

Eulogy for Dad

I will try my dutiful best to honor my father with a few words, although my father's life seems impossible to measure up in words, few or many. I'm sure every other person who has stood here to deliver a eulogy for their parent has felt the same way.

Let me try by honoring my mother's constant words to my father in his sickness. My mother, during these difficult, trying last few weeks gave great strength and solace to my father by visiting him, even while she was fighting an illness of her own. And in those visits, her constant words were, "You are a good man."

Every day she could, every time she could, my mother would visit dad at the hospital and she would hold his hand gently, stroke it, and lovingly repeat the words, "You are a good man." "You are a good man."

In today's world of immodesty and hyperbole and false superlatives, where everything is the greatest this, the greatest that, **good** may seem insufficient, unjust. But in its simplicity, integrity, and moderation, is there anything better that can be said but of someone's goodness?

My father was a good man, a good husband, a good son, a good father, a good brother, a good grandfather, a good friend, a good doctor, and in the final chapter of his life here in California, he was a good student of the Bible and good servant to God. He was, in everything he embraced in life, **fundamentally good**. And he brought out the goodness in everyone he touched. Imagine a life of such goodness in everyone.

So, as my mother said with constancy, my father was a good man. He led a life with kindness, grace, dignity, and noble purpose. And he led a life of example for others to follow. Jungku, Jinku, and I have strived to follow that example in our own lives, each of us in our own way. And I strive every day to teach my children to follow that example in their lives in their own way.

But if we are going to remember him, we much remember him honestly. My father may have led a life with grace and dignity, but it was not

always a quiet grace or a somber dignity. Dad loved to have fun, and it was a joy for life that was infectious, that lifted up all souls, that embraced life with wonder, adventure, and sometimes even mischief. It was always 100 percent.

If there were crab legs at a buffet dinner, he would eat **only** the crab legs, and as many crab legs as he possibly could, and every single crab leg would get his undivided, meticulous attention until there was not a single fiber of crab meat left between the sheaths and shells.

When he discovered golf in his 40s, he devoted himself completely to the sport, convincing his friends to wake up at the crack of dawn – literally, 6am – and then play golf until the sun set at 8 or 9pm. Often 54 holes of golf in one day.

When he reunited with his brothers, baduk would be played not just hours at a time, but often 24 hours and sometimes 48 hours at a time, without sleep and only occasionally remembering to eat and take a bathroom break.

Growing up, I just thought that was normal. I thought everyone stayed up all night when they got together with friends, family, loved ones.

For someone who comes off as a consummate Korean gentleman, Dad was also full of surprises. He loved telling dirty jokes. My Korean was never good enough to know how crude his humor was, but over the years, when I'd meet one of Dad's old friends, they would lean over towards me with a twinkle in their eye and say, "Your Dad is funny!"

But through all this fun and frivolity, he never forgot about other people. He was one of the most caring and considerate people I knew. For the last several years, he has been my mother's primary caretaker and he looked after her with such tenderness and devotion and concern for her happiness and respect for her dignity.

Even in his last days in the hospital, Dad had a breathing tube and so we could not understand him when he tried to talk to us, and tried he did whenever he was awake and alert to talk to us.

The nurses and doctors would strain to understand what he was trying to say while they were subjecting him to procedure after procedure, most of it unpleasant, some of it humiliating, and then they realized that what he was trying to say was just "thank you."

Friends and family who visited would strain as they stood over my Dad to understand what he was trying to say in such a weakened state, and then they realized that he was pointing to the chair and asking them to have a sit and be comfortable.

And on his next to last day, Dad was especially agitated, flailing his arms and trying to say something. I had gotten into this routine of asking him "yes/no" questions because while he could not talk, he could nod his head, so I ran through every "yes/no" question I could think of to calm him down.

Did he want an update on his blood and liver enzyme tests or his vital signs? Did he want to know what the doctors had said that morning? Was he worried about Mom or Jinku? Was he in pain? And I started to get desperate, because he was so agitated his blood pressure was tanking and his respiratory rate soaring into the 40s.

And then finally, it occurred to me to ask: are you asking about me, if I am OK? He nodded his head and when I reassured him not to worry about me, he quickly turned calm and restfully drifted off to sleep.

The last thing I want to share are my Dad's final moments. I've described my father in many ways, but one thing I haven't yet mentioned is that my father was an impatient man, especially as he got older. If we were going somewhere, he was always the first one dressed, the first one out the door, the first one in the car.

But in his final act, the doctors told us Father may only live a minute or two once they removed him off all the intensive care support he was on. Dad stubbornly decided to stay with us for over an hour. I would like to think that in that hour, in his joy for life and in his playfulness, Dad wanted to hear what we would do. He wanted to hear what life would be like for us without him, after we thought he was gone.

And when the one or two minutes turned into five, ten, then twenty, then thirty, the family gathered in around his bed and started fondly remembering things Dad said or did that made us laugh and not cry. And then we remembered how much my Father loved to sing and so we started singing the songs he loved. Laughing and singing.

Finally, when we all joined together – my mother, Jungku and I, Dad's brothers and sisters and nephews – when we all joined together laughing and singing a heartfelt chorus of "Oh Danny Boy," Father knew we would be OK, and he left us quietly and peacefully.

I hope you are laughing and singing up there in heaven, Father. You were my North Star, my oak tree, my prince. And you were such a good man.

아버지, 잘가세요.