

Thank you all for being here today—for the outpouring of love, support, and FOOD. The kindness you've shown my family this week has meant more than we can express, and it stands as a powerful reminder of how far my dad's legacy has truly reached.

Anyone who has lost a parent, knows there is a **numbness** and a **stillness** that comes with the loss, that is so profound, you can't find the words. *And for those of you who know me and my "gift of gab", you will be grateful for that today.*

Today, I want to share some of my memories about my dad that speak to the man he was:

My dad loved **peanut butter**—not so much in candy or as a flavor, but straight from the jar. The twist: he didn't like condiments like ketchup, mustard, or mayo (a trait I inherited); peanut butter was his condiment of choice. A steak and cheese sandwich—with peanut butter. Sloppy joes—with peanut butter, — tuna sub with peanut butter...(thankfully, I did NOT inherit this trait).

My dad was a gifted **MONOTONE** singer. Loud, soft, fast, slow...didn't matter, he could only produce one note. Those of

you who sat near him here in church through the years can affirm this. Yes?

As a child, it was difficult to get me to sleep at night so a bedtime routine evolved. One night, my grandmother, returning from a trip in Hawaii, rocked me and sang *Tiny Bubbles* by Don Ho.

Magically, I fell right to sleep. So every night thereafter, my dad would sing *Tiny Bubbles* with the same effect. And I don't just mean as an infant, I mean up until I was at least 3 years old, carried over his shoulder, back and forth across the floor. And while this may sound endearing, remember, he was **monotone**. So I've decided it was actually an act of self-defense: I fell asleep to avoid listening to his singing.

My dad had the **patience of a Saint**, on so many occasions, but most especially with my art projects. Dad was an engineer, organized, meticulous, precise. I was a creative spirit, not so organized - and I often sprang last minute projects on him, requesting his mechanical help to execute my vision. Some days he even had to drive me to school with a project that was still drying in the back seat.

As an adult, he was my go-to for countless home improvement projects. Together we would fix, build, paint...I learned so much from him and these times. Working side by side with him, created some of my favorite memories with him.

Sickles always have an "Open Door" philosophy which started with my dad's parents. Create a home where ALL are welcome, ANYTIME, and always keep some food on hand to share. My parents hosted so many dinners and parties through the years, but the really special times were when my friends just came to hang out. Dad was always there to greet them in his quiet way with a genuine smile. My friends to this day refer to my parents as "Mom and Dad" which really means the world to me.

My favorite memory was New Year's Eve 1989, when my parents let my brother and I host a party for 30+ kids. We were allowed to drink that night, which was an exception to my parents' rules. However, everyone who came, had to sleep over. For anyone who is a parent, imagine more than 30 "spirit-filled" kids on all 3 levels of the house, all night...impressive or insane, you decide.

My dad faced many health challenges throughout his life. Cardiac and kidney disease, a transplant, dialysis, and most recently,

macular degeneration that left him with extremely limited eyesight. Over the past several years, he endured more medications, doctor's appointments and hospital stays, but he NEVER, EVER complained. I affectionately started to refer to him as "airport luggage" because he just kept taking the beatings, and going around the carousel. One day as I sat with him in the hospital, yet again, I asked him if he was doing OK, (emotionally). He replied: *you play the hands you're dealt, you know that kid*. The moment was so profound to me. It was not a complaint, there was no self pity, and it acknowledged the struggles that I myself had faced. It was a gentle reminder: Don't waste energy on things you can't change.

My dad was an extraordinary man—my hero then, now, and always. Those who had the privilege of knowing him have shared messages that affirm what I've always known: he was kind, a gentleman, funny; generous with his time and spirit; always ready to help; and deeply faithful.

He was an incredible grandpop to his five grandchildren. He gave each of them the same patience and dedication—nurturing their creativity, cheering on their athletic pursuits, teaching them practical skills, and loving them unconditionally.

Above all, he was utterly devoted to my mom—the love of his life and his true soulmate. Their love story was remarkable and there is not enough time here today to speak to all of its beauty.

As I mentioned at the beginning, there has been a stillness since dad's passing, but it has made me more keenly aware. There was a beautiful sunrise the day he left us, the moon was bright that night, and every morning now I hear the birds usher in a new day. The void my dad leaves can never be filled, but in his spirit, I will always strive to be patient, resourceful, welcoming, kind and faithful. I won't waste energy on things I can't change. I will play my cards and ride the carousel...but I draw the line at the peanut butter thing!

I love you dad. Thank you for modeling such an exemplary life for all of us.