

Remembrances of Maurice Villiard
September 13, 1937 – December 31, 2005

From Mark Villiard:

My father was like a rich gift that I got to slowly 'unwrap' over the years. My earliest memories were of him bringing me, at 3 years old, body cast and all, on my first bus ride in Manchester for a little adventure. I'm sure he was puzzling out, then, how he was going to relate to such a frail young boy. Once he discovered our shared joy in adventure-seeking, we soon graduated to having me drive the family car up the hill on Maryland Avenue while I was perched precariously on his lap. I still recall being wide-eyed then, laughing with him, my heart beating 'a mile a minute'. Although he was very protective of me, we still took little risks back then. The bigger the risk, the more likely it was to be followed up by the advice: 'Don't tell your Mother!'. His encouraging me to take calculated risks served me well over time as it got me to try to push past my limitations. I thank him for that.

As I grew older, I too would ponder my father's reserved nature, an attribute that was widely recognized. I came to realize, though, that there was a pattern to the occasions that allowed us to see his veil of reserve lifted and him truly reveling in his relationships with others. The key that 'unlocked' him was 'sharing'. Dad would share whatever he had, with no hesitation. Whether he was helping out a friend in need, teaching us how to fish, sharing home improvement tips and tricks, regaling us with stories of days gone by, or making us burst with laughter with amusing anecdotes and bawdy jokes, those were the moments when Dad really 'shined'. This was especially true when it came to sharing his mischievous sense of humor. You could almost physically see the love he felt for us, emanating from him, when he had us all 'in stitches'. He always seemed very content after one of those sharing events and, I imagine, those times were a gift to himself, allowing him to express emotions that did not come easily for him in more conventional ways. Everyone present paying tribute to him today should take pleasure and comfort in reflecting on those moments, big and small, that they shared with him and regard those moments as Dad's lasting gift to them.

Dad faced many hardships in the latter part of his life. When his troubles began with his vision difficulties, he really began to open up and we all got to experience parts of him that were previously reserved for his 'inner life'. Through all of the trials that were to follow, he showed tremendous strength and fortitude. He exemplified the idea that 'if you're not moving forward, you're moving backwards'. I think he understood that, as human beings, we are all fated to suffer to some extent and that it serves no purpose to weigh our fates against those of others. He pushed on through years of personal challenges and, aided by the unwavering support and devotion of my mother, persevered to meet those challenges, right up to his last days. Their example of courage was the last part of Dad's gift to me that I got to 'unwrap' and, despite my profound sadness in parting ways with him, I am grateful for all he has shared with me.

I had the distinct honor of having my father tell me that we were friends. I couldn't have asked for a better one. I will miss him...
