

Words for Pops

So what can you say about my Dad. He was a true one of a kind. One of God's own prototypes. He was a great man. Oh maybe not in a conventional sense. He didn't scale any mountains, or conquer any lofty crusade. He wasn't a rich man, or a famous man. But he was great all the same. And I know that all who knew him best would agree wholeheartedly.

He was a beast of a man, with a heart to match. I remember seeing him carry a full size couch up a flight of stairs, just lifted the thing onto his back and hauled it up those steps, all by himself. And I've seen him out in the cold, with his head under the hood of someone else's car to lend a hand, chemo bag casually flung over one shoulder.

Dad had never been in a fight, because one look at that big frame and his "angry face" was all you needed to see to know that you wouldn't want to tangle with Robert Pete Manolis. Yet he would give you the last cig in his pack and the last buck in his wallet if you needed it, even if he didn't know where his next one was coming from.

That was just the sort of guy he was. A true samaritan. And he didn't brag about it or ask for any recognition or anything in return for what he shared. He was just happy to be of help.

And he never really complained when things got difficult or dodgy. He would just smile, and remind everyone that , "Hey, it always works out," and then he would work his magic and find a way forward. The eternal optimist, always with a kind word and a great smile filled with warmth and love and positivity.

I saw that smile many times, growing up and later in life. When a great song would come on the radio, and he would make that face, and start pumping his fist and rocking out, truly savoring it. Or when one of his children did something that made him proud. Or when he would patiently play with his grandson or have a chat with one of his granddaughters.

There was a gentle kindness in that smile, a warmth that could disarm you, or remind you without a word that it was okay to come in off the ledge. That smile on that loving man's face was all the home any of us ever really needed. I'm going to miss it, as I know will all of you.

Let's remember him like that, like the great man he was.

Here's to Robert Pete Manolis. My father. Our loved one. A great man who will be with us forever. May he finally be at peace, and hear our words, and feel our love, and know that he was right all along. Things do, somehow, always work out. Love you, Pops.