

## **I Love You – Part 2...**

**by Rev. Joe Dirt - Sunday, May 07, 2023**

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A while ago I posted an article: [I Love You – Part 1...Maybe](#). What prompted the article was my wife's use of the three word phrase, *I love you*. She says it frequently and to many folks. For me, it is not something I say so much. In the first article I explored some the reasons why I do not. I also gave my flimsy definition of love:

*... to love someone is have a responsibility towards that person. I have a need to live up to my responsibilities, and there is only so much I can take on.*

*When I say I love you I can mean many things. It means I care for you. It may mean I will take care of you. It means I will be there for you. It means I will accept your eccentricities. And this is before we get to romantic love.*

By the above definition I love The Wee Dog, for what that is worth. One of my readers commented that for them love was more visceral than my somewhat clinical definition of love. I will admit for me that often love does have an emotional element beyond the intellect's control. However, I spend so much time in my head that sometimes I do not recognize it. The other component I failed to identify is that frequently love is a decision, which really does sound clinical. Anyone who has been in a long term relationship is aware that they are occasionally roller coasters. In a valley I often make the decision to love someone knowing (hoping) the ride will eventually rise again. I assume I am not alone in this decision making process. The need to love and to be loved is perhaps the paramount human need once we are fed and sheltered. In some manner we need to have connections with other beings... I'm thinking of cat ladies here, thank you very much.

I next threatened to count the number of people I have said *I love you* to. I guessed then it was somewhere between 10 and 20. The programmer in me wants to start a spreadsheet, but I shall resist the urge. Even so, I can see columns for people I said *I love you* to; people I should have said it to, but did not; people I said it to, but it was questionable if I meant it. In this posting I am going to explore the rubrics of *Parents, Children, Grandparents, Grandchildren, Siblings, Relatives, and Friends*.

Romantic Interests may or may not be in the offing for a part 3. Towards the end of his life my father wrote a short autobiography. He divided that document into chapters based on his career, perhaps because he married at 20, and spent his whole life with the same woman. If I were to write something of the sort, the chapters would be a mix of jobs but mostly chapters on women, perhaps because work for me was always just a way to keep the rent paid.

## **Parents**

Perhaps the first people we are supposed to love are our parents. The relationship with either of mine can only be described with that much overused and abused term, "complicated".

I know that I never said *I love you* to my father. The closest he ever came to saying it me was in a letter he sent to all of his adult sons on the occasion of some family issues. He signed off that letter using the words *I love you*. At least part of his not saying *I love you*, I will chalk up to a generation thing. It just was not something the men of his time did. The other part was that with his career he was not around much of the first 12 years of my life, and then shortly after that we became estranged which lasted well into my twenties. Such is life. I worked to have a relationship with my father later in my life, that is the primary reason I took up golf, but the relationship was always superficial, fragile and felt mostly one way. The one way being me trying to have a relationship with him. When he did try about the relationship, it seemed to me he was trying to appease my mother.

My mother is another story. Try as I might, I do not remember her telling me she loved me when I was little. When I became a teenager there was more than a little friction in the family. What she would say to me was, "*I love you, but I do not like you.*" At least that is what I remember. I also remember thinking at the time; if you don't like me how can you possibly love me. Fast forward a few years. I am married to my first wife, I have a couple children, and my mother has rediscovered the religion of her childhood with a fervent vengeance. I remember her telling me she loved me occasionally during the 22 years of my first marriage. During the many years between my two marriages she became very adamant about saying *I love you* to me. Social pressure had me saying, *I love you* back to her. Thing is I am not sure I ever

really felt that I loved her which partly stems from feeling that her love always felt so conditional. I had sense of duty to honor my father and my mother. I felt a sense of responsibility to be an attentive son, at least to my mother. I suppose that is a form of love. The fact is our views of the world had diverged so sharply, it was frequently hard to relate to them. After I was a teenager I cannot remember ever talking with either of my parents about anything that really matter. Small talk was the order of the day.

Count: a wobbly 1

## **Children**

I married a woman with two small children. After we had been married a year I adopted them. While I fell in love with their mother, and also lost my heart to her two children. There is no way for me to know the feelings I would have had towards biological children, but I find it hard to believe they would be different from my feelings for my adopted children. I said *I love you* to both of my children frequently when they were small, somewhat less when they were teenagers, and it is not uncommon for us to exchange those words even now.

Count: a solid 2

## **Grandparents**

I did not know my mother's father. He divorced my grandmother when my mother was very young. I recall seeing him twice in my life, very briefly both times.

My father's father, can best be described as a ne'er do well. Most of his children, sadly, have little good to say about him. About as kind as they get, is that a few follow the principle if you cannot say something nice, say nothing at all.

My father's mother was not a woman you could get close to. She was about as reserved a person as I have ever encountered. I never felt like she had any special feelings for me as a grandchild, even as her first grandchild. It is just the way it was.

My mother's mother is different story. If you were to look up the definition of matriarch in the old Webster's you would find her picture next to the entry. I had a lot of respect and admiration for the woman. I also had a healthy dose of fear of her. However, her daughters just adored her as did many other folk, relatives and others wise. But I do not remember *I love you(s)* coming from her to me, or vice versus. Again that may have been a generational thing, her hardscrabble life... who knows, again just speculation.

Count: an unfortunate 0

## **Grandchildren**

I have three grandchildren. The oldest granddaughter is in her twenties. The other two are seven and five, my son being a late starter in having children. The unfortunate truth is that I am not close to any of them as I have never really had the chance to bond with them. With my oldest granddaughter, I fault that to my

divorce from my daughter's mother. The first few years after the divorce were not the sanest in my insane life. Also I felt like between my ex and the mother of my daughter's first husband, the grandchild's father, there just was not room there for me. In retrospect I could have tried harder.

As much as I would have like for it to happen, I have not bonded with the younger two grandchildren either. There are various reasons for this, but nothing I need to get into here.

I have said *I love you* to all three of them, but more from a sense of grandfatherly duty than any real emotion. With all three, I frequently have the feeling that to them I am that strange man that has some sort connection to one of their parental units. Sadly, it reminds me of my relationship to my maternal grandfather.

Count: a conditional 3

## Siblings

I have four brothers, no sisters. My parents had their five children over a span of fourteen years. The first three of us were born in what had to be a very trying four years for my mother, from April 1952 to May 1955. Just as aside we three older boys are about 18 months apart, a pregnancy last for 9 months, a Navy cruise then was for 9 months. The math lends me to believe that it was more than a coincidence. The fourth child came along in 1959, and my youngest sibling arrived in the summer of 1966. Effectually there were two groups of siblings, we three older boys and the two younger. The 3<sup>rd</sup> brother bridged the gap between the two passels of *muchachos*.

My youngest brother was 4 when I essentially left my parents' home. He has always been very reserved and is even more so as an adult. I will have to admit I do not know him well. With my second from the youngest sibling I was a little closer to, but I mostly remember him being a very pesky much younger brother who I did not have a lot to do with. Later on, as adults, we tried to have a better relationship, and that more or less worked for a while. Either because our personalities are too similar or because they are too disparate, we had a hard go with it. Add to that his all consuming evangelical Christianity versus my agnosticism, and you are lacking the ingredients for a good relationship. In all likelihood he has said *I love you* to me, either because he was feeling fraternal love or more likely as part of his Christian duty. If I ever in return said *I love you* to him, I have no memory.

I was very close with my brother born just after me. My mother used to tell stories of how protective I was of "My Paulie". Unfortunately, as teenagers we drifted apart, probably because I was too cool to be seen with my younger brother, the reality being that I was too big a *pendejo*. As adults our lives took different paths, and we drifted apart, but I will have to admit that the original bonding has never completely gone away. We rarely exchange *I love you*, but we will occasionally fall off our macho hobby horses to do so.

The "bridge" brother also falls into the gap of the brothers with which I had a distant relationship and the second brother to whom I was closer to at one point in our lives. My retired Special Education teacher wife aka *Señora* has said on more than one occasion that she feels all of the Rush boys are on the spectrum...well, maybe. However, if that be true then "bridge" brother is the farthest down that road. Relating to him can be a bit of a chore at times. He admits that by saying that he is an acquired taste! I am

sure we have exchanged a few *I love you(s)* over the 70 or so years of our existence, but it is a rare occurrence.

**Count: Let's give this a 2**

## **Relatives**

This is a bit of tough category as I have or had – most of the relatives I was closest to, having passed away – a ton of relatives, on both sides of my family. There were nine siblings on my mother's side that survived to adulthood, and seven on my father's. The reality, however, is that I was closest to my mother's family. We just did not visit that much with my father's family. I have my theories as to why, but they are just speculations.

Some of my cousins will say *I love you* to me, but I frequently feel that this is more from the Christian duty/meme that is very popular in Oklahoma than an emotional statement about me. I have probably said *I love you* back to a few of them just because I felt some vague pressure to do so. However, there are only a handful of these cousins that I will admit to caring for deeply. I suppose deep caring is as good a definition of love as any... but an *I love you* initiating with me, has not been forthcoming. Now days as an agnostic liberal, I feel a bit like a black sheep when I go to Oklahoma... or Kentucky for that matter.

The three relatives on my mother's side that were the most important in my life were my Uncle Dutch (a Baptist minister), his wife, my Aunt Peggy, my mother's sister, and my cousin Don. All three were a tremendous help to me and influence on me during my troubled teen years. I definitely felt love to all three of these souls, but, with the possible exception of my Aunt Peggy, I do not recall us saying *I love you* to each other. With my Aunt Peggy, it was probably a response to her saying it.

**Count: Perhaps a conditional 3**

## **Friends**

This is another word that I feel has been devalued tremendously. And with the advent of social media, especially Facebook, this word's valuation has cratered worst than the Venezuelan bolivar. The definition of friend is given as:

*Friendship is a relationship of mutual affection between people. It is a stronger form of interpersonal bond than an "acquaintance" or an "association", such as a classmate, neighbor, coworker, or colleague*

Another definition is:

*a person whom one knows and with whom one has a bond of mutual affection, typically exclusive of sexual or family relations.*

General common usage has a friend as anyone with whom you have an ongoing, non-business relationship. Most of these I would categorize as acquaintances. To me a friend is something rare and to be cherished.

Many decades ago I read a book about friendship, exact title and author unremembered. The author made a couple assertions that stuck with me. One was women tend to have more actual friends. Men tend to have what the author termed buddies. Their definition of a buddy was a companion for specific activities, i.e. a fishing buddy, a golfing buddy, a drinking buddy, etc. From my non-scientific observation over the years, I would have to concur with the author. I have had numerous buddies over the years, but less than a handful of friends. With just about all those buddies, if I were to take the relationship to a place outside the activity, they would have been very uncomfortable. I sure I would have been also.

One actual friend was a female coworker that more than a few folks termed my office wife. We had great affection for each other and discussed varied intimate things about our lives. The issue with that relationship, since we were both married, was that it could have easily tripped over into something more. Although there was a mutual physical attraction, we remained careful about that. Saying *I love you* would have been more than a little dangerous.

I had a couple good, close friends during my prolonged college years, but saying *I love you* to either one of those gentlemen never crossed my mind.

In my adulthood, my closest male friend has been and is an African-American gentleman that lives in Mississippi. When I lived there, if folks saw one of us they expected to see the other. With time, but mostly distance, the relationship is not as close as it once was. My feelings towards him would certainly qualify as the type of love the Greeks termed *Philia* (deep friendship). However, if I were ever to say *I love you* to him he would have the heebie-jeebies. If he said it to me, someone would need to pull out an AED unit to restart my ticker.

Count: Another unfortunate 0

## Summary

Parents	a wobbly 1
Children	a solid 2
Grandparents	an unfortunate 0
Grandchildren	a conditional 3
Siblings	gave it a 2
Relatives	a conditional 3
Friends	an unfortunate 0

I think I need someone qualified in higher mathematics to calculate this as some of this numbers are in the fuzzy category, not to say imaginary numbers. However, I would put the number from these categories of people I have said *I love you* to as a minimum of 4 with a possible high of 11. In many ways

this is very sad, but then again *tis* the story of my life.

The third part of this series might be about romantic partners I have said *I love you* to, those I didn't but should have, and those I did and should not have.. However, *Señora* seems to have a real issue when I discuss this sort thing. I know it makes her uncomfortable when I do so one on one. With the public nature (allow me a long, deep belly laugh here for a minute) of my blog it seems to amplify that discomfort exponentially whenever I have tip toed down that path. The last thing I want to do is cause hurt to her.

We will see. I started this article almost immediately after posting [I Love You – Part 1...Maybe](#). It has taken me nearly 18 months to complete it. Holding your breath for Part 3 might not be the best of ideas.

And so it has gone.

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