

Tribute to my dad, Richard Nelson Frye

I think one can tell a lot about a person by his relationship to food. My mother always told me never to trust a man with a poor appetite because it was a good indicator that other passions in his life would be lacking too. My father had an endless appetite for food and for life and learning. I loved cooking for him. He always ate everything on his plate, (and sometimes off of other's plates!) without question and with great gusto. No fussy food wants or needs, no picky eating, no food allergies which in today's gluten-free, dairy-free, this free, that free food climate was so refreshing. My father was a simple man really, very uncomplicated. He embodied all the old-fashioned virtues of discipline, hard work, determination and tremendous willpower. He was good and he was happy. He was absolutely reliable, whatever it took, he always got the job done. He refused to speak English whenever he was traveling, no matter how little of the local language he spoke. He would just adapt one of the numerous languages that he knew to fit the present need. My mother always said that the person he was talking to would look at him as if he were crazy and then proceed to answer him! There wasn't a small, petty or mean bone in his body. He truly accepted all and fit in with all. On his many trips to LA, he would join in the Sikh celebrations of music and chanting followed by eating a community meal, two of his favorite things. Then he would lean back when the music portion was over and say, "Ahh music, the language of the soul." Someone would invariably say to me, "I didn't know your father was a Sikh!" The only problem my father had was that the world isn't the way he was. The world is complicated with layers of duplicity and double standards. So my father developed comparable ways to be successful when dealing with intractable bureaucracies which were his particular nemesis. He hated it when things didn't work or people didn't come through, and he fought back vociferously if he believed he was ripped off in any way. This caused some embarrassment to me when I was younger. I remember one particular time at Persepolis, when he took the family to the sound and light show and the system malfunctioned. Dad wanted a refund which he proclaimed at the top of his lungs, his voice ringing out from the top of the platform, while I wished I could drop through the ground below. It's quite amazing to me that over the years, this has come to be the quality in Dad that I love most and hold forever dear. One of the last times he came to visit me in LA, I took him through airport security. He was in a wheelchair and when asked to remove his belt and shoes, he just started screaming, "Osama has won, Osama has won! Look what he's turned us into, look what we have become!" I was so proud of him. "You tell them, Dad," I told him with great glee. "You are only voicing what we all feel!" My dad. Truly one of a kind. How I love him and how I will miss his indomitable spirit! Yes, Dad, it's true, fanatics make history but it's you who cherished history and preserved it for us and for all the generations to come.