

Who's Your Daddy

With Father's Day on Sunday there is good news and bad news. First the negative: single mothers head up almost nine percent of American households. The good news? Fathers who care are making a huge difference in this country.

How do I know? It is estimated that close to 40 percent of all those incarcerated in the USA did not have a father in their childhood home. So doing the math, a responsible father seems to be a strong force for promoting righteous conduct.

It was never easy being a father. Did you know that American icon Davy Crockett abandoned his children? And many other famous men did as well. Shameful. You can't be a real man if you don't look out for your kids. They need you.

There are plenty of books by dads explaining the dilemma of contemporary fatherhood, and it is true that dadism in today's high tech world is not easy. My father firmly embraced the Ralph Kramden philosophy: he was king of his Levittown castle. He worked hard and his family deferred to his wishes. Except me. I did not defer and was disciplined accordingly.

But today, most fathers don't rule as my father did. In general, modern dads are more enlightened. We bring diplomacy to the home rather than the "my way or the highway" post-World War II paternal strategy. But, looking back, I clearly understand that seeing a "chain of command" approach in my house was a positive thing for me. My father provided a strong point of view on life and was a leader. Boys, especially, need that.

Even though I am now a one-percenter economically, I rarely waste money. Every time I am tempted to buy some dopey thing, I hear my late father's voice: "do you really need that?" He was big on saving money and buying as much security as possible. He also encouraged charitable giving. So I am

responsible with currency.

Also, I go to church every Sunday because my family always went to church. It didn't matter if the priest was speaking Flemish from the pulpit – we went. It was an obligation. Now, I fulfill my obligations. All of them.

My father also taught us to respect our country. He was a naval officer. So there was no slacking on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Veterans Day. We knew what they were. Today, a flag flies daily in front of my house.

Finally, I was never really tempted by drugs and alcohol. My father thought addicts were weak and intoxication was stupid. I never saw him high. He had a beer or two but never lost control of himself. By osmosis, I have adopted the sober attitude. It has really served me well.

As a teenager, I called my dad "the monster" to his face. He laughed. He even referred to himself as "the monster" when doling out orders to his offspring. There were many times I resented my tough dad and wanted Ozzie Nelson to replace him.

But now, I'm a father and realize that status is the most important thing in my life. No question who provided that perspective. So on Father's Day 2013, I remember my dad and the indelible gifts he gave me.