On the river

Reflection by Eddie Heinrich, Yuba City, CA

Nobody can say for sure, but I was probably born with my sickness. It was in the predawn of a cool, foggy Friday morning in July of 1973 the first symptoms began to appear. The events of that day would change my life.

I lay in bed listening to the gentle sounds of breathing coming from the bunk above me. I willed myself to sleep, but no sleep would come. Every few minutes, I would check the clock to see if it was time to get up. Finally, after what seemed like eternity, the clock showed 4:30 a.m. It was almost time to get up. A few minutes later, I heard stirring in the next room and knew that Dad was on the move. After what seemed like an eternity, he stumbled out of the bedroom mumbling something about it being the middle of the night and went into the kitchen. A few seconds later, I bounded out of bed and hustled into the kitchen of our tiny cabin chattering about who knows what and waited impatiently for my dad to hand me the box of shredded wheat and the carton of milk. I would come to know this pattern well in the years to follow—the routine was always the same.

Over the years, my dad patiently taught me the art of fishing. He never yelled at me, even when I shut his brand new fishing rod in the car door. He got excited for only a few minutes when I accidently dropped my Christmas present, a brand new rod and reel, in the river. He rarely seemed to notice that I was always impatient to get to a different spot where the fish were bigger or biting more readily. He taught me everything he knew about fishing
and encouraged me to learn even more.

Over the years, I would make the annual journey home to fish with my dad. Nothing seemed to change. He still could out fish me, but he never rubbed it in. He would always say it was luck.

In the past couple of years, I’ve begun to realize that my dad has started to slow down. He’s not as quick to jump up and go fishing as in the past, but he still likes to make the trek to the river. It takes him longer to reel in a fish, but he’s still got what it takes. I’ve begun to wonder how much more time I will have with him and if my kids will get the chance to fish with “Poppy.”

Fishing wasn’t the only thing my dad taught me. I love Jesus and am a Seventh-day Adventist Christian because he understood the value of both modeling and teaching his beliefs. From the time I was very little, we were in church almost every week. He firmly believed Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

October 30, 2014, I snuggled in a cozy warm bed listening to the gentle breathing of my family. Today would be the day I took my oldest son fishing for the first time. Quietly, trying not to awaken the whole family, I tugged on my son’s pj’s and quietly whispered in his ear that it was time to go fishing. Without another word, I slipped out of my room and into my parents’ room as I headed for the kitchen. As I stepped quietly through their room, I heard my dad’s voice.

“Is it time to get up? It’s the middle of the night.”

“I know, Dad, but the fish are biting,” I mumbled as I stumbled in to the kitchen looking for a box of shredded wheat to give to my son.

Recalibrate

Is there someone in your life that you send a thank-you note, a text message, a Facebook, or phone call to let them how much their life has impacted yours?

What impact will your life have on the lives of others?

Feel free to send any thoughts or comments to Eddie Heinrich.
The One Project headquarters is located at the Boulder Seventh-day Adventist Church
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