

My dad was an exceptional father. When I was a young kid, my dad spent his weekends taking me to the Ft. Worth Museum of Natural Sciences, the Botanical Gardens, the Water Gardens, West End Marketplace in Dallas, sidewalk sales, shooting ranges, camping trips. We spent many Saturdays underneath his '69 Corvette getting greasy and saying all the bad words. We would hang out at Foot's Corvette and Harley shop. We would go to Jo-Ed's Bomber Subs on Pioneer Pkwy for submarine sandwiches. I don't even know why I'm thinking of these random memories. But one thing was certain, I was dad's wingman every weekend.

As a young adult in my mid-twenties, I bought my first house in Austin. My dad was so excited for me. He drove down to co-sign on that FHA loan. He was a man of few words, but he loved home improvement projects, and all of a sudden we had everything in the world to talk about. And lucky for dad, my first house was a dump. But it's what I could afford and, if you know the real estate market in Austin, you understand. Dad would load his truck up with tools and drive 3 hours to Austin to spend weekends helping me work on my house. We did drywall, electrical wiring, welding, replaced windows, hung siding, pulled toilets--you name it, we did it. We worked so well together, often finding a rhythm without using words for long stretches of time. He used to call home improvement "creeping elegance," and we turned that little starter home into something pretty magical.

In my late 30s, I met Xochitl. It didn't take me long at all to realize that I needed to share my life and start a family with her. My parents sold their house of 35 years to move down here and be close to us, and to enjoy their grandkids. In fact, my parents' house is so close that my dad would drive his lawnmower over and cut our grass if I let it get too long (sorry, dad). He eventually got tired of that and just gave me his riding lawnmower--a win for both of us.

Mom and dad have been coming to my gigs at least once a week since they moved down here ten years ago. My gigs had become a social outlet for my parents, and they always showed up with a posse! Up until last week, I enjoyed regular cups of coffee on my back porch with dad. He never had a lot to say and he rarely finished his coffee. Nonetheless, it was a ritual I will always cherish. Anyone who knew my dad knows he was never very chatty. But this much is true, my father never missed an opportunity to tell me he was proud of me. He never missed a chance to tell me how much he loved me.

When I try to wrap my head around the abundance of love and support I've received from my parents for my entire life, it seems ridiculous that I would have anything to grieve about. The rest of the world should be upset that he got to be my dad and not theirs. But it's true, my dad did pass last Saturday. I've always tried to keep it light out here and I'm sorry for the bad news. Please raise a glass of whatever you're drinking to my dad, Joseph Colarusso. You were a great father and I'll love you forever, dad♥

Joey Colarusso

Courtesy of: Barbara Colarusso, President, Amvets Ladies Auxiliary 115