

by Jessica L.

**1**

I am Jessi L., 14 years old, and I decided to interview my father. I interviewed him at our dining table while he was working on his laptop. We had just finished dinner for that night, and I decided it would be a good time to interview him. I asked about his marriage to my other father. When he told me about his relationship with my other parent and what he had to do to get married, I was both surprised and interested.

After writing down the basics of what he had said, I asked a few more questions, like how they met. "We first met in October 1997. I was a freshman at UCLA, and I responded to an ad that he made for a roleplaying group he was starting." I think that is a cute story of how they met. I also decided to ask why his marriage here was so special. "Our marriage in America was important because it was here for my mother, and siblings, which made it more real for them because before it they couldn't accept that I was gay."

**2**

My father was the second-born child in his family, after my uncle Matt. He has two younger siblings; my aunt Diane and my uncle Chris. He grew up in Canyon Lake and was born on November 25, 1978. He had me, his daughter, about 10 years after he initially met his husband, and my sibling 2 years before me.

For most of his life, my father was uncertain about what he wanted. He was not the closest that he could have been with his siblings, as his two younger siblings were much younger than him, about 6 years apart, and his older brother just wasn't that close to him. And for the rest of his life, he was just a normal person. When he went to UCLA, he met his future husband, Lukas Mandrake.

**3**

At UCLA, my dad studied to be a mathematician. He started his career in 2008 and has been working there for

around 15 years. He has worked on many projects such as the Mars 2020 Rover, and SWOT.

**4**

As my father's daughter, I see him every day. My father always comes to get me at around the same time every day, taking the quiet route to my sibling's school, and then back to our house. Sometimes we like to drive to small convenience stores for snacks on long drives. I wouldn't normally get anything other than a soda, but sometimes he would let me get candy. He would always get a large soda and some mints. Those things always remind me of him.

**5**

When I think of him, I always first picture him sitting at his desk watching YouTube or playing video games. He would be sitting in the large comfy chair with the pillow I got him for his birthday. He would be watching some of the many different live comedy shows that he found and loved, or expanding his empire in rimworld, making increasingly complex worlds to challenge himself. He would create his world for days, perfecting the perfect scenario for himself to play for a while before starting over again.

**6**

A few years ago, my dad hurt his hand when he was working on his carving hobby. He cut his thumb really bad, and it was bleeding a lot. The cut went from his thumb down to his palm, and it was a deep cut. He had to drive himself to urgent care because my other dad was busy working and my dad didn't want to disrupt him. I did not really know what was happening at the time, I just saw him come out of his home office with his hand bleeding, and later he told me he was trying to hide it from my sibling so we would not get worried.

I don't know what happened at the urgent care, but I did hear that he had to get stitches on his hand.

**7**

My father is an organ donor, so he can use any parts of his body that could be

used to save someone else's life, he would help them. Aside from that, he would want himself to be buried or kept in an environmentally safe way, nothing that harms the planet anymore. In terms of having a funeral, he likes the idea of a wake. A wake is where people who knew him gather to reminisce and remember the person they are grieving the loss of. He believes that would help him live on in people's memories the best so that part of me could continue with you. He closed with "But ultimately, it's not for me to decide, since I won't be there to care. I think whatever helps my family gain closure and grieve is what's right. I promise I won't judge whatever happens."

**8**

2 years ago, during the summer I fell in love with the band BTS, as well as some similar bands in that genre. While not as interested as I am, my father was the most immersed member of my family besides me and would make jokes about it and listen to me when I talked to him about it. He might not have cared about what I was saying, but he would still listen to the music with me and comment on it. I would like to show him the music of the band BlackPink, which is the band I first started playing next to him, and he would even get into some of the fanbase things, like picking a group bias and getting all into the gossip.

**9**

This was a whole new genre of music to me, and the first time I had ever gotten so invested in any celebrity/band. Close, bright flashy colors on my screen, on my phone and computer, and next to my dad for long periods of time, helped my relationship with my dad grow very much. And although I am now mostly over that phase, it was still fun to have that connection.

**10**

My father works as a mathematician at JPL, working on different missions that will eventually be sent to space and take research. He has worked on many projects such as the Mars 2020 Rover. He mostly has meetings with coworkers but also writes code and similar things when he is

not talking to people. He works partially from home and goes into work three days a week, and when he is done with his work, he goes to his personal computer and spends the rest of the day, aside from dinner and picking up me and my sibling, sitting there.

### 11

Computers help make the world the same way our eyes see it. Pixels light up on the screen to create images. When we look at computers, we just see our world, but more blocky, less real.

### 12

When I was 10, my family and I went to Hawaii for the first time of many. We went with my grandmother and the rest of my extended family, my aunts & uncles, cousins, and a few other more distant members of my family. The trip was very important to me, as it was my first time flying over the Pacific Ocean and being so far away from the normal culture that I lived with. I love to remember all of the time that I spent with my family, all the bright & warm beaches, cold air, and unique food. Although I did not really enjoy going into the ocean, I still liked spending time with my family.

### 13

One photograph I remember from this trip is a picture of my father and me, standing in front of the sign of the hotel that we were staying at. We had gotten off the plane and driven over, and we were tired. Behind us, you can see part of the sunset and the beach that the hotel was attached to. I love this photo because it is quite beautiful.

### 14

My father has an interest in woodworking and carves pieces of wood into different shapes. He creates spoons and wooden chains and little knick-knacks and keeps them around the house, mostly on his desks and in his office. He wasn't always good at woodworking and picked up the hobby during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 15

When I picture my father's clothing, I see him in jeans, sneakers, a plain t-shirt, and the flannels he wears that I love so much. I

would take the flannels that he leaves around the house and wear them myself because they are so comfortable. He has always had a more simplistic clothing style, but I always see it uniquely as his.

### 16

A tradition we have every summer is to go on a vacation with our family. Often, it is to Hawaii, and it can also be to towns like Palm Springs. One year we went all the way to Cooperstown, NY. These vacations are very special to me because they include the entire family, not just the ones that I live with but everyone, like my grandmother, aunts and uncles, & cousins.

### 17

My father is a man who has always appreciated his family. He likes to listen to our conversations a lot and observe

what we say. He does talk with us sometimes but for the most part, like on car rides, he will just listen to us.

### 18

This story remains unfinished because the time spent between me and my father has yet to end, and hopefully will continue for a long time, as I do not want it to end. To me, this story is a joyful one, as I do not have too many bad memories with my father, and I hope to continue to make joyful memories as I get older. I might come back to this memoir in the future, and add on what I learned throughout the years, but for now, it will end here. This story is something about being connected. It's about closeness. And sharing. And love.

### 19

I'm growing these connections one day at a time.

