

Commitment & teamwork between a husband and wife:

In my growing up days, I always saw my parents working together as a team. Towards the end of my 5th year, my Dad decided to become a fireman in the LA City Fire Department. I remember my Mom helping him type up his homework and correcting his spelling and grammar. About three years later, after he was a certified fireman, he would 'moon light' as an abalone diver on his days off. They bought a 27 foot boat called 'The Last Dollar'. My Dad would put on his wet suit and take up his breathing apparatus and his abalone bag and pry bar, and jump over the side of the boat, and then disappear into the water. As we looked overboard, we knew his location by the air bubbles. My Mom would feed out the air hose to him, and keep her hand on a rope that he was also towing. If he tugged on it, it would mean that she was to haul it in. It would be attached to the abalone bag full of abalone. She would hoist it aboard using a system of pulleys, and then unload the bag. Then she would measure them to make sure that they were legal size. My Dad in the meantime, would be collecting more abalone. It was also my mother's responsibility to make sure that the air compressor continually ran as long as my Dad was in the water. If my Dad came up out of the water really cold, she would feed him a bar of chocolate. At night, she would prepare the meal while my Dad repaired whatever needed to be repaired. (That was about 1964.)

The following year the Watts Riots broke out, and my Dad was one of the firemen trying to put out all the fires. Now he had entertained the thought of moving to Australia, but that was the thing that pushed him into it. My Mom agreed to it, so the following year, that's exactly what they did. They left family and friends, sold everything they owned, put the family treasures in a few trunks, and we left. I had just turned ten, and it was the day before my brother's eight birthday when we boarded the plane. My Dad had already been there for over a month. He immediately took up the abalone trade again, although we had been allowed into the country on emigrants visas because he had a BA in Agriculture Science, and his teaching credentials. My Mum continued to be his abalone tender when he wasn't working with somebody else. When I think back, I realize

that my Dad was just a young whippersnapper himself at the roaring age of 33! (In my 10 year old mind he seemed so old!)

Two years later (1968) we moved up to New Guinea where my Dad took up teaching again. When I was in the 9th grade, he decided to take up farming and rented a piece of land from the natives. He turned it into a vegetable farm. Again, my Mum was his 'right hand man'! He would do the planting and the harvesting, and she would pack them, and ship them off. They were a team.

When I was 17, they moved back down to Australia, and my Dad took up teaching again, and continued until he retired. Now they mine for opals, and they still work together! They each have their own specialties. My Mum's is making the dynamite. My Dad's is drilling the holes where the dynamite is to be placed. After he installs it, everybody gets out of the way, somebody cries, "Fire in the hole!", and they explode it. Then after the dust settles down, they go have a look to see what was buried beneath the surface of the ground. Team work! They have been yoked together for 60 years now. I learned how to keep my commitments by watching them keep theirs. The pattern was passed on through their example.

