

An Afternoon with My Dad

Interview/Profile Essay by Kenan Reeh

Sitting down on our copious sofa, her dark, thick, curly hair waves like a black sea. As my mother sits with her legs crossed and her mind open to my questions, she recalls her past experiences when she would gather limestone rock on the creek bottom with her dad, back on the farm where she grew up. As her eyes grow stale and her mind wanders off into a long past world, she slowly recollects these great times.

“When my parents moved to their new house in Iola, Kansas, the yard was very plain and my mother wanted some new landscaping. My dad suggested they should gather rock from their farm. The creeks that ran through the pastures on our land were lined with limestone rock filled with fossils and many unique quirks. The rocks were consistently about two inches thick with a twelve-inch diameter, and which made for good stacking around flower beds and beautiful walkways.” She continues on and informs me that every summer she would spend a week visiting her parents. She and her dad would go to the farm and spend long days gathering rock and storing them for later use in landscaping the house in town.

They would always go prepared with bale hooks and leather gloves. The bale hooks were used to lift back the rocks, so any critters living underneath could slither away. They would always pack a sack lunch and take any supplies they might need, including bug spray, sunscreen, and a big jug of water.

“It was always hotter than Hades, and the humidity was always enough to sweat off ten pounds,” she says with a long sigh. “It also was a steep climb up the side of the creek embankment to get your load on the trailer, hooked behind the pickup.” Her mother could never understand why she wanted to go spend a day in such arduous and miserable circumstances and

work so hard. She would just answer, “I love coming back home, spending time on the farm where I grew up, and this is one thing that I can do where it is just me and my dad.”

One day she saw a very inimitable rock, unlike any of the other rocks. “I couldn’t believe that this one-of-a-kind rock was still around after all the years we had scavenged the area. The rock had a beautiful beige tone and was filled with unique patterns. I started toward this rock that was perched high upon a stack of other rocks, like God had meant for us to see it. Since it was above the water line, I didn’t think a living creature would be underneath it, and I didn’t reach for my baling hook. As I leaned over and reached to pick up the rock, it turned toward me, stretched out its neck, and tried biting me. This was no ordinary rock, as you can see; it was a belligerent snapping turtle!” She laughed and grinned as she looked back at the rock, and decided that it truly was unique and unlike any other rock. “Dad and I recounted that story many times after that.”

The time she spent with her dad was extremely special.

“I look back on those days, now that he is gone, and I fondly remember them and hold them very dear to me. Spending that time with my dad as an adult, took me back to a time as a little girl when I would tag along with him, whether it was feeding the cows, fixing fence, or riding with him on the mail route.” She said the special time she spent with her father was usually hard work, but those are memories she will never forget. She was a daddy’s girl, and even though he has since passed away, she always will be.