

On November 1, 2019, my father turned 88 years old. I gave this gift to him to share my gratitude for the many life lessons that he taught me throughout his life and by his example - Stephanie Riley Hahn

10 Life Lessons That I Learned From My Father

1. Never, ever slow down before you cross the finish line!

My father was my track coach and he emphatically stressed that you lean in as you cross the finish line, and you never slow down before that tape. My dad taught me to leave my all out on the track, never to hold back and to run with all that you have until you finish the race. In the broader stroke of life, it has helped exponentially. My 5 siblings and I learned from our father's example that you give it your all until the race is over. It was apparent from my dad's life that he strived to do just this as he battled cancer these last years. He fought so hard until the very end when he finally crossed through the finish line and entered heaven.

2. When you see greatness in someone, help them develop it!

My father could spot strengths in others even if they did not know they possess those talents. This was his gift as a coach that he shared with so many. He could watch a clip of an athlete & know almost instantaneously if the kid had enough "swivel in his hips" to be a great running back. I have heard from many of his fellow coaches that he had the knack for spotting greatness in players. He shared this gift with the many players and coaches that he mentored over the years. In a career that spanned over 50 years, this gift of spotting greatness resulted in life changing opportunities for many young men. At my dad's 80th birthday party, one of his former players shared his immense gratitude by saying that my father saved him from working on a farm by giving him a college education and a spot on the football team which forever changed his life. My father also gave this gift to his children and grandchildren by spotting our gifts and coaching us to develop them. By identifying greatness in others, my dad leaves a legacy for all of those with changed lives because he saw something great in us.

3. Don't be afraid to show your emotions!

My father was not one to hide his emotions. From the spirited half time talks he gave to his many football teams, to the tears he shed at sad movies, my dad was comfortable sharing his emotions and letting others see what was important to him. He did this with great enthusiasm. This lesson helps us all to share our excitement, our struggles and challenges with others so that they know how to celebrate and support us.

4. Share your time and gifts with younger people!

One of the things I loved most about my father was how he so willingly shared his time and his gift of teaching with young people. He was a natural born educator, whether on the football field, in the classroom or along a shoreline at a lake, he shared this gift with us all. From showing a grandchild how to tie a bubble and a fly on their fishing pole or playing basketball with his neighbor's young daughter or

breaking down the x's and o's of football, my dad was constantly teaching. He made young people in his life feel important because he took the time to engage with them.

5. Find what you are interested in and develop this into your passion!

This lesson was ingrained in me since my first memories in kindergarten when my siblings and I accompanied our mother to the football games at Montana Tech. We observed my father as the head coach who passionately shared his knowledge and love of football with his players and all who came to watch. This scene was repeated many, many times when I had the chance to marvel at my dad's passion for coaching. His love for sports propelled him towards a profession that he excelled in and he found great satisfaction and joy. We should all be so lucky to have that level of passion for what we do every day!

6. Enjoy your down time!

The Riley family loves to camp, fish and enjoy the outdoors so many of our favorite memories are those that took place back in my mom's home state of Wyoming. My dad truly learned to enjoy down time when my parents and an aunt and uncle bought a cabin in the Snowy Range in Wyoming for their families 26 years ago. They would spend their summers at the cabin and their children and grandchildren loved to accompany them. Many a game of poker was played with his grandkids at the kitchen table and tons of stories were told around the campfire. My father was all in when he was on vacation and these moments are so precious to our family because he was present to us in a way that he could not always be when he was coaching..

7. Get to know people by asking them about themselves!

One of my father's most notable qualities was his ability to strike up a conversation with just about anybody. He loved to learn where people grew up, what their interests and passions were. He took great pleasure in learning about his players and their families. My dad was always inquisitive and wanted to better understand what his children's' jobs entailed and what activities his grandchildren were passionate about. The time he took conversing with others is what was so endearing about my father and as a result, he is loved and appreciated by many!

8. Share stories about your past so future generations can learn!

Many a family dinner was spent hearing about my dad's childhood during the Great Depression and World War II and what challenges Americans faced at that time. He shared so many hilarious stories of the fun that he, his older brother and buddies had back in Massachusetts. From his stories of swimming in the ocean, skating on the cranberry bogs and learning how to play ball on the dirt fields, these stories delighted our family. Hearing about my father serving in the Army, playing college football in South Dakota and working in a mine so he could finish college gave us a glimpse of what he went through to become the man he was. This important lesson of sharing stories with younger people allows them to learn from our experiences and become their best selves like my father did.

9. Love and honor your family!

My father was not a man that surrounded himself with material possessions. He never needed a lot to enjoy his life. Working hard to support his family was much more important to him than spending money on himself. He and my mom have been great stewards with their money and have used it to help their children and grandchildren. My dad always elevated his family above himself and honored us all by doing this.

10. Marry a partner that prays!

My father did not realize it at the time when he met my mother, Peggy but he found the most prayerful and steadfast woman he could have found. He married a woman that prayed him through his coaching jobs and job changes, countless moves across the country, raising six children, and then becoming empty nesters and grandparents. My mom prayed them through losing their daughter, and losing their own parents, through retirement and through my father's declining health. My father learned through the example of my mother that prayer brings you closer to the Lord and to the threshold of heaven. She prayed for many months that my father would have a happy, peace-filled death. My parents' priest gave my father his last rites while was surrounded by his loving wife, children and grandchildren. He passed away just a few moments after Father's Day. Bob Riley did indeed have a happy, peace-filled death and a very joyous journey into heaven.