

The Friedman family did not take a nice long trip over spring break. For the most part we stayed around Ankeny. I needed to get some work done and wanted to save my vacation time. What we did do is to travel to Dubuque for the weekend to visit my parents. We haven't seen them since they came to Ankeny for Thanksgiving and it's been a while before that when we were in Dubuque.

Coming "home" to Dubuque always stirs up memories for me. Mostly good memories of a loving and fun filled home and people that truly cared about each other. In this column I have talked about my dad several times, how he was and is a role model for me as a father, friend and businessman. I have not mentioned my mother nearly as often. This trip home got me thinking about my mother.

Mothers, including mine are probably the most underappreciated segment of our society. In my experience they do the preponderance of the household chores, cook the family meals and generally look after the welfare of husbands and children. Mothers provide a lot of the emotional and physical support that children need to survive and become successful. My mother instilled in me a passion for reading. Given a choice of reading a book or watching television, mom always chooses a book. She loves murder mysteries, and while I enjoy fiction, those kinds of books keep me awake long after I have closed the cover.

I remember when I was in high school she would always wait up for me to come home. She would sit in the living room reading her book, making sure that I came through the door and was OK. Mom has always supported my writing, even when I wrote a colorful, but probably inappropriate piece back in 5th grade. As far as I know, she might still have that tattered paper from 1969. She supported my athletic adventures as well, often re-telling the story of how I taught myself to ice skate after coming home crying.

Mom is the kind of person who made sure that I had enough money and/or gas in the car when I went out. Slipping me an extra \$5 or \$10 when my dad wasn't looking. When ever I had a problem or issue I knew, and still know that I can talk to her and she will listen. Before I married my wife I had a couple of girlfriends that she didn't really like. She didn't tell me however until the girlfriend and I went our separate ways. She now frequently reminds me how lucky I am to be married to Joanne.

While I always said thank you to my mom when she did something for me, I don't think I conveyed true appreciation. I may have even taken her for granted from time to time. As small business owners and managers we have people that work with us and support us. We show them appreciation by making sure they have a regular paycheck and a decent place to work. But do we truly thank them for being the backbone of our company?

This week I challenge you to truly say thank you to everyone you work with. Not just the "important" people in your company. Thank the people who deliver the products,

answer the phone, make sure that customers are taken care of and the reports are done correctly. It doesn't take money or gifts, but it does take a one on one, look 'em in the eye, sincere thank you. Tell them how much you appreciate what they do.

So mom, when you read this, I can't really look you in the eye or give you a hug, but I want to say that after 49 years I really appreciate all that you have done for me. Thank you.

Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, president of First National Bank, Ankeny.