

Father-Daughter Dance

Perhaps it is the fact that I am writing this a few days before a Father's Day I will miss by being out of the country. But whatever the reason, I want to tell you this story about my own Dad, Fred Kopf of Baldwin, New York, who I love very much.

My father is well-known to family, friends and the entire universe as the world's greatest hockey fan—New York Rangers especially. Now, lots of people say they are fans, but my father lives the sport. Legend has it that he took my mother to a hockey game on their wedding night—and neither one of them has ever denied it. As a child, I learned about hockey at his knee, which was no easy feat. You see, Dad was never particularly happy with how the TV announcers call the game (he thought they missed a lot of the subtle nuances of the sport, like how bad a guy was bleeding after a fight), so he'd set up an old transistor radio in just the right spot to try and hear the game while he watched it. Putting the radio next to a TV with bent rabbit ears and an antennae that had to be placed just so made sitting there a booby trap, because one wrong move could wipe out the signal. But it was a great way to learn about hockey.

And whenever a game was “blacked-out,” Dad would get in the car and drive to this spot on top of a small hill in a nearby park where he had miraculously discovered he could get the radio stations from Montreal.

And there he'd sit and listen to the game—entirely in French. Now my Dad does not speak a word of French, but I venture to say if asked, he could call

an entire hockey game in the language. And when the Rangers finally won the Stanley Cup a few years back for the first time since he'd been a boy, my father received calls and letters of congratulations from all over the country. So his hockey fanaticism is a proven fact.

Today, the rabbit-eared TV and transistor radio have been replaced at the Kopf homestead by cable with ESPN, ESPN2 and the very popular Madison Square Garden Sports. But the excitement of a Stanley Cup series continues.

“Who you rooting for?” my father asks me two weeks ago. “Denver,” I answer, “aren't you?” “No,” he says, “New Jersey is a neighbor and the Devils are a good team.” “But Dad,” I say, “you hate the Devils and besides, no self-respecting New Yorker would want the Stanley Cup going to New Jersey.” (For those of you who don't know, New Yorkers feel about New Jersey the way Virginians feel about West Virginia, or Northern Illinoisians about Wisconsin.)

“Besides, Dad, this game has some professional implications for us. You know, the coach, Bob Hartley, used to work in a PPG factory in Canada and he has promised to bring the Stanley Cup to the factory if he wins. I'd get a kick out of covering that.” So last night, when the Avalanche disposed of the Devils in game seven, 3-1, and provided an amazing ending to Raymond Bourque's career, I was ready for the post-game call from my father.

“Oh by the way, Debbie,” he says, “I've been reading your magazine for years and really gotten interested in glass. Any way I could get to see it being

made? ... Maybe visit a plant? Maybe a windshield plant in Canada even? It would be quite a learning experience.”

“I’m sure it would, Dad.”

Debra Levy

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Any Dream Will Do

When I wrote about my Dad’s love of hockey two months ago, I had no idea it would generate such a tremendous response. I received more than 100 e-mails and a number of thoughtful letters, including the one from Tom Thomas in this issue. One thing learned: the glass industry loves hockey. I also learned that Red Wings fans are a particularly vociferous group, and their love of the game almost made me forgive the way they trounced the Washington Caps in the Stanley Cup finals a few years back.

And I was reminded of something I already knew: that Karen Welsh of PPG Industries is a very nice, thoughtful lady who does her employer and her job proud every day. “I just read your article, Deb,” she said in a phone call about three weeks ago. “You know, Bob Hartley and the Stanley Cup are coming to the PPG plant in Hawkesbury next week. How would you like to come up for it and bring your dad?”

Now I have to explain that unless he is watching hockey, my father is a very quiet, reserved guy. When I was 12, he drove himself to the hospital with his hand nearly cut in half because he didn’t want to bother anyone to drive him. (He did ask me to ride with him and told me that if he fainted, I should grab the wheel and aim for a curb.) So when I asked him if he wanted to go, he said simply, “I could do that.”

The weather was perfect July 31 and you could tell that everyone in Hawkesbury was excited that “The Cup” was visiting and being brought to town by a local boy to boot. Coach Bob Hartley of the Denver Avalanche had worked making windshields at PPG for four years before becoming a professional coach. Nearly 1,500 employees, their families and retirees turned out at the plant to meet Bob and “Stanley” (as Hartley called him).

Dad and I attended the press conference and then PPG was kind enough to have arranged for him to meet the coach and have his picture taken with him and The Cup. As we rushed up to meet Hartley, I was trying to think of a quick way to explain why we were being photographed with him. I’ll just say “I wrote this article in **USGlass ...**” But when we got up there, I couldn’t even form a coherent sentence. All I could muster was a single grunting sound.

But not Dad. He more than rose to the occasion. All of a sudden my quiet father transformed himself into Bob Costas. “Hi, Coach,” said Dad in a smooth-as-silk voice while shaking Hartley’s hand, “Congratulations. Great series, great season. You did some excellent coaching this year.” Hartley smiled and posed for the pictures.

Then dad got to touch the Stanley Cup and have his photo taken with it, as you can see above. "I can't believe it, I actually got a lump in my throat when I saw it," he said, in a moment that gave me a lump in mine.

But through it all, he never forgot his roots. "Make sure you get the side with the Rangers' names," he said when I picked up the camera to get some pictures of The Cup.

In fact, PPG was so kind to Dad that one of the Canadian reporters later asked him if he was the president of the company.

So to paraphrase the Master Card commercials: Dinner for two in Hawkesbury: \$40, round trip plane tickets there and back: a ton of frequent flier miles, the memory of seeing your hockey fanatic father with the Stanley Cup: priceless.

Thanks to Karen Welsh, Larry O'Reilly and PPG for a great memory.

Debra Levy