

Star Trek, Dog Food, & Dad

By Leon Scott Baxter

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As I look back today, I realize I never particularly liked *Star Trek*... nor dog food, for that matter. I was maybe four years old. It was the early seventies, and my father was the poster child for the long-haired, pot-smoking, shower-once-a-week, hippy movement: “Stick it to the man!” Anti-government, anti-war, anti-establishment. Well, all except Wednesday nights at 8:00.

Pop had to watch his *Star Trek* reruns. Wouldn't read “the man's” political rags. Avoided taxes like deodorant. But, couldn't miss Kirk getting it on with a buxom, orange alien princess. He made Timothy Leary's sixties mantra his own: Turn on... the TV. Tune in... NBC. And, drop out...of sight for an hour.

Dad would sit on our ratty sofa, glued to our 13” black and white Sony, snacking from a bag of kibble. My father ate the Puppy Chow, not because we were so poor, but because he actually liked the crunch, the texture, and, yes, the taste.

And, I liked him. Actually, I loved my dad. So, every Wednesday night at 8 pm, I crawled up on his lap and watched Kirk and Kahn go at it, all the while dipping my hand into my German Shepherd's “Bag-o'-Cuisine”, sharing dog breath with my Old Man.

I never did understand the love/hate relationship between Bones and Spock. I didn't see the humor in those multiplying hairballs called Tribbles. And, I never seemed to acquire the same taste for kibble that Dad had.

As the years past, I wondered what kind of brain washing I'd undergone to allow myself to sit through sixty minutes of “Space, the final frontier” and a bag full of dog food.

Then, last month Dad came to visit me and my family. He sat his balding, gray-beard-toting, Baby-Boomer-mix-of-Phil Collins-and-George Carlin-self on my sofa and ate the cheddar flavored rice cakes I offered him, while watching reruns of *Fear Factor* with me.

My dad can't stand puffed rice or "the man's" supersaturation of reality TV. But he endured them anyhow, to spend time with me. And it was then that I understood. We endure what we don't love for those we do love. Wednesday nights had been our time to bond.

Some fathers and sons shared fishing, or baseball, or motorcycle riding. We shared Alpo and teleportation. Just the two of us: turning on, tuning in, and dropping out.