

Memories of journeys past, thanks to Dad

FATHERS

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STORIES FROM THE ROAD

There are your domestic dads. And then there are those who bring home stories from the road. In truth, my dad's job was stories. A reporter for LIFE magazine in the 1960s, he was often distant from our Manhattan apartment.

Hearing about Dad's adventures made his absences easier to swallow. His beat included the Mercury and Gemini space shots, and when John Glenn became the first American in orbit, Dad wrote the article. His hardest assignment was reporting on Kennedy's assassination in Dallas.

Because he got to see what was happening right up close, I hung on his words, and wished I could be at his side. Even when what he was covering was sad. Even when writing was hard.

Though none of us knew it at the time, the JFK piece would be one of his last for the magazine. When I was 8, after our family moved to London, my dad grew suddenly weaker from melanoma. At age 36, he died.

To this day, I think of him whenever I travel, whenever I try to capture aspects of a place and bring them — using words on a page — back home.

PETER MANDEL

UNFLAPPABLE

I remember one of the first times I went perch fishing with my dad. We headed out in a beat-up 12-foot rowboat equipped with an old Evinrude motor. About an hour into the trip, the skies turned dark and it started to drizzle. "Fish bite in the rain," he said, throwing me a hat. Long story short: The storm moved in, the fish didn't bite, the motor broke down, and Dad never lost his cool.

No one is calmer in a storm than my dad. On washed-out family camping trips, I'd hear, "The rain won't melt you." If we were lost: "Gotta' get there somehow." Missed flights, broken equipment, stolen wallets . . . no matter what the bump along the way, he'd give a little shrug and move on.

Two years ago, I met my dad in Paris to celebrate his 85th birthday. My flight was hours late, and I'd forgotten to give him the address of the apartment we were renting. He was waiting for me in the terminal when I arrived.

"Knew you'd get here sooner or later," he said with a smile.

Thanks, Dad, for teaching me how to go with the flow.

PAMELA WRIGHT

HIGHWAY COMPOSER

For years, my view in the car was the back of my father's head. I would watch him and wonder what he was thinking.

A musician, he once told me he composed in his head while driving. He never wrote "The Ohio Turnpike Symphony," but he could have. Because that man could drive.

My parents were from Haverhill but a job took the family to Toledo, Ohio, in 1953. By the late 1960s, college and work drew us four kids, one by one, back to New England.

"Back" because every summer, Dad drove us East for vacation.

Dad perfected our journey over the years with side trips: the New York World's Fair in '64, Niagara Falls, and presidential sites.

And when the New York Thruway met the Massachusetts Turnpike, we cheered. When we crossed the other way, we booned.

On the homeward leg in 1967, the Red Sox were on the radio. Ken Harrelson was at the plate, bases loaded. When The Hawk hit that homer, our car erupted in screams of joy. Dad cheered, too, but kept the Vista Cruiser as straight as that home run.

JAMES R. CARROLL

IN HIS ELEMENT

On family vacations, my dad, a traveling salesman, was in his element on the road, asphalt beneath, blue sky above, a song on his lips, a cigar clamped in his teeth.

I remember driving by Deerfield River in the Berkshires one day, a warm breeze blowing over us. At that moment, as I ached to know what was around the next corner, the radio played "Cast Your Fate to the Wind." To this day I hear that song, and I think of my dad and traveling.

I was a flight attendant in the 1970s, flying around the world. One time I was in Munich, for Oktoberfest. Coincidentally, my dad was there, on a company trip. We met, hoisting steins of beer, cigars clamped in our teeth. Someone took a photo. Copies still proudly hang on my wall and his.

My dad is 84, quieted by age and infirmity. In his prime, he was unable to sit still. I am that way now, always on the move, always aching to round that next corner, always hearing "Cast Your Fate to the Wind" as I do. It was his gift to me. The best he's ever given.

PAUL E. KANDARIAN

UNFLINCHING

I was always convinced my father had no fear.

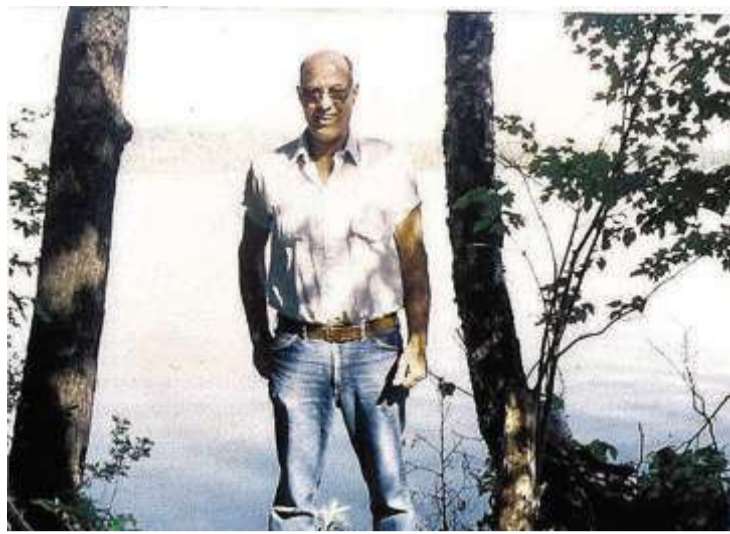
This was a man who took me for joyrides on a small motorcycle, without helmets. When we went sailing, his smile broadened the more the boat heeled, and the more my mom looked at him like she might throw him overboard.

He was the reason I took an interest in traveling.

When I was a child, he built a farm in the rural highlands of the Dominican Republic, one of a number of businesses he started. The first time he brought us there he drove up a dirt road that



Everett Kandarian Jr.



Jack Bair

how to plan for a trip, and better yet what to do when one goes wrong. I continued to write about my travels, keeping a journal for most of them. It wasn't painful anymore; rather it was essential. I didn't want to forget a single moment, and by then I'd been taught that written words never fade. It was my father's inspiration that lit a fire inside me to travel, to write, and to never, ever take an experience for granted.

BRIAN IRWIN

IN HIS BOOTS

A man of few words, my father radiated a mystery that I loved as a child, but rebelled against as a teen. He took me fishing and deer hunting when I was small, and wore knee-high rattlesnake boots that stirred my imagination. As I graduated from college, Dad graduated to NASTAR racing in the Laurentian Mountains, hiking the Great Wall of China, and parasailing in Bora Bora, sending one-line postcards: "Love you, Dad."

Today, in his 80s, he practices law and tackles Thailand on a recumbent bike. Yet, the trip that sticks with him was his first, to Arizona: riding in the rumble seat of a Ford convertible with his uncles Irv and Morley when he was 4, thrilling to the prairie beyond the family's Chicago walk-up.

Suddenly the other day, Dad tells me he cried for three days on that trip, when they left him with his Tucson grandparents to cure his asthma. "I never cried again," he says.

A long time ago, it would have been nice to know, but now it doesn't matter. I travel. I wear his rattlesnake boots. We don't need words.

PATRICIA BORNES

EVERYTHING IS IRIE

"Julio, you can spend the day on the beach," I said to my dad, knowing that climbing up a waterfall and then tubing down a river in the Jamaican hillside might be a bit of a challenge for a 79-year-old still recovering from a stroke. "No, I'm going," came the expected answer.

Not that the man doesn't like to spend his leisure time relaxing and reading. Ever since I came into his life, I've watched him sit for hours enjoying a Penguin Classic. Yet, when my dad is with the family, he savors our time together.

The next thing you know, we're walking hand-in-hand over the slippery rock steps as water comes barreling down. My dad lost his footing on several occasions, but my son was right behind him, guiding his every step.

When we reached the top of Dunn's River Falls, Julio was the first one to dip his head under the waterfall. On the White River, we planted our bums in tubes and flowed with the slow current. I turned around to someone singing Bob Marley's "No Woman No Cry," thinking it was the guide. I should have known it was Julio, with a smile plastered ear to ear.

STEPHEN JERMANOK



William David Abel



Lawrence Borns



Frank Capos



Robert Irwin



Julius Jermanok



Bob Carroll



Paul Mandel



Dan Daniel



George Tsui



Bernard Wright

disappeared into the clouds and looped beside thousand-foot drops. He never flinched when trucks passed inches from us, barreling down in the opposite direction.

I still remember the way the pine trees scented the tropical breeze and the rich soil spurred everything from flowers to eggplants to bell peppers, all of which my dad would eventually grow.

Shortly before he died of cancer last year, I asked if anything scared him. At first, he didn't seem to understand the question. Then, with a mischievous gleam in his eyes that I hope I've inherited, he said: "Mom. If she threatens me, I listen."

DAVID ABEL

MEATBALLS IN 30 STATES

The radio would crackle as Dad spun the knob in search of any AM station to keep him awake during the five-hour drive from Blacksburg, Va., back home to Raleigh, N.C. If my father's beloved Virginia Tech Hokies had won their football game, his voice would boom. Otherwise, he stayed subdued.

Usually Mom joined us, but sometimes I had Dad to myself. He'd point out the shadows of the Shenandoahs and make sure I didn't miss the large electric star glowing in the hills above Roanoke. When I turned 8, my parents decided I was ready for longer trips. Each summer Dad would plot out a western route, staging stops at historical sites and national parks. I ate my favorite meal of spaghetti and meatballs in more than 30 states and learned to dive at a Holiday Inn pool in Bismarck, N.D.

The road trips ended when my teenage surliness overshadowed our enjoyment. At 16, I bought my parents' Plymouth Fury II with money I'd saved from working at Hardee's and defied them by driving solo to Florida. At 54, I've stopped rebelling, but I'm still hitting the highway.

DIANE DANIEL

VACATIONING AT "CAMP DAD"

Traveling with my father usually involved an outhouse. Our family trips involved long drives to woody cabins on deep-blue lakes, indoor plumbing optional. Think "Girl Scout camp meets 'Survivor.'" Dad was a manly man, a Midwestern version, whose idea of the perfect trip meant teaching his daughters how to scale fish, skin rabbits, and dig for night-crawlers.

Those vacation days started early: At dawn, we'd toddle to the dock in our nightgowns and life-jackets, cane poles in hand, and hop into a fishing boat. We ate the fish we caught, and peach ice cream hand-cranked by Dad. If we got dirty, we'd jump into the lake, but we still smelled like wood-smoke all week. I'm sure there was a hammock, but nobody ever used it.

In Dad-speak, this was "good for what ails you!" He was right.

Although I haven't dressed a deer since I moved to Boston, I'm still my father's daughter: Give me woods and water and a boat, any boat, and I'll show you vacation bliss.

Dad died young. I wonder if he knew he had to cram his outdoor fun into too few vacations.

DIANE BAIR

HE GRANTED ME A GIFT

My parents were broke when I was born. We lived in a single-wide trailer in West Virginia, but when my father's job as a writer got a grip the financial stranglehold loosened. We started traveling, first to local state parks, later to national ones.

My father was a travel writer, and keeping trip journals was a family rule. Each night we'd sit around the campfire or in the motel room writing about the day. A hike to the bottom of Canyon de Chelly. Seeing a roadrunner in Nogales, Mexico. Staring at shipwrecks through a glass-bottom boat in Georgian Bay, Ontario.

When I left home for college, traveling became an obsession. My father had taught me

PILGRIMAGE

When I was growing up, my father told me about Hainan Island, the "Chinese Hawaii," perched on the South China Sea. To the Chinese, Hainan had always had a romantic, frontier air about it. As the southernmost point in China, it was the only tropical island, and it served for centuries as a place of exile for poets and politicians. To my father, a Hong Kong-born painter who has lived in southern China for the past 20 years, it was a dream of a place, a palm-fringed paradise that would be perfect inspiration for him.

A few years ago, I arranged for us to meet there. The island had seen a development boom, but still we were able to walk on stretches of empty white beach, with mint-green waves lapping the shores, and take drives to the rural inner parts of the island.

A Chinese friend back home had written out a traditional poem for me from memory, a long verse about Hainan's famously striking mountains. We brought it with us, and saw my father's vision come to life: the island's legendary landscapes and mist-clad cliffs, as they were, straight out of the traditional calligraphy paintings. He was happy.

BONNIE TSUI

SCOUTING FOR ADVENTURE

My dad was an Eagle Scout, and he proudly reminded us of it at every chance. Our family vacationed in August and usually stayed in the great outdoors. We pitched wobbly tents or parked a rental trailer in rugged campgrounds. When a nor'easter swept through Canada's Rondeau Provincial Park, Mom and I drove at 2 a.m. through pelting rain to the restrooms. At Niagara Falls, the mist soaked our tent and the center pole collapsed while we slept.

Dad loved every minute. "Rise and shine," he trumpeted each morning before cooking flapjacks. We fished all day, seldom catching anything. At night, we huddled around a campfire with marshmallows on sticks while Dad led us in singing the "Beer Barrel Polka."

During one ill-fated journey from Michigan to Pompano Beach, Fla., the trailer's hitch decoupled, a window fell out, and the toilet overflowed. Our car's air conditioning broke in Georgia, where we were accosted by fruit flies. Finally, the trailer brakes went out in the Kentucky foothills while we were lost on back roads and then seized up one block from home.

These mishaps only whetted my taste for travel adventure, and I savor the memories.

CLAUDIA CAPOS