

GREETINGS FREE WORLD! I'm writing to you this day with a heavier heart than the last post. 4 months after my youngest brother Tiny passed away I lost my dad, Big Richie. To all my relatives and all those who are going through something similar, I'd like to say at the first chance you get hold your head up. Focus on being an example for those younger than you and may be looking to you for guidance. One day someone will surprise you with the fact that you showed them how to get through a great difficulty in their life. You likely didn't even know that you were being watched.

To all of you parents, know that you are real life heroes to the young ones you raise. No one cooks a certain meal like you. No one is stronger than you. No one is smarter than you. No one is more cool than you. All these attributes occur at different phases in life. Build upon them while letting your young ones know that you are not perfect.

My dad was an old school 77 year old barroom brawler at 5'10, 210lbs., with hands as strong as steam shovels. When he passed he still had glass in his head from going through bar windows in his younger years (he was always afraid of hospitals).

Learning to pitch and catch a softball was a hell of an experience, such that I still remember the first time at Seaside Park in Bridgeport. I was about 5 or 6. He threw the ball as if I was a seasoned catcher. I shut my eyes and ducked. He yelled "Stop actin' like a p---y and catch the ball!" Man did that make me angry. So much so that I did my best to get everything right on the first try whenever he wanted to teach me something. Playing catch with him hurt like hell but it was fun. It also made me a better athlete than most of my peers. At the high school agility tests I was ranked 7% top most fit in New York State. Thanks dad.

It was my father who taught me the art of arguing. We weren't allowed to fist fight relatives but we were allowed to argue. Yeah, he was the best I'd ever seen. He taught me how and when to start an argument but it was my mom who taught

me how to successfully finish one. So naturally it was my dad who taught me how to fight but when he went to sleep it was my mom who taught me the skills to walk away, preventing a conflict.

My father suffered from claustrophobia and thus hated school. I was told that his 2 oldest sisters would beat him up and drag him to school. Eventually he outgrew them and dropped out at about 13 or 14 years old. His father wasn't having that so my dad left home. After screwing up for a while he got a job and was mentored by his boss. This led to him becoming a successful business owner. He met my mom in New York where I was born. My brothers and sister were born here in CT and the rest is history.

Though he was 77, my dad suffered a premature death. He smoked at least 2 packs of Salems a day most of his life. Despite being so afraid of needles and hospitals he couldn't quit. Over 30 years he would have to go to New York and have benign tumors removed from his face. He had high blood pressure and a resulting enlarged heart nearly all of my life. His kidneys eventually failed and then they had to remove a lung. Then his heart gave out. As strong as my dad was his smoking was one obstacle he couldn't overcome. At one time he was a weekend alcoholic. However, he kicked that habit after watching my brothers and I (I was 8 y/o at the time) imitate him coming home drunk. It really affected him to see that.

I knew my dad hated drugs so I never did them. I saw the effects alcohol had on him so I rarely drank. Cigarettes stank and made me choke so I never smoked anything. As fathers and bug brothers we need to understand the amount of influence that we have on our loved ones. My father's philosophy about smoking was that we have to die from something. As a kid I asked him about this habit that he didn't want me to have. At that time he didn't know how much his quality of life would suffer nor how his suffering would affect those who loved him. SMOKERS, I beg you for your families' sake to go out of your way and educate yourselves about how your end will affect you and yours. Use it for motivation. Please do whatever it takes and quit. It's never too late until it's too late.

WEE LOVE YOU DAD.

Lil Richie to Big Richie.