel it with my real life.

About Sarah; there is always bad news and good news. The good news is, Sarah HAS toilet trained! Yeah!! I am finally released from this burden. NO MORE data collections, NO MORE research, NO MORE toilet training ABA, NO MORE psychologists consultants and NO MORE smelly diaper pail! Well, I still need to see the psychologist for another issue though. To tell the truth, I rarely talked about my anxiety that I had about whether Sarah would be toilet trained by age 18. Thinking of her bio-neurological disorder, it would not be strange to hear of 20- or 30-year-olds still untrained.

The bad news is Sarah's AAC device is broken again, and who knows how long it will take to get it fixed. We determined at our last AT meeting that Sarah needed a new AAC device. However, we did not have time to discuss what kind she needs. Another meeting was proposed, but the school never

followed through. In other words, my struggles to ensure Sarah receives the best education continue to this day.

Sarah is now ten years old. She stays in the regular class. She goes to the resource room for mostly math, because she HATES the math textbook and throws it on the floor. She is learning the same 4th grade academic content as her peers, so she has homework. Most of it is makeup worksheets from attending OT and speech sessions. Sarah has a new aide (who is also a behavior interventionist) this year, and she's really good to Sarah. Sarah's old sign language interpreter left in the last school year. The school hired a new interpreter. Can you guess how long she stayed? – one day. No one could believe it. I asked Sarah if she was nice to the new interpreter. She signed "yes." I asked her if she hit, spit, kicked, ran away, or screamed. She signed "no" for each. I guess a regular interpreter has no idea how to manage a child with special needs.

Lately I started enjoying crafts again (mostly plastic canvas) because Sarah is interested in that. I have been stocking up on craft kits for her for age. Her fine motor skills and eye coordination are still very poor. So she needs my help for every stitch. She made Winnie the Pooh's picture and I made a recliner (TV remote control holder). Now I'm working on "Sofa" (a tissue box cover) to match it. She is keen to watch my hand movements to see how the project is done. I hope that someday she can do a craft kit all by herself. To think of it, it requires a lot of tasks such as reading comprehension, fine motor skills, eye coordination and perception, organizational skill, etc. I know you are a good crafter. I wonder what you are making now.

Last week I went shopping with a friend, and we talked about how beautiful it is where we are living. Snow covered everything in pure white, and the snow crystals on the tree branches were glittering to reflect the sunlight. It was like we

were in the world of the Christmas card or in a poetry photo book. Then this morning, our driveway and the front of our house were covered with frozen ice sheets from melting snow. Sarah was almost panicking as she walked, it was so slippery, and of course her snow boots were not much help. My back was hurt carrying Sarah to the school transportation van. I hope you won't have the same kind of trouble like me. Stay inside and keep warm!

Until next time,
Fumiko

Abbreviations used in letter:

AAC = Alternative Augmentative Communication

AT = Assistive Technology

ABA = Apply Behavior Analysis

OT = Occupational Therapy

IEP = Individual Educational Plan

Fumiko Adair

LIGHTHOUSE OF MY HEART

You're the one who lightens my dark places,
The one who's trustworthy, come what may.
On the roller coasters of my life
And the slow Ferris wheels
You walk and talk with me,
Lighthouse of my Heart

Your silence sometimes astounds me,
And yet I feel close to you even then.
When you whisper,
I stand listening with bated breath
For your next reply.
For you and only you are
The Lighthouse of my Heart.

If only I could be
Yet a candle in your window;
The winds could never put me out.
For you and only you
Are the Lighthouse of my Heart.
It never goes out.

Theresa Blanchard

MY BEST FRIEND, AND THE PERSON I USED TO KNOW

I have a little story to tell you. Everyone has a best friend, but a mother is usually not it. I grew up in a very small town where everyone knew you, and everyone talked. I also came from a large family of eleven. My dad was known as the town drunkard, and my mother was very sick. A lot of it had to do with her being married to my father. I don't even like to refer to him as that. Just someone I used to know. Which happens to be the name of a song. That just came to me.

I always wanted to be close to my mother but always felt she was too sick and did not have enough time for me. I was always busy cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the other children. My older sisters were out dating and trying to find a boyfriend, and the younger children couldn't care for themselves. So being in the middle, I had to do what I thought would make my mom proud of me.

My mother was around on and off. When she was around it was torture for her, from the person that I used to know. I knew him well you see because when my mother wasn't around, he would begin to abuse and torture me. So if you are wondering why I refer to him as that, you know now. He would beat all of us kids and sometimes hurt us bad. I can remember him pistol-whipping me. For those who don't know what that means, it is when someone takes a gun and begins to beat you with it.

The few times that she would be in a normal frame of mind, he would snap her back out of it. He used to stick loaded guns to her head with all of us children in the room and threaten to blow her head off. She would try to commit suicide to get away from it, then would be hospitalized for several weeks and even months at a time. Sometimes she would come out of there not knowing anything or anyone. It

was so sad always to see her like that. I knew I had to face life and go on, in order to make it.

As I grew older, I began to learn a lot, and I grew up fast. I had to in order to survive. It was up to me, and I had to make the best of it. I was leaving, never to return, and I didn't know what the younger children were going to do. Well guess what? They learned like I did and made the best of it.

I grew up, at least what I thought to be grown up. The children did make it, and I got out of there and started to live my life. After getting married, I wasn't permitted to go around my mother or family because they were all crazy, and it would be insane to do so. So I went 20 years or longer without being around my family or my mother – and sure not that ugly, mean person that I used to know.

I always wanted to see my mom. I missed her, and I loved her very much. As I grew up, I learned that it wasn't her fault, and she couldn't help it. I finally got out of a bad marriage and finally one day got up enough courage to call her and start a conversation. I began to have a conversation with someone I really never knew that well, but I also found myself wanting and feeling a need to get close to her. She would talk about things my sisters and brothers were doing and what was going on in their lives also. It became interesting. I began to realize that they couldn't help the way they were brought up, no more than I could.

My other sisters were always sending word to me that I thought I was too good and that I never did anything for my mother, that they were sick of always having to be the ones who took her to doctor appointments and to the store. They had to let her live with them and care for her. I tried not letting it get to me. I guess I felt more guilt than anything for not helping her. So I began to go and take her to the store and to doctor appointments and anything else I could

do for her. By this time my father passed away at Christmas time. I know that you probably noticed that I called him father.

There is a sad, but true ending to this. It makes me happy because for the first time I see my mother starting to live and come alive and almost be a little normal. I started to let her talk to me a lot when driving down the road. I kept quiet because I wanted to learn things from her. I did learn things I never knew; now I have a greater understanding. That is when I realized that I loved her so much and that she really was and is my best friend in the whole world. I had never had a friend like this before. I am so close to my mother now. I talk to her everyday and tell her how much I love her. I see her a lot, and we are best friends. I can tell her anything. My sisters and brothers know that I am now back in the picture and that I care for her. They are glad to be rid of her. As for me, I am glad to have her all to myself. I also have looked back, and I understand now why things happened the way they did. I guess it has been worth it all because I am a good cook. I keep a clean house. I love my children and have given them everything I never had as a child, which mostly was love and a mother. And guess what else? They too are my best friends, so my mother passed down a lot of good things to me.

So I have my mother and my two girls as my best friends. The most precious gift a mother could give. I also hope and pray that my girls grow up and realize that what they went through in life was only a lesson from life's experiences, and that someday they will learn to forgive me for my mistakes, understand the reasons for them, and love me as I have my mother. I also pray that they have me for their best friend.

Vickie Hargraves

TODAY

Today someone broke my heart.
They said the words that tore me apart.
This is only the beginning
But so far from the end.

Today someone gave me some bad news.
At this point I'm so confused,
I'm beginning to get scared.

The doctors said we've done all we can do,
And all he wants is to see you.

He said he was sorry
But he had to go
Because it was the end
Of his road.

Today was the day
That started the end.

Today I lost my best friend.

Dedicated to Bradley Lannum 1984-2002

John Skaggs

CHILD ABUSE

My story is about child abuse. There are so many crimes in the world today. But I think one of the worst crimes is child abuse. A child is a precious and loving human being. A child is a beautiful person. A child gives you unconditional love. A child cannot defend itself. You hear so many stories about children getting beaten to death or being sexually abused by a closely connected adult. An emotional type of child abuse is calling them bad names. Or finding other ways to kill them.

The reason this so close to my heart is because about ten years ago, my nephew was beaten by my niece's live-in boyfriend. But he was one of the lucky ones. They got him out before he was killed.

The man spent only 7 years out of 15 years in prison. And to me that wasn't enough time for him to pay for what he had done to that little boy. But that boy turned out OK. He graduated, and now he is in the Army. He is one of the lucky ones who survived a terrible crime. I thank God he did!

Linda Seymour

TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER

Thank you for reading stories and taking care of me.
Thank you for tying my shoes and putting bandages on my
knee.

Thank you so much for all your hugs and kissing me good
night.
I love you for the fun we share.
I love you for the things we do.
I love you because you always care.

Thank you for being my mommy but that's not all I have to
say.
Thank you so much for all you do.
God bless all the mothers of the world.

Georgia Tutu

CAN YOU LOOK DOWN THROUGH THE CLOUDS?
A Tribute to My Grandfather

Can you look down through the clouds?
Did you see me turn on that fastball?
The crowd was cheering loud.
The winning run made me feel ten feet tall.
As I rounded second base,
I watched it sail over the fence.
I looked up and saw your face,
Even if it was only a glimpse.

Can you look down through the clouds?
Did you see me in my suit?
Did you hear us exchange our vows?
Was I shaking in my boots?
I've never felt another love
Like I feel for my wife.
I only wish she had the privilege of
Having you in her life.

Can you look down through the clouds?
See my stomach full of butterflies?
Never felt any more proud.
When they laid her in my arms, I finally cried.
As I gently gave her face a stroke,
I realized the last time I cried was when you died.
Then as she awoke,
I saw she had your eyes.

Michael Ballentine

HEROES

Men and women of our land giving of themselves to protect our country and our beliefs.

Intent upon getting the job done.

Leaving behind their loved ones so they can make a safer place to live.

Infectious need to serve their country.

Training extensively so they are prepared to defend themselves and survive under hostile conditions.

Ambitious and determined to achieve their goal.

Ready for any situation that might arise.

Yearning to get back home to the family they have been away from for so long.

Carol Rudder

MATTIE'S COURAGE

There is a twelve-year-old person in this world who inspires me a great deal; his name is Mattie J.T. Stepanek. Mattie is a boy dealing with a rare disorder of Muscular Dystrophy, called Mitochondrial Myopathy.

Even though the odds are stacked against him, with death a very real part of his life, he still has this peacefulness about him. Mattie has had more hardships in his few years of life than most people experience in a lifetime. He's dealt with losing three of his older siblings to the disease, and his mother also suffers from an adult form of MD. Somehow he's acquired more wisdom in his short life than most of us do after decades of living. Mattie's an author of four best-selling books of poems. He also met his hero, Jimmy Carter. Oprah Winfrey had Mattie on her show as a guest.

Mattie has the courage to face death every day knowing the outcome. Through his bravery and strength, I find it somehow easier to face my own worries and apprehensions. My wish for my two sons, who have Duchenne's muscular dystrophy, is to have the courage and strength to face their own destiny. Mattie is a true-hearted person who seems to care more for others than himself. He along with God has taught me not to take for granted the small things in life.

Teresa Maynard

TIO TONY

My uncle Tony was very special, a very important person for me. Tony was the youngest brother of my mother, raised in the country. When he was little, in his childhood, he had an illness that prevented his walking. He never married. My grandmother took care of him until she died.

Tony was never a healthy man. He depended almost all the time on family for his simple needs. Yet he gave me a rich understanding of life. I learned so much from him.

He was simple in manners, never demanding anything. He accepted all the things that life brought to him. He never complained when his clothes were old, when he didn't have a breakfast, or when his food was cold. He was a kind, generous, patient man, and he had a smile on his face even when his heart was crying in pain and loneliness.

He taught me that we don't need material things to be happy and how to share our happiness. His actions talked so loud to me that they changed my life.

I got married, and I moved to another continent. Almost two years ago, Tony died, and I wasn't there. I never had told him how much he meant to me, but I'll keep the gift Tony gave me forever in my heart.

Maria Santos

A TEAR

A tear
Slowly slides down the side
of her cheek.
She closes her eyes
to silently say her last goodbye.
“Sweet love, I’ll remember you
Always and forever.”
She softly whispers in his
ear.
She gives him one last kiss
on his tender cheek.
His eyes never meet hers,
for he knows that he would cry.
He puts his cold hand
against her face.
She gently pushes it away.
Too much love
to end so quickly.
He reaches for her face
and wipes away her tears,
wiping the hair off of her face.
Her mind a million miles away
thinking of how everything
went wrong.
How much they were in love,
but now it’s all gone.
He slowly lets down his hand
wanting to hold her.
Not able to let go.
Her eyes leave his face
Hoping to lose the
memory of him.
Only knowing that she can’t
He softly says to her “I’m sorry

this is happening.
Where did we go wrong?"
But it's too late to find out.
For her heart is already gone.
He leans towards her
and looks in her eyes,
Tears streaming down his face.
He doesn't know how to tell her goodbye.
She creates a smile,
then pulls away,
and he is left there,
left with her memory,
Alone in the rain.

Brandis Patrick

CARING FOR AN AGING PARENT

Caring for an aging parent has become the norm in today's society. More people are living longer these days. Studies have projected that by the year 2040 there will be millions of people over the age of 60.

With that in mind many people are turning to their families for support. Oftentimes some turn to a nursing facility, but others find it difficult to turn away from those who cared for them in their early years.

Caring for those who can no longer care for themselves can be very stressful. Having to care for my own father, I know all too well the emotions that one can go through. It's times like these that I begin to feel helpless.

A typical day of caring for an aging parent begins with a blood sugar test. Then it's time for breakfast. Next it's time for a bath. Bathing aging parents can be time-consuming. Also the parents can be defiant. "Well, I'm your father. Don't try to tell me what to do." The next thing that happens is to get my own bath so I can go about my daily activities. But wait. It's time for my father to use the toilet, so I have to stop and take care of that. Now I can go back to what I was doing.

Now I can leave my father with other family members. They will help him to and from the toilet and give him his medications. When it's time for lunch, my sister or my mother will prepare his meal.

Now when I return home I'll prepare dinner for my father. Then it's time for more medication. Now it's time to relax and watch TV. But there's more work to be done. The steady trips to the bathroom, more meds, and another sugar

test. All evening there's much comforting to be done for the parent. "No, Dad, it's OK. You're all right. No one is trying to harm you." My father suffers from dementia. He has delusions that are common in older adults. Now the whole family will settle down for a good night's sleep. Maybe!

I love my father. I wish he wasn't sick. But with the baby boom generation entering middle age, one can only think that there will be a lot more elderly parents to care for in the future.

This is dedicated to my father, William F. Zuern. I love you, Dad.

Hyder Zuern

WHEN MY DAD DIED

Before my parents got divorced, my life was good. Sometimes things got bad, but we got through it together.

The last time it got bad was when my mom got a job and met some guy. She left us to go with him. A year later she asked my dad for a divorce. It killed my dad so badly that he got sicker and sicker. I had to help him. I was too young to do my mom's job, but I loved my dad so I did it. It was very painful to see my dad hurt and crying every day with a broken heart. I had to be strong for the both of us.

When I was thirteen, my mom got custody of my brother and me. We had to start living with her. I was not happy, but dad was too sick to care for us.

My dad died in 1997 when he was 55 years old and I was 14. He had talked to me about his illness and possible death but I hadn't believed him. One day he ended up in the hospital. When he came home, I took care of him until he died. That is when my life changed completely.

I had lost my best friend. There was a piece of me missing. He was everything for me. He had always understood me more than my mother did. He had always been there when I needed him. Being a girl, there were some things he couldn't understand, but he would listen to my explanation and all would be fine. When I lost him, my world fell down on top of me.

Until this day I wish he were here and could see his granddaughter. She is so much like him. He always told me I would one day have a little girl that would look just like me. My daughter is so wonderful, and he would be so proud of her.

I will always tell my daughter how her grandfather was a wonderful, happy man and how I will love her as he loved me. I wish he were with us, but he will always live in our hearts.

Brandy Charles