

# The Wyndcroft School



## A Father's Gift

By,  
Dr. Kate Wunner, February 2010

As many of you know, my father, John J. Doyle, passed away two weeks ago, very peacefully in Scotland, at the age of 99. My husband and I were at his bedside.

And I am sure you can imagine that over these last two weeks, he has been much in my thoughts. While the death of a parent always represents a huge loss, no matter how old our parents are or how grown-up we are, there is a certain comfort afforded the grieving heart when a loved one dies in their own bed, with no pain, after a long and happy life. So my overwhelming feeling right now is one of gratitude for the wonderful father I had. He was a life enhancing presence.

But my father's death has also brought to the forefront of my mind the importance of the role a parent plays in a child's life. I am always telling the students they are the luckiest children in the world. And really, the luckiest thing that can ever happen to a child is to be blessed with a good parent. But here's the thing, it may be that we never really realize how good our parents were till we are way beyond the age when we need parenting. Being a good parent is hard, and often unappreciated. It is easy to feel like a good parent when our children are saying "thank you, mom" and "I love you, dad" But how hard it gets when they are saying, "You just don't get it!" or, "I hate you!"

I would like to share with you a parenting incident in my life which I now realize was immensely significant in shaping my future. I was sixteen years old and had a Saturday job in Woolworth's. In October the manager asked the high school Saturday girls if they would work during the Christmas vacation and we all said "sure" and signed right up. But when December rolled around, other more social opportunities began to outweigh the wish to make a little extra money. There were skating parties being planned, movie trips, shopping days, etc. and we decided as a group that we didn't want to work in Woolworths over Christmas break after all.

I announced this decision casually over dinner in our house one night and explained that Mary, Patricia, Isabel, Anne and I would not, after all, be working over Christmas. My father looked at me over his glasses, and said calmly, "But you made a commitment to work." Me: "Well yes, but we've all changed our

minds and now we're not going to." My father: "No, you made a commitment, the store has made plans, they expect you to work, you must do that." And then, as you can imagine, a father-daughter battle ensued of great proportion because he simply didn't understand, nobody else was going to work, if everyone else could change their minds why couldn't I, why was I stuck with such a rotten, rigid, dad who was so mean. He was ruining my whole Christmas Break!

I worked that Christmas. And I was mad. I thought it highly unfair and my dad an unfeeling monster. And I do not know what age I was when I realized how right he was, and that it might not be by pure chance that as an adult, I am a very responsible person. I am someone who can be depended upon. I know now I didn't get that way by accident. And I will always be grateful to my dad for holding his ground that time, and all the other times, knowing that what he was doing was going to be of great benefit to his daughter in her future life.

So I offer this story as encouragement to all you good parents. Even when it is hard and your children tell you how wrong you are, keep right on being the good parent. It is your greatest gift to them and although it may take a while, your adult children will someday look back and their overwhelming feeling will be of immense gratitude for the wonderful parents they had.