

RERUN

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[Assignment: Henry Adams, in his autobiography, claims that the most important things he learned in life he learned accidentally. Write a list for yourself of all the things you remember learning accidentally. Choose one interesting and important item from your list; make another list of all the details that flood into your mind as you recount that learning process. Then write a narrative essay about what happened. Your purpose is twofold: to relate that story to your reader as completely as you can, and to comment on what the process meant to you.]

For as long as I can remember, I've known that my dad's lifelong dream has been to become a clown. This sounded pretty cool for a while, but upon entering my teenage years, it started to look like a large embarrassment waiting to happen. I had never known anyone, especially not anyone interesting, who had a clown for a father. It just doesn't happen.

I think that my dad has actually always been a clown without the costume and make-up. He always jumps at the chance to make a joke or tease someone. He has never been the kind of dad that my friends had. I was always a little afraid of my friends' fathers. The only time I would see them was when I spent the night, and that wasn't enough to feel comfortable around them. They were big, scary guys who never had much to say, except to yell at us to be quiet. My dad, on the other hand, was pals with my friends as soon as he met them. He could always find the right joke to make them feel comfortable. I remember that my sister had a friend who took dance classes with her for a semester and they shared rides. Her father was obviously very stern and proper and nothing like my dad. My dad would crack a joke, or say something to tease her, and she wouldn't know how to respond! She would just sit there frozen in fear trying to figure out this strange man. By the time dance classes were over, she was answering and laughing with the rest of us! I suppose my sister and I and our friends were practice for my dad's dream of clowning. I think we probably helped convince him that he could do it.

My dad hasn't changed while my sister and I have grown up. He is almost always smiling and in a good mood. He has sometimes been an embarrassment, though. He loves to chaperon the twenty-four hour band bus trips from our high school in northern Indiana to Orlando, Florida. He has a rubber chicken that he bought the first year and somehow he made this lifeless piece of rubber into a cherished and well-loved bus mascot. He would get everyone into it so much that the other chaperons would send students over to kidnap the chicken. The legend of the chicken and the games that have been played with it, along with stories of my father and how funny and great he is, were passed down from year to year. Every time we have a trip, my dad brings the chicken and everyone wants him to be his or her chaperon! I really think he is more popular than I am.

This winter a friend of my father who was a certified clown told my dad about a clown class he could enroll in at a nearby church. The idea was interesting when it was just an idea, but this was different. My dad was actually going to be a clown--the kind that throw candy in parades, make silly little animals out of balloons, and just make fools of themselves in front of

everyone for entertainment. Truthfully, I had never actually liked clowns. They always scared me a little bit. The idea of a person putting make-up on and dressing up in weird costumes just to go play with kids seemed a little strange to me. I really wasn't sure about the whole thing.

My dad came home from his first class with all kinds of information. There are actually very strict rules in clowning. There are three basic types of clowns with rules about how the make-up and outfits have to be for each one. There is the white face clown, which is basically the Cadillac of clowning. They, obviously, have white faces with only small red spots on the cheeks and nose and little other make-up. They always pull the tricks on other clowns, and never have tricks pulled on them. They are the best dressed of all the clowns. The Yugo of the clown world is the hobo, or tramp. This kind of clown very obviously wears make-up that forms a beard or a dirty face, and worn out and torn clothes. These clowns never pull tricks on others, but always have tricks pulled on them. The middle type of clown is the *auguste* clown. *Auguste* is a Berlin slang term for "stupid." These clowns have white make-up around the eyes and mouth, but have flesh-colored cheeks. This clown both has tricks pulled on him and pulls tricks on others. He has the best of both worlds! This is the type of clown that my dad is. My dad came home one night with the clown face that he knew was him. I had to agree. He eventually got blue hair and a mismatched outfit of plaids and stripes. He's now trying to figure out how to dye a swallowtail coat bright yellow. His name is Rerun because he's in his second childhood. Okay, he's cute, but that doesn't take away from the fact that it's weird and still embarrassing.

I went to his graduation from clown class at the church that had hosted his classes and realized that he was one of the best looking clowns up there. I went to his first performance, which was at a nursing home, and realized that my dad was one of the best clowns, period. After his first parade in a small town nearby, which was incredibly hilarious and wonderful, I realized why my dad was so good. My dad really loved this. It wasn't just something that sounded like a fun idea, it was what he loved to do deep down.

I'm now very proud of my dad. He did some clowning at our outdoor church service, and I sat in the front row. He was so good with the kids, and so funny for the adults. I think he was born to be a clown, and I love him for it. I've realized that whether I want him to or not, this is what my dad was destined to do. I'm very proud to be in the car with him dressed up and waving to all the people we drive by. They all stare and smile back at him because he instantly brings a smile to your face when you see him. If you ever want to see a picture of a great clown, I will be proud to show you my father.