

FAQ 74

(August 20, 2008)

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While I have not read your book, I have seen a number of comments on the Internet that claim you had a hatred for your father and wrote the book to “get even.” Did you hate him?

No, actually, I LOVED MY FATHER. AND STILL DO. It was only after his death and completion of my initial three year (1999-2002) criminal investigation that I would come to discover the monster within him-- The “Mr. Hyde.”

Clearly, anyone who has read BDA realizes how much I loved and respected my father.

Below excerpts are from BDA, Chapter 3- A Death in the Family. These are real life letters exchanged between my father and I just days before his death. (He died on the evening of May 16, 1999, just a few minutes before midnight.)

Judge for yourself:

**BDA Chapter 3- A DEATH IN THE FAMILY—pages
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the trust built. As the years followed I would make increasingly regular trips to visit Dad and June in San Francisco, and they, in turn, would make occasional trips north to Bellingham to visit me and to explore the beauty of the San Juan Islands in Puget Sound.

For the first time in our adult lives together, quality father-and-son time would go beyond the formalities of a business meeting and take on the aspect of something social and even human. Now our gatherings would even contain some laughter, and I would be permitted brief glimpses at the man who had always walked through life behind an iron mask. It would only be a peek, though, and the occasions were rare, but it was enough. I could see that my father, after so many years of being a stranger to his son, was beginning to mellow. I had made a breakthrough with him. Though he still felt awkward and uncomfortable talking about feelings and things of the heart, I knew I could finally begin to broach some personal and honest topics with him so as to touch on what to me was the only truly important thing in life as far as I was concerned — communication and relationships. But it was too little too late.

Just a week before my father's passing, I was concerned about his health. I had heard nothing by fax from him or June for quite a while. I'd invited them to come up during the summer, stay with me for a week or so, and we could make the short drive to Vancouver, Canada, for sightseeing and day trips.

Sensing that his health was failing or something else was amiss, I faxed them and asked him directly about his physical condition. On May 9, 1999, I received the following fax:

May 9, 1999

Dear Steve:

Thanks for your fax of yesterday May 8. Your photos also arrived yesterday and are great depictions of your beautiful new home, and we do wish that we could see it with you.

There is a reason why you haven't heard much from us for the past few months. We certainly miss seeing you for prolonged periods such as this.

The fact of the matter is that I have been going through a particularly difficult situation in regard to my overall health. We have not wanted to expose to you or to anyone else the full extent of my present debility and overall weakness and general helplessness. This would be humiliating, and could leave a much tarnished image in your minds.

I am now wheelchair-bound, and cannot get around without a great deal of help from June, plus the wheelchair and rolling walker. On the rare occasions when I must go out to see a doctor we also need the help of a hired limo with a strongly built driver.

None of this comes as an actual surprise to me. The overall clinical picture is just about what we would normally expect in a patient who has moved on into the final terminal phase of congestive heart failure. The clinical fact is that I have simply lived a few years too long.

Let me assure you that this thought does not frighten me in the least. For example, I am going into the hospital tomorrow, Monday, for a procedure, which is called cardiac retroversion. This consists of applying two strong electric shocks to the heart, in an attempt to change its present arrhythmia (disturbance of heart rhythm), which in my case is known as "heart flutter" into a more normal rhythm.

But if this and other corrective procedures fail, I shall not be saddened. I have been fortunate enough to lead a very full and interesting life and to know some truly wonderful women and to have some very fine children of whom I am truly proud. The most recent few years have been among the happiest in a long life, thanks to the remarkable help given by June, who is indeed an angel.

In the meantime, June and I send you our love.

George and June

In light of that fax, and intuiting that the end could possibly be near, even for this man considered by all of his children to be an immortal, I felt an urgency to speak from my heart, and mailed a letter to him the following morning.

May 9, 1999

Dear Father:

Thank you for giving me an honest and accurate picture of your current health condition. I very much appreciate it, and know how difficult and naturally reluctant you are to do that, for many valid reasons. Your communication, of course, will always remain confidential. Personally, I appreciate knowing things as they are as opposed to how others or I may wish them to be.

I want you to know that for me, likewise, the past six or seven years have been the happiest. While I have gone through many difficult personal life-changes, emotional adjustments regarding Marsha and the boys, yet I have been extremely happy and content.

The reason for that happiness was the development of our relationship as father and son. Our relationship, yours and mine, has grown and developed and become *real* to me. It was not always so. For many reasons beyond both of our control, we did not have the opportunity to share our thoughts. This was neither your fault nor mine. It simply was *what was*.

But in these past years, thanks to your openness, acceptance, and encouragement it became something real. It was like a reverse of the normal course of a father-and-son relationship. Ours was in my youth, distant, and now has become close. I thank you for that.

And I thank you, Father, for your support and patience in me and of me. I thank you for your wise guidance and advice over the past years. Your positive promptings for me to improve my health in many ways. (I think your encouragement in getting me to quit smoking has probably added ten or fifteen years to my natural life and health.)

Mostly, I thank you for your time. Some wise man said that "Time is our most priceless possession." And of that you have given me much in these recent years. I look on my computer over the past six years and see hundreds and hundreds of faxes and communications from you. Each one requiring your time and your thought.

The memories I have of visits here and there are warm reminders of these years, and will be with me while I breathe and think. Thank you for those, dear Father. I don't want this to sound

like a goodbye. But if fate should make it so, then mostly I want you to know how much I love you and how grateful I am to you for the gift of life and for the time we have shared together.

You are truly a great man, and I am very proud that you are my father.

ALL MY LOVE

Steven Kent

My father read this on the final day of his life. And now, just twenty-four hours later, the flight attendant was motioning to me to raise my table to the upright position in the minutes before we made our final approach to San Francisco airport.

The uniformed driver met my arrival at gate 33 with a sincere, "I'm so sorry about your father. He was a special man. Very few like him in the world." I nodded in the polite acknowledgment of his condolences. We drove in silence to downtown San Francisco to their condo, some forty floors above the financial district in the heart of the city.

June was in tears when she met me at the door, and we embraced in our sorrow. I held her as she spoke softly in my ear, "I'm all alone now. I'm so afraid. He didn't have to die, Steven. I thought we would be together for another ten or more years. He died in my arms. I tried to save him but I couldn't." She was shaking and looked near death herself, pale and thin as if his death had drained her of life. I could feel her tremendous grief mixed with the fear of having to go it on her own from now on, after having been under George Hodel's protection and absolute control for thirty years. The apartment seemed woefully empty. No radiant voice, no great intellect, nothing. And that nothingness shouted out the absence of the man. Her man.

The two of them had been inseparable for the thirty years they had been together. During all of that time they had never been apart for more than a day or two, and that mostly for business purposes. Together they had shared 11,000 sunrises, and now, with him gone, the sun would never rise again for her in the same way.

June Hodel, my stepmother, was younger than I by about four years. She had been graduated *ichiban*, at the top of her college class in Japan. Bright, eager, and beautiful, she had answered an advertisement Dad had placed in the Tokyo newspaper for a personal