

Ella: Our dad has been many things to many people, such as a friend, colleague, or church leader--but we are lucky enough to call him our dad. We want to tell you the story of how it all began, what he was like as a father, and how he chose to live his life.

One thing he always told us was to “**say yes to life**”. Some of you may be asking yourself, what does that mean? As we’ve reflected on who he was and what he did, it is clear that saying “yes to life” means investing in relationships, being positive, and always making time for adventure.

Mak: Let’s begin with how our parents met. It was 1987 and my dad was surfing at Pleasure Point. He was with a couple of buddies who were all single and they decided they needed to take some girls on dates. Naturally, they made a bet. As all of you know my dad loves to turn any situation into a game or challenge. The bet was they all had to pick a girl right then, ask her on a date, and the first person to kiss the girl won a pizza from Pizza My Heart. My Dad had heard of this cute girl named Jan Soelberg so that’s who he picked. My Dad’s cousin was good friends with Jan, so before my dad took my mom on a date, he had his cousin find out everything my mom liked and didn’t like about boys she was dating. My Dad had done his background research so naturally hit the ball out of the park on the first date. My Dad was investing in this relationship far before he even knew it would work out. He knew what he wanted and did whatever it took to make it happen.

In March 1989 my parents were married and moved to Montara, CA. My dad worked in San Francisco, living by the beach, and having the active lifestyle he loved. They lived there for 7 years, and had Ella and I. In 1995, my parents were seeking a larger community with more sunshine so they moved down the coast to Santa Cruz. While in Santa Cruz they had our brothers, Emmett and Henry, and our family was complete.

Ella: Let’s talk about what he was like as a dad. One special thing my dad did to “say yes to life” was to take his kids on 1:1 trips. For example, when we turned 9 we would go to NYC and when we were 13 we would hike Half Dome... and of course lots of surf and ski trips throughout the years.

One of my most distinct memories is lying under the crystal clear stars in Yosemite on my 13th birthday. We were eating our families classic chocolate whipped cream layered cake, chatting about life, smelling the fresh pine trees, and looking at the gorgeous expansive sky.

I think the take away here is how my dad went the extra mile to create memories and opportunities to bond with each of us. He was stoked to have 4 kids, because that meant 4 more people to surf, bike, run, ski, camp, and hike with!! We often came back from our 1:1 trips a little bruised, broken, and stitched up...but I think we’d all say they were worthwhile. My dad consciously took us away from the distractions of our lives and put us in new, fun environments where we could have real life conversations. Because of trips and conversations like these, I feel super close to him as a father and a friend.

Mak: The amazing thing about my Dad was that he was not only close to us kids, but also to all of our friends. Growing up, our house was the place to be. We always had parties, people over, and good vibes. Still to this day you can find countless groms hanging around our house with Henry. In fact, even when Henry isn't around there are still kids, bikes, and boards scattered across our yard. It wasn't until I was older that I talked with my dad about his parenting and he said that his strategy with our friends was very deliberate. He purposely worked hard to make our home a safe environment where kids could feel comfortable, have fun, and experience the joys of growing up. There are countless stories of my Dad taking us and our friends TPing in the middle of the night, mud sliding down the golf courses, turning on music and starting a dance party, or throwing treats down to us while we were in the hot tub. My Dad was the ultimate host, always bringing out carrots and hummus, guava juice, or whipping up some midnight crepes after a school dance. Our house is a revolving door with people always coming and going. I assumed this was normal, but have come to realize just how special and unique that really is. I know my dad was very intentional about creating a sense of community and making everyone that came into our house feel like family.

Ella: Not only did my dad teach us to invest in relationships, he also made sure we knew the importance of balancing adventure with our schooling and career aspirations.

My dad studied organizational behavior at BYU and made a career out of what he loved doing: helping people. He did this in a business setting through coaching, leadership development, innovation training, and helping individuals improve performance in sales and communication. He worked, but always made time for a morning surf sesh, run, or bike ride. He never made excuses; in fact, he was the one motivating us to wake up early and exercise.

Education was important to my dad, he even volunteered on the school board for 2 years in order to He instilled his love of learning in each of us through sending us to the best schools in Santa Cruz. We went to a Pacific Collegiate School (or PCS), an academically rigorous college preparatory charter school. In order to ensure we could go to PCS, my dad volunteered on the school board for 3 years. He always helped us dream big and work hard.

However, he also knew when it was time to play. During my senior year of high school my parents told me they had bought me a flight to New Zealand, and that I would take school off for 1 month to travel with Makena. I thought to myself, "hmm... normally it's the other way around," you know....parents telling their kids to stay in school. Luckily, my parents knew how to have fun responsibly. I had already been admitted to college and taken my AP tests, so my dad knew adventuring through a foreign country in a rickety old van would be worth it... could handle missing a few weeks.

They did something similar just last winter. They pulled Henry out of school for the entire winter semester to move to Park City. Lucky for Henry, I think he now has the family record for # of days skied in one year.

My dad was professional when he needed to be, but never took himself too seriously. Clearly saying “yes to life” means taking time for adventure!

Mak: The last thing we want to talk about is how my Dad chose to live his life, which was by example. He was involved in many community realms including Jr. Lifeguards, church callings, and the PCS school board. My Dad was a connector, and there was nothing he loved more than bringing people together. My Dad was very involved with the Capitola Jr. Lifeguards parents club, always volunteering at competitions, recruiting new members, and bringing the biggest smile and positive energy down to the beach. It brought him joy to see people finding common ground and connecting with one another. My dad was always creating community wherever he went.

While my Dad served as Bishop of our Capitola church congregation, he helped 100s of people change their lives to become better individuals. He devoted countless hours to serve the people of Capitola. He was always visiting people, checking in, and listening to whatever was on people’s minds. Even until the end of his life he was constantly serving others.

Ella:

In the spring of 2015 my Dad developed a cough. All summer long he went to doctors to try and understand what was wrong. No one suspected cancer, especially considering the health nut he was (*food joke* → my dad ate kale before it was cool, no joke). On September 21, 2015 my Dad was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. In true Greg fashion, he had a very rare and unique type of cancer. Throughout his whole battle with cancer my Dad maintained his deep positivity for life. Even through the gnarly symptoms from the chemotherapy and radiation, he always downplayed his pain and continued to be an amazing father, friend, and mentor. While meeting with his oncologists, the doctors often had a hard time tracking the cancer progression because he was always so optimistic and positive, and never focused on the difficult symptoms he was facing. The doctors would tell him “Greg, we really need to know what you are experiencing” and he’d respond by saying, “no one likes a complainer”. He taught us how to have real and genuine positivity for life through always keeping a smile on his face and being grateful for every moment he had. Even in his last days, when he wasn’t fully coherent or functioning, he was always asking to go visit and help other people. Through his years of dedicated service, it truly became part of his nature to turn outwards.

Mak: Greg Madsen, Team Maddog, a legend, a friend, a dad, a husband, a son, a brother, a church leader, a surfer, a business man.... I often ask myself... How did one man do so many things so well? He truly had a “knack for living,” so what was his “secret sauce”?

As a part of “saying yes to life,” Greg’s secret sauce was living God’s greatest commandment to “**love others.**” He invested in others by showing genuine interest for every person he met, and

not just for show--he really felt it. He could find common ground with anyone and had an open heart full of love for all people.

Two weeks ago my parents had a prompting to have our brother Emmett temporarily come home from his mission in Canada. As we spent a few days together my dad was able to share his deepest feelings and most meaningful life stories. He talked about his LDS mission and how much he loved sharing the peace, purpose and happiness that comes with living a Christ-centered life. He spoke of the reality of God and His Son Jesus Christ, and we all felt the tangible power of his words.

My dad not only believed in Jesus Christ, but lived the way He did. He served others, loved others, and had positivity in every fiber of his being.

May we all follow the example of my dad and “SAY YES TO LIFE” by investing in relationships, living positively, and always making time for adventures!!! We love you dad! Go TEAM MADDOG!