

Firsthand Biography, Introduction Example Text

A Man of Dignity

My father, Frederick John, is the person I admire most. There is a special dignity about him. Even in bad times, he is calm and considerate of others. Last year, for example, my dad was laid off from his job. We knew something was wrong when he came home early and called us all together. My mom and Derek, my six-year-old brother, and I sat down at the kitchen table. I picked nervously at a black fleck showing through our cracked, enamel table. Dad sat down, too, folding his hands carefully before him.

"It won't be so bad, kids," he said. "We've still got your mother's paycheck. We'll have to tighten up some, that's all. Something'll come along soon." He smiled and reassured us.

It was three months before my dad's construction company called him back to work. Before then, he took whatever odd jobs he could get. He bagged groceries, washed cars at a car wash, and worked in a warehouse loading trucks. No job was beneath him. "Everybody's special in their own way," he would tell us. "No job can take that away from you."

Even in the T-shirts, jeans, and construction boots my father usually wears, he has a lot of dignity. It shows in the way that he always stands straight and holds his shoulders back. On special occasions, he irons his jeans so that they have a sharp crease down the front and puts on a starched, clean shirt. At night, when he comes home covered with dust from the job site, he always showers and puts on clean clothes before supper. Even my dad's name has dignity. He is Frederick to everyone—even Mom and his friends. No one calls him Fred or Freddy.

Dad treats my brother and me with dignity, too. He always makes us feel like somebody important. When we accidentally turn over a glass or dish and make a mess, Dad says, "Nobody's perfect. Everybody makes mistakes." Last week, I lost my social studies report the day before it was due. "That was really stupid," I told Dad. He smiled and told me about the time he lost his weekly paycheck.

My dad isn't perfect, of course. When he's tired or when we interrupt his favorite ballgame, he sometimes loses his temper. He is also strict. For example, if I break curfew, I get grounded fast. Dad always says, though, that getting mad or punishing someone doesn't mean that you do not care about that person.

I have learned a lot from my dad, I may not make A's or get chosen for the All-Star team, but I am still somebody important. Like my dad, I'm a special person, and nobody can take that away. When I think of my dad, I always stand a little taller.