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3rd Place Essay - ENGL 1000 Literacy Autobiography Contest - 2017

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Lisa Palicki

Professor Laura White

Originally, I wrote this essay as an assignment for my Honors Writing class. We were told to write a literacy narrative about anything important to us that had to do with our personal process of learning, speaking, writing, or witnessing literacy. I immediately thought of how my dad used to read to me every single night and my enjoyment in those memories. The more I thought about it and looked back on my accomplishments throughout my entire academic career, the more credit I gave my dad's influence of literacy on my life. I wrote my draft of the essay for my class with these things in mind and in focus throughout my essay. After getting feedback from my peers and Professor White after our "workshopping day" of class, I knew that there were some development and page length requirements that I still had to add to my essay. I reread my own paper and made the changes that I thought were necessary, turned my paper in, and left it alone for a while.

Then, recently, I received more tips and revision suggestions about adding more detail, some grammatical changes, and more description about my high school academics from my peers and class tutor. Additionally, I changed some sentence structures that did not seem to flow right to me after not reading my own words for a few months. Those changes and suggestions from my classmates were basically the extent of my revision process to my literacy narrative.

No, I will not be available to present my essay on the presentation day.

Reading is Fun?

We've all seen those corny little bookmarks with an adorably fluffy puppy or kitten proclaiming, "Reading is fun!" As convincing as those are, most would disagree that reading is not exciting or enticing enough to be "fun." But, ever since I had the ability to read, I have agreed with much enthusiasm that reading definitely is fun! It is not common for a child to choose to read a book over watching T.V., playing video games, etc. However, the value of reading has been instilled in me so greatly from such a young age that I would. Sure, reading can be educational, but it can also bring you on journeys that you could not even begin to imagine on your own. The right book can easily whisk you halfway across the world, to another dimension, or a whimsical place in a faraway time. Reading can be beautiful, exhilarating, breathtaking, and an overall fun use of time.

My dad has always been the strongest educational influence in my life. Not only was he my primary school Principal, but he was my elementary school Assistant-Principal. He wasn't only a strong figurehead for me to look up to at school, but at home as well. For as long as I can remember, my dad read to me, my older sister, and younger brother at home. There were books that I loved listening to him read aloud because his personality shone through the characters as he made them more interesting than they actually were. For instance, one book that I vividly remember that he would read to us before I was even school-age is Over in the Meadow. It was a kid's picture book with animal mothers and their many illustrated children that had a subtle rhythm to it. Instead of simply reading the words off the page as I imagine every other adult reading that book aloud, my dad created his own type of beat-boxing that was a quick, "boom-a-chicka boom-a-chicka BOOM boom boom boom" as the intro to every page. As soon as he reached for the thin, light-green spine of the book with its' delicate white flowers painted over it

I would burst out with excitement as the anticipation grew while he was getting situated on the carpeted floor. I can still hear the catchy, upbeat melody in my head, even if the actual words are more fuzzy to recall.

As I grew older and lost such interest in those ten-to-twenty paged stories my dad would read a chapter or two from a novel to me and my siblings every night. We would usually pick series of books to read together so the stories would continue for weeks or even months. Some of my favorites were the Harry Potter series and A Series of Unfortunate Events. To this day I can picture Harry and Ron's voices as my dad would read it- heavy British accents and all. The nightly routine would be for him to make himself comfortable out in the hall with his back straight up against the olive green wall that separated my brother's room from my sister's. My room was directly across from him, and while we would all be able to clearly hear his voice from our beds in the corners of our rooms, we would lay on the floor in our doorways just to be closer to him. If he caught us dozing off during the stories he would get frustrated, the wrinkle between his eyebrows would become defined, and in his stern tone state that if we couldn't pay attention it was obviously time for bed. Of course, we would resist and try to explain how we were only closing our eyes to envision the story more clearly and beg for him to read a few more pages, although our efforts were rarely convincing enough to work.

It never helped that at 9:30, as if on a schedule, my mom would walk up the stairs, sigh, and start nagging that, "Joe, the kids are too young to be up this late. You really shouldn't still be reading. Just let them sleep already" She, of course, would be accused by us kids of trying to ruin our fun, strengthening our drive to blink away the tiredness and listen to a few extra pages or another paragraph at the least. Seeing the additional effort my dad put into creating personalities for even the most mundane of characters while listening to my his unique voices sparked my

interest in reading for enjoyment. My dad's consistent reading resulted in my yearning for new books and series to read throughout my life, despite my mom's opinions of how late and how much I should be reading.

While my dad did read to us as frequently as possible, there were the occasional nights that he would get home late from work due to board meetings or extra situations he had to deal with. When this happened he would walk around to our rooms to say goodnight. If he found us on our Nintendo DS's or little electronic 20 questions games we would undoubtedly get scolded for being up past our bedtimes. But, if he caught us reading rather than sleeping he would let it slide and only set a time limit for us to read to until we would have to go to sleep. Not only did his attitude and punishments about reading compared to those of electronics promote more positive feelings about reading, but it also discouraged unproductive activities that ultimately had no use to us. This encouragement and interaction with my dad and books directed me towards a path in which reading became the normal thing for me to do. In fact, when I was bored at home and complaining that I needed something fun to do, which happened daily, he would suggest, "Do some chores", "Clean the house", or "Read a book." The choice to grab a book and start reading was evident.

By the time I reached high school my liking and ability to read and understand literature with great ability would show through all of my work. I excelled in most my classes with straight A's all thanks to my solid foundation in reading and continuing interest in books. I received high test scores in reading assessments. I was placed in advanced classes and groups to challenge myself with more difficult texts including AP English and Honors Reading and Writing classes. I received my highest score, a 34, on the reading portion of the ACT. Outside of school, I still enjoyed reading for fun rather than wasting hours-on-end on my phone or computer. I am

confident that I would not have been able to accomplish any of these feats without my dad. If I never developed such a positive attitude about reading from him at a young age the course of my academic life could have taken numerous other, less prestigious, paths. While other students complained about having too much to read in Honors classes and even dropping down to less demanding ones, I enjoyed the extra stories and literature. The fun-filled readings of my childhood assisted my interest in knowledge, school, learning, and granted me the opportunities I may not have gotten if my dad had not gone above and beyond in solidifying my interest in reading and supporting me throughout my entire academic career. For me, my dad is the reason that reading is fun!