

D

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Lying on the floor with one of those large pencils for small hands may not have been the best place to learn to write my name, but it was Christmas, and we were visiting my grandparents, and all the chairs were taken by the big people. Those helping me learn to write my name showed their frustration with trying to help me, and I also became frustrated. Looking back, I must admit that the two biggest problems I had were my being “hard headed” and the letter “D.” Now let me admit up front that the letter “D” does not require much practice, but even so, it did cause me great difficulty. You see, my name does not have a letter “D,” but I thought it should because my older brother’s name, DAVID, has two of them. As far as I knew, everyone should have a “D” or two in his or her name.

I remember being about four years old when my parents and other relatives were teaching me how to write my name. My brother, already in the second grade, wrote his name really well. When I wrote my name, it looked messy. I understand now that I lacked fine motor skills, and that others did not expect me to write perfectly when I first started writing; but at the time, I remember wanting it to look good, like when my older brother wrote his name.

So, I decided that my name would look better if I put a “D” at the beginning and end just like my older brother David. It made sense to me with my four-year-old mind. However, those helping me did not like “D-P-A-U-L-D”: “DPAULD” and would correct me - even though I did not want to be corrected. I did not understand, and I resisted. When no one was looking, I would add those two “D’s.”

Somewhere along the way, I do not remember when or where, I began to write my name the way it should be written. It must have been before I entered the first grade because I do not remember the teacher ever telling me that I was writing my name wrong. I do remember several occasions when I practiced writing my name the right way many times in order to establish my

own style, but that happened later when I was comfortable with cursive . . . maybe about the fourth or fifth grade.

Many years later I experienced the joy of seeing my daughter learning to write her name. I had forgotten completely about my early writing experiences and could only offer the encouragement of a proud father as she showed me how she had learned to write her name at school. I asked her to write a copy for the fridge, and one for my billfold, and another for each of her grandparents, and even more for a few other people. She wrote and wrote and we had several days devoted to her name writing. Soon after I remember one especially proud moment when I heard her tell one of her young friends: “I can write my name; my parents say I write it *really well* and my grandparents say *they just love it*”

Several years passed and my little girl celebrated her sixteenth birthday with a swimming party and lots of friends. Before the party she asked if I had any of those oldies songs about being sixteen. Well, she asked the right person! Not only did I have several, I knew where to go to borrow more, my older brother. I put together a cassette tape with about twenty birthday songs, including “Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen” by Neil Sedaka, “Sixteen Candles by the Crests,” “Your Sixteen” by Johnny Burnette and many others.

Arriving as the party began, I brought a “boom box” cassette player and the most special card I could find. I would not be staying as plenty of moms were present, but I knew my daughter would like the card. I gave credit to “Uncle David” for some of the songs and then signed my name “with love” right under my brother’s name. Suddenly, my mind flashed back to that time almost fifty years ago when I learned to write my name. Lo! And behold! I was putting a “D” at the beginning and end all over again in my *new* name, that most important name, the name my daughter calls me: DAD!

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