**This I Believe Example 3**

**Never Give Up**

Mary Curran Hackett - Cincinnati, Ohio

Never, ever give up.

My father said it to me for the first time nearly thirty years ago. He gripped his sooty hands around the steering wheel of his beat-up Chevy truck and stared out through the windshield, while the wipers batted away big, fluffy, white snowflakes. “You just can’t. You can’t ever give up. No matter how hard it gets. No matter how it hurts.”

He spoke the well-chosen words firmly and tight-lipped, while his head nodded to the rhythm of his speech. I don’t remember why he was telling me to never give up, I only remember that he never stopped doing so after that day. Now, I remember these words, whenever I do anything challenging.

My dad was notorious for giving his “I’ll tell ya what” speeches to my seven siblings and me after each one of our basketball, baseball, football, and field hockey games—but those lectures would come many years later.

On that particular snowy day I was only five years old and I hadn’t even picked up a sport yet. I hadn’t yet earned the right to hear one of his go-get-em speeches. I hadn’t yet missed a free-throw shot. I hadn’t yet stood over the plate and watched the third strike pass without swinging my bat. I hadn’t yet only received a 98 on a test. (“Where are the other two points?” he would ask.) To be honest I don’t think I ever did anything to warrant the oft-heard never-quit speech in its many variations, but that didn’t stop him from giving it.

Like him, and like all his kids, I worked my ass off from the day I was born just to keep up, just to survive. But, still we heard it from him:

“If you give up, someone else will eat the last and only piece of bread. If you give up, you can’t win. If you give up, you only have yourself to blame. If you give up, you’ll live a life of regrets. Only the strongest, fittest, and ablest survive. Only those who go the distance, finish the race. Only those who work for it, earn it. Perseverance is everything, kid. It’s the only thing.”

Seventeen years later when he showed up with a U-Haul rigged to his pick-up outside my apartment in Nebraska, I hung my head and couldn’t bear to look at him, knowing all the pep talks and lectures he’d given me in that truck. Seeing him standing there, I was sure I had let him down. There I stood, almost nine months’ pregnant and the father of my child long gone. I had called my dad twenty-four hours earlier to tell him I had given up. I couldn’t do it all alone—raising a kid, living thousands of miles away from home.

We sat in silence for the nearly twenty-hour drive. He didn’t say much, but he didn’t have to. Without a speech, my father lived the lesson he was trying to teach me for so long. He really didn’t ever give up—even on me. And because he didn’t give up, I didn’t either. Somehow I got through those first few lonely nights with an infant, the long work days, the financial struggles, the heartbreak, and the disappointment, because every day I heard my dad’s words, over and over, and I too shook my head to the rhythm of the speech as I rocked my newborn daughter, I will never, ever give up.

*Mary Curran Hackett is the mother of Brigid Claire, twelve, and Colm Francis, six. She is now married to Greg Hackett Jr., who adopted Brigid in 2005. Hackett is a writer, and an adjunct English professor at the University of Cincinnati. Her novel, Proof of Heaven, was published in 2011.*