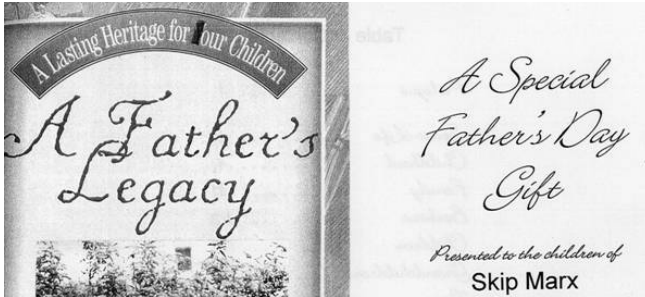


Road Tripping



“I want to finish my book,” Skip told me after his various pain medications began their work.

He was talking about the book of questions his youngest daughter had given him for a birthday.

We’d taken it with us on several long driving trips and, while Skip drove, I’d open the book randomly and ask him the question on that page.

“Did you have a nickname? How did you get it?” I read from the book. While Skip watched the road and talked, I took down what he said, as best I could. He answered, *“I was nicknamed ‘Skipper’ by the nurse in the maternity ward who was a friend of my parents. My father was in the navy during World War I and when she heard me crying in the nursery at mealtime, she said to my mother, ‘I guess I’d better go get the skipper.’ My father laughed, and picked up the name. That’s all he ever called me.”*

The miles flew by as he talked, I wrote, and we laughed together at the things he remembered. The tales he told brought out the storyteller in him and listening, I learned about the person he was. By the time we took the second road trip with the book, I was making up questions to catch the stories he told *after* he answered the question in the book, and adding them in.

Now we were on a different journey – Skip playfully teased me about leaving the road part and just doing the stories. And so we traveled in the night, when we were both awake, and in the daylight when we had a moment alone. I looked for a page in the book that was still blank and read him the question, and he told a story or two in response. Together we finished his book.

In the weeks immediately after Skip died, I was lost in the now-quiet house and needed something to do. Telling a friend about Skip's book, I realized there were pictures to go with some of the stories he told.

I copied the book and took the pages apart, pasted up pictures with stories where they belonged, and put them back in an order that fit Skip as I knew him. I bound copies of the newly-made book and presented them to his children for Father's Day. Then I left for the beach.

Afterward: Several years later, I had lunch with Sean, one of Skip's grandsons. Sean was 12 when Skip died, and he particularly felt the loss. Sean had plans that year for a solo trip with Skip, as his older brother and sister had done in a previous year.

Over dessert, I started to tell Sean something about Skip when he interrupted me. "*I know, Grandma,*" Sean said. "*I've read **Skip's Legacy** so many times that I can tell you the story!*"

Significant Lesson: *Journal through your caregiving. Find ways to hear the stories, and recount them. You'll never guess who may be listening.*