

Farewell Father: Gisela Koehl

Dear Dad,

I write this letter to you in the comforting darkness of the passenger cabin, surrounded by the soothing sound of the airplane's constant hum.

I spent the last eight days with you and watched you disappear slowly. We went from having Easter Lunch together to watching you suffer in a sterile hospital bed. Went from greeting each other as father and daughter to saying farewell with nothing more than a gentle squeeze of your hand, from a warm hello to a cold goodbye.

I am on my way back to what I call home now. It is not easy to leave. Not easy to leave you. But it feels like I have nothing else to give. I am so grateful I got to sit with you and listen. Got to hold your hand and gently talk to you. Got to look after you, at least for a short little while.

On this journey, I find myself thinking: Even though we didn't always have the greatest relationship, if it weren't for you, I wouldn't be who I am today. I am not me without all the experiences we had together - positive and negative.

So here is my letter to you, Dad, to thank you for everything we shared - good and bad. For making me the person I am today.

Thank you for taking me for hikes and bike rides. For taking me to the pool every Sunday morning. For introducing me to Beethoven's 5th and Irish Coffee. Thank you for instilling in me a love for travel and adventure. For supporting my crazy dreams, no matter how outrageous they were. For calling me your Schnuckel. Your Schnallewatz. Your Posemuckel.

While spending the last few days in your empty apartment, I found a big red folder with my name on it. In it, I found all the blog posts I had written in the past, printed in colour and filed in no particular order. My year of teaching abroad, of living my dream. And maybe your secret dream as well.

Thank you, Dad, for reading my blog posts. For reading this letter, though I will never mail it. Thank you for being my father and for being the best father you could be. Thank you for making me who I am today. I miss you already.

G

(Five days after my flight back home, my father passed away. On my flight back to the funeral, I watched the thick layer of clouds beneath the airplane disappear and float away. Silently, I made my way through the clear blue sky to say one last goodbye.)