Topic: My Father’s Struggle for Survival

Abstract: On many occasions we have heard stories of our parent’s childhood. Even more so when they scold us by reminding us how well we have had it to this day as opposed to how things were for them. My father was separated from his siblings at the age of 10, was forced to work since he was a child, lost his mother when he was only 14 years old, and had to ultimately immigrate to the United States by the time he was 16 years old. His life had been an emotional rollercoaster and continued to be so until his life took a turn for the better. He met the love of his life and finally started the family he had so long awaited for. To this day he continues to work hard to support his family and although he is not the perfect dad, he is the perfect dad for me.

Key Words: Childhood, Abuse, Illness, Separation, American Dream, Immigration, Family, Love, Marriage, Children.

On many occasions we have heard stories of our parent’s childhood. Even more so when they scold us by reminding us how well we have had it to this day as opposed to how things were for them. Both my parents immigrated to the United States when they were teenagers. Although they were born in the same country, they were raised completely different. The motives which brought them to the U.S. were a series of events that arose from their early childhood years. However, I chose to this narrative on my father. He is far from being the perfect dad but thanks to him we have always had a roof over our head, clothes, and most importantly food on our table. The struggles he went through and the fear of not knowing what the outcome of his life would be could be easily tied to the person he is today.

I truly believe what one goes through as a child and how one grows up is the key to the adult we will ultimately become. The idea of having better opportunities and a better life overall is the leading reason for immigration to the United States. The American Dream was something the majority of individuals throughout the world wanted to fulfill. The opportunity of being able to work, raise money, have a family of his own, and eventually become a homeowner was the key to starting a life here. You will learn the story of my father growing up, immigrating, and
starting a new life here in the U.S. I will also identify how his childhood life affected his adulthood and in return affects our day to day life with him. My father has done his best to educate and discipline us in a way we appreciate everything we have. He ensures we do not take anything for granted by reminding us of his struggle for survival.

Born on October 2, 1956 in Santa Isabel, Nayarit my father is the first-born out of three children. He had a sister and soon after a brother. Raised in a tiny town with very little resources my grandparents did their best to raise the family they had started. They lived surrounded by many family members and friends who loved them unconditionally. There were financial struggles from the start but that did not keep them from living a happy life together. The kids grew up and eventually they were all attending school. Things at that point were as good as they were going to get for them until their life took a drastic turn for the worse.

My grandmother suddenly became ill. Due to the lack of resources they could not afford to take her to the hospital in Guadalajara. Unfortunately, in order to get good medical treatment in Mexico a person must have money. This was obviously not something my father’s family had. They were left with no other choice than to take her to the clinic in their ranch. The doctor had no explanation as to what was wrong with her at first. He eventually diagnosed her with a very bad case of arthritis. She was put on a special treatment that cost very much. This would lead to the next chapter of my father’s life.

The need to provide for my ill grandmother and continue to support the family, led my grandfather to the United States. His mind set was to send them money to allow my grandmother to receive the proper medical care and eventually bring them all over here. Unfortunately, this would not be as easy as everyone had hoped. My grandfather soon stopped calling and sending them money. This forced my father to drop out of school and start working like a man when he
was only 10 years old.

As if things could not get any worse aside from dealing with his parents separation, since he was the oldest he was responsible for his sick mother and his younger siblings. This was too much for a 10 year old to handle and soon the younger siblings were sent away with one of his Aunts to Tepic, the capital of Nayarit. He was left behind to care for his sick mother while his siblings were taken to city for a better life opportunity. This was devastating for him. They could no longer afford to live in their house and were forced to rent it out. This would lead them to go live in a cave up in the hills along with other families who had no place to live.

My father had to become an adult at a very early age therefore you could say his childhood was robbed from him. He was deprived of something every individual has a right to and it was all because they did not have the resources to give him a normal childhood. As the years went by my grandmother kept getting sicker and sicker, there was not enough money to take her to get the medical help she so desperately needed. My father then learned the reason behind my grandfather’s abandonment. My grandfather had already remarried here in the U.S. As if this was not hard enough for him to deal with, he also learned he had three half brothers and one half sister. All of which were the outcome of a secret life he led here in the U.S.

My grandmother passed away from her illness in my father’s arms when he was 14 years old leaving him alone. Imagine the pain he must have felt to lose his mother in front of him and having absolutely no control over it. He then moved with my paternal great-grandfather where he endured brutal beatings if he did not do as they told him. He has told us my great-grandfather would even go as far as hanging him when he did not want to go to work. Since he had no other place to go to, he had no choice but to deal with the abuse. The abuse would be his motivation to do something for himself. This made him work extra hard
to raise enough money to come and reunite with his father here in the U.S.

He had very little communication with his father and was very resentful with the fact he had abandoned them and moved on with his life when he and his mother had suffered greatly. He would see his siblings every other month and had very little communication with them as well. They were practically strangers to one another because they did not grow up together and would not see each other often. Despite the fact they were separated at a young age, he was happy to know they were living a better life than he had. They always had a roof over their, food on their table, were going to school, nice clothes, and even had luxuries here and there. All things he was unable to do or have growing up. When he was 16 he finally raised the money he needed to immigrate over here, the pursuit of a new life had just begun.

He was very fortunate to not have been caught crossing the border, and reunited with my grandfather soon after in Hollister, CA. He came to a home where he was a complete stranger in every sense of the word. His step-mother treated him very bad and they had him sleeping in the garage because there was no room for him inside the house. Things were not going the way he thought they would be. He soon began to work in the fields cutting vegetables from dawn to dusk. It was there where he met one his best friends. He too had just immigrated here and was living with his sister. They had many things in common and the rest is a very interesting chapter of his life.

Having a friend made things a lot easier for him since he did not count on his family. His best friend introduced him to one of his younger sisters who had just arrived from Mexico. At the time he was 19 and she was 16 - it was love at first sight. Three months after they met she ran away with him. Since he still lived in the garage at his father’s house, it was apparent he was not happy with the idea of him bringing someone else to the home. In fact, he tried talking him into
taking her back to her parents because according to him he was making a huge mistake. There was absolutely no one who change his mind, he knew she was the one. They got married in November of 1976.

He had finally raised enough money to rent a place of their own, they were finally out of his fathers garage. They no longer had to deal with indirect comments towards them. In 1977 they had a little girl and then an unplanned boy in 1979. He was still working in the fields but that would change soon. He began working for Nicholas Turkey’s in 1980. It was hard physical work. They would breed, vaccinate, and care for thousands of turkeys a day sending them to other locations as well. Sometimes his work would require him to work graveyard making it hard for him because he had two little kids home who would not let him sleep during the day. He was very hard on his first two kids, discipline wise. He refers to it as tough love. In 1984 they moved into a bigger house and in 1986 they welcomed another baby girl to their family. There were no plans for more children but there was a little surprise coming their way and in 1991 came another blessing from God, another baby boy. He finally had the family he had always wanted, and this time it was his own.

He had already been working, had a family of his own, and the final piece missing would be here before he knew it. He finally purchased his own house in July of 1995. Everything had been going just as he had always wanted prior to coming to this country. His life was in order and everything was set. Then in 1999 after working at Nicholas Turkey’s for nearly 20 years, they laid him off. This was extremely hard for him because now it was not just him he had to look out for. He had a family to support and he knew it was not going to be easy. Being the hard worker he has always been he started applying in various places immediately. A couple of months after being unemployed he got a call from Milgard Manufacturing, Inc. They had
positions open for production workers. He went for the interview and began working the following day. He has been working there since and has experience in many departments making him a greater asset to the company. He is always striving to learn more and get ahead in any possible way.

Now that his story has been told, it is easy to understand why he is the way he is. My father is not the type of person to show affection towards others or open up about his feeling to anybody. He keeps to himself a lot and prefers to be left alone most of the time. This has affected our family because there is little interaction between us. The times he does try to be affectionate towards us, it feels weird and we do not take it well. I believe he is this way because he never had a childhood and had to grow up and survive on his own at a very young age. How could he give affection to others or talk about his feelings when he was always alone? Despite the way he is, my love for him is unconditional. If it was not for him, I would not be here or be the person I am today. He will always be the greatest dad ever, always my #1.