

Into Adulthood

By Molly Hegman

I was the sixth child born into our family of eight children. We lived a sheltered life. As a child I did see my dad every day but I did not have much time to get to know him. I felt safe with him. I have memories of events that stand out in my mind in which he revealed his personality to me.

When I was very young I would kiss my mom and dad before I went to bed; this was a tradition in our family. My dad would be sitting in his rocking chair reading. It clicked in that my dad loved books and education.

Our family went to 7:00 Mass almost every day. It was such a constant not only with us but also with our congregation that they always saved the front row for us. From this and our saying the rosary together I gleaned that my dad's faith was steadfast.

One night when I was about ten I learned about his artistic side. We were walking down a sidewalk overlooking Pensacola bay. We were quiet at first but as we stood at the end of the walk, admiring the moonlight on the water and listening to the soft sound of the waves, he took my hand and told me a story about the moon and its glow, how fairies were the sparkles playing in the water. I was old enough to appreciate his creativity and young enough to be entranced with it. This was one of the few times I remember having a conversation with him by myself.

It was just a couple of years later when my dad began having heart attacks. There were five of us at home so while my mom was at the hospital we girls would keep things going. Even though we always helped in the kitchen we had never cooked a whole meal. We learned quickly. My feeling of safeness became vulnerable.

When I went away to college my dad wrote weekly letters to me. He stressed the importance of family, faith and education.

The summer after my first year at college I worked in his office. There I got to know him as a business man. I learned why he won the respect of many people.

The weekend before my twenty-first birthday, I went home to celebrate with my family. When I was leaving he gave me a big hug. Back at school, the day after my birthday, someone knocked at my door. When I opened the door there stood four somber faced nuns. I knew that it wasn't good. They said that I had to come with them. I tried to back into the room but they held my arms. I remember being dragged, screaming, down the hall to the phone. My mom and brother were on the phone. They told me that my dad had another heart attack and died. My sheltered life was shattered; I was thrown into adulthood.