



Joe & Pk took William everywhere! They even took him to Rome, Italy where, on their famed Spanish Steps, he took his first steps! (Pictured here overlooking Sienna.)

We bought a video camera and Ria and I drove up at least one day a week to babysit or help with him. This was always the main priority on our calendar, around which everything else was scheduled. Ria was totally devoted to him, just as her own mother had been devoted to Pk when she was at that age.



These were joyous years! And Pk took great pride in hosting our family holidays. Sara and Gary doted on their new little brother. And Will would erupt with excitement whenever they came home!

Then, on Thanksgiving of 2005, Pk announced that she and Joe were pregnant again! It was every bit as euphoric and emotional for us as it'd been the first time, or perhaps even more so as Pk was creating the family that she had always dreamed of.



Meanwhile, Edward had traveled to Florence, Italy to complete research on his most ambitious project yet, a musical about Leonardo da Vinci and the subject of his most famous painting, the Mona Lisa. Two partial readings of the show were held at his theatre down in The Village before he mounted a full production on 42nd Street.



Ria and I attended several performances of “La Gioconda” and brought two busses full of eager ticket buyers all the way up from The Fairways! Needless to say, we were extremely proud.

Edward wrote the lyrics and co-wrote the book with his talented collaborator, Donya Lane, who composed a beautiful score.



(It starred Broadway veterans, Lewis Cleale & Megan McGinnis as the young Leonardo & Lisa.)

And then, just two weeks later, our second grandson was born!

Aidan
Thomas
Broderick

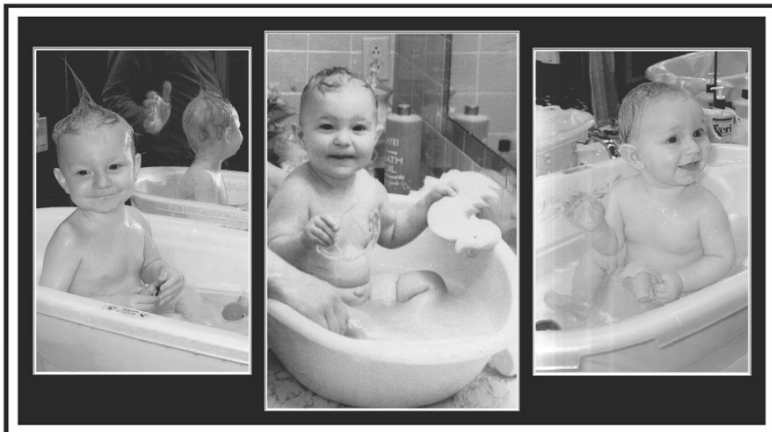
(7 lbs. 5 oz.)

June 23, 2006



William's reaction was priceless and this photo was printed in our local newsletter!

You'll have to pardon the preponderance of pictures featuring my grandsons over these next pages. But after all, this account of my life has been recorded for them more than anyone else and my single greatest hope is that they'll always remember their Nana and me and the unbounded love that we both had for them.



(Here's William, Pk and Aidan, all at the same age!)

Aidan was curious and outgoing from the start. From the moment he could crawl and begin to express himself he showed an innate spark of creativity.



Gifts were superfluous. We had everything we'd ever hoped for or wanted.

By now, our William was showing a natural ability and zeal for puzzles and process. Even before he could read, he would work solely from the diagrams to assemble complex structures with scores of moving pieces. His spatial relations skills were off the charts!



Ria and I celebrated our 75th birthdays that next year.



That spring was also our 50th Wedding Anniversary. No small feat for sure. But while everyone seemed eager to tell us what “hard work” marriage was, I never found it to be so. Life is hard work, certainly. And growing old is difficult too, but marriage, I think – at least in our case – made everything easier. Division of labor – allowing the other to play to their strengths (as I said before) seemed the key. Ria and I just felt fortunate to finally be affiliated with such a rarified and lauded club.

Once again, we celebrated with friends old and new, carrying on our lifelong practice of stirring everyone together. Good people would always mix well without effort or interference from us, we’d found. And, after all these years, weren’t we lucky to have our essential ingredients still at the ready for any size dish?

Our maid of honor, Patricia,

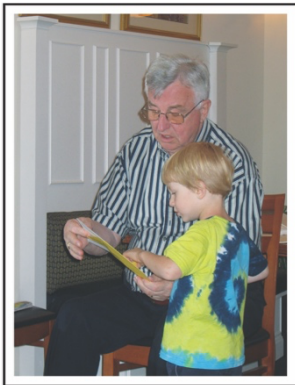
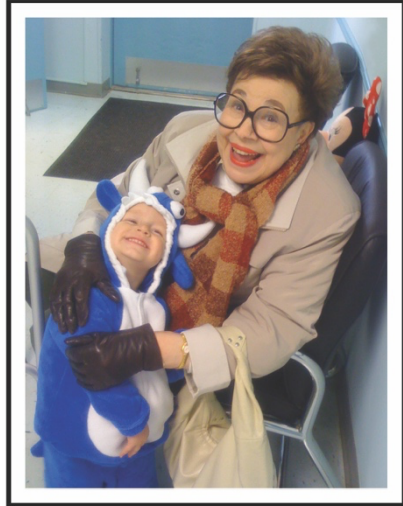


and our best man, Nick.

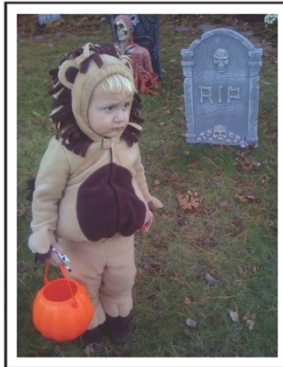


That milestone awakened in me a need to look back and archive old photos for future generations. CD-R collections of the completed scans were distributed to family members and many of those preserved images have found their way into this book. It also occurred to me that Pk’s childhood rocking chair should be a family heirloom.

I suppose I was tying a bow on the past as a means of bridging it to the present where all these new memories were being created.



So many wonderful images from these early years.



These are
just a few
of our most
cherished.



Despite how it looks, Ria and I were anything but insular during this period. Our schedule continued to brim with dinners, events, and weekends away, especially for weddings and christenings.

I have fifteen nieces and nephews, most of whom you've met as children in earlier chapters. And at least that number again (the children of very close friends) who call me Uncle Ed. With a great deal of pride, I can say that every one of them grew up to be solid and productive citizens. I've delighted in watching them pursue paths as diverse as their talents and passions and not one has strayed from the values which our generation strove so hard to instill in them.

It's been especially gratifying to see my goddaughter, Pam Hunt, and my godson, Michael Macri, discover purpose and passion in their work and also find lasting love in partners who – in each case – could only be described as their soulmates.



(Here in '05 with my sister Pat, and Brett & Kay, with their two children, Aaron & Ellie.)

And, during this same period, Michael married Lorren Becker who was a match for all of his most enviable qualities. Gleeeful, compassionate and shamelessly romantic, they've proved to be winning partners in all quarters, including the pickleball courts!

(On their wedding day in 2004 with Rocco & Theresa.)

Pam married Brian Thomas in 2002 after an ecological survey placed them together in the wilderness. Two of a kind, and equally at ease at a masquerade ball or a glacier lake, they're always on an adventure!



Never before had the blessings of having a close-knit family and many lifelong friends mattered so much as when Ria discovered that she would need open-heart surgery to save her life.

Everyone rallied around to help her overcome her hesitancy, but I do believe it was William and Aidan who, in the end, gave Ria the courage to get through it. In December of 2009, she put her faith in the superb professionals at the Ocean Medical Center.

It was mid-procedure when they elevated her risk from a double bypass to a quadruple. I was not at all confident that she would come out of it alive.



It was a long road back through rehab and beyond. Edward chose that moment to return home to help. Ria had lived with chronic back pain since her thirties, and a minor heart attack in the late '80s had also taken its toll, but after that operation, she'd forever be in a weakened state and working at quarter capacity.



Edward stayed on. He decided to use the break to record the songs from his musical and so Donya moved in too! We were thankful for their help and company but also for the vitality which their work brought to our home. They had learned to use all the latest software & equipment to create a fully orchestrated cast album!

This quality time with Edward was a gift for Ria, who made it quite clear that her last remaining wish was to see him married.

As fortune would have it, Edward had just met a new someone through the most random of circumstances. Edward had been out “celebrating” on a weekday with his best friend from college, Tom Christopoul, when Tom was called back to the office (of a company he’d just been made CEO of). Tom brought Edward into the conference room and there, returning his flirtations from across the table, was Jennifer Bliss Raskin.

Jen was a former attorney and CPA, now making her career in corporate consulting. She was brilliant, worldly, and highly adaptable having been schooled in a dozen locations from Hawaii to Jakarta and Oakland to Ann Arbor. She’d recently arrived in New York City after opening her firm’s offices in Sydney, Australia.



Jen had a five-year-old daughter named Sophie. And just as soon as it became clear that Edward and Sophie would be ideal for one another, their wedding date was set for “March Forth,” the only date that’s also a command!

Not only was Tom their best man but, dressed as the Mad Hatter, he ‘performed’ their ceremony which Edward had created based on the themes of Alice in Wonderland. It was held at Alice’s Teacup on the Upper West Side.



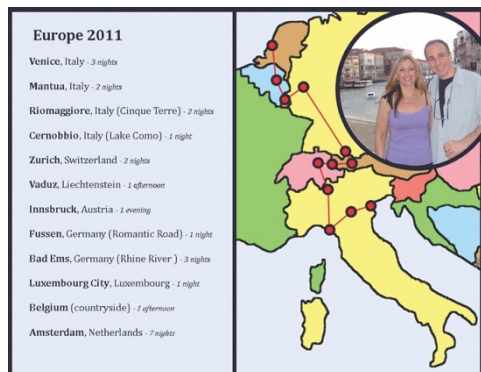


Their five guests were William & Aidan, Sophie's cousin Bria, her best friend Avery, and Sophie (with hand raised) for whom the entire affair had been conceived and customized!

Edward and Jen spent twenty-four days driving across Europe at whim, knowing only Venice and Amsterdam as their points of arrival and departure!



All manner of surprises, gifts, and confections punctuated the vows and parables!



Their honeymoon continued on with a poolside reception in Kailua Beach, hosted by Jen's father Philip and stepmom Miriam. Their friend (former Governor of Hawaii), Linda Lingle, presided over the proceedings.

Ria and I loved Jen. She was all that we'd ever hoped for Edward, a good heart, a sound head, an adventurous spirit and above all, she valued his creative essence. Plus, she was giving Edward a chance to experience being a parent. Ria was finally at peace.





May 7, 2012, had been a normal day for us. I had prepared Ria's evening cocktail, and after dinner she'd enjoyed her phone calls with Pk, Edward, and a few friends. We went to bed at the usual time, and nothing was out of the ordinary. That is, until Ria woke me at 1:37 AM to say that she'd lost all the strength in her body. It wasn't very long after that when she wasn't responding at all.

Within the hour Ria was being examined at the Ocean County Medical Center where they confirmed a brain hemorrhage and reported the worst news imaginable.

I called Pk and Edward at 5:30 in the morning. As you can well imagine, these were impossible calls to make but being in shock, I somehow made them. I was completely frank with them that their mother would not be recovering from this. Pk and Edward rushed to the hospital with Joe and Jen.

Unconscious, Ria received her last rites from Father Bernardino and was transferred to the hospice unit where all of us could be at her bedside for what became the last thirty hours of her life.

Patricia and Patrick began a race against time from Florida and very nearly made it. Pam, Kim, and Kenny Granowski, were all able to make it to the hospital in time to say goodbye. Edward and Jen were holding Ria's hand when she passed as Pk, Joe and I looked on.

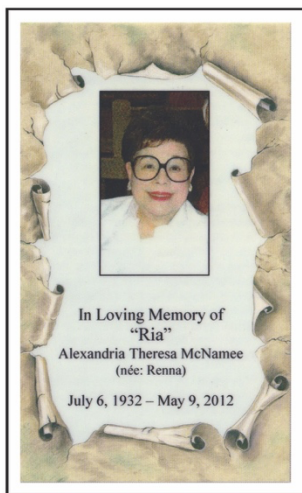
It was in the early afternoon on Wednesday, May 9th when the Oliverie Funeral Home arrived at the hospital to take Ria. We all stood in the corridor in disbelief as they rolled away her gurney.

The kids and I had to pull ourselves together and begin making decisions. I expect many of you reading this (if not most) know that moment. Out of necessity, funerals have always happened quickly but even in modern times, this custom has continued. To reach out to every person one knows and call them to our side might be the furthest thing from our minds when we first enter grief, but the collective wisdom of tradition forces our hand.

Arrangements for food and flowers and photos and music and readings occupy us through our trauma, preventing us from shutting down. And the arrival of friends and family, en masse, helps us to begin the long process of closure and healing.

That year, Mother's Day fell on Sunday, May 13th which drove our decision to hold Ria's wake on that Friday with her mass on the following day. Everyone came together to make the schedule work. Edward wrote his mother's prayer card which read:

Ria was born in Brooklyn to Sylvester and Frances Renna. She graduated cum Laud in mathematics from Adelphi College at age 20 and completed advanced studies at Columbia and Yeshiva Universities. After teaching mathematics, Ria joined



AT&T, working in engineering and management roles for the next decade. In 1980 she began a second career in real estate.

Ria was an efficiency expert, a great communicator, and a harbinger of good taste who pursued excellence in everything she did. Professionally, she was a woman ahead of her time. In her relationships, she was that rare being who was confident and grateful enough to put other's needs before her own without a thought. In fact (and without hyperbole), Ria was described as "a saint" more often – and by more people – than any other person we know.*

Ria's greatest joy in life has always been her family, especially her two grandsons, William, and Aidan.

* Actual sainthood status applied for and pending.



I owe everything to Ria. She had this vision that I was somehow a great husband, and then she sacrificed so much and worked so hard to make it true. I had a wonderful life because of her.

Every family experiences 'the firsts' after a loved one passes. The first birthdays, first Thanksgiving, first Christmas, etcetera. Pk, Edward and I marked all of those occasions together with remembrances of their mother (and for that matter, every major occasion since) but by the following summer I knew I needed to do something big to turn the page and bring us all into a new era of traditions. So, I invited my children and their families to be my guests on a Disney Cruise through the Caribbean.



It was just what everyone needed!



In Ria's final years, her often repeated wish was that I keep our children close. I saw this cruise as one concrete thing I could do to honor that.

