

When dad was the principal at Skowhegan, at the end of the school year each year he would go to the New Balance store to get presents for the teachers who won an award. Every year was the same. The owner said he would come into the store, scurry around from section to section grabbing things as he went and always out within 10 minutes. It was strange, but also efficient at a level she had never seen. After several years of this, the owner said he came in and was shopping as he always did and asked her what time it was. She told him 10 past 1, and he replied, "Hell, the award ceremony started at 1." She asked him why he would wait until the last minute to do this.

And his reply. "Because I work well under pressure!"

Now I understand why I waited until last night to write this speech. Guess I like the pressure too, pops.

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Many of you don't know this about my father, but he was somewhat of a food connoisseur. I was recently reminded of this fact when I heard a story about my dad traveling to Germany with my mom and another couple. They drove into Austria, and everyone was excited to experience the culture and taste the local cuisine. They passed several restaurants until dad finally found the *perfect* spot.

McDonald's.

The man did love his cheeseburgers.

Like many Michelin star chefs, he appreciated a colorful palette: yellow and pink lemonade, green lemon-lime soda, the bright purple of a grape soda, the sort of Historic Red in a Maine red hot dog; not to mention the texture and crunch. ...

During my junior year in high school, my dad took a 6-month sabbatical to spend time with his ailing mother. We decided that dad and I would stay in Aspen through soccer season, and then we would join my mother in Maine who was getting settled into a home they were renting near Pine Point. During those two months, dad cooked for me...almost every night.

It was him stepping up to the plate to provide for his son. He showed me how to be a man, how to be a great father, during that time. The problem was he knew how to cook exactly two things: egg salad sandwiches and cheeseburgers.

So that is what I ate...every night...for an entire month. That is until my mom received a call from the athletic director in Aspen who was concerned about my diet. True story. (Mom, you can vouch). And the call to my mom ratting him out worked, because we did start to have

some fruit – sliced watermelon – and added a whole new meal to the mix: spaghetti and meatballs. Well, SpaghettiOs and meatballs. You know, from the can.

When I was a sophomore at Colby College, my dad called me up one Friday evening and said he and my mother were planning on coming up to Waterville the next day and they wanted to take me out to a nice lunch. Amazing. After eating at the dining hall every day, a nice restaurant would be a welcome change. So dad and mom drive up in the truck the next day, pick me up, and dad drives us straight to Bowl-ees. This is your typical backdoor bites grease trap serving hot dogs and cheeseburgers.

So we order. And the three of us pile back in the truck right there in the parking lot. Three deep on the bench seat. Eating cheeseburgers and fries. Not exactly what mom and I had in mind.

After lunch, they dropped me back at the dorm and headed straight home to Kennebunk. My friends were absolutely mystified. They couldn't fathom why someone would drive two hours to grab a 30-minute lunch, and then drive two hours back. But they missed the point. He didn't want the food. He wanted the 30-minutes with his son. With no distractions. 30-minutes in a truck to catch up and see how I was doing.

But that was just dad. Food was just something with a lot of processed flour or sugar to get inside you really quickly: Bill's pizza and Pier fries, Roy's burgers, whoopie pies, apple turnovers, boston creme donuts. He didn't care about spending time thinking about food. He'd rather spend his time thinking about people.

He cared about people.

Which is why education came so naturally to him, and why, I think, he was the best school administrator and teacher you could ever know.

Over the past month, and especially the past few days, many people have reached out telling me how great of an educator, role model, athlete, and person dad was. There are countless stories of how he was a true advocate for the students, how he took the time to listen and actually notice each and every one of them. And how he was a great athlete who could compete with anyone on the basketball court despite his relatively small stature. By all accounts, he was a saint and will long be remembered for his leadership as an educator, his competitive spirit, and his bright smile.

But that doesn't capture everything.

In the days leading up to and immediately following his passing, I found myself drawn to his phone, eager to search through his camera roll to find photos of him and to relive some of the moments he captured. I quickly noticed how almost every picture was candid. I mean they were all really, *genuinely bad* photos. Unplanned. Almost always taken from some impossible angle. But the more time I spent going through the camera roll, the

more I realized that was the idea. He never asked for anyone to pose or plaster on a fake smile. For him, it was about capturing life in its most authentic form – appreciating the moment for what it was, freezing it, and enjoying it. And yet, despite his lack of staging, everyone in his photos was always smiling. He didn't have to ask us to do it because when you were him, you were already doing it.

And Dad always made his family smile the biggest. That is something you can see in his camera roll, as well as throughout the photos in our albums at home. Dad was first and foremost a family man. While his chosen profession always blended into his personal life, his personal life didn't always blend into his professional one. What people need to know, is just how amazing of a father Tom was, and is.

My favorite photo of my dad is actually one of him and Thomas. Thomas was just a few months old, and my dad was lying in bed with him, a smile on his face: a look I only understand now as a father myself – one of pure affection and pride. Of pure happiness. Of beautiful connection. That connection he had with my brothers and me, it was just the best. It was everything. It's why it makes losing him so hard. But I have and will carry with forever, so many memories that demonstrate and encapsulate that connection: Riding on his shoulders as a kid; going to the numerous professional and collegiate games with him; shooting hoops in the gym for hours while he rebounded; standing next to him when he was the officiant at my wedding as Courtney walked down the aisle; and a million others culminating with him grabbing me and hugging me that last night – a hug I will forever cherish, no matter how hard it makes me cry.

How to make that connection with your kids: is the most important thing he taught me. I try and connect with my own kids like that every day. and I always will.

So thank you, dad, for always being there for us. And for being there for everyone who needed you.

You will always be remembered for your immeasurable capacity to love; your huge heart, – with room for your wife, all three of your sons, plus our spouses, and your grandchildren – especially them.

Because while he was a mentor; a motivator; a husband; a father; an uncle – I think his favorite role of all was being a grandfather. A Pops.

Thank you, Dad, for being our rock, our teacher, our friend, and our Pops. Your legacy of love and laughter is one we will carry with us, always. We love you, we miss you, and we will continue to celebrate you in all that we do.