

My father has a tendency to use the royal "we." Always. I don't know if I should attribute it to his privileged upbringing, or serving as a Brigadier General, or simply another funny way my dad says things (among the others included are pronouncing Hyundai \*Hioooooondee\* and the inability to say the words "breakfast" or "nuclear"). I have had many an occasion when my mother and I are talking to my father on speakerphone, and he signs off with "we love you," even though he is surely the only person on the other end of the line. I don't know if my father likes to speak for others or is just uncomfortable speaking for himself with something as personal as love. Before going to bed I'll often say "goodnight Dad, I love you" and he will respond with "goodnight Meg" to which I will re-respond "goodnight Dad, *I love you*," and I will receive "*you too Meg*." And that's that.

So, it is the case that I do not remember the last time my dad said "I love you," and I really have no qualms about it. Because I am quite sure that he does. Once when we got home to our apartment at midnight, I mentioned that I was craving strawberries and he went back out and got them at the market. He gives me his frequent flier miles. He helps me do my taxes. He loves me, and telling me is definitely *not* the most important thing he could do.

There are many occasions where he does not like me, and that is clear to both of us. This year during parents weekend my dad said "I'm proud of you, Meg" for the first time in many years. And I responded with complete sincerity, "Really? I had no idea." This meant far more to me than the "I love you." that I had been waiting for. I learned something new. A void was filled. There seems to be a perception that "I love you" fills all voids, but sometimes that's like drinking water when you're really hungry.