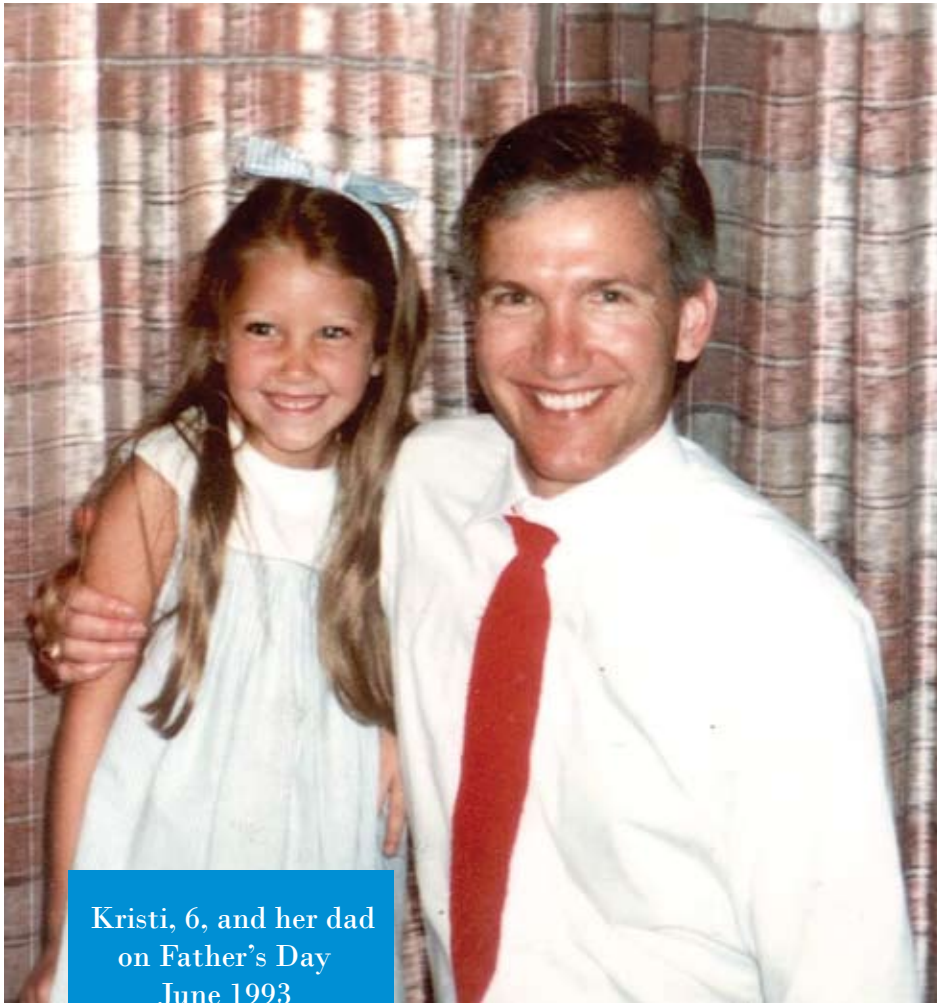


My Story:

my father, my childhood hero, my daddy



Kristi, 6, and her dad
on Father's Day
June 1993

By Kristi Jennings

How the Jennings' rediscovered the meaning of family.

The whole place smelled like Lysol, lavender linen spray, and caustic bleach. Everything was white: the ceilings, the floors, the walls. My new black boots click-clacked, betraying the silence of the long

hallway, echoing my steps throughout the still corridor. I walked past each numbered door, glancing at each three digit combination, hoping for the right one. I approached room 402; it was on the right. The door was cracked; I could hear voices coming from inside. I pushed open the door, holding my breath, terrified at what I might see. I walked in the room, averting my eyes from the bed, looking for something to focus on, something to distract me. There was nothing.

My eyes were drawn to the bed and eventually grew wider in shock. I had never seen him look so pale and

so withdrawn. His hand looked so frail, pierced by an IV needle that supplied him the medicine he needed to endure the pain. He managed a weak smile and an even weaker hello.

“Hi, Daddy.”

The reality of what he was experiencing hit me at that moment. My father, my childhood hero, my daddy, had cancer. He was just an hour into recovering from the surgery that we could only hope would eliminate the disease that attacked our family.

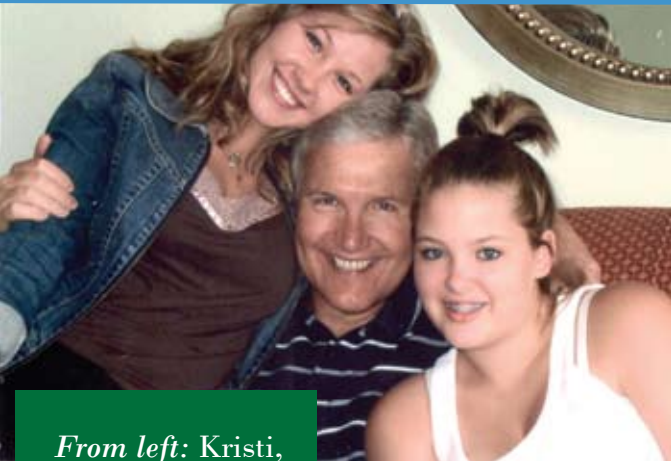
As a freshman in high school, it was all surreal. I thought I was invincible; I thought nothing could hurt me. But this hurt. I felt like my heart had been run over by a two-ton steamroller. My throat burned and my eyes misted with the tears that I ached to let spill over onto my cheeks, but I blinked each one away quickly, careful not to let my dad know I was hurting.

He looked at me again, his translucent blue eyes caught mine for just a millisecond, and it was like looking into a mirror. His heavy eyelids slowly dropped, hiding his eyes from mine. As he lay there drifting off into sleep, I finally let the previously concealed tears fall down my face.

I sat there in his hospital room, with my mom's arms around me and a blurred view of my sleeping father, and I finally understood. I understood that true family unity is there no matter what the situation, no matter what the circumstance. And I understood that no matter what the outcome of this challenge, my family was going to overcome it, together.

*“Spending quality time
with my family suddenly became an activity
that I genuinely enjoyed...”*

Throughout the rest of my freshman year, as my father slowly recovered from his surgery, I patiently learned the value of what is truly important. When I got home from school, it was just more important to see my dad’s eyes brighten when I mentioned another passed math test than it was to watch Doing the dishes wasn’t so much of a chore anymore



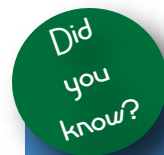
*From left: Kristi,
her dad Randy,
and sister Kelli -
June 2007.*

because I knew it helped my overly busy mother. Reducing the sisterly fights to a manageable once-a-week occurrence, just to avoid the excessive noise, wasn’t as much of a problem as I had originally anticipated. Spending quality time with my family suddenly became an activity that I genuinely enjoyed, and I began to appreciate each one of them more and more. I learned how to be stable for myself and my family. I discovered how to manage my time better so that I was able to get everything done in the seemingly short twenty-four hour day. I verified that with strength and determination, I could accomplish anything, no matter what the obstacles. I grew up a lot that year.

He walked into the room to tuck me into bed, as he always did, I didn’t even notice his slowed walk and carefully placed steps. I did notice his smile, one that originated, it seemed, in his sparkling eyes that had always held so much wisdom. He bent over to kiss me

good-night, and as his lips brushed my cheek, a rush of emotions came over me. I had never been so thankful. “Hi, Daddy.”

This story was originally written as a college entrance essay. Kristi is now a senior at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas studying Business Management.



Prostate Cancer*

In 2007, more than 218,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Men are 35% more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer than a woman with breast cancer.

African American men are 56% more likely to develop prostate cancer compared with Caucasian men.

A non-smoking man is more likely to develop prostate cancer than he is to develop colon, bladder, melanoma, lymphoma and kidney cancers combined.

When caught and treated early, prostate cancer has a cure rate of over 90%.

Prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer in America, affecting 1 in 6 men.

Research in the past few years has shown that diet modification might decrease the chances of developing prostate cancer.

Men at high risk, such as men with a strong family history of one or more first-degree relatives diagnosed at an early age, should begin testing at age 45.

*all facts from The Prostate Cancer Foundation (PCF)
www.prostatecancerfoundation.org

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