

# My Father

## *An American Hero*

By  
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I've mentioned my father in previous essays. 'A force unto himself' as I've referred to him before. That's my father very aptly put. An American Hero? Most certainly. My father is an ex Marine or still is. All depends on how its viewed. A Marine is a Marine for life, a brotherhood if you will. Dad, or Pops as I call him, is a Vietnam veteran. A special kind of veteran of the era, special indeed. Pops volunteered rather than be drafted.

I can easily refer to him as Hero because of that very deed. He partook of one of the most altruistic acts of sacrifice one can ever do. He risked his own life for others. Pops never reminisced about the war as some veterans are wont to do. Some say it's because he didn't experience much or the polar opposite, he experienced too much. After knowing my father like I do and knowing some few other veterans, I know why he doesn't talk much about it. I've learned that the more a veteran glamorizes a war, the more its talked about with such fervent excitement, the more its probably a bullshit story their telling.

A force unto himself? That's Pops as well. Dad is the type of guy that truly believes that he can take care of anything himself, including the entirety of the Vietnam conflict. I say this because I can remember a Christmas Eve some years ago, on one of those rare moments that he was talking about Vietnam. He said that he volunteered so that, as he put it, 'I could get this finished so that my brothers won't have to.' Or words to that effect. He has two younger brothers. Again, altruism. I'll do it so others won't have to. That's my father.

So, how does a man such as this help me through my grief and ultimate acceptance of my hardships? I mean my father is a capable individual, physically and mentally that can overcome tremendous opposition. I've seen it first hand. Towering over six feet in height, over 300 pounds, giant hands with fingers like sausages and prominent gold rings that he's fond of flashing, Pops is a formidable man. So how could someone like that help me, a recent handicapped little kid. In the simplest terms and the most convenient definition, 'Get up off your ass and make it happen!'

That's what I was told throughout my life. If you've read my other essays you understand that my family never let me think about something I couldn't do. That's how Dad achieved it. Always told me that I'm capable of doing anything, just make it happen. Don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't. If they do, spite them and do it anyway.

I can remember being told countless times to get on that damned computer and make it happen. Whatever it may be. He was just being a Marine, a force unto himself. He fully expected me to adapt and overcome regardless of my situation. The expectation was that I become a force unto myself so that I could move forth through life. He helped

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me more than I can ever say. Even now, when I'm faced with a seemingly impossible task, I find a way to make it happen.

Now don't think I'm idealizing my father. Don't mistake anything here, we go round and round still, wars of wills. As great as my father is, he is capable of great acts of cruelty. I suppose any man is. I know I am. But it isn't the capability we focus upon. It's other things. As my mother says, "You don't love the acts, you love the person." That's another portion of the wisdom of my mother. You hate the actions, not the person.

I've learned as I've gotten older some key elements of compassion. As you get older you begin to understand things better, people better and your family. Does compassion grow with age? I don't think so. Understanding grows with age and with understanding, compassion.

I understand my father more now than ever before. I understand how he helped me and how I didn't even know it. I'm old enough now, compassionate enough now to understand how much of a great person my father is. With his help, I made it happen.

*I love you Pops*

*Thank you...*