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Topic: Heroes

## My Father, My Hero

I remember my father pruning his rose plants while listening to Sunday broadcasts of the Chicago Cubs on his transistor radio; he was not the most obvious hero. At home, to me, my father personified kindness and gentleness.

He was well-versed in the classics, having been schooled at Chicago's Latin School and St. Mark's in Massachusetts.

Having graduated from the University of Chicago with a master's degree in business in 1942, he learned throughout his life of the difficult battles in the world of large corporations.

In WWII, he bravely served for four years as a very young Naval commanding officer of a PT ship in the Pacific.

Did these experiences make him a hero?

Typically, a hero is defined as “a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.” Yet, the origin of the word is from the Greek “*hērōs*,” which can be translated as “protector.”

Thus, I remember him during my youth, silently shielding me from my mother’s expectations, letting me gradually become myself and not the image of what I imagined my mother desired. In my teens, when I was caught after sneaking into an unseemly R-rated movie, my father later asked me what I thought of the movie. I had a special rapport with him; he treated me like an equal.

He protected all of us children in his way. When entering a teen-age marijuana smoke-filled den containing my brothers, various friends and me, he observed us, said merely, “good evening” and then retired. My mother was oblivious of the night’s activities.

After college, he did not stop me from moving to London to pursue architecture.

Through the following years, he encouraged me on my career path, advising me on my resume and job searches. He was an unusual father for a girl born of the fifties.

He wanted me to succeed, in whatever path I chose. He was my guardian.

Dad was also a go-to advisor for many of my friends. If they were at sea with their careers, he always offered to meet with them and provide guidance. He was generous with others, volunteering and eventually heading the Chicago Youth Centers, helping children in difficult circumstances find inspiration and direction.

When his mobility was challenged in his later years, he remained a warm and encouraging presence. I found sentimental notes in his room that he had written to me, wishing for my happiness, expressing how well I looked in my “stunning blue dress.”

His wish for his remembrances on the day of his funeral was so truly humble - it still tears me apart. The poem he chose spoke of his acceptance of death and his love of the sea.

My father was truly a hero to me.

*“Sunset and evening star,*

*And one clear call for me!*

*And may there be no moaning of the bar,*

*When I put out to sea.*

*But such a tide as moving seems asleep,*

*Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
Turns again home.  
Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;  
For though from out our borne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crost the bar.”*

(“Crossing the Bar” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson)