

I adored my Dad. He is without doubt the most generous and original man I've ever known. I particularly loved Dad for his essential bigness. His scale was self-evident, but even his physicality was dwarfed by his big-spiritedness and generosity.

In business and in life I've been one of the many, fortunate recipients of my father's tutelage. In the wonderful letters and emails we received over Dad's illness his very rare brand of mentoring is a frequent theme. Dad's mentoring was distinguished by being selfless, results-driven and, as one email put it, always without any 'sharp elbows'.

Dad often said he lived his entrepreneurial life vicariously through me (and the business which I started just over 3 years ago). The truth is I've learnt so much from Dad through our many freewheeling discussions over this period. And I can see why those he took under his considerable wing speak of him with such warmth and appreciation. Despite a schedule that would challenge someone half his age, he always gave generously of himself.

Dad was also a man of big ideas and dreams. I remember two years ago, with the business' resources already stretched, Dad tried to convince me he knew just the people who could help set up our American and European operations...In Dad's view, we had no time to lose!

Sometimes Dad would ring me during a brief court recess, bursting with his latest idea for my business.

Once when our receptionist put his call through to me, and while lost in the excitement of his latest inspiration (and no doubt juggling 10 other things), I would be greeted with..."Hi Will, Kim Santow here, I just needed to run a concept by you..."

I would explain, as tactfully as only a son can, that given the length of our association, the term "Dad" would suffice.

His grand vision, while sometimes not strictly practical, always made you question your assumptions and challenge yourself. Dad was never one for resting on laurels – many of you might remember the least retiring of retirement speeches only 4 short months ago.

Dad was also an exceptional listener. He had a gift for letting people of all ages and stages know he was genuinely interested in who they were, what they represented, and of course, what their views might be on the important topics of the day.

Someone once said the art of being a good salesperson is to be sincere...And when you can fake sincerity, you have it made! Dad never had to fake sincerity because the same tirelessly enquiring mind, which carved out such a stellar career in law and the broader educational, commercial, artistic and philanthropic fields, was equally interested in the travails and opinions of the individual – whoever that individual might be.

At their best, all parents try to provide a good example for their kids to follow. I've no doubt that most of my good points come directly from Mum and Dad, also thankfully influenced by my wife, Mel.

Mum and Dad were two halves of an enviable partnership. They complemented each other perfectly by always highlighting the other's strengths and celebrating their differences. In many ways, their marriage inspired me to find my ideal life partner. And for that alone I owe them a great debt.

Dad, Mum and Mel have combined to provide that moral compass with which I now try to navigate my life. So while I'm very unlikely to be invited to the bench or take the Australian Law Journal on family beach holidays (just for light reading); in most other respects and certainly in terms of my value system I have tried to follow my Dad's lead.

Dad was also good enough to pass on a few of his quirkiest traits: his rhythm gene (anyone who's seen a Santow male 'cut the rug' would be nodding); his penchant for English-mail-order-shirts; his handyman gene (or lack thereof); his real-estate voyeurism; and that elusive gene which compels me to massively over-order at delis and takeaways... Both Mel and Mum are familiar with the well-worn phrase: "... *But the good news is you'll never have to cook again!*"

Over the past 6 years, my three children have revelled in a close connection with all their grandparents including their larger-than-life Grandfather-Kim. In recent years, Dad has revealed to them some of the magic of my own childhood.

When engaging them with talk stories of Friendly Shark (who would write Dad messages in toothpaste while cruising alongside him, as he sculled along the Lane Cove river), along with other characters he'd invented like 'Robert Robot Robber' or the infamous 'Gorilla Bananas', my Dad had that unique ability to get down to a child's level and to captivate their imaginations.

Dad's love of cats was equally intense. If you look closely, you can even see the hint of his beloved Strudel's tail curling up from the bottom of his Chancellor's portrait. Dad and Lewis Miller, his portrait artist clearly understood each other.

His wish to include Strudel in this portrait also reveals a lot about Dad's soft side. I remember a trip to his judge's chambers in recent years at which I mentioned to Dad that the only photo he had of me was from 25 years prior. I was flattered that he thought that image best captured me today – until I realised this photo also showed a much-loved family cat – and it was her image he couldn't bring himself to replace.

As young kids, Dad would sometimes take the three brothers and our cousins fishing. He'd buy a family block of Cadbury 'fruit-and-nut' for the occasion. Dad loved chocolate but importantly, it was also his preferred currency for persuading us to throw our catch back into the water.

My Mum's father used to say "integrity above all". Like Dad, he lived his values. Similarly, Dad taught us how important it is to treat people with respect; to show the courage of your convictions; and to always look family, friends and colleagues in the eye.

In many ways, I feel this is my father's greatest trait: integrity in his dealings with others and a steely determination to see things through. He applied this philosophy throughout his life – and it was brought into sharp focus again during his recent illness and death.

It will be no surprise to everyone here that at no stage during his fight did my Dad ever 'give in'.

In true form, and throughout his terrible illness, Dad remained courageous, optimistic, outward looking, and defiant...And not for one moment did he countenance any form of self-pity...Dad left this world as he has always lived his life...With grace, dignity and humanity.

To finish, I'd like to quote Roald Dahl from 'Danny the Champion of the World'. I've recently been re-reading Roald Dahl to my three kids - Phoebe, Alice and Tom - and reliving some of the same magic that I experienced with my Dad. The way Danny described his Dad says it all:

*" What I've been trying so hard to tell you all along is simply that my father: without the slightest doubt, was the most marvellous and exciting father any boy ever had"*

Dad, we're all going to miss you terribly but we are so privileged to have had you in our lives...

William Santow