

“THE PERSON WHO INFLUENCED ME MOST...”

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“This is an easy one: my father, Dale Hempel. He embraced the beauty of each new day, and shared his joy of life with everyone he met. He gave selflessly of himself and always stopped to help anyone in need. He was a local political figure and many times had to face the “nay-sayers” in the community. I never heard him offer a negative comment back to them. If I can be half as good as he was, I will consider my life a success.”

-- Elece Hempel, *Community Resource Director, Petaluma People Services Center*

“My life has been influenced most profoundly by my mother and father, of course.

“As a teenager I would come home and see my Mom in strange positions -- standing on one leg, or lying flat and still -- and I'd say, ‘What in the world are you doing?’ She told me ‘Yoga. It helps me deal with the stress in my life.’ I never forgot that and that is why I chose to get into yoga myself a few years later. I appreciate all that I learned about yoga from Kate Pelly, Ian Rawlinson and Joseph Le Page.

“I also feel my husband, two children, and now my two grandchildren will continue to influence who I am and who I am becoming.”

-- Jean Grant-Sutton, *Bodyworks*

“The person who influenced and inspired me the most in my life is my Aunt Janet. She was my father's only sibling and grew up in the South -- in Birmingham, Alabama. She became a “stewardess” (as they were called then) for Delta and continued to work for Delta until she was 67 years old. Aunt Janet became a stewardess in the days when women hardly even worked outside the home -- much less traveled around the world on their own. Wherever she went in her uniform,

other young women admired her mysterious and glamorous life. By the way, in those days the airlines were serving flaming desserts to first class customers. Can you imagine?!

“My Aunt was extremely independent and a pioneering feminist. She is still alive today and has been a resident of New Orleans for more than 40 years. She hasn't missed a Mardi Gras or Jazz Fest in all that time. In fact, almost every time I phone her, she has been out at some festival or new restaurant or wine tasting or funeral or dance or party. She inspired me because of her fun-loving independent nature, but also because she was so good at taking care of herself. She taught me the importance of washing my face, eating healthy, getting a good night's sleep and being self-loving. She even took me to my very first meditation class -- in New Orleans when I was 15 years old. Thanks, Janet, for all you've done for me and what you have inspired inside of me!”

-- Pamela Bell, *Life Coach, Hypnotherapist, and Petaluma Post columnist*

“Dr. Steven Zara -- an inspirational man of infinite energy, love and wisdom -- touched so very many people in so very many ways through all facets of his life. He was my purest reflection -- a man of great vision and insight whose consistent loving energy inspired me to believe in myself, follow my dreams and reach for the stars. He was a mentor, father, brother and friend. He is the man behind the love and energy of Sky Hill Institute. I feel blessed to have been graced by his presence in my life.

“We all moved to Petaluma in the hopes that he would live many years in retirement here with us. He passed away April 13, 2006, after only 8 months here. He is greatly missed by all of us who grew to love him so dearly. To all he touched,

he gave the most powerful gift, the gift of unconditional love.”

-- Colette Bizal, *ScD, WHP, CMT, Sky Hill Institute*

“The biggest influence in my life is and always has been my DAD. He was always a source of knowledge, wisdom and love -- sharing his experiences to help shape mine. I appreciate the gift he was created to be for the world and thank God for giving me such an amazing example of goodness and integrity!”

-- Jodi Cookson, *Store Manager, Petaluma Check Center*

“I was always inspired by my paternal grandmother, Helen Sawatzky. She immigrated to the U.S. in the 1920s when she fled her homeland of Hungary. She and her sister protested the Prussian oppression of the Hungarian people. She was an avid student in the freedoms of this country throughout her life.

“As she aged, her dedication to prevention of disease through natural herbs, exercise and spirituality became a driving force. In January of 1994, I got a call from my sister that Grandma was only given a few days to live. I flew to Florida to be with her one last time. I remember crying all the way there on the plane. Though weak & unable to talk, her eyes had nothing but love. We moved her to hospice at the home she and Grandpa had shared for the last 20 years as a retirement home. She held on for 3 months and peacefully passed after celebrating her 60th wedding anniversary with Grandpa. She always wore bright clothes and didn't mind having dessert before the meal every now and then. She lived a very full life and set a great example of living.”

-- Linda Postenrieder, *co-owner, Pelican Art Gallery & Framing Studio*

“My father, Ray Peter-

son taught me at an early age about setting goals and the importance of an education to attain the goals. He loved to ask us at the dinner table ‘What did you learn today?’ He always said, if you didn't learn something new then it was a wasted day, so we always had to come prepared with some answer to what we might have learned that day! ‘Knowledge is power!’ was among his other favorite sayings. These life skills I use every day.

“Even making mistakes was okay with him, because they were lessons as long as we didn't repeat the mistake! I am grateful that he still is in my life and can still teach me about important matters or something difficult like cross-country skiing.

“He is a role-model about giving to the community and caring about our environment. He teaches me many things and I am glad I have the opportunity to pass this on to my children.

“Fathers are very important in their children's lives. As an adult, I appreciate the qualities that my father shows me through the way in which he lives his life every day!”

-- Karen Peterson Nau, *teacher, Petaluma City Council member*

“A person most influential in my life: Ann O'Hanlon, founder and former Director of the Art Department of Dominican University in San Rafael and founder of SIGHT & INSIGHT (now called the O'Hanlon Center for the Arts) in Mill Valley.

“As an artist, she educated me in new ways of seeing -- translating Nature into the most pure forms. She dared me to explore and accept new materials -- to create active spatial happenings and to fulfill my creative existence.”

-- Linda Gonzales, *Gallery One Petaluma*



“No. 5”, abstract lithograph of tree and rocks by Ann O'Hanlon, 1939