

HOPES DASHED

Forgiving and recovering from the death of a dad and grandfather by Tracey Mino



Earl with his grandson Daniel

October 8, 2010 at 6:00 in the morning my phone rang. I had that stomach-dropping feeling you get because you know a call coming at that hour isn't good news.

Dad had fallen off a ladder and collapsed at the grocery store where he worked, and they were rushing him to the local hospital.

My Dad, Earl Mino was born July 1940 in Hamilton, Ontario. He was the oldest child and had not one, not two but three sisters. He always did have an uphill battle. As a child he loved horseback riding, playing hockey and baseball. As an adult he was a soft-spoken, thoughtful, gentle, patient man. He was free-spirited and always having fun. Although, sometimes he couldn't keep his mouth shut and once it landed him with a broken nose and a car chase down the main drag of Hamilton heading to the hospital.

My Dad, by career, was a butcher. He enjoyed working and he loved the people he worked with.

On April 22, 1967 he married the love of his life, my Mom, Dianne and they were married for over 40 years. A few years later they started their family, having myself and then my sister, Denise. I was Daddy's little girl. I recall always following Dad everywhere he went and helping him with whatever task he was doing at the time.

Our parents were very giving, kind and social, and my Mom is still to this day. They knew and taught my sister and me that life was good and it is meant to be lived and more importantly, to have fun doing so. My parents ALWAYS enjoyed hosting and being at a good party; they loved to dance.

My Dad was the peacekeeper in the family. He was the one who could see clearly when everyone else was losing their heads. He was the healing balm. He had a gentle way of getting you to see the other person's side and lead you to the solution but made it look like it was your idea. My Dad exemplified good

character, honesty and commitment. He had a way of making people feel important by taking the time to stop for a chat, no matter how busy he was. He would rather be late than end a conversation prematurely, and he always made you feel that what you were saying was the most important thing in the world.

His laugh was contagious. He was always happy and that happiness spilled over to all those he knew.

My Dad dedicated his life to Air Cadets for over 40 years. He was Captain of the Listowel and Wingham Squadron for many years. He helped make a positive difference to hundreds of kids.

He was awarded the Queen's Jubilee medal for his over 40 years of service and for his unyielding dedication to the Cadets and Youth of Canada.

As the years went on, another addition to our family is Lori, who quickly found a place in everyone's heart, becoming a 3rd daughter to Mom and Dad and another sister to Denise and I. Several years ago I met John, a man my Dad knew he could trust with my heart and life.

Everything took a backseat when his greatest treasure, his grandson Daniel, my only child was born. Everyone could see the great pride and joy he took in his grandson. My Dad and Daniel had a very close relationship they were like two peas in a pod sharing a very special bond.

I will never forget walking into the local hospital that October day. I did not wait to get permission. I went straight to the trauma unit where my Dad was. I will be forever haunted by what I saw. There was my Dad, although it did not look like my Dad, lying on this cold steel table wrapped in a black plastic bag. His face was all bloody and black and blue and swollen. His head was so swollen and there were tubes running out of his mouth and lines running everywhere and so many monitors flashing and people moving all over the place. Then he was whisked away from me, to the ambulance for transport to Hamilton General Hospital.

When we arrived at Hamilton General they already had him in surgery.

During surgery it was discovered that my Dad had a significant and life-threatening subdural hematoma along with significant skull and facial fractures. Too much blood had accumulated between the skull and the

brain and was putting too much pressure on the brain. They drained the blood and removed a portion of his skull to allow fluid to escape and alleviate the swelling. The next 24 hours will tell if he's going to survive.

Walking into ICU to see my Dad after his surgery was surreal. Nothing could have prepared me for the sight I was about to see. My strong, full of life Dad was lying on a hospital bed so still and lifeless. Tubes coming out of his mouth to breathe for him; lines and tubes and so many blinking beeping machines. It was overwhelming.

His body kept convulsing. The nurse said it was because he's trying to breathe on his own. Hope. As elusive as it was, I would grasp at anything.

The last Father-Daughter time I got to spend with my Dad was from 2:00am to 6:00am. I held his hand the whole time. I hugged him constantly. I talked about everything to him.

He made it through the night! Against all odds he made it! Hope!

The next morning, Daniel was asking to see his Papa. How would a seven-year-old handle seeing what I knew he would see? I took him in. It was the best thing I could have done. It gave him some precious last moments with his Papa and it allowed him to see what was really going on.

Late in the afternoon we had a meeting with the surgeon. Hope; completely dashed. If he managed to survive, he would be in a vegetative state as his brain had been so damaged and he had had several severe strokes. We had a choice to make. We could keep him alive in that state on life support or we could remove the life support and let him die. How do you make a decision like that?

Later, a nurse came rushing in and said, he's making the choice for you.

My Dad never regained consciousness once he collapsed at work. Saturday, October 9, 2010 in the late afternoon, after 36 hellish hours my Dad succumbed to his injuries and died.

The visitations and funeral seemed surreal. There were hundreds of people. It tore my heart out when the cadets did my Dad's last post. I wanted to scream when they lowered the flag. All I kept thinking was this isn't real, this isn't happening.

I don't remember much about the first year following my Father's death. It was a traumatizing, unbearable pain. Our cherished family life was ripped to pieces and it nearly tore our family apart. My Mom was suicidal and pushing everyone away. My son was having gut wrenching nightmares and wouldn't let me out of his sight. My sister shut down and shut everyone out.

Year Two I think was worse because the numbness of the shock had worn off and all I was left with was this overwhelming agonizing pain.

I went through a depression during year three and I ended up on medication for a few months. It has been and continues to be a long journey.

concrete floor. After a few moments, he got up, climbed the ladder again and finished putting the trays away. He collapsed several minutes later.

My Dad's boss was grief stricken over what had happened. It was a traumatic loss for him as well. Yes, he made a mistake, an irreparable and very costly mistake. People often ask me

“ We had a choice to make. We could keep him alive in that state on life support or we could remove the life support and let him die. How do you make a decision like that?

My Dad made a choice. He knew the ladder was not safe however, my Dad was old school and he continued to use it even after reporting it several times to his boss. All of this could have been avoided had my Dad and his boss just made the right decisions.

We attended the trial in the spring of 2012. The owner of the store was found guilty of failing to provide proper equipment, failing to provide direction, training and supervision on proper use of ladders and was fined \$50,000.

We know from security video footage what happened in the stock room that day. My Dad was placing several packages of Styrofoam meat trays onto a top shelf. He made an attempt to put the package onto the top shelf and failed the first time. On his second attempt he put his one foot onto the higher ladder step. The ladder rocked, my Dad lost his balance, and plummeted face first onto the

“don't you hate your Dad's boss”? My reply is: Hating someone and un-forgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. I forgave him the day the accident happened.

Forgiveness isn't something you do for someone else, it is something you do for yourself, otherwise you will never heal.

The best way I can honour my Dad's memory is to forgive, let it go and keep moving forward.

Threads of life has helped us navigate through and heal from one of the most traumatic, heartbreaking experiences we have ever faced as a family. I cannot imagine where our lives would be without Threads of Life. We will be forever grateful for this amazing organization.

The laughter and celebrations have come back to our home. We have a new normal but not a single day goes by that we don't miss my Dad.



Earl with his wife Dianne and daughters Tracey and Denise