

## Lessons From Fatdad

*Winner, World Championship of Public Speaking, 2004. I had the pleasure of seeing Randy deservedly win this trophy with his story about love -- the love in his family experienced while growing up and covered in a collection of vivid vignettes, energetically and enthusiastically relived on stage. Enjoy!*

By Randy J Harvey ([www.randyjharvey.com](http://www.randyjharvey.com))

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When I was seven  
We drove to my cousin's for dinner --  
And to show off Fatdad's new car -- a 1960 Ford Fairlane.  
I fell asleep in the back seat.  
And my folks left me sleeping as they went up to the house.  
When I woke up  
I stumbled out of the car and headed for the porch.  
Woof! -- OWWWOOO!!!  
I WAS surrounded by a pack of black and tan hunting hounds --  
OWWWOOO!!!  
My heart jumped -- and then so did I --  
First to the trunk -- and then the roof -- of his new car.  
Mr. Contest Chair, Fellow Toastmasters, and guests  
I was frozen like a treed raccoon  
I was bawling and screaming --  
The hounds were circling and howling.  
An ugly one-eyed dog  
Clawed and scratched its way onto the trunk.  
His yellow teeth snapping and foaming --  
Uhh! -- I was standing in water -- [looks down briefly]

It was mine!!!  
Its claws screeched and slipped on the glass when I heard --  
*Son!!!*  
And I dove at the voice --  
To be caught in Fatdad's arms.  
Safety was a flannel shirt [inhales]  
That smelled of cherry tobacco  
And a thunderous bellow  
That scattered hounds like cottonseed on the wind.

The next morning --  
Fatdad was buffing the scratches out of his new car  
I said -- *Fatdad, I'm sorry you had to rescue me.*  
He scooped me up in his big arms --  
Said: *Son, in life --*  
*Sometimes you're the catcher -- sometimes you're the caught.*  
*When you love somebody -- their trouble is your trouble.*  
Fatdad was my Daddy --  
And that loving nickname Fatdad  
Has been handed down through four generations of men in my family.

When I was sixteen  
Fatdad bought me a 63 Volkswagen Beetle  
Wide tires, chrome wheels.  
I was driving it one sunny afternoon --  
Listening to Simon and Garfunkel on the eight-track --  
*Cecelia you're breaking my heart! [leaning back singing loudly]*  
A humungous horsefly shot through the window --  
In my mouth -- and down my throat --  
It came back up --  
Lodged in my right nostril!!! -- *[points to right nostril]*  
What would you do *[asks audience question]*  
With a horsefly buzzing in your nose  
Taking bites the size of Texas???

I steered with my knees -- *[on chair, with knees up]*  
And tried to fire that bug out my nose.  
The car shot to the left --  
Then it catapulted back to the right -- *[runs to left, then right]*  
Cut down Morrison's fence --  
Sailing across their yard

Right at Mossburger's fountain --  
Where Mary Poppins stood --  
Holding her umbrella [*on one foot, one arm up*]  
Pouring water from a can.  
I hit that fountain so hard I launched it like Sputnik  
Mary Poppins hovered briefly  
Then went down faster than a spoonful of sugar!

Well, the Morrison's and the Mossburgers -- they were a bit excited.  
Not Fatdad!  
He rode in like the Cavalry -- made peace with the Neighbors.  
I -- sat on a rock -- in shock -- as Fatdad put his arm around me.  
I burst into tears.  
*Shssssh -- we can fix the fence -- I'll buy another fountain --*  
*We can even replace that ol' car -- those are just things.*  
*But -- I could never replace you --*  
*Besides -- the town will talk about this for weeks --*  
The lesson -- Love!

Now teenage boys -- they don't always think about cars- --  
Sometimes they think about -- GIRLS!  
Fatdad overheard me and my buddies  
Bragging about our adventures with women!  
Not being the shy type -- he joined right in- -- listened for a while --  
And then -- like ice water thrown on you in a hot shower -- said  
*Boys -- real men love for a lifetime --*  
*Not for a moment!*  
Ruined the whole conversation!!!

But Fatdad loved my Mama.  
When they walked in the garden  
Or when they sat on the sofa  
Their hands seemed to find each other.  
And when Mama was sitting watching TV  
Fatdad would come up behind her  
Wrap his strong arms around her  
Rest his chin on her shoulder  
Kiss her on the cheek. [*gives soft smooch*]  
Ooh, as a teenager  
I couldn't believe old people carried on that way!!!  
But Fatdad's love was more than romance.

When my Mama battled the cancer that eventually took her life  
Fatdad --  
Like a good shepherd caring for a wounded lamb --  
Fed and bathed --  
Read and sang to her --  
And when my mama's sunset fell --  
And turned to starlight  
Fatdad held her close --  
Whispered words of love -- and faith --  
To calm her fear.

Fatdad's love for my Mama was a gift to my wife and children.  
Because watching him --  
I learned to love them --  
For a lifetime.

This year I had my first Father's Day without Fatdad.  
And I miss him. *[holding back tears]*  
But the lessons he taught me will last a lifetime.  
When you love --  
Sometimes you're the catcher --  
Sometimes you're the caught.  
When there's trouble --  
Love rushes in --  
Wraps its strong arms around you.  
*Real men -- well --*  
*They love for a lifetime --*  
*Not for a moment.*

Fellow Toastmasters  
THE LESSON IS LOVE  
And I'm proud to tell you  
My children call me -- Fatdad.

789 words

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Brian Woolf's comments: This is a tale told by a storyteller. We are taken on a rollercoaster of emotions and laughing with Randy as he tells us of memories of being surrounded by hounds, a humongous horsefly in his nose, launching Mary Poppins like Sputnik, teenager bragging, and parental love right through to the moment when his "mama's sunset fell and turned to starlight." Randy was in ever-present contact with the audience while covering the stage and when adding another dimension as he unobtrusively sat on, stood on, or otherwise connected with a chair. (A record!) From this kaleidoscope of images, Randy ends with three lessons, the one most remembered being: Real men love for a lifetime -- not for a moment. The speech is a great story with a great lesson. (A detailed analysis of this speech is in my book, The Speaker's Blueprint.)

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