

Father's Day Community Comment: June 18, 2015 – Mike Goldsby

Father's Day is this Sunday. It can present a wonderful opportunity or a significant challenge, depending on the relationship you have or had with your own Father. My Dad died over 40 years ago and he was pretty absent during my childhood, leaving most of the responsibility of raising the family to my Mom. He had some good qualities too but Father's Day was never much to celebrate in our house.

So before I had children of my own, I viewed Father's Day as a Hallmark holiday; An afterthought, shoved between Mother's Day and Independence Day. My opinion of Father's Day has changed, just like the role of the Father has evolved.

In the 50's and the early 60's there was the stereotype of Father Knows Best. When it was a radio show, the title ended in a question mark. Father Knows Best? But on television it became a statement. Robert Young, so wise and caring, came home from work to his wife and two and a half kids. There was no problem he couldn't solve in a half hour. He didn't look like my Dad or any of my friends Dads. But Father Knows Best lingered as an ideal and an incredibly rigid and unfair expectation.

In addition to the Father Knows Best stereotype, the image of the bumbling Dad is still widespread. The Father as Dagwood, the Bumbler, unaware, mentally and emotionally distant, that image is powerful and destructive. It promotes the idea that raising children is women's work and that it is enough for Dad to just put groceries on the table and then have the family leave him alone.

I never had a great example of how to be a Father, so I just resolved when I had kids to do a better job than my Dad did.

I feel sorry for Dad's that don't participate in the raising of their children. I think the most important thing a Father can do is be present

Father's Day is a relatively modern Holiday. The first observance was in 1910. It was officially observed as a holiday by President Nixon in 1972. There are a wide range of ways to celebrate, from making it a big deal to just sending a card or making a call. It is a difficult holiday if you are estranged from your Father. So Father's Day can be observed out of joy or obligation or ignored as well.

I don't know any Fathers who expect a big gift. I know most hope for something sincere. I've kept the handmade cards and crafts that my kids made for me when they were little. And as young adults they are both very good about remembering and observing.

I saw a list of out-of-the-ordinary Father's Day gifts: Membership in the Potato Chip of the Month club, a personalized oak whiskey barrel, a portable briefcase-sized barbeque grill. I would rather receive a heartfelt card.

This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment