



BY MELODY WARNICK

Dad and I seemed rarely to see each other. How would I let him know how much I cared?



It was 11 p.m. when I heard my father's car door close outside. He was home a little early tonight. Dad was a college professor with a full load of night classes to teach, so his normal arrival time wavered somewhere between 11:30 p.m. and midnight. And since I left for my early-morning seminary class before sunup, I usually only saw him for a few flurried minutes each night. That is, if I saw him at all.

Tonight I was brushing my teeth when he popped his head through the bathroom doorway. "How are you?" he asked. Through a mouthful of toothpaste I mumbled a response, then asked how his day had been.

"Great," he said boisterously. "The plane got in a few hours ago, and the bus dropped us off at the school. After that I came right home."

Plane? Bus? Was I missing something? He must have noticed my vacant stare, because he quickly added, "I was at a conference in Indianapolis all week."

He was? Why didn't I know about this? I realized with a pang of shame that my father had just spent five days on the other side of the country, and I hadn't even noticed he was gone.

As my sister and I got older, it seemed like the whole family got busier until we were, as Mom liked to say, "like ships passing in the night." We barely had time to blurt out "good morning" before we rushed

in separate directions. But even with our classes and after-school activities, my sister and I couldn't compete with Dad at being busy. His work-

day was longer than anyone else's. Even when he was home, he spent hours at the computer, writing textbooks and revising lecture outlines.

Because Dad wasn't a member of the Church, we only saw him on Sunday mornings over our bowls of breakfast cereal. By the time the rest of the family came home after our Church meetings, he had usually disappeared to his office at the college to get more work done.

I had always thought my family was a regular busy family, and I figured that feeling out of touch with my dad was just a part of such a high-speed life. Until that night over the bathroom sink, I never really considered the idea that we might be too busy.

A few weeks later, the missionaries from our ward came to my house for dinner. Dad, of course, was missing in action, but after we had eaten, the missionaries began to ask us some questions about Dad's feelings toward the Church. Had he ever taken the discussions? Had he read the Book of Mormon? Did he ever come to Church with us? My mother and I answered the questions as best we could. Then the elders said that they'd really like the chance to teach my father the gospel, and they wanted to enlist our help.

Although I was usually enthusiastic about thinking up ways to help share the gospel with my father, I leaned back into my chair and frowned. "What can we do?" I asked skeptically. "We hardly ever see him." I explained to the missionaries about Dad's overly hectic schedule, and they nodded understandingly.

Finally one of the missionaries, who also had a non-member father, said, "My dad was the same way when I was in high school. He was such a workaholic that I felt like I never saw him, and we just drifted farther and farther apart. I got even busier after I joined the Church.

"I just decided," he went on, "that it was important for my dad to know that I loved him, that my joining the Church didn't make me love him less. Since I didn't see

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him very often, I started leaving him notes. Nothing special. I just wrote a quick note telling him that I loved and appreciated him, and I made sure I put it where he'd find it."

"Did it work?" I asked skeptically.

He smiled and shrugged. "Why don't you find out for yourself?"

It was a challenge I couldn't refuse. That night, after I was in my pajamas and Dad still hadn't gotten home from work, I pulled out a pad of sticky notes and wrote a quick message: "Dear Dad: I hope you had a good day. I love you." I signed my name at the bottom and stuck the note to his computer screen, knowing Dad almost always made a stop at

his computer before he finally got to bed.

The next morning when I plodded into the bathroom still half asleep, I noticed a piece of yellow paper clinging to the mirror. "Dear Melody," it read. "Thanks for the note. I love you too. Love, Dad."

I smiled, something I rarely did at 5:30 in the morning.

For the rest of that year before I went away to college, I left notes for my father a few times a week. Nothing elaborate, just a few lines to tell him what was going on in my life,

to wish him a good day, to tell him I loved him. He almost always responded

with another note attached to my bathroom mirror or my bedroom door.

As the weeks went on and our note exchange became a regular thing, it became easier to put into words how I really felt about my dad. I realized that even though I didn't spend as much time with him as I wanted to, I really did love him. And I realized that even though he worked a lot, he really loved me too. Having a true friendship made us more eager to do things with each other, too, like trips to museums or into the city on Saturday afternoons.

Over the years I kept a few of the sticky notes from Dad. I even taped one to the mirror in my dorm room at college just to make it feel like home. When I finally went back home for Christmas, I noticed that Dad had done the same. A piece of yellow paper with the words "Dad, I love you. Melody" was firmly attached to the top of his computer desk.

My father never joined the Church. But when he died suddenly several years ago, the yellow sticky note was still on his computer desk, right where it had been for five years. In the weeks after his death, I felt grateful that I had found a way to communicate with Dad even when we were both at our busiest. I didn't have to wonder whether he knew that I loved him. I knew that he looked at my words every day. **NE**

How do you and your dad connect? Send your story to newera@ldschurch.org.

