

My daughter Lindsay is going to graduate Richland High School this June. She will attend college to become a Registered Nurse; I am very proud of her. I look at her and am amazed at the young woman she has become and I wonder what life has in store for her. The world throws curves, sliders, and change – ups, never the easy fast straight pitch. I've been sitting in my den this past month reflecting on her life and wondering for what else I should have done to prepare her for the world.

I wrote an article titled "Life is based on how you spend your time" and it appeared in the Tribune Democrat on November 29, 2008. In the article I had calculated the amount of time the average, hard working, everyday American spends at work, sleeping, vacation, holiday's, or off for the weekend. This totaled 4,832 hours in a year, which left 3,928 hours left over which I called discretionary time. Each of us decides what to do with this discretionary time; we decide how to use the time. Over a forty-year period, this discretionary time added up to 157,120 hours.

We are told that the computer, power tools, cell phones, instant messaging, video teleconferencing, and a host of other "Time Saving" devices would free up our time for more leisure. So why is it that with all of the time saving devices people complain that there is not enough time in the day? Our parents, grand and great grand parents did not have any of these "time saving" devices and they worked physically harder and longer than most people I know yet still had time for family and friends. They had time, but how? We have it far easier and better than any preceding generations so why don't we have time?

When I retired from the Marine Corps, I worked at a local, medium size defense contractor. I had title and position, a nice office, people reported to me and I was well paid. It took a lot of time and the days were not the standard eight-hour day. A sixty hour week was considered a short week. When a proposal had to be submitted, the company came first. Weekends and late nights were standard; it is part of the industry. The choice I was making was between the company and my family. Time is fleeting and my children were growing fast; I decided to spend time with my family. This choice cost me monetarily and yet richly rewarded me.

I traded my fully loaded Ford pickup for a used Taurus with high miles, the credit cards were cut up, and we had to tighten our belts. We lived on a tight budget, cut back on the wants and just met the needs. I worked part time for another company and did consulting work too. It was a struggle but the consulting work has now turned into full time. We've learned that meeting our needs usually addressed most of the wants, we pay cash for everything, and the Taurus is running fine; it's not fancy but it gets me where I need to go. I certainly have made many mistakes in my life but choosing my family was not one of them; I wake up everyday with a big smile.

I asked Lindsay what else I should have done to help her prepare for life. She looked me and said "Dad, every Friday night for the past five years you've watched me march with the Richland Marching Band, you've sat in every Christmas and Spring concert, drove me to piano and flute lessons, attended my recitals and drove all over Western Pennsylvania as I participated in music

competitions. When I needed to talk you listened, you gave me advice when I asked for it and sometimes when I didn't ask. You gave the most important thing you can give...you gave me your time." I had to swallow hard after Lindsay told me this.

I may never drive a fancy car, make a six-figure salary again, obtain an impressive position, have many people at my disposal or ever achieve an elected office. While some people have made the choice to pursue these status symbols, I do not think they matter much or really last. However, I know the one thing that will truly last forever is my daughter will always remember that I gave her the most precious gift I could give her; I gave her my time.