

My dad was a storyteller. His stories came from his heart.
And sometimes embellished from his imagination.
He had a flare for the dramatic.

Three weeks ago he was lucid and alert and he began, in grand Buddy fashion, to share a powerful, mysterious story.

He told me he was near the end.
He had seen his mother.
And that I needed to get his coffin ready.

We held hands and I cried.
I cried a lot and he cried a single tear.
He told me I shouldn't be sad. That we would be together again. That he was proud of me. That he did a good job raising me. There were women who were coming to take him up soon. That there were lights and that it was beautiful. He told me up there felt like a joke that was serious.

But it was the end, he said. It was time for him to be getting on.

When people die, he said, they go up to where their mothers are.

She is there, he said, and she is waiting for me.

What the fuck...he said...my mother is dead...I was alarmed to talk to my mother, he said, but now we talk a lot, I'm prepared to talk to my mother.

She told him the people he knew would be behind him.

I count on my wife, he told me, but we can't leave her alone.

I count on my boys, who are men now, and they will be with me. They will be with me til the end.

I said, Dad, what happens at the end?

I would love to walk again. I've been a good man, never stopped being a good man, and I'll be a good man again, too. I was good to people, and part of getting to know me was knowing that.

I said, What am I going to do without you, Dad?

You'll see me in your face. I see me in your face. I'd trust you anywhere and everywhere. Do you understand that? Some of my happiest moments were on your team. We have to be a team. We will always be a team. It won't be easy, I know this, he said, because it's not easy being me, and you're like me. I remember you being a

beautiful boy and a loving man, who I will always love. I have a lot of heart in my love and a lot of love in my heart. They go together.

A Dylan record with now symbolic titles played in the background. If Dogs Run Free...New Morning...Sign On The Window...One More Weekend...The Man In Me...Three Angels...Father of Night...

It was deep and profound. It was essential Buddy.

He was a natural storyteller. There were certain people, that to me, seemed like he had raised onto this mythical mantle. He told stories about these people over and over and over. He made us converts to his classic tales.

Lena, his grandmother, who taught him about open doors and honoring the tradition of family and how to listen to a good story. And, Jacob, his grandfather, who sparked his interest in entrepreneurship.

His mother who taught him commitment, taught him the virtue of building a strong home and most importantly, how to be supportive of identity, purpose and passion. Nan got him, she understood him. She gave him the freedom to discover his true self.

Uncle Julius, the ultimate cowboy, Uncle Julius who was taken into custody after the Brinks robbery, Uncle Julius who's henchman Little Abbie Laveen they would roll up into a rug at Sears so they could knock off the joint from the inside. Uncle Julius taught dad about loyalty, about showing up for those in need. Dad was the right man for the job when Julius was dying, he trusted dad to drive down to Florida and get those contents in his safety deposit box.

Robert Handwerker, his oldest and truest friend, taught him about comradeship, rebellion, living with a free spirit. Dad always gravitated towards people with zeal for life, and together they were powerful electric currents who never backed down and always had each other's backs.

Sydney James was a father figure, a mentor for my dad, he harnessed dad's creative voice and expression, he taught him that pursuing passion was physical, demanding work.

Paco, his Belgian Shepard, gave dad a friend he could come home to, a friend he rescued from hardship.

Maureen, the true star by his side, pragmatic and compassionate, taught him about compromise, helped him become the father he needed to be after losing his dad at such a young age.

And then there was Jesse, Aaron and Daniel. They gave him pride and legacy for the Kenner name. He went back to his alma mater Moses Brown to cheer for Jesse and

Aaron, watch them dominate and kick some varsity wrestling ass. Daniel followed in his footsteps and graduated from the same theater department at George Washington University. He learned to pass on the torch, and radiated joy doing so, watching Jesse and Aaron become incredible dads to the beautiful and brilliant and effervescent Julia Isaac Judah Clara Ruby and Alice.

But now I know, they weren't just stories. Dad was letting us in on the secret. These were some of his greatest teachers. Buddy didn't become a noun and an adjective on his own. These were some of the people and some of the stories of how and from whom he became pure and bold mischievous loyal ever present rebellious resilient and calm.

He was a storyteller.

And through that, he became my favorite story to tell.

He was a character, he was so many characters. So many personas. So many names.

Harold, Buddy, King, Caleb Christian, Jacob, Doc, Unc Bud, Mistah Kenner, Einstein, he was a freakin' honorary Deputy Sheriff for Christ Sakes.

I worshipped them. He was my hero. The highest compliment I can give of my dad was that he had a son that idolized him. Through Lenny Bruce, Marlon Brando, James Dean, Bob Dylan, Joe Montana, Jerry Rice, I tried to soak up everything my dad loved. I wanted to learn from the greats who taught my dad how to be himself, because he didn't know to be anybody else. Observant and oh so clutch. Always listening, always learning. Which in turn made him an incredible teacher. Never speaking down to students, empowering them as equals.

I developed many of my streaks from my dad. Inquisitive, creative, athletic, love of nature, champion for the arts, a love of reading, analyzing and synthesizing, I'm a grown up man child prankster. Yippee Ki Yay Motherfucker.

He was a kind, giving man. An encouraging, supportive teammate and teacher and coach who never said no. A giant as an artist. Never lacked confidence. His smile lit up every room. There was always so much laughter.

He was the kind of storyteller who listened more than he spoke. He thrived in silence, watching the flocks of birds overhead, surf crashing onto the beach, in an actor's Pinter pause, carving an oven roasted chicken, tearing through a Lee Child or Andrew Vachs mystery, standing over a putt.

There was always potential for magic.

Dad taught me to always keep a good song in my heart.

When life goes back to quote on quote normal in the next few weeks, and my dad is no longer here, I will continue to speak of him the way he spoke of Lena and Jacob, Nan, Uncle Julius, Robert, Sydney, Paco, Mom, my brothers and me.

Dad never stopped collecting heroes and stories.

How lucky am I to be one of his?

I am relieved.

I am terrified.

I am honored.

The storyteller has passed on, surrendered to experience.

There was a good sunset for my cowboy.

The stories, unique and powerful, will be devoured and shared. They will be whispered, sung and shouted.

There will be so much more laughter.

He gave us the power of a good story.

I hope you have that confidence to share your story so you continue to become a great teacher for another. And always carry your creative license.

Dad would like that.