

# A new millennium Dad in a *"Father Knows Best"* world



Donald G. Hauprich as a very young father in the early 1950s and with daughter Ann at the Albany International Airport in 1971.

The ink on my Class of 1971 Ballston Spa High School diploma was still fresh the first time my Dad drove me to the then small Albany airport to catch a flight. The tiny passenger plane would fly me only as far as JFK Airport. From there I would board a 747 “jumbo jet” destined for Denmark, where I would spend a full year representing the village and the nation as a Rotary International Exchange Student.

As I waved farewell from my airplane window seat on the Albany runway, my heart — as well as my eyes — seemed to be filling with tears.

At first I dismissed the feeling as an adolescent mood swing.

For months I’d save for and dreamed about this trip. Now at long last the adventure of a lifetime was about to begin. How could I be so deliriously happy and immeasurably sad at the same time?

It wasn’t until my head was (literally) in the clouds that I allowed my mind to gently drift back in time. There among the dust-covered memories of my childhood was a remarkably sharp image of my father with me at the Albany airport.

Dressed in casual attire befitting the Eisenhower era, my astonishingly young-looking father was pointing out something on the nearby airstrip. A small plane was rumbling in preparation for liftoff, and neither my Dad nor I could contain our excitement.

Nor for that matter could the many brothers and sisters who had accompanied us on this 1950s airport outing! Although we were to number 10 siblings by the summer of 1963, there were probably only seven or eight of us around at the time. Yet somehow our father was making each of us feel as if we were the light of his life.

Hoisting little ones in his arms for a better view in those pre-airport security days, Dad would enthusiastically explain what was about to transpire, then patiently field the barrage of questions that inevitably flew in his direction. The thrill was the same when the planes approached for landings

Head still in the clouds, I peered more intently into my father’s young eyes. Was it possible that he had wished – for at least a fleeting moment – that he might hop aboard one of those planes and escape to some distant, carefree destination?

The thought had never even crossed my mind until now. How could it? Unlike my Dad, who had always put his children’s wants and needs before his own, I had been thinking only of myself. So caught up had I been in planning for this trip of a lifetime that I had neglected to stop and thank my father for the lifetime of wonderful memories he had already given me.

Like so many teenagers, I had come to take my father for granted. I had even come to regard him as old-fashioned – something of a “square.”

In fact, the opposite was true: Though he may have been born in 1924, there was nothing old-fashioned about my Dad's role as a father. If anything, Donald G. Hauprich was decades ahead of his time: A New Millennium Dad in a "Father's Knows Best" world.

Although he had more than his share of yard work and household repairs to tackle after arriving home from his full-time job, Dad willingly pitched in with chores most men living in the shadow of fathers on such vintage TV programs as "Father Knows Best" and "Leave It To Beaver" snubbed as Women's Work. If Dad considered the traditionally female tasks to be beneath his dignity, he never let on.

When a shirt button fell off, he'd deftly thread a needle and sew it back on – a tribute to his seamstress mother. If a floor needed sweeping, he'd grab a broom. If mashed potatoes were on the menu, he'd fetch a peeler and joke about being on K.P. duty – a reference to his days serving overseas in the US Army during World War Two.

Perhaps most important of all, if a baby needed feeding, burping, changing or rocking, he'd feed, burp, change or rock the little whippersnapper. Had a book on infant-father bonding existed half a century ago, Dad would have been a natural for the cover. Come to think of it, he could have written the book!

In order that our mother might take well-deserved late afternoon naps or concentrate on her studies when she returned to college after the youngest was born in the early 1960s, Dad would often surprise us kids with spur-of-the-moment plans.

Sometimes it was hiking in Thatcher Park. Other times it was chestnut-gathering in Washington Park or fishing at the Six-Mile Waterworks where he enjoyed many happy hours as a lad in the company of his late father, Edward Hauprich.

Although he went on to earn the rank of an Assistant Scout Master in Albany, Dad never stopped believing in The Tooth Fairy, The Easter Bunny and Santa – who always left tangible proof of their visits by way of hand-written notes and drawings which bore a striking resemblance to our father's unique penmanship and artistic style. His lifelong love of literature, music and gardening has also enriched many lives.



Donald Hauprich tending his garden today and with daughter Ann Hauprich on his 70th birthday in 1994.

Even now, at 96, Dad can be found telling captivating tales, giving impromptu poetry recitations and leading singalongs for kindred spirits gathered at the family homestead on Church Avenue in the village. And although Father Time has robbed Dad of the ability to rake and hoe, the bulbs he passed along to be planted in the gardens of his descendants continue to bloom in his honor.

A wise person once observed: "There are two important things you must give your children. First you must give them roots; then you must give them wings." By keeping both feet planted firmly on the ground through life's highs and lows, my father succeeded in giving his children both..

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