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Dads, make time for children

By Mark Chinn Guest Columnist



Jamie Ross/Special to The Herald

Mark Chinn gets a kiss on the cheek from daughter Conley, 9, during a recent photo session at Christ Untied Methodist Church. I

This past Fathers' Day jogged the recent memory of my 9-year-old daughter enjoying an Ole Miss vs. LSU baseball game in Oxford. I enjoyed watching her. She soaked in every single second. As we were topping the hill to catch our first glimpse of the stadium she exclaimed, "Wow, I got goose bumps!"

She asked about strategy and rulings. I pretended to have the answers. As I sat and took in the scene, I became dumbfounded. My confusion was heightened when the time came to head home and she became upset that we were not staying for the next day's game. How could a 9-year-old girl care anything about a college

baseball game?

My Dad worked his tail off. I don't remember ever waking and him being home. The only evidence was a half-eaten piece of toast and half a cup of black coffee. Not until 6 or 7 at night would he appear through the departing dusk light. A figure with long, slow strides down our sidewalk would mark the first time I saw him that day. He looked like John Wayne to me.

I loved my dad as much as a son can love a father. He was tall, strong and, to many, quite intimidating. He spoke few words. When he did, it meant something. He was sharp as a tack. My Dad was, and will always be, my hero. The one thing I wish I could get back from my Dad is more of his time.

Up until recently I have led a life much like my Dad. Working hard was burned into my being. I started out on that track. One day not too long ago, a great friend and business associate, Mike Peters, asked if I would be watching a daughter run in a track meet. I remember barking, "That meet is on a weekday. The meet is for her. My role is to work."

Only after an argument did Mike get the best of me. I arrived just in time to catch her last race. My life was changed. Standing, watching with other dads I thought were also tied to their jobs, I watched Courtney come from behind to win the 800 meter run. I was addicted.

As the years have passed, I have adapted my professional practice to allow for the staff and me to be able to spend time with our families. With four daughters, there are many games. My golf game died. Some say it never lived. Business hasn't suffered, and I have been able to have the time of my life. A bond of love and satisfaction with my family has emerged that I am unable to explain without emotion.

On the way home from that recent ballgame, somewhere past Grenada, Conley awoke from her iPod ear phones and lamented, "I have this need for a cheeseburger. I am addicted to them!"

After a stop in Madison to fulfill a fairly simple request, I was rewarded more than I could ever have dreamed. She leaned over, kissed me on the cheek and said, "You're the best daddy I ever had."

Mark Chinn is the proud, 30-year, husband of Cathy. They have four daughters: Courtney, 24, Casey, 17, Carly, 13, and Conley, 9. He operates the family law practice Chinn & Associates. He can be reached at mark@chinnandassociates.com.

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