



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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Dads

I recall some summer mornings as a kid, when I would try in vain to wake up as early as possible and see my dad go off to work. He was in construction and I thought if I could just drag myself out of bed early enough that I could at least wish him a good day as he was going out the door. I never managed because this man was like a ninja. He would quietly arise each morning, get ready, and leave, all without making a sound. Then he'd be gone each and every day before the crack of dawn, wanting to be the first at the construction site to make sure everything was in order for the men that would soon arrive. There also was no "quitting time", the day ended when the work was done and, more often than not, that was well into the evening.

This routine remain solidly unchanged for 40 some odd years, rain or shine, good health and bad, and I recall asking him as I grew older how he managed to never deviate from this almost Spartan life of sacrifice. His plain-spoken dad answer was always the same: "Someday you'll understand. You'll do it for your kids." Truth is I worried that I'd never own such devotion but thankfully, I feel it now completely with four daughters of my own. And when I'm tired, or beat up or fed up, I think of him. I think of the immigrant who came to this country with little education and just a few dollars, who relentlessly worked and sacrificed so his kids could have it better than he did. I think of his courage in adversity, his patience,

and most of all, his gritty persistence.

I know I'm not alone in this sentiment. Many of you have similar memories of your own fathers. Maybe yours had a different line of work or maybe he had to work two jobs. Maybe he spoke a lot or like mine, very little. Maybe your memories are of his coaching your teams, or his building camp fires, or his smiling face at your dance recitals. The feelings are always the same no matter the recollection.

One good friend remembers her father waking each night at midnight to make a sandwich and bring it to her older brother who worked at an all night gas station. She says dad would keep him company for about an hour then pretend to leave. But unbeknownst to her brother, their dad would quietly park the car a block away and keep an eye on the place all night. Another friend remembers taking a job in Europe and stepping off the plane, anxious about what life would be like alone in a foreign land. What she found at her new apartment was her dad, who had flown in the day before, stocked the kitchen cabinets with food and remained with her for two weeks to help her get acclimated.

Sadly, there are plenty of situations where familial circumstances aren't so kind. Death or divorce may force a mom to go it alone and play both roles. If you're a friend or a neighbor to a family like this, becoming involved may be the best thing you ever do because the lessons and love of fatherhood are not solely derived from biological dads. Sometimes they come from a grandfather, a neighbor, a teacher, or even a coach. Just having a "father-figure" in a kid's corner goes a long way to producing happy, healthy adults. And while that doesn't seem like any kind of earth-shattering revelation, you'd be surprised at how many dads discount their own roles in their children's lives.

So this Father's Day I wish all the dads, granddads, and father figures out there a blessed and peaceful day. What's more I wish you the knowledge that you are far more relevant than

modern culture gives you credit for. Keep teaching your patience, your grit, and your persistence because the world needs more of it.

And to my own dad, I say “thank you” for being the quiet strength our family draws from.