

2002 Father of the Year – Tom Williams

Dear OHJA,

When I look at how far I have come with my riding and how much time I'm able to spend doing it, I realize just how lucky I am to have a father like mine. Most of the riding would not be possible without my father's time, hard work, and all the effort that he puts in for me.

My father was a golf pro for years before I was born. As I got older, he spent less time playing the game he loved, except for some weekends. Now, even though he's retired, he hardly goes out to the golf course on weekends at all. Instead, most of his weekend time, especially in the summer, is dedicated to my sport.

My riding has taken up a large portion of the time he could use to be playing golf. He hauls my horse to shows, driving back and forth just so I can have my schooling rounds, and he drives for 45 minutes to my lessons, sits and waits, and drives for 45 minutes back home. At the shows, he is always willing to help me tack up my horse when I'm running late. If I've had a bad day at the show, he always has something to say that fills the empty space inside of me with confidence and gives me strength to press on and try to do my best the next day.

It's lucky for me that I have a dad who is willing to spend so much time just for me, because he knows how important riding is to me. He is always at my side, doing everything he knows I would need him to do, and even makes an effort to learn some things about this sport that I love. He has spent lots of time reading and watching all kinds of things about hunter and jumpers, and knows as much about my horse as I do. I'm thrilled at how much my dad has learned in the past five years that I've been riding. Together, we both put in an effort so I can do well. I work very hard, but at the same time, he's making it possible for me to do that, and out of the goodness of his heart, he's also working hard so I can do well.

I feel bad that I've sometimes neglected how much my dad does for me. I am sorry to say that I have never really sat down with him and thanked him for everything. I know that when I tend to act like a spoiled brat, that's not showing him any appreciation. Nevertheless, he still dedicates his time and hard work to my horse and me.

I will never forget all the times that he took perfect care of my horse when I couldn't be there, like this past spring when my mare had a reaction to a vaccination. Her leg swelled up pretty badly and she needed to be hand walked every day and have her leg hosed with cold water. I didn't have to worry about her when I was at school because Dad was doing everything that needed to be done. Even when my crazy mare felt the excitement of being out of her stall and almost broke my dad's foot a couple times, all he cared about was taking care of her, doing what I couldn't be there to do. Things like this open my eyes to all the appreciation I have yet to show him.

The least I can do for him is take some of my own time to write this essay for him, considering he takes his time to do so much for me. This is my way of saying thank you and giving all my love to my dad, Tom Williams, who deserves to be Father of the Year.

Jessica Williams