

In Bodying Grief - Text by Jackie Moynahan

I remember clearly the day when you couldn't find the words - "You know the round thing, it goes around and round..." you said. After some guesses I figured out it was the ferris wheel.

It maybe wasn't the first time but we didn't talk on the phone much, so it was the first time it struck me.

I think it was later that year that the diagnosis came - Alzheimer's.

That was 2020 and then you died in 2023.

The decline was slow at first, the last time we went out into the world & had dinner all together was in 2022.

I didn't know that night - when you had trouble with the menu & needed support to find the restroom, so we kept an eye out for you on the way back, - that night would be the last time I saw you outside of the walls of a rehab or long term care facility.

We had a good visit that March before you died.

You didn't know who I was and that sucked BUT you remembered Fergus, my little stuffed frog and that your daughter had one - me actually.

You were in your own world at that point - a parallel universe your brain constructed as reality. For me it was fascinating & heart breaking at the same time. Just about two months later you called it quits & transitioned on to join your sister & parents & some friends who went before.

But let's go back to when you were young. Stories I heard.

You loved peas so much the only way grandma was able to get you to put your hands in your 1st birthday cake was to put peas on top & even then, you picked them off - individually.

You raced cars as a youngster and owned a 1967 stingray corvette, specially painted a gray/light blue. When I asked "Why didn't you keep it!?!?" You said, "Well we needed to buy a house.... "You were practical.

I spent time at your shop, learned from you more than I realized until I saw you fading away,,,,piece by piece - disappearing into just memories.

I go back & forward in time, my mind wanders. Back in the younger days - you taught me things.

How to ride a bike, how to look under the hood of a car - to check the oil, antifreeze, the red stuff means the transmission, a big problem - how to fix things, shoot a gun. All the not so girly things.

I see now how quietly supportive you were. Even when I didn't make sense to you - the strange lofts spaces I lived in, my multiple jobs, using my limited funds for art, not savings. "When was I going to get a real job?" "Have you thought about buying a house instead of renting....?"

You gave me your work ethic and some piece of your fixing skills which I now see have been the support beams on which I've created my life. Upon which I've been able to make it work, craft a full life so far....

I'm sad you don't get to be here for this part.

But I am not the only one convinced that you had a hand from the beyond in getting me settled here in Olympia in a practical house & you keep pulling my attention to all the things that need fixing, which I need to do without your guidance.

Again and again I turn back to moments when I was frustrated and dismissive and now feel the weight of lost opportunity.

It is heavy like a giant watermelon holding me there.

Squeezing out the joyful moments that make me/us laugh -

“remember that time.....”

I had to laugh, cause it was oh so terrible to watch you slowly dissolve, going further and further out of reach & now I like to think that you float out in the universe somewhere.

And I am sad about that AND I am relieved for you to not exist in a limbo state, in a reality that I can't participate in and you can't control.

I like to think that you were just
tucked away like Alice in Wonderland.

Playing in a construct of old good memories that brought you joy, comfort and peace as you took your last breath. Not alone as you transitioned onward in your journey.

Copyright 2025. May not be reproduced or copied.