

Fathers cry, too; it's all part of being a man

COMMENTARY

By Joe Shearer

I once had a dream that my grandfather, who died in 1998, came back to life. He was coming back home to see everyone, and we were all naturally excited to see him.

I couldn't wait for him to meet Riley, who was three years old at the time.

My family waited at his house, but I was outside across the street playing with Riley when Grandpa got home. As he got out of the car, I told him I wanted him to meet my son. I yelled for Riley, and he came loping up to us.

There he stood, face to face with my grandfather, who had returned from the dead to meet him. "Riley," I said, "this is MY papaw."

Riley cocked his head, sizing the man up. "Are you my papaw too?" he asked.

"Well, yes, I am," Grandpa answered.

Riley took a breath, as if uncertain of what to do next. Finally, he thrust out his hand and said, "Nice to meet you."

Grandpa gripped his hand. "Nice to meet you, too," he said.

I had that dream at least a full year ago.

I only ever saw Grandpa cry at the end of our visits as we readied to go home. My stepfather was in the Army, so we lived hundreds or thousands of miles away for much of my childhood.

Grandpa didn't cry in my dream, but I did, and again when I woke up, and again telling my wife about it, and again as I was writing this.

But seeing him cry always meant something, even at that age when only babies and girls cried.

It said that even the manliest men, like John Wayne, Humphrey Bogart, and my grandpa, cried too, and not only was it okay, it's part of being a man.

And a dad.



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