

Thankful for Dad

My father loved telling the story about the day I was born, September 7, 1955. He named me Florence Rose, after his mother, who died when he was a boy.

During my childhood my parents did not get along well for a very long time. Years later I asked my dad why he had stayed around, and he said, "Because no one was gonna get my kids."

Back in the 1960s fathers had few rights, but our dad took care of my siblings and me when our mother moved out. Although she returned after several months, our dad was always there for us.

For a man who never made it past the fifth grade, he was amazingly talented. He was a wonderful gardener, carpenter, painter and mechanic.

I never knew anyone who had as much patience as my father, regardless of the circumstances. He also cooked, cleaned and fixed anything that needed fixing.

One day he called me to the backyard to see the car he'd bought for me—a Ford Falcon. He had paid \$10 for it and painted it blue, our favorite color.

The car had a lot of miles on it, but that didn't matter since my dad was a mechanic. It took me to college every day no matter the weather.

After my brother Chuck and I had graduated from high school, my parents moved from New York to Arizona. The first time I visited them there, we went shopping, and everyone in the stores knew who I was. Dad had told the whole town I was coming for a visit!

I can still recall the day I left for home. Mom and Dad waved goodbye to me from the top of the observation area as my plane

taxied away from the terminal. I remember crying all the way home.

In late 1996, my father became extremely ill and was hospitalized. He knew he would soon pass away.

I spent time with him and slept in a recliner next to his bedside until I had to return home. The next day, he passed away.

Although I knew I would miss him, nothing prepared me for the emptiness I felt when he died. It was as though he took a piece of my heart with him.

Thankfully, around the time of my father's death, God brought a new friend into my life, Wendy. She was a registered nurse and lived in an apartment downstairs from me.

I'd known Wendy for only a short time before my dad died, but she always had the best advice for me. She was instrumental in assisting me to get the help I needed in order to cope with my grief.

Six years have passed, and I still miss my dad. But I will always be thankful to God for him, and I look forward to the day when we will be together again.