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Doug Stone: A Father's Day Reflection

It's Father's Day, a good time to reflect on the three people who made me a father and for whom I am eternally grateful. I came late to this father's thing. I was 47 when my wife Ann and I traveled halfway around the world to Xiamen, China, to adopt a beautiful six-month baby who stuck her tongue out at us.

That adorable baby full of personality, Sadie, is now 14 and very much her own person. Try as I might to accept it, I still can't believe she is starting high school next fall. She's a good student, is a swimmer, basketball player, softball player and is on a water ski team in the summer. She had her Bat Mitzvah last fall and handled the whole thing with grace and poise. A proud moment for her parents. But mostly Sadie is a great sister and a wonderful daughter. She has a special gift for befriending others who might need a little extra support like a new girl on her basketball team. Like all 14-year-olds, she has her teenage moments and I find myself scratching my head trying to figure out how to communicate in her world. More often than not, Sadie reaches across the divide and helps her old dad figure it out.

Three years after Sadie came into our lives, Ann and I traveled to Hanoi, Vietnam, where we adopted our second adorable baby daughter, Evie. Somehow I failed to support her head when the doctor handed her to me and it jerked back. The whole episode was caught on video, which she later saw. Evie has never let me forget that parental transgression. Every time I pick up a baby, Evie reminds me to hold her head properly. The family has a big chuckle. Evie is 11 approaching her teenage years. She will enter 6th grade next year and, like her sister, is a good student

and a good athlete, specializing in soccer, swimming, her new love, basketball, and rides on the top of a four-high pyramid on the water ski team. I video tape nearly every minute of the ski team, but I have to hold my breath as the pyramid comes into the frame. There she is, 20 feet above the water, on top of three layers of skiers, moving about 25 m.p.h. through the water behind a speedboat. There is nothing about a ski pyramid in any father's manual I have read.

Evie is a keen cultural observer, especially when it comes to what pre-teens and teens think is cool. The way her dad dresses and talks, especially when he tries to act like he knows what is going on among her age group, is definitely not cool. I credit my kids, especially Evie, with my knowing more about certain teenage entertainment phenomena than many of my colleagues.

My daughters and I have good times together. And we have our disagreements. Sometimes I push too hard, always wanting them to try something or complete the project now or attend every practice even when they're not up to it. Their mother often has a better perspective on such things. Like most men, I'm still learning.

When Ann and I journeyed across the globe to make a family, I knew it would be a wonderful adventure. But I could never have comprehended how every day would bring such a sense of joy, pride and love as these past 14 years have. Here's to fatherhood and here's to the three ladies in my life who have made it such a thrilling ride.

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