

Father's Day
by Sasha Johnson-Freyd
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I woke up this morning, and the internet reminded me that it was Father's Day. For those of you who don't know, my dad died of cancer four years ago. I pass through most of my time these days not explicitly thinking about him; but whenever I do, my insides swell. I remember going on weekend trips with him to the hardware or grocery stores, where he would let me crawl through the trunk and over the back seats of our Volvo station wagon before he strapped me back into the car seat. I remember the majesty of the wilderness, where he and my mom would use their overwhelming competence to create comfortable conditions for adventure that I still experience today. I remember our friend Sarah, a 12-year-old girl living on the moon who helped out in the hydroponic gardens of her city-dome; and I remember later, when I was in middle school, when the bedtime stories were nightly lessons in group and number theory.

When I do think about him these days, it's normally in the form of, "what would he think about this life decision?" and maybe this is the bias of surviving, because I'll never know¹, but I feel like he would be so proud of me. He was always so proud of me, so this isn't an unlikely guess, but thinking about it still makes me feel so proud myself. My dad would be proud of my new job at Stanford I'll be starting in July; he'd be proud of the roundabout adventure I took to get to that job; he'd be proud of me finding an amazing partner who's smart, caring, and actually much like him; and he would have been so, so proud to watch me graduate from his alma matter, a school he put zero pressure on me to go to but was unexpectedly thrilled when I got in and chose to make my own (he would have been proud both because he loved his experience in college, and also because the feminist in him would find justice in his youngest daughter achieving what in his family was the role of the oldest sons).

I am so blessed to have had such an amazing father. And lucky now, too, with the new father figures that have emerged in my life.

Happy father's day to all you out there with dads you want to celebrate. And if you feel like celebrating somebody but don't have anybody in mind, I'm very happy to share the memory of my dad with you — I'm sure he'd be happy to have a few extra kids today. He was generous like that.



¹Imk if you want to talk about the existential issues of maintaining an emotional relationship with a deceased loved one