

## WARM THOUGHTS

### AN ODE TO FATHERS (EVERYWHERE)

June 4, 2021, by Lindsay Wincherauk

(773 Words - Deeply Personal)



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Father's Day is on the horizon. It's only | ? | days away.

My father, Nicholas, died the day after my twenty-fifth birthday. My brother Brian and I flanked our mother, Rebecca, on both sides of his deathbed. Nicholas reached for Rebecca's hand. When their hands touched, the last breath of Nicholas's life drained from his body, + cancer had claimed another soul.

I never knew my father.

"*The times*" and religion scripted my story. I was a secret baby. Born in a secret place. The shame of family + community + and religion. How could I ever grow up?

I have carried the pain of "*the times*" with me ever since.

I search my memory banks, trying to conjure up tender memories of my father. I cannot find, one.

I remember him teaching me to drive, only in reverse, replacing my car's gearshift with vice grips, + a smashed headlight, with a trouble light. I do remember Nicholas taking me to see a "*James Bond*" or "*Carry On*" movie every Christmas Night – half of the audience would march out of the cinema in protest as soon as nudity appeared on the screen during the "*Carry On*" movies. *I'm dating myself.* I'm not sure these memories are real or a product of my imagination.

I cannot summons up tender moments. I'm sure they exist. I feel awful I cannot find them.

I don't think I'm being fair to Nicholas.

He's not my father.

Eighteen years after Nicholas died, I met my birth father, Elmer, for the first time. He tapped on the window of my Toyota Corolla during the wind + rainstorm of 2006 in Vancouver. When I rolled the window down, Elmer said, "*Lindsay, are you going to stay in there all day?*" I got out. He hugged me. The first time I recall my father hugging me.

We shared lunch. Elmer apologized for the past, "*I'm sorry for what the adults did to you.*"

He brought a female companion with him to ease the absurdity of the day. At the end of lunch, he warmly looked at his companion and said, "*I told you he's a good man.*"

We hugged again when he departed. He welcomed me into his life and invited me to become part of his family.

Two weeks later, I called Elmer to tell him he wasn't my father; my mother Bernice, had lied on my birth record. We both cried our eyes out during the call.

My moments with Elmer are the fondest memories I have of my father.

He, too, wasn't my father.

In 2016, alongside my mother's deathbed, the second time I was watching my mother die, I asked Bernice who my birth father is, to which she said, "*I'm glad it wasn't that asshole.*"

I don't know who my father is?

I carry pain with me daily, being reminded every Father's Day, + every family-oriented day throughout each year.

I don't want to carry the anguish with me. I think it's just the way humans are wired: pain follows us, happiness often hides.

Occasionally, when I've shared my upset with friends, I've been met with, "*It was the times.*" Or "*A lot of people come from messed up homes.*" Or "*We could never figure out why you are the way you are. This explains it.*"

*Shut up,* would have been kinder. I'm no longer friends with WE.

This is my story; I hurt every year, feel pain, and feel sad for Nicholas. I feel grateful for my brief moments with Elmer. I feel sad for my family, who have never asked me if I am, okay?

Father's Day is nine days away.

I struggle with being reminded yearly of what I don't, or perhaps, never had.

I cannot fathom the pain of fathers who have lost a child.

A light comes on. I'm okay: I think.

A young boy and girl (siblings) walk by, holding hands, grinning from ear-to-ear, father closely by in tow. My heart warms. I'm happy seeing what they have.

I see children laughing and running (like drunk sailors) in a park, their parents close at hand, smiling as well. Joy enters my heart.

I can never erase the pains of my past.

*Why would I?*

The pain has gifted me with much: empathy + compassion.

I don't want to wipe away who I have become. What I can say to all of the fathers out there who've given their children the safety of smiling, laughing, and playing, "*Thank you for doing the most important thing you can do: showing up and being there to allow moments of tenderness to flourish.*"

Thank You.

Father's Day is nine, eight...four... days...

Happy Father's Day!

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