

# American Thinker

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## Jackie Gingrich Cushman on Her Dad

By [Elise Cooper](#)

With the holidays approaching, families gather to share their love, support, and traditions. *American Thinker* interviewed one of Newt Gingrich's daughters, conservative columnist Jackie Gingrich Cushman, about her dad. She was honest, forthright, and in admiration of her famous father, who is currently running for president.

What three adjectives describe Jackie's father? Jackie answered that he is persistent, cheerful, and tenacious. "Persistent" applied especially after Newt lost the election for Congress in 1974 -- the next day, he started preparing for a run in 1976 and lost again, but he eventually won in 1978.

Jackie commented to *American Thinker* that the lesson she learned from Newt was that "[h]e did not just give up. Everybody fails. He has always told me if you fail, you need to get up very rapidly and learn what happened. You need to move forward to incorporate that learning in whatever you are doing."

Regarding "cheerful," Jackie cited Newt's motto as speaker of the House: "cheerful persistence. Sometimes it is hard for people to see that about him. Today, when he is out on the campaign trail, I ask him how is he doing and he responds, 'having a ball.' He is glad to be out there, glad to be with people. I am trying to pass down this same cheerfulness to my children. There are so many things to be thankful for, but we tend to focus many times on the challenges in our lives instead of focusing on our blessings."

And Newt is tenacious because he desired to have a "Contract with America," becoming an advocate to make America better. Jackie feels that Newt

accomplished this by doing what he promised, voting on all the items in a short period of time. To her, this shows that "he is able to trudge through stuff. Dad's tenaciousness has taught me to hold on, and to not give up easily."

As Newt runs for president, there are those who will judge his character on the issue of his past marriage. Jackie was asked about the accuracy of a 1985 *Washington Post* article in which her mom, Jackie Battley Gingrich, was quoted: "He walked out in the spring of 1980 and I returned to Georgia. By September, I went into the hospital for my third surgery. The two girls came to see me, and said Daddy is downstairs and could he come up? When he got there, he wanted to discuss the terms of the divorce while I was recovering from the surgery."

Jackie did not take exception to the question; she believes, as her father has constantly professed throughout this campaign, that the American people *should* ask any questions they feel the need to ask. Ms. Cushman hopes that people will read [her article](#), but she willingly answered in addition that "I don't know the answer to your question since I never asked her directly, nor am I going to. My mom is a very private person and has decided to stay that way. She is 75 years old, a grandmother, and a retired high school teacher. I came to write the article, in part, because I went to give a speech in Alaska. After getting picked up I went and called home to check on my children. My mom was at home watching them. The lady asked, 'Oh, is your mother still alive?' I answered [that] she is absolutely alive.' Obviously, she read a wrong account that had my mom dead. At that point I realized there are various accounts out there, which are very misleading. My mom is an *incredible* woman. When I went to write this article, I discussed it with my mom and sister. They read it and agreed with what I wrote and said that is exactly what happened. The account that I gave is her memory of what happened. I can't speak to what she actually said to reporters and what they actually printed. I can tell you that the facts I have given in the article are my mom's memory."

For many, the holidays are "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year," but the ideal can sometimes be tougher to realize for children with divorced parents. Jackie understands firsthand that having divorced parents can complicate matters, but she feels lucky since her family has stayed "very close. I talk to my sister a bazillion times a day. I talk to my mom at least once a day. I either talk to or e-mail my father at least once a day. What I want people to know about my family: yes, divorce is very hard, but we all have moved on. I feel very lucky because I have two parents who love my sister and me. They are very supportive of us as well. They are very involved in my children's lives. We are very blessed."

Newt Gingrich has a reason to have common ground with his ex-wife: their grandchildren. She emphasizes that "both want the best for their grandchildren. They now have a different perspective. My dad has changed a lot since he has a much more personal faith with G-d. He is much more patient, a combination of being a grandfather and growing older. Robert, my son, and dad play chess together and talk about military history. Maggie, my daughter, loves to try to stump grandpa with her knowledge of Greek mythology, which she often does. They and their grandfather like to talk and have fun."

A lot of families over the holidays have their grandparents reflect on their past to teach a lesson to the younger generation. Did Jackie have a story? "Dad always tries to tell stories that convey a learning process. One that made an impression on me was the time in high school [when] he attempted to rescue his dog, Pride, that fell through the ice. Dad also fell through. Since he went under the ice, there was the feeling he would not be able to get out. When he finally came up, Pride was already out and looking down on him. What he tells us [is that] he learned was not to panic. What I learned from this story is what a big heart my dad has, which people don't always see. They believe what is written about him, that he is gruff. That is not the man that I know as my father. He has a really big heart and is really funny with a great sense of humor."

The holidays are a time for bringing families together, but will there ever be a time when the country can be brought together, being less divisive and working toward a common goal? Jackie commented, "Dad can bring America together. He has done this before: balancing the budget for four years, reforming welfare, cutting taxes, and cutting spending. He clearly understands there is a need for a dialogue with the American people and that the way to accomplish things is with an optimistic vision of the future. Dad believes in individual people and what they can do for America." She explained that President Obama's belief is the direct opposite, with big government being the answer to everything. This is exemplified in her quotation from the book written by her dad, *To Save America*: "We were told to vote for change we could believe in and found we had elected people who wanted to change what we believe." Jackie commented directly that "President Obama wanted to change the basis of our country: life, liberty, and happiness."

Jackie Gingrich Cushman offers a different perspective, knowing her father better than most anyone. The spirit of the holidays is for families to take pride in one another and to let those who mean the most know that they are loved. This sentiment came across in the interview -- the special father-daughter relationship where Newt Gingrich is still his daughter's hero.

