

On Father's Day, dad is everywhere

By [Regina Brett, The Plain Dealer](#)

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I saw my dad the other day . . .

A car got stuck driving through a construction zone during rush hour. The befuddled white-haired lady was holding up a long line of cars.

He sat in the car behind her and could have easily driven around her, but he stopped, jumped out, listened to her, then helped her get unstuck. When people applauded, he shrugged, got in his car and drove off.

I saw my dad the other day . . .

Ladders weighing down the roof of an old beat-up station wagon, red bandana tied to the last rung, waving in the wind. Wooden ladders, the heavy kind Dad lugged all over Ravenna on hot summer days to get to the gutters and spouting that needed replaced.

I saw my dad the other day . . .

Dashboard all cluttered with maps and notebooks and tools and odds and ends of nails and stuff that would later be stored in baby food jars in the garage. Somehow, it never went flying when he hit the brakes.

I saw my dad the other day . . .

Up on a roof not far from my home. He stood near the peak, tall enough to touch God's ottoman. Laying down row upon row of shingles that sons and daughters will hear about when he drives past, points to the house and says, "See that one? Put that roof on back on the hottest day that summer of 2007."

I saw my dad the other day . . .

A pair of tan, steel-toed boots on a man in worn blue work pants waiting in line at the drugstore. White T-shirt covered in sweat, arms tanned and scarred by the sun. Dad always wore a T-shirt, especially when it was hot out. He said it soaked up the sweat and cooled him off. Nature's air conditioning.

I saw my dad the other day . . .

His two old lunch pails resting on a dusty shelf behind the laundry chute in Mom's basement. They sat like retirees on a park bench, quiet and still. One a dull black, the other silver with BRETTE scrawled across in black marker. I wanted to open them to see if

he'd left anything, but didn't want his aroma to escape: the smell of apples he brought home, the faint whiff of bologna on white bread, the stick of Doublemint left for grabs.

I saw my dad the other day . . .

Big hands herding a gaggle of giggling children at the ice cream stand, doling out dollar bills for kiddie cones. The kids forgetting to say "thank you" until they were leaving, and then saying it like a song that spreads in rounds like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat:"
"Thanks dad . . . thanks dad . . . yeah, thanks dad."

I saw my dad the other day . . .

Walking to church, squirming under the tourniquet of a tie and handcuffed by stiff sleeves that button at the end. Shuffling slow the way Dad did, carrying the weight of the world to Mass, always tired but always obedient.

I saw my dad the other day . . .

All over the shelves of the store where they sell Father's Day cards I'll never need. In the green packs of Doublemint gum he chewed, in the wintergreen scent of the liniment he rubbed into sore knees, in the cheap white tube socks they sell in six-packs.

I went looking for my dad the other day . . .

I drove to St. Mary's Cemetery in Ravenna, turned left into the drive, saw his big granite marker on the left.

But he wasn't there.

The sympathy cards eight years ago were right. I can't stand at his grave and weep. He is not there, he does not sleep.

He is everywhere.

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