

## StoryCorps Interview at Mystic Aquarium

Madeline Meranda (18) is interviewed by Jeanne Long (51) about the death of Madeline's father, who encouraged her to work at the aquarium, and how her family supported her in her role as a volunteer.

Jeanne Long: I'm always struck by the fact that as young as all you guys were nobody had their licenses. So all your parents had to drop you off and pick you up and it was never a finite time. Like if you came in for a half day, you know, chances are you'd tell your parents "I'm done at 1:30 or 2 o'clock" and then it'd be 3:00 by the time - you know - it always took some parent calling in from the driveway to the front office like, "I'm waiting, she's gotta come out, she's got a dentist appointment!" Or, you know, "The whole family's in the car and it's 103 degrees outside, can you get my kid?"

I always felt like we should've - we still should - thank the families more because really it's your parents schlepping you here in, you know, 30 degree weather.

Madeline Meranda: That first summer I would text my dad after a morning meeting and he would come down around like, 2:00 or 3:00 maybe, and he would sit at the Starbucks across the street and just wait for me and work cause I was always out at such weird times and I never really knew when.

JL: After your dad died I just remember you came in and I'd look at you and I'd start crying, and you'd look at me and you'd start crying and - and I think I told you, like, there was like a place, after my brother died - there was a place at home I loved but I couldn't go there anymore because it always reminded me of my brother. And it wasn't like a sad thing but it like was an emotional thing and I'd get emotional. That's what I thought the aquarium was.

MM: It definitely was that place for me where - cause he pushed me to become a docent.

JL: Oh he did? I didn't know that!

MM: The first time I -

JL: I didn't know you needed any pushing Maddy, I'm shocked!

MM: Oh, oh yes.

JL: [laughter]

MM: The first time we visited dad looked at me, he was like, "There are volunteers!" "I will never do that! I will never do that!"

JL: [gasps] Maddy! I never knew that!

MM: I wanted to work here but being a docent just seemed absolutely terrifying to me. I am not a public speaker. I was always very nervous about that and just talking in front of people on a microphone seemed like the worst thing I could ever do to myself.

JL: Aw, it makes me love your dad even more that he forced you to do it. And he'd be proud of you that you're working with the seals.

MM: Yeah, no, that was one of the first things I wanted to do once I found out that I was gonna actually be able to work in the seal rescue clinic. I just want to text my dad and say-

JL: I know, I know.

MM: My family's been very supportive of it. I mean they drove an hour to drop me off every day, then they would drive home because I was here for so long and then they would have to come pick me up. So for a while when I didn't have my license they were driving four hours every day to help me get here so I could volunteer. So they have been extremely accommodating and just helping me get this experience because it's really played a huge part in my life the last couple years.