

2017

## Things My Father Taught Me

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### **Recommended Citation**

Waits, Casey (2017) "Things My Father Taught Me," *The Tuxedo Archives*: Vol. 2012 , Article 19.

Available at: <https://scholar.dominican.edu/tuxedolit/vol2012/iss2/19>

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# Things My Father Taught Me

Casey Waits

They say every man grows up to be his father. I'm pretty sure they say the same thing about women too. They also say how life is all about the little things. The devil is in the details and what have you; body language, facial expressions, clothing, ticks, mannerisms, habits, speech patterns, sayings, tones, opinions, and patterns. These are what make up a person. These are what make up me. I learned them from my dad.

Shaving is a damn manly thing. It looks so cool. The white shaving cream, applied to the Louis Armstrong contortion of the cheeks followed by the rhythmic attack of the blue dollar store razor. As a toddler I made bubble bath beards and shaved with my finger. As a teenager I shaved peach fuzz with a stolen pink blade that belonged to my sister. Today, it's a pain in the ass, but I remember how I couldn't wait to cross that threshold.

I was given pocket knives from an early age and lost more than I could ever count. As a young man I saw that my dad looked for any and every opportunity to use his. Whether it was a rope that needed to be cut or an apple to be sliced he was always on high alert. I will have it noted that teeth were also a tool to be used for ripping, tearing and opening things as well.

I remember the "little people". In our backyard, in the redwood forest, there was a special place dad took me, where an old dead log lay on its side surrounded by stumps that looked like chairs and an enclosure of trees, which appeared to be homes. He told me if I left my broken toys on this log perhaps the small hobbitlike people of the woods would make a trade with me. So, I did. I would leave burnt G-I-Joes and torsos of Ninja Turtles on this dead trunk, only to return days later and discover my toys had been taken. My dad would tell me to search around and see if they left me something in return. I can still conjure up the excitement I felt, discovering odd trinkets wrapped in tissue paper tucked in the nooks and niches of this fallen tree.

I miss that belief in magic and the realm of the unknown. I don't remember the shift in thinking, or when I stopped going to that spot in the woods but I wish I could go back. With age came an unfortunate awareness of the harsh realities of the world. The one that make a kid jaded, cynical and sarcastic. I can't give my dad credit for that, nor would he want it.

My dad and I say the weirdest things. I don't even know where to begin with the listing of vocabulary words but I'll do my best. Shoolabonda, haylamonda, sando headed pint, and cadint, to name a few. There is also a lot of wiener talk in my household. Even if I'm the one who coined the phrase "one dumb wiener" my dad fully embraces and backs it. A phrase used by my parents, my brother, his friends, my cousins and even their friends.

We used to have a swear jar when I was younger. Every word had a different value. I think "fuck" was a dollar. My dad would have friends over and they would just donate about twenty bucks before even opening their mouths. When we had enough money in there my dad said we were going to buy a tree. A tree made of "fuck". But he kept stealing from the swear jar and we never got there. Eventually no one put money in it and ultimately no one even tried to monitor their language. So now our house is a mix of made up crazy talk and cuss words.

I blame the sagging of my pants on my father. He still sags like no other and though I looked up the origins of the fashion choice only to find it linked to prison, he claims he invented it. Apparently there used to be a one size fits all wardrobe policy in the jails and so the skinny guys would be floating around in their clothes. Apparently it caught on as a badass look, but that's another story. The point being I wear my pants just like my dad, even though we all say my mom wears the pants in the family.

He definitely showed me how to be a loving husband and father if or whenever that day comes. I've seen how he will drop whatever he is doing and sacrifice anything for his family. To sum my dad's relationship to my mom, it's constant affection and attention, never ending cups of tea, massages and compliments. He is a real gentleman.

My dad might have grazed over fighting, pool, sex, construction, sports and the trick to a stick shift, but those things can be picked up along the way and don't really need too much explanation. Perhaps they do, but I'm confident I'm doing just fine. I've made it this far.

How do you begin to list off the little things? The joys of peeing outside, the bouncing and rocking on all chairs and beds, the ability to sleep anywhere, the hidden candies in pockets, speeding tickets, burnt teriyaki chicken on the grill, denim jackets with holes, old blues singers, and Cadillac's. I don't think I could ever do a list justice. He's taught me a lot and I like to think I've taught him some too.