

2004 Father of the Year - Lee Ellison

Dear OHJA,

I am writing to you on behalf of my wonderful father. He is an extraordinary man who has made a huge impact on my life. Never have I known another person to be as passionate about their family as my father is. For as long as I can remember, my father has been traveling world wide for his work and spending weeks out of the country and away from his family. His persistence in his high demand job is all to support his family. I miss him so much when he is out of the country for work and I know he misses me and my sister and mom just as much, if not more. All of the time I sit and wonder why he is so willing to work as much as he does. I then realize how fortunate I am to have a father who is willing to sacrifice time at home just so that he can support his family's hobby of riding horses.

When my father is home, my mom, sister and I are usually at the barn or at a horse show. Instead of golfing or doing something that most dads love to do, my dad follows us to whatever horse event we are going to. I know that horse shows are not always the most interesting sporting events to be a spectator at but he never misses one that he is in town for. This last year my dad was able to be in town for the entire summer. Normally this would make me want to jump to the ceiling with excitement except that it was a very unfortunate circumstance that caused him to be home. In May my father was diagnosed with throat cancer. He immediately had to start radiation treatments, and the radiation began to make him very tired and sick. It was devastating to see my father in the condition that he was in. The man that had always brought so much light and electricity into the room was now growing weaker by the day. As his energy level dwindled, his strength and spirits stayed as strong as ever.

Refusing to miss out on anything and aching to be a part of all of the action at the horse shows, he designated himself the official chef for the vonZimmermann Stables show crew. After his morning treatments he would drive out to the horse shows to watch us ride and then wow us with his gourmet talents at an evening barbecue. Anyone was welcome and there was always plenty of great food to go around.

There is always a great energy in the room or wherever you are when my father is around. With his mischievous jokes and hilarious stories, he makes sure that there is never a dull moment. That is one of the great things about my father. He always makes sure that everyone is having a great time. My father is always thinking of others before himself.

This is the reason why I am writing this letter about him. This is now my time to do something for him. He was the reason why I began taking riding lessons when I was seven years old. I don't think at the time he knew that taking a few riding lessons would turn into a life long passion. Even if he didn't mean for that to happen to me, or even if he doesn't like to think about all of the money he would have saved if I had not started riding, he has supported my love for riding horses without regret or hesitation. I love him for all that he has done for me and my family. He is by far the greatest man I have even known and I do believe that my father, Lee Ellison, should be the Father of the Year.

His loving daughter,
Erin