

Coffee

by Kamaron McNair

My dad always stood forever at the end of church talking to different people for what felt like hours. As a child, I wandered around the legs towering over me, or swung my dad's hand reminding him that it was lunch time. Sometimes I stole the nearly empty Dunkin Donuts cup from his hand and drank the last swig of his light and sweet brew. He scowled at me, and told me that coffee would stunt my growth.

Extra large coffee, extra cream and four Sweet 'N Lows. He ordered it every day at the Dunkin Donuts a mile from our house. In fact, he didn't need to order it, most of the employees knew "Mr. Alvin" and would start pouring his drink as soon as they saw him get out of his car. The Dunkin was family owned, and my dad became kin. On Saturdays he would come home in the mornings often with a dozen donuts for me and my siblings. He smelled like coffee and newspaper. On Sundays, he went into the store alone as we all called out orders—chocolate chip muffins for Kari and Cassidy, bagels with cream cheese for Zack and me.

There were hard times, when money got so tight we tried to cut back everywhere, even on coffee. My dad started brewing at home. Still Dunkin Donuts brand, but buying in bulk was cheaper. He couldn't do it, though. It never tasted the same as buying in-store, and he managed to go back to his old habit.

As I grew older, my dad let me start exploring coffee. Occasionally he ordered a Cappuccino Blast, a Dunkin equivalent of a Frappuccino. It's essentially coffee flavored sugar with whipped cream on top, so my dad let me take sips of his, and eventually I started ordering my own. Again he'd warn that the drinks would stunt my growth, but I told him he turned out just fine.

When I was in 6th grade, my dad went into the hospital with chest pain, and was found to have a pulmonary embolism—blood clots in the lungs. Further testing showed the clots had broken off from a larger clot in his lower leg, and it was a close call. He spent the night in Intensive Care, where he had a Vena Cava filter inserted in his chest to prevent more clots from getting into his lungs. He spent the next few days recovering in a regular room. Every morning my mom had to bring him Dunkin, as he refused to drink hospital coffee. One morning she sent me in to get it, my heart warmed as the Rodette, a manager who loved my father, started pouring his drink as soon as he saw me.