

**Susan B. McConnell**  
**4452 Airport Blvd., Mobile, AL 36608**  
**251-342-3554 H, 251-490-9767 C**  
[aub76@aol.com](mailto:aub76@aol.com)

**A FATHER'S LEGACY**  
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When Earl Woods died of cancer in May, his son, Tiger, was quoted, "My dad was my best friend and greatest role model....I am overwhelmed when I think of all of the great things he accomplished in his life. He was an amazing dad, coach, mentor, soldier, husband and friend. I wouldn't be where I am today without him, and I'm honored to continue his legacy of sharing and caring" (as quoted in the Mobile Register 5/4/06).

Tiger Woods' words are an awesome tribute to a father who dedicated his life to raising his son. Earl Woods said his purpose in raising Tiger was not to produce a good golfer but rather a good person. He achieved that goal through support, guidance, discipline and love for his son.

The son Earl Woods raised has influenced thousands of people through his career in golf and the charitable foundation that bears his name. Not many fathers will have the opportunity to raise a Tiger Woods—a man whose name has become familiar to most American households whether or not one is a golfer.

But every father has the opportunity to raise a great son—a son with the same characteristics: discipline, honor, respect, compassion, ambition, "a good person", as Earl Woods described his role as a father.

When my own dad died when I was twenty-five years old, I committed my life to making him proud and to live as he taught me. He was one of those dads who loved his family and taught each child to be responsible, independent and trustworthy. His legacy continues through the lives of his children and grandchildren.

The impact of a father on a child's life can not be replaced with any other relationship. A dad thinks differently than a mother and can inherently teach a son to become a man. Dads are needed to show boys how to become men: how to lead and make good decisions, love a

woman, support a family, show accountability for actions, develop character, and how to leave a legacy for their own children.

Societal influences in today's culture do provide adequate role models for boys to emulate. That is why dads are so important to the raising of children, besides the fact that parents have the most influence with their children in a loving, nurturing home environment. Many role models that kids idolize today are sports figures, politicians, rock stars, and actors whose popularity in media is born out of sexual prowess, drug use, violence against women, and unlawful conduct. Real men protect the welfare of children and women and model integrity. Real men love their children and teach their sons character, integrity and goals for life.

No parent is perfect and will make mistakes. But children are the most forgiving people in the world because they long for the love of parents. Don't let mistakes cause a parent to let go of the task of parenting. Say "I'm sorry. I haven't been a very good parent". Start over. Become involved in a child's life by loving and nurturing that child.

The challenge of parenting is enhanced when one parent does not live in the home. But the need for that relationship is just as great and a parent's positive influence is just as important. Dads who live away from their children still need to continue to build relationships with them by being involved in their lives.

Raising a son is a lifelong commitment to loving, nurturing and teaching a child to become a good person. When dad is committed to a child's well being, greatness will come. His name may never be printed on a newspaper headline or become a household name but his influence in his own world will be noticed and, like Earl Woods legacy, may influence another young man to greatness.

Our society is in desperate need of more fathers (and father figures) committed to raising good sons. As we celebrate Father's Day, think of the people in life who have positively influenced you. Take time to say "thanks" and continue that legacy of giving and loving and teaching through the life of a child. If you are a father who has not been successful as a good role model, take heart, and re-commit today to raising a good child. A father's legacy is never forgotten and lives on through generations.