

(front of card)

You are Forty.

You are generous with your time and your love.

You forge onward in spite of exhaustion and despair.

You have a bottomless wallet and unending patience, even when you feel unappreciated and misunderstood, outnumbered and taken for granted.

(open the card)

WHINER.

Does any of that sound vaguely familiar?? If you replace "Forty" (oops, I keep typing "Forth" instead of "Forty"... I just did it again! I guess that what results from having been a **FORTH** programmer for many years of my professional life)... anyway, replace "Forty" (got it right!) with "a Father" and you would have the text of a Hallmark card that you sent to me on Father's Day in 1996... the year that Tiffany and Kevin were married.

"How can you possibly have held onto that card for twenty years?" I can hear you think; *"... and why?"* your thought continues. I cannot answer those questions; all I know is that, when I was fumbling around to retrieve your mother's once-in-four-years birthday card from the semi-infinite sink that is my top dresser drawer, out popped this card -- and I knew I had the basis for this note to you on the occasion of your fortieth birthday.

Your note on the Father's Day card talked about tuxedos and reception speeches, about our father-daughter dance at the wedding, about playing catch in the backyard, and about the hope that someday it would be you and I at the back of the church, heading down the aisle into the next uncharted waters.

Your postscript to the card apologized for not having any Father's Day gift, great or otherwise, and an *"... also, I'd love to do a day trip to Elephant Rock or somewhere soon, so make it a date!"*

We **did** make the day trip to Elephant Rock, perhaps later that same summer. In those days, before *Google Maps*, we had to use the *Rand-McNally* book of paper maps for the State of Missouri, but we managed to get down there and back in once piece, stopping off at a rustic convenience store for sodas on the way down and stopping for a glass of wine (heavens!) and some conversation in the late afternoon on the way home.

I recall two other "adventures" of note that we undertook, both of which illustrate facets of your personality -- and tie right in with the Father's Day card.

- **STRENGTH:** The first was a walking trip from our house down to the riverfront (at Frontier Park?), north on the KATY trail to Olive Street and then returning home via Randolph Street past Blanchette Park. I wasn't walking regularly in those days, I guess, and by the time we got to Blanchette, I was just about worn out. You said that you were tired, too, but you knew we could make it, adding: **"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."** (*Phillipians 4:13*).
- **PATIENCE:** The second was much more recent -- a short trip last August with you and the boys to *Rock Chalk Park*, just a mile or so west of your house in Lawrence. We had planned to search for geocaches in the northwest corner of the park but we got stumped on the very first one (which I still haven't found).

The boys were getting bored and impatient and might possibly have mutinied on me had I been alone with them, but you made the best of it and convinced them to move on to the next cache down the trail.

The next three caches turned out to be tremendous fun in a dust-y and tree-sappy way (translation: perfect for Evan and Caleb) -- Caleb found *two* of them and you found the other one *from 40' away!*

A note like this one can not cover the facets of your personality that have been chiseled and shaped and worked in your forty years. This note **can** celebrate those forty years with a:

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Love,
DadO