

Kindness

The nicest thing anyone ever did for me when I was growing up was something so silly and trivial that you would think I would have long forgotten it. But I remember it like it was yesterday.

One of the first times I ever went to a movie theatre was with my father. I was about five years old. The theatre was giving away free rings to everyone ... the kind of cheap plastic ring with a picture that seemed to move as you moved your hand around. I think the picture was of the Three Stooges.

I remember thinking that this ring was the best thing I'd ever seen. I couldn't believe they were giving them away for free. I loved getting that ring! It made me feel grown-up.

But as I was moving it from finger to finger, trying to find the best fit, it broke.

I was crushed. I remember crying. Losing that ring was so sad. It was such a great ring, and now it was broken.

And then my father did an incredible thing. He gave me his ring. I couldn't believe it! How could he part with his own ring, a thing that was so wonderful that I was in tears over losing my own? Was he serious?

He gave me his ring, and made me very happy. But I remember being so sad that now he didn't have one. I couldn't understand how he could give up his, for me!

Of course, it was just a cheap plastic novelty ring that my father would have been embarrassed to wear. But to me, then, giving me his ring was the most selfless act of generosity I could ever imagine.

Over the years, my father did many things for me. He provided us with a caring, stable home. He let me sweep the bank floor on Saturday mornings, and didn't get too upset when I accidentally set off the silent alarm. (The police arrived *fast!*) He let me drive his shiny new car to high school once in a while, just because I asked. He came to Boy Scout dinners, wore funny hats at my birthday parties, and was proud of my accomplishments in school. He supported me all the way through college, and beyond, and he was at my wedding.

But with all the things he ever did for me, I remember him best for that ring he gave me when he was five. I knew he loved me.

In my own life, I've always tried to be as caring as my father was. I haven't always been successful. But those were awfully big shoes to fill!