

BREAKING NEWS Co-pilot in French Alps crash wanted to 'destroy this plane,' prosecutor says

FIRST PERSON

A son's songs

In “All Sins Forgiven: Poems for My Parents,” out this spring, Cambridge poet and jazz vocalist Charles Coe captures the complicated feelings adults have for their elders.



ESSDRAS M SUAREZ/GLOBE STAFF

Charles Coe.

The title is about me making peace with many of **THE FEELINGS ADULT CHILDREN HAVE** when they look back on their lives. Dad died eight years ago, then mom, and my one sister, three years older, after that. So there's no one I can sit around my kitchen table with and say, "Hey, do you remember when?"

I'm angry that my father was so terrible with money. For years, I had to help out the family. But **I LOVED HIS GENEROSITY**. His sense of humor. His gentleness. His respect of women. I write about "the list of ancient grievances that crumbles to dust in my hands." Forgiving your parents' sins is something you do for you, not them. I'm forgiving my own sins, too. You wonder about **WAYS YOU DISAPPOINTED THEM**. I never had any children. My mother said she was fine with that. But my father never said. And I never asked. After my parents passed, it seems there are 10,000 questions I never asked them.

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It'll hit me, not **FATHER'S DAY** so much, but when I see some guy who looks like my father. I wish I could drive over and talk about football, my writing, or how he's enjoying retirement. My father was a factory worker and moonlighted as a house painter. We never had any arguments. When you're a kid, you don't realize your parents are people. When you're an adult, you start to wonder about the burdens they had. This is **A MEMOIR IN POETRY**, a stumbling over snapshots in a shoe box.

One day, in my 30s, I called my father. I said, "I'm so proud of you." He was quiet for quite a while. Then he said, "I'm glad to hear that." — *As told to Kathy Shiels Tully*

Interview has been edited and condensed.

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