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12th Grade

Age 17

I listened to a presentation about Eva Kor in sixth grade and thought how inspirational she was with her forgiveness; I never expected to have to learn such forgiveness as well. This essay piqued my interest because it is a chance for me to share my story with a lesson from Eva Kor that means so much more to me now.

Forgiving A Killer

On April 2nd of 2019, my entire world came crashing down. I knew my dad was addicted to drugs, but I never expected that to be his end. In our lives it's natural for your parents to die before you but having the one dad you get in this life die at eleven years old, did not feel natural. I was your average awkward sixth grader that was making my way learning about life. My father was discovered on the 3rd, so that's when my mom found out. I look exactly like my father, so it did not take long for me to notice my mother could not look me in the face. I knew something was wrong. My grandma came over the next day to tell me since my mom did not have the heart. The day I found out my father was dead was the worst day of my life and I gained the greatest enemy, the woman who killed him.

My father was the kindest man that I've ever gotten the privilege to know; he was gentle and sweet with every person he met. To my dad, everybody was a friend. He would sing like an angel and play the piano like there was no tomorrow; he had dreams and aspirations he should

have gotten the opportunity to meet. Every moment that I remember with him I have held on to tight because that day it took only one woman to rip away our future memories. He would sing “Beautiful Boy” by John Lennon or “My Girl” by The Temptations, and they’re still on a constant loop in my head. I slept in his shirts when visiting with him, I traced the tattoo on his back of a piano on fire, I held his pointer finger crossing the street, I rode on his shoulders every time we went to Ice Cream Paradise in Lebanon together. He was my best friend, my protector, and she put him in a casket.

I was so proud of my dad before he passed; he’d been in rehab for around two months and he was doing better, he was about to move into an apartment, start a new job, and buy a car from an old friend. His life was about to turn around right before it ended. He was staying in a Motel that night since he didn’t have a place to sleep yet, and the footage the police found showed a woman go into his room. She was brought in for questioning, claimed she didn’t do anything, and walked. The drugs he took that night were laced with fentanyl; he didn’t want to die. He would never just leave me behind. My family did not get concrete proof that this woman didn’t provide what killed him. She is out in the world with possible blood on her hands.

Almost four years of my life, I would think about her every single day, and I wished death upon her. Not her death though, the death of *her* person. My dad was *my* person, my safety net, and the glue of our family. I would sit and daydream about how she would feel if her family hardly saw each other anymore. If at every family gathering, there was a dark cloud hanging over them. It felt like my family was broken and left with no answers. For this, I hated her.

I was held back all 1,539 days of my life after his passing up until June of last year. I was at church camp, and I fell to my knees screaming at God to change something; that’s when He put forgiveness in my heart. I had to remind myself often to forgive, forgive, and forgive more. I

was so angry that all the energy I had was being wasted away being angry at her. I was filled with constant agony for more than four years of my life. I gave up on everything. I didn't want to try anymore. Now I don't think about her as often as I did, I finally feel free. Like Eva Kor has said, "I forgave them because I deserve it." When she came to forgiveness of the Nazis in 1995, she did it for herself, just like I've done now. Killers don't deserve to be forgiven, but Eva and I deserve to be free.

She was my worst enemy, I hated her with every fiber of my being, while she does not know I exist. Coming to the point in life where I was asking myself why I was holding myself back over someone who does not even know me, changed the way I live. There is simply nothing I can do. There is no bringing my daddy back. He will not ever get to walk me down the aisle, he will not become a grandpa, and he will not see me graduate in just eight short months. Although it was the hardest thing to ever admit in my life, my dad made the decision to take the drugs that killed him. She may have participated but it wasn't just her that took part; if I were going to be mad at her, why wouldn't I be mad at him? There are days where I am angry at both, but anger gets you nowhere, so instead I forgive. I don't spend my days in sorrow anymore because I am not held back by grief and being unforgiving. My dad is at peace where he is, and now, I am too.