

My Father - 父爱无边

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My father was a self-taught mandolin player. He was one of the best string instrument players in our town. He could not read music, but if he heard a tune a few times, he could play it. When he was younger, he was a member of a small country music band. They would play at local dances and on a few occasions would play for the local radio station. He often told us how he had auditioned and earned a position in a band that featured Patsy Cline as their lead singer. He told the family that after he was hired he never went back. Dad was a very religious man. He stated that there was a lot of drinking and cursing the day of his audition and he did not want to be around that type of environment.

Occasionally, Dad would get out his mandolin and play for the family. We three children: Trisha, Monte and I, George Jr., would often sing along. Songs such as the Tennessee Waltz, Harbor Lights and around Christmas time, the well-known rendition of Silver Bells. "Silver Bells, Silver Bells, its Christmas time in the city" would ring throughout the house. One of Dad's favorite hymns was "The Old Rugged Cross". We learned the words to the hymn when we were very young, and would sing it with Dad when he would play and sing. Another song that was often shared in our house was a song that accompanied the Walt Disney series: Davey Crockett. Dad only had to hear the song twice before he learned it well enough to play it. "Davey, Davey Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier" was a favorite song for the family. He knew we enjoyed the song and the program and would often get out the mandolin after the program was over. I could never get over how he could play the songs so well after only hearing them a few times. I loved to sing, but I never learned how to play the mandolin. This is something I regret to this day.

Dad loved to play the mandolin for his family he knew we enjoyed singing, and hearing him play. He was like that. If he could give pleasure to others, he would, especially his family. He was always there, sacrificing his time and efforts to see that his family had enough in their life. I had to mature into a man and have children of my own before I realized how much he had sacrificed.

I joined the United States Air Force in January of 1962. Whenever I would come home on leave, I would ask Dad to play the mandolin. Nobody played the mandolin like my father. He could touch your soul with the tones that came out of that old mandolin. He seemed to shine when he was playing. You could see his pride in his ability to play so well for his family.

When Dad was younger, he worked for his father on the farm. His father was a farmer and sharecropped a farm for the man who owned the property. In 1950, our family moved from the farm. Dad had gained employment at the local limestone quarry. When the quarry closed in August of 1957, he had to seek other employment. He worked for Owens Yacht Company in

Dundalk, Maryland and for Todd Steel in Point of Rocks, Maryland. While working at Todd Steel, he was involved in an accident. His job was to roll angle iron onto a conveyor so that the welders farther up the production line would have it to complete their job. On this particular day Dad got the third index finger of his left hand mashed between two pieces of steel. The doctor who operated on the finger could not save it, and Dad ended up having the tip of the finger amputated. He didn't lose enough of the finger where it would stop him picking up anything, but it did impact his ability to play the mandolin.

After the accident, Dad was reluctant to play the mandolin. He felt that he could not play as well as he had before the accident. When I came home on leave and asked him to play he would make excuses for why he couldn't play. Eventually, we would wear him down and he would say "Okay, but remember, I can't hold down on the strings the way I used to" or "Since the accident to this finger I can't play as good". For the family it didn't make any difference that Dad couldn't play as well. We were just glad that he would play. When he played the old mandolin it would carry us back to a cheerful, happier time in our lives. "Davey, Davey Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier", would again be heard in the little town of Bakerton, West Virginia.

In August of 1993 my father was diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer. He chose not to receive chemotherapy treatments so that he could live out the rest of his life in dignity. About a week before his death, we asked Dad if he would play the mandolin for us. He made excuses but said "okay". He knew it would probably be the last time he would play for us. He tuned up the old mandolin and played a few notes. When I looked around, there was not a dry eye in the family. We saw before us a quiet humble man with an inner strength that comes from knowing God, and living with him in one's life. Dad would never play the mandolin for us again. We felt at the time that he wouldn't have enough strength to play, and that makes the memory of that day even stronger. Dad was doing something he had done all his life, giving. As sick as he was, he was still pleasing others. Dad sure could play that Mandolin!

我父亲是个自学成才的曼陀林琴手，他是我们镇最优秀的弦乐演奏者之一。他看不懂乐谱，但是如果听几次曲子，他就能演奏出来。当他年轻一点的时候，他是一个小乡村乐队的成员。他们在当地舞厅演奏，有几次还为当地广播电台演奏。他经常告诉我们，自己如何试演，如何在佩茜·克莱恩作为主唱的乐队里占一席之地。他告诉家人，一旦被聘用就永不回头。父亲是一个很严谨的人，他讲述了他试演的那天，很多人在喝酒，咒骂，他不想呆在那种环境里。

有时候，父亲会拿出曼陀林，为家人弹奏。我们三个小孩：翠莎、蒙蒂和我，还有乔治通常会伴唱。唱的有：《田纳西华尔兹》和《海港之光》，到了圣诞节，就唱脍炙人口的《银铃》：“银铃，银铃，城里来了圣诞节。”歌声充满了整个房子。父亲最爱的其中一首赞歌是《古老的十字架》。我们很小的时候就学会歌词了，而且在父亲弹唱的时候，我们也跟着唱。我们经常一起唱的另外一首歌来自沃特·迪斯尼的系列片：《戴维·克罗克特》。父亲只要听了两遍就弹起来了，“戴维，戴维·克罗克特，荒野边疆的国王。”那是我们家最喜欢的歌曲。他知道我们喜欢那首歌和那个节目，所以每次节目结束后，他就拿出曼陀林弹奏。我永远不能明白他如何能听完几遍后就能把一首曲子弹得那么好。我热爱唱歌，但我没有学会如何弹奏曼陀林，这是我遗憾至今的事情。

父亲喜欢为家人弹奏曼陀林，他知道我们喜欢唱歌，喜欢听他弹奏。他就是那样，如果他能把快乐奉献给别人，他从不吝啬，尤其是对他的家人。他总是那样，牺牲自己的时间和精力让家人生活得满足。父亲的这种付出是只有当我长大成人，而且是有了自己的孩子后才能体会到的。

我在1962年1月加入了美国空军基地。每当我休假回家，我都请求父亲弹奏曼陀林。没有人弹奏曼陀林能达到像我父亲那样的境界，他在那古老的曼陀林上抚出的旋律能够触及你的灵魂。他弹奏的时候，身上似乎能发出四射的光芒。你可以看出，父亲为能给家人弹奏出如此美妙的旋律，他是多么的自豪。

父亲年轻的时候，曾在农场为爷爷工作。爷爷是农场使用者，要向农场所有人交纳谷物抵租。1950年，我们全家搬离农场，父亲在当地石灰石采石场谋得职位。采石场在1957年倒闭，他只好另觅工作。他曾在马里兰州登多克的欧文斯游艇公司上班，还在马里兰州的洛斯的托德钢铁公司上过班。在托德钢铁公司上班期间，他遇到了意外。他的工作是把有棱角的铁滚到搬运台上，这样焊接工才能作进一步加工来完成整个工序。在那个特殊的日子里，父亲的

左手第三个手指被缠在两片钢铁中。医生对手指施手术，但未能保住那只手指，最后父亲只好让医生把那手指的指尖给切除了。那个手指并没有完全丧失拿东西的能力，但是却影响了他弹奏曼陀林的能力。

事故后，父亲不太愿意弹奏曼陀林了，他觉得再也不能像以前弹得那么好了。我休假回家请求他弹奏曼陀林，他以种种借口解释不能弹奏的原因。最后，我们软硬兼施逼他就范，他终于说：“好吧，但是记住，我拨弦再也不能像过去一样了。”或者说：“这个手指出意外后，我再也不能弹得像过去那样好了。”对于家人来说，父亲弹得好不好并没有分别，我们很高兴他终于弹奏了。当他弹起那把陈旧的曼陀林，就会把我们带回昔日那些无忧无虑的幸福时光。“戴维·戴维·克罗克特，荒野边疆的国王”就会再次响彻西弗吉尼亚州的贝克顿小镇。

1993年8月，父亲诊断得了不宜动手术的肺癌。他不想接受化疗，因为他想体面地过完他生命最后的时光。大约在父亲去世的一周前，我们请求他能否为我们弹奏曼陀林，他说了很多借口，最后还是答应了。他知道这可能是他最后一次为我们弹奏了，他为老曼陀林调弦，弹了几个音。我环顾四周，家人个个都泪水满眶。我们看见在我们面前是一个安静的、谦虚的人，以生命最后的力量，用爱的力量支撑着。父亲再也没有足够的力量弹奏，这使我们对那天的记忆更加强烈。父亲做着他一生都在做的事情：奉献。即使生命已走到了尽头，他却仍尽力为他人创造欢乐。没错，父亲一定还能弹奏曼陀林的。

