

# Hey Dad. thanks

by Mark Owens

Dads are neat people. Not neat, as clean or insanely teddy; dads are notorious for leaving their part of the house, usually the basement, rather messy. Which, incidentally, always struck me as kind of funny.

Women used to complain when they were sent to the kitchen to do that domestic thing while men did those traditional male things, yet even in today's liberated society where women do many of those traditional male activities (Mom, for example, is a bookie), men still find themselves in the basement spending time with the water heater and boxes of Christmas ornaments).

Rather, I meant neat as in pretty cool, way hip, rather gnarly dude-types. Take my dad for instance.

Remember learning how to drive? I do. Remember the first time you got behind the wheel? I do. Remember backing out of the driveway at

approximately Warp Nine and mowing down a row of mailboxes? I do.

Since then I've managed to damage three vehicles, limiting casualties to another mailbox, a telephone pole and a road sign. In fact, it's gotten to



the point where he treats accidents like an everyday occurrence:

Me: Ummm, Dad? I've, er, damaged the car again.

Dad: Oh... how 'bout them Cubs?

Still, Dad wasn't really upset about the accidents; (mind you, I picked up my homecoming date on the Route 9 bus, but that's something else). He didn't have to say much, knowing I felt bad enough for the both of us.

Of course I've done other things than damage the family car, but I won't mention them here, seeing as there's this Constitutional amendment about self-incrimination.

Like everyone else, I was a real joy to be around while I was growing up; my parents were uptight and didn't know anything, if I do something it'll work despite what everyone else says, etc., etc., etc.

Surprisingly, Dad put up with my attitude. He supported me when I needed it (even when I thought I didn't) and let me go on my own when I didn't (even when I thought

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I did), figuring I'd catch on... sooner or later.

The other evening I was out on a bike ride and stopped by my parents' house and talked with Dad for a few minutes about school. I got ready to leave, saying I wanted to get back before dark so I could get some work done and get to bed.

My father smiled and asked me what happened to the kid who stayed up late for insane periods of time and was never bothered by riding after dark?

I told him I was getting old. Dad laughed and gave me one of those looks parents can't wait to use-- a cross between "I told you so" and "maybe he's got the idea."

I mention all of this because today marks my dad's 25 anniversary working here.

It's kind of weird, in a way. Growing up, I never saw Dad until three or four in the afternoon. Now, I see him on a lawnmower at

eight in the morning or walking under my window around noon when I'm waking up.

Things are a little different, though. I don't get lectures -- only advice. He doesn't check up on me or ask professors what I'm up to. In return, I borrow money.

Actually in the past two years more and more of what he's told me makes sense. At one time my friends and I dreaded growing up to do and say the things our parents did. Now I'm thinking it wouldn't be a bad idea.

Congratulations, Dad. You're the best.

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# It didn't take long to lose euphoria

by Mike Royko

That old euphoria. Like the 24-hour flu, it seems to just come and go. And now it's going, going and might soon be gone.

Only seven weeks ago, Newsweek Magazine conducted a poll in which this question was asked: "Saddam Hussein has withdrawn from Kuwait, but remains in power in Iraq. Is this a victory for the U.S. and allied forces?"

Fifty-five percent said yes, it was a victory. Only 38 percent said it wasn't. The rest didn't know or didn't care.

Now the magazine has done another poll and asked the very same question. But the results are almost a perfect flip-flop.

This time 55 percent said, no, it wasn't a victory. Only 36 percent thought it was, and the rest were watching soaps or something.

If the poll really represents what Americans believe, it means that in only a few weeks, tens of millions of people have sprung a major euphoria leak.

This is probably viewed as bad news in the White House, with all the parades and airport greetings still on the schedule.

But the White House shouldn't take it as a disappointment. If anything, it shows that the Bush administration knew what it was doing and did it almost to perfection. Except for one minor glitch, which we'll go into a little later.

The first poll, in which 55 percent said we scored a victory, proved how effective censorship, media manipulation and skillful propaganda can be in shaping public opinion.

It didn't matter that Saddam, the latter-day Hitler, was still in power. We had won, really kicked butt, with little loss of lives to our troops. And to most Americans, that was what counted.

And it had been done so neatly. All the dramatic video bombings and Scud interceptions. The generals in their combat fatigues and boots detailing each day's triumphs. (I've always wondered why generals wear combat fatigues and boots to sit in offices.)

Then the lightning-fast ground attack that brought Saddam's miserable 4-F's popping out of their gopher holes with their hands in the air.

So we didn't kill or capture

Saddam. What's the difference? We stomped him so thoroughly and quickly that it didn't seem to matter. Besides it was only a matter of time until Saddam's own people would string the villain up for messing up their country. Our leader told us so.

It was more than even the



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White House could have hoped for. Wham, bam, thank you Saddam. All that remained was for the troops to come home to heroes' welcomes and let the festivities begin.

Ah, but then came that little glitch I mentioned.

Once the war was ended, so did the censorship. No more press pools being told where they could go and to whom they could speak. No more carefully staged and filtered briefings. No more lading out info and carefully chosen bombing-run tapes like thin broth a soup line.

Anybody with a camera or a notepad was free to go where he chose. And many went into northern Iran, where the Kurds were trying to pull off a revolution. When Saddam's Republican Guard began slaughtering the rebels, the cameras and notepads followed the masses of fleeing Kurds into the cold and muddy mountains where they hoped to avoid extermination.

Suddenly the pictures on TV weren't neat and pretty anymore. A general blustering at reporters, a bridge in the crosshairs suddenly going "proof"--these images were replaced by those of children with skin blistered and blackened from napalm; their teeth chattering from the cold; their little bodies being wrapped in burial rags; their mothers shrieking their grief.

Of course, it wasn't our fault. We don't napalm Kurdish children. We don't chase them

into the cold mountains to die of exposure, hunger and disease. All we did was leave Saddam in power, with his robust health and evil nature, and the means to engage in mass slaughter.

So Americans, many of whom have soft hearts and get squeamish at the sight of suffering children, began thinking that if this pain was the fruit of our victory, it might not have been our finest hour.

There's a lesson in all of this that our present and future leaders should keep in mind. When you fight a war, don't be too quick to declare it over. Even if you stop fighting, by officially remaining at war, you can keep the censorship going, herd the press pools like sheep, and filter anything that might upset the TV viewer's appetite.

Remember, next time keep the lid on. No burned, freezing, starving or dying kids.

They can ruin a good show.

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