

## The Un-vicious Cycle

By Shana McLean Moore

I was one of the lucky ones, but never knew it at the time. I assumed every girl had a father who came home from work in time to sit down to dinner with the family, teach her to play tennis and tickle her until she cried. A father who valued family time enough to want to spend what must have been his cherished vacation days with us, instead of seeing them as an escape from both his demanding career and parental responsibilities.

Now, as a grown woman with a family of my own, I can finally appreciate what my father has done for his family. By coping well with the stresses of being an adult, he avoided scarring us with the words and actions of a person who is unfulfilled or overburdened. And though he never slept well or enough, he didn't let his exhaustion prevent him from missing what my brother and I now consider the many highlights of our young lives. From the little evening lessons in bike riding and baseball and the competitive piggyback races up the stairs to applauding us throughout our talent-less shows and crowd fishing at the lake, dad was there with bells on.

While none of us probably thought about it at the time, his behavior was the obvious model for my brother to emulate when subconsciously deciding what type of man he would become. And for me, his daughter, his example became the unspoken benchmark for what I expected of a partner in life. I settled for nothing less.

These days, when my husband comes home after a day caged in a cubicle, his brain bursting with the frustrations of bureaucracy best described by Dilbert, I truly understand the selflessness of effective parenting. While he often has to mask a wince when bombarded at the door with our girls' playful but piercing shrieks, within minutes he is quick to join them for a push on the swings, a chapter of Harry Potter or one of those laugh-til-you-cry tickles that is being passed on to a new generation. All this when I know how enticing it must be for him to plop onto the couch he worked so hard to pay for, yet rarely gets to enjoy.

While many will argue that a child aware of life's complexities will become an adult strong enough to confront real world issues, I think this is merely a comforting rationalization. Thanks to the wisdom and commitment of my parents, my loss of innocence came the way it should, second hand. When I eventually heard stories of neglect and hardship suffered both just outside my circle and on a more global level, my outlook in life was already firmly formed with the kind of innocent and sweet memories that my husband and I are determined to pass on to our own children.

They, too, will eventually find out about the horrific things endured by many families that fill our newspapers and are whispered about on the playground, but I expect them to be sickened and appalled at the very possibility. After all, shouldn't we be incensed that anyone over the age of nine would attempt to resolve conflict in such a barbaric manner?

But, until then, I want them to know first hand about the magic of leisurely summer evenings...just like the ones my parents provided me. Our girls need to learn, as I did, that there is no better way to earn a buck than by spending the day behind the table of your very own lemonade stand. And as if the process weren't fun enough, imagine the joy my brother and I experienced after realizing we had earned enough for a week's worth of snowcones! As supportive as dad was of our dreams and schemes, I must confess it was mom who let us add a table of penny-candy and powdered donuts so we could make enough to lick our way through July. And we still haven't admitted to purposely overstocking our shelves to be sure there were plenty of leftovers!

This type of memory is made daily by ordinary yet exemplary dads like mine and my daughters' who will never get the press of their failing peers. Their fame is earned, instead, in the hearts of their wives and children who smile and laugh because of their efforts. And as they continue to perpetuate the cycle of paternal love and commitment they will receive the ultimate blessing in seeing their own children follow in kind.

