A Time For Rest

Since my Mom passed at the end of June I've been to two memorials: a family friend and a great aunt. Two people Mom loved dearly.

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Two days ago I was thinking, "I haven't heard or seen anything coincidental that I could playfully asign to mom meddling/messaging me from beyond the grave..." I try to rationalize my feelings about the spirit, even though I am certain in my heart of hearts that there is something beyond these clunky bodies that temporarily contain our souls.

Then yesterday, Mom was stirring.

Understandably so, in the last two weeks she's been joined in the great beyond by two people who were dear friends on her mortal journey. One was John Lynn, who Mom worked for at a drug store in Waynesboro, VA when she was a teenager. I knew John in my own teenage years as one half of "Joyce and John!" You know, those inseparable couples that are seldom mentioned apart. Mom and dad would go play cards and hang out with them a lot, particularly in the time just after my diagnosis.

Joyce and John's home was a safe haven for them to escape a lot of the worries of home. Until I called, late in the evening, "Hey, can you bring home a slice of pizza?" Mom tried to get me to eat better, but she also had a theory that the garbage I put into my HIV-positive 13 year-old body was too much for the virus to process. You could say that my original "cocktail" in the late 80s was a slice a pizza, a slurpee and an eclair.

"The 7-Eleven."

Last week, I attended John's service with my dad, who got a little overwhelmed. My heart goes out to dad, because "Pam and Bud" are one of those couples. Mom was the big dreamer of the duo, the mover and the shaker while my dad was a bit of the nervous nelly about some of those ideas. In a lot of ways, they were opposites. I feel like my dad knew and acknowledged how much he needed her while my mom had developed a toughness that didn't allow her to acknowledge the vulnerability of needing someone else.

But she needed Dad, too. And in her final weeks, he was the only person she was comfortable having around. What gives me the most peace in her passing is that she got to see that loyalty in no uncertain terms before she was reunited with all of the loved ones that she's lost... people that, at one point in her life, she needed.

Yesterday was the service for her aunt, Janet. A kind, humble and loving woman that married into mom's family. And she married a real character in my grandmother's brother, Ted! Like my mom and dad, Ted and Janet balanced each other out well. And I hope Ted's saxophone playin' was some of the comforting sounds that led Janet into her next big adventure.

At her service, one of Janet's daughters told me that mom really helped Janet out last year when she was having a medical issue that was giving her doctors pause. Mom, as she was known for, had some kind of home remedy solution and laid it all out for Janet: what to do each day and for how long. "It worked!" Janet's daughter said, beaming.

Mom was all about figuring out solutions to medical woes, and I swear she had a beautiful mind for that, always storing data and having it ready for loved ones if medical science was falling a little or a lot bit short.

Yesterday I woke up well rested. When I turned to the clock it was one minute before my iPhone alarm was set to go off. Previously I felt like Mom was sending me a message through my old clunky nightstand clock from 1989. Yesterday morning I took it as one more chance for her to wake me up in the morning, like she did before my HIV diagnosis gave me the golden ticket to dreamland.

"You had that alarm set on your phone, son… who knows if that damn thing was going to go off? I don't trust those iPhones."

I know, Mom. And I appreciate you waking me up.

Now, of course I can't be certain that she woke me up. But it's fun to think she did so I kind of rolled with it as I rolled out of bed, and it really helped me start the day on the right foot. I smiled thinking of the countless mornings that I just laid in bed like a log. And the countless mornings mom let me stay home from school, because she knew my body and mind needed rest more than public schooling.

Part of my peace with her passing is that, no matter how you slice it, Mom is resting. She is finally resting. I've never known anyone to have the energy and zest for life that she did. It was hard to keep up with her. It was pretty tough on her when her body started placing limitations on what she could and couldn't do. Her body kept taking away the things she loved to do, which can chip away and really take it's toll on your happiness. Come to think of it, I don't think mom ever rested easy. There was too much excitement in a day to warrant laying in bed. To many things to do. Someone out there might need her help.

At the end of her life, she was kind of forced to sit and lay around. That comes easier to me and my dad, but for her it must have felt like a form of torture. But now Mom has respite from all of that. Her body and the weight this world put on her are no longer an obstacle. Before yesterday, when I was thinking that maybe the signs from her would become less and less obvious over time, I decided to send her a little message.

And it went a little something like this...

It’s okay, Mom. I’m okay. Be with loved ones you’ve missed. Check in on the people here who can use a little extra help... like you did when you were in your body. But me? I am safe. I am loved. And you were, are and will always be loved, too.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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