



Rummel multi-tasking, with his oldest daughter Dawn. Photo from Dawn Akemi's photo collection

# Chapter 2

## Dad

Dawn Akemi

In 1980, I left Hawaii to attend American University in our nation's capital. My first class was Introduction to American Politics and the professor called out roll on the first day. After I'd heard my name and raised my hand, the professor paused and looked me over. 'Are you related to Professor Rudolph Rummel in Hawaii?' Stunned, I said, 'He's my father.' I had sat at the back of a horseshoe-shaped arrangement of tables and chairs, and everyone turned to look at me while the professor launched into an adoring speech about the value of my father's research and theories. I basked in a brief sensation of being the child of a celebrity.

It was something that needed to be reconciled with the man I knew: my goofy and spaced-out dad, whose brilliant intellect did not rise above the scatological joke or other off-color humor. He seemed so silly to me as a youngster that when I asked him what he did for a living and he said he was a scientist, I laughed at him and said, 'No you're not. Scientists are smart!'

Of course, he was smart, brilliant even. I was never a student of my father's and can't pretend to be an expert on his legacy. However, I was steeped in the knowledge he was accumulating, imparted to me in a family culture of near-constant intellectual discussions of current events and his research and views. He didn't believe in dumbing down information for children, and if I had the intellect to ask the question, then I deserved the full adult answer. This and much more I inherited from him as he leaves a legacy not only in his work but in his daughters.

He gave me his optimism and the general positive outlook of 'Don't assume a negative.' Looking back at the dark revelations from his statistical analysis of war

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Dawn Akemi grew up in Hawaii, where the warm ocean breezes filled her spirit with an active imagination and deep wanderlust. She left at 18 to work her way through college in Washington, DC, and then pursued a variety of careers all around the United States. She worked as a Certified Public Accountant, a sales representative, a chef's apprentice, a server, an actor, a comedian, and a writer. A zest for travel has taken her as far as Europe, Australia, the Far East, and Canada. Her journeys and experiences gave her a love of storytelling which she believes to be the heartbeat of the soul. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two doggies. Stories inspired by her life are blogged at <http://www.DawnAkemi.com>. Email: dawnakemi@gmail.com.

and death, it's a wonder how optimistic he could be. For many years, his study was decorated with the macabre, wallpapered with horrifying cover images of blood and strife, torn off of magazines. He called that inspiration.

He gave me a thirst for a worldview, a global understanding of the human condition, as opposed to something regional or cultural. I was given exposure to world politics, critical study, and philosophical thought for as long as I can remember. Both my parents put a primary emphasis on education and scrimped his university salary, living in the most expensive state in the Union, to send my sister and me to private schools.

He made me a seeker with an inquisitive mind, instilling the imperative to 'question authority', including his own. He taught me to stand up for what I believed, even if it went against norms or need (such as kissing up to a boss for job), or friendship. He was always available to discuss parenting rules and was willing to be persuaded to change them if I gave sufficient evidence as to their deficiencies. He was able to question his motives, go against the flow, and entertain new ideas. This took courage, a spirit for adventure in the mind.

He was a fantastic and very patient mentor and teacher. I was remedial in math, the only one in my family without a proclivity for numbers. Dad had to coach me in algebra and calculus and did so cheerfully. He also taught me chess. It didn't matter what he was working on. If I had an academic question or confusion, he would drop everything to provide an answer or assistance.

He believed in maintaining the physical body for a strong mind. My parents walked every day for exercise until his health failed him. Over the years, they became involved in two sports—bowling and tennis—and joined leagues so they could compete. He loved competition. All this he gave to me, especially a love for physical activity. He approached sports with the same methodology as his work, studying books and magazines to learn techniques and strategies, then applied his research and taught it to his family. Next, it was practice, practice, practice! A couple of months ago, I went bowling for the first time since I was a kid. I felt my father over my shoulder, whispering those long ago instructions in my ear, and my old bowling muscles came alive again under his tutelage. That evening, I felt very close to my Dad.

He encouraged me to 'Do what you love and the money will come.' This idealism has ruled my life as I followed my heart into a variety of experimental careers, encouraged by him at each risky turn: a Certified Public Accountant, a chef's apprentice, a salesman in food distribution, various positions in the restaurant industry, a working actor in theatre and the entertainment industry, and now a writer working on my first novel. Like my Dad, I had artistic yearnings, and have studied and worked in the arts for most my adult life. Dad was the first person to encourage my writing shortly after completing my college education, saying for years, even before I started, that I was a better writer than he. There was some fatherly pride in that statement, of course.

He gave his daughters the freedom to explore and discover who we were, and then to bring that person to life's challenges with full force. He fostered individuality in a world that often demands conformity. My father walked his talk by applying libertarian standards (his professed beliefs at the time, later to become even more

extremely labeled as freedomism) to his parenting. This choice lent itself to a permissiveness during the liberal and experimental sixties and seventies that now seems surprising, even to me. He believed in letting us follow our instincts and trusted that we would learn and grow from the experiences. To protect us from that process with strict rules would interfere with our growth and may not have prevented us from doing what we wanted anyway. Only later did I discover this choice was absolutely at odds with his conservative Mid-western upbringing, and it sometimes kept him awake at night. My sister and I were beneficiaries of this heady freedom, as it was grounded in the rock-solid foundation of ethics and morality present in my father's work. He was no hypocrite.

This is important to say because I think my father can *look* like a hypocrite. His life's work was spent researching the causes of war. His last brag was that he gave the world a potential solution for world peace. He hated violence, yet supported the Vietnam War, both Iraq Wars, and a host of other US military actions abroad. He believed absolutely in our military buildup during the Cold War and continued to support it even after the Berlin Wall came crashing down. At various times, he's been accused of being a war hawk. There's still a framed cartoon from the 1970s on the wall in our family home where my Dad is lampooned as a war hawk, standing next to a colleague shown as a peacenik. He found it so absurd as to be funny and worth memorializing. He could be confusingly contradictory. I used to think of him as a fiscal Republican and a social Democrat, but then he really defied all labels.

I've always believed we're a complicated species in a complex universe we barely understand. Our world is organic, with messy boundaries and beautiful colors. It's impossible to impose upon it our black and white organizational grids without running into contradictions of their very purpose. I've never met someone with strong opinions who didn't sometimes look like a hypocrite. In that way, my father was like any other. He had layers of rationalizations for his hierarchy of beliefs. He would've called it all logical and scientific, but the rationalization of beliefs is a skin-deep penetration into my Dad. In truth, I think there are deeper reasons for his contradictions that lend insight but can never fully explain them. He understood gestalt and that 'You simply can't divorce ... personal elements from your work.' In the end, he did manage to separate aspects of himself, very private personal elements that he didn't want to look at or reveal, proving we are all mysteries and contradictions unto ourselves.

My parents grew up in broken families filled with pain and sorrow, both suffering through trauma at a young age. My mother's formative years were indelibly scorched by the horrors of World War II in Japan, particularly the US firebombing of Tokyo. Her earliest memory is jumping into a ditch to avoid fire, her house aflame. Her father was a violent alcoholic who abandoned her and her mother when she was young. My father's parents were poor and irresponsible, and their relationship was equally conflict-ridden. He remembered being so hungry he searched for food crumbs in his pocket. Out of desperation, he ran away from home in his teens, living in the streets of slums.

Other than these publicly related facts, I don't know much more about either of my parents' upbringings. Their combined traumas left them defensive of too much

psychotherapy, introspective analysis, and communication of feelings. Psychologists often need a psychologist, my Dad would often joke. So why bother? Neither forgave their past or parents, and both held onto a bitter privacy where they trusted few. They didn't heal their grief, as they didn't believe such a thing needed to be healed. Rather than try understanding these sorrows and transforming them into a compassionate inner understanding of themselves and the human condition, they clung to each other and stashed painful memories in a dark place, buried beneath intellect, where they hoped no one could see, including themselves. While compartmentalization is understandable, we can't isolate the shame or fear resulting from trauma, intern them in an emotional concentration camp, and expect them to stay confined without impacting society at large. Emotions remain alive, sometimes festering, often bleeding into the mind and heart with unintended consequences, or even psychosis. For my parents, those unexplored dark places created blocks and blind spots in how they reacted to and interpreted their environment.

My parents alienated others, including me, with their sense of righteousness and self-proclaimed 'hermit lifestyle'. Their laissez-faire, non-interfering approach to parenting, which gave me so much freedom as a child, could look like abandonment, especially once I left home as an adult. Attempts on my part to pierce the veil with questions as to the whys and wherefores of their behavior in order to connect more deeply to my father yielded gentle rebukes saying he 'didn't wish to psychologize' and 'wasn't laced with a disposition for introspective analysis'. My father's spirit for adventure came to a screeching halt at introspection. My mom was simply unapproachable on these matters. Their combined resistance was impenetrable.

In later adulthood, I presented the oft-used, very trite garden metaphor for relationships to my father: that gardens needed daily cultivation, such as watering or fertilization, and weeding or pesticides; gardens also needed space and time to grow, and could be given too much attention such as over-pruning or over-watering. I was searching for a language for how to bridge the ever-increasing distance between us that didn't directly demand he gaze at his navel. Before I could expound completely on the metaphor, my father stopped me and said, 'No, a relationship is like a landscape, to be viewed and appreciated from afar.' This stymied me and led to a five year silence between us where I withdrew to soothe my disappointment and, unconsciously, to test my father's mettle. How much distance did he need before he would inch closer? I never found out, because I broke silence when his health began to fail and accepted that such a question would never be answered.

In terms of the wider world, he loved studying politics but hated political playing. His journals revealed a man insecure in his ability to speak publicly and engage socially with aplomb, and so he kept himself private. Social expectations were an infringement into his chosen lifestyle and a threat to long-held protections of privacy. He kept a cerebral distance, a social and professional isolation, which also protected him from criticisms of his work. As with myself, his wider professional relationships were a landscape to be viewed and judged from afar. I've often wondered about possibilities if he had the openness to explore the mysteries of his own behavior beyond the scope of his focused numerical and scholarly analysis, to delve into self-awareness and introspection, to shine a light on his pain and personal

sorrow, and to heal those dark festering spaces. He might have relinquished the need to separate himself, promoted his work with more skill, and achieved the wider recognition for his conclusions that he craved. Who knows what subtle layering and insights it could have brought to his analysis, or his ability to relate to his peers effectively?

My father's aversion to his inner world and anti-social tendencies may seem like splitting hairs in academia, but in the artistic world, it is the biggest inhibition to creative expression. He wanted to be an artist at one point and dabbled all his life. His painting was approached with the same methodical processes he gave his research: analyzing an image, breaking it down into a grid of smaller reproducible sections, and recreating the image with virtual photorealism and very little style. He left sitting out on his worktable an unfinished grid of a work-in-process of an old favorite picture of my sister and me. He also loved Photoshop, where he could play with filters, color, and line. He mocked abstract art and 'high-minded interpretations of pretentious art critics' in the world of fine art, especially when it came to modern and post-modern expression. He seemed to push away the subtleties of emotional and behavioral explorations inherent in such abstract work. His workman's approach to art wasn't a bad method, and he created some fine images. As in his life's work, he had much talent and skill to offer. However, his process was craftual and missed the bedrock of an artistic process which goes beyond the aesthetic to interpret an object or event, to look inward to see how it makes the artist feel and to imbue those feelings into the work. Art not only brings to life a subject, it expresses ideas and feelings. Our introspective emotions are what give art power. In return, art exorcises trauma by its release in expression. As intelligent as he was, I don't believe he metabolized this understanding, and it never came through in his art.

Dad considered the heart, with its often inconvenient emotions, to be an unreliable decision maker. 'Learn to control your emotions.' and 'Use your mind to control your body.' were two admonishments given to me and provided a strange contradiction to his '... do what you love ...' advice. It's true the heart alone cannot make all decisions. However, this is true of the mind as well. Both need to be consulted and both have valuable information to impart. Emotions need to be heard. Our bodies are more than a conveyance for our heads. Were he to have looked more deeply into his heart, into the dark recesses he had hidden away, he may not have been so quick to endorse policies of force against force. He may have found a more far-reaching conclusion. This too could've earned his work the recognition he craved.

All of this isn't to say my father was anything less than a great man, a great teacher, and a great father—those things don't demand great perfection. Nobody's perfect. American individualism purports that one discipline, or one person, can hold the key to saving the world from war, or rather, humanity from itself. I don't believe that. It's a very complex problem. My father died believing he had found a solution in the Democratic Peace Theory. Perhaps. What I do believe is he developed ideas whose time has not yet come, and he accumulated a mass of data that can be used to refine the analysis and solution. He laid a great foundation, and was a great benefit to humanity, a special man who overcame adversity and a tragic

childhood to become a world-class scholar. He took that which was dark within him and used it to fuel light, as coal makes fire. He was my Dad, lucky for me, and I love him.

It's my hope that we're joining forces in this book to do more than simply eulogize and reminisce about my father. The authors of this volume, and others, are now charged with parsing and building upon his life's work. I present these personal recollections of him, both light and dark, in an effort to paint a more complete picture of the man behind the data and theories. If you imagine all knowledge as a big dark room, and that we all have flashlights to illuminate, teach, learn and grow from, then my Dad's light shone bright and wide. Yet he couldn't illuminate the whole room. No one can. He was but one man, beautifully imperfect, brilliant with the vitality of his unique life force. Progress in humanity is comprised of individuals building on the discoveries made by those who came before. It's a collective and cooperative synthesis of information and ideas, involving both the head and heart. This may eventually light up the room. The human journey isn't finished. My father's prime legacy, his research and analyses, will always help enlighten that which is dark.

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