

I share with you the letter that I wrote to my father a few weeks before he died.

My Darling Manfi:

I write this letter to you to share with you my love and admiration for you, and to tell you how having you as my father has impacted my life.

My first most concrete memory of you was when I was about 5 and I walked hand in hand with you into the operating room at the Brenthurst Clinic for eye surgery. I knew that with you by my side, all was well. From this experience emerged a relationship of trust between us that evolved and matured as I grew from childhood into adulthood.

However, the most defining thread that has weaved its way throughout my life, has been one of love. From the time that I was a little girl you would hold me in your arms and tell me that I was sweet like sugar. Being so certain of your love can be attributed to my growth into the woman I am today; my capacity to give love was moulded by the unconditional love I always received from you.

I learned from you how to deal with adversity. When you lost your father at 13, you were forced to leave school and work to help support your mother. You became an upholsterer in a factory but when you realised that your life's dream was to heal the sick, with courage, tenacity and determination, you completed high school, and became a doctor. I understood this to mean, that in life we can not control life's circumstances, but to dream is to be practical, and that dreams are capable of becoming a reality with hard work and perseverance.

The way you conducted yourself as a doctor has provided me with a recipe for success as a professional. Your timeless devotion to the needs of your patients was exceptional. Day and night you tended to their physical, emotional and mental health problems with a commitment to minimising their suffering by taking responsibility for whatever ailed them; your patients would tell mommy that you made light of everything. Manfi, you always were an outstanding diagnostician and I would marvel at your ability to identify a problem and then come up with solutions. When one member of a patient family needed to see you, the whole family came along because everyone wanted to see Uncle Freddy! So it is that I learned that compassion, dedication, problem analysis and understandable solutions were essential ingredients of a successful practitioner.

Manfi, you have always been such a positive and optimistic person. I'm also so proud of the fact that for all the years that you played lawn bowls, you were the peace maker. If there was a dispute on or off the bowling green, it was taken to Freddy Beck for resolution. You had an inherent ability to see the other person's point of view and to respect it. Manfi, you really knew how to tell a joke and make us all laugh. Making your audience laugh meant making people feel good and that was your priority. As an honorary doctor at Our Parent's Home, you gave so much of your time to the elderly in need. Thank you for teaching me by example the value of optimism, respect, volunteerism, and humour.

I know you are thankful for all the love, kindness and support that you have received in your time of need. Manfi, you reaped what you sowed; Rory and I were privileged to watch your tireless efforts to ensure that your mother's every need was met.

Your devotion to our family is unquestionable. I imagine what you would say to us now if you could speak. To mommy you would say, "Dear, you have been my wife and my best friend for almost 60 years, my confidant, and my reason for being. I will always love you." You would tell Rory that she always understood you the best and you would thank me for being the level headed one. To Stan and Sid you would tell them that you love them like sons. You would tell Marc how proud of him you are, and Andy and Lara how happy you are that they have chosen to follow not only in their fathers' footsteps but in yours too. You would congratulate Andy on her recent marriage to Sam and tell Sam how lucky he is to have married such a wonderful young woman. To Nikki and Dale, you would encourage them to follow their dreams. But mostly what I think you would say to us is that life is for living. You would not want us to be sad for too long and you would remind us that you will forever remain in our hearts.

I love you, Manfi.

Your daughter,
Meryl

I honour our mother today for her incredible devotion to our father. You nursed Dad often under very difficult circumstances with such grace. Sissie, our father's care was exemplary because of your ceaseless efforts to seek every available comfort and treatment for him. Stan, thank you for supporting Rory because she could not have done it without you. Sid, any peace of mind I had over this challenging time was because of you. Thank you. To our children, nephews and nieces, thank you for completing the circle of love.

I conclude with one of Dad's favourite prayers:

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you.

May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.