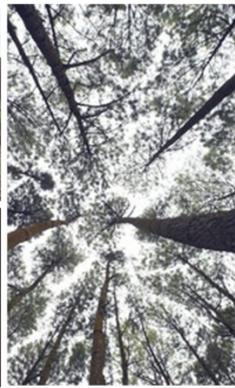




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Shine Through Your Brilliance and Transform Your Life Experience

Revisiting my Dad’s Death While Telling Others About his Life

By: Melissa Drake

Hi, I’m Melissa, Joe’s youngest daughter. Thank you for coming to celebrate my dad’s life. Dad is rejoicing right now as he is reunited with my mother, his wife of 51 years.

Dad worked at a job he loved as a television engineer at Iowa Public Television. After thirty years on the job, at the age of 56, he had a stroke that wiped out his peripheral vision on the right side of his right eye. It also caused him to forget everything he knew about living. He had to relearn to tie his shoes, to say the alphabet, how to speak and how to read. He even had to relearn what food was.

I remember a weekend he was spending at home from rehab. He wanted something to eat and he tried to describe it to me. He told me he wanted something that was small, tastes kind of like meat, and is sometimes covered in chocolate. I had no idea. After searching through the cupboards with his prompts I finally figured out he was looking for peanuts.

After the stroke, life for him became a series of questions and answers. Instead of becoming bitter and angry after his stroke as many people do, dad became the gentlest man with the quirkiest sense of humor. As frustrating as life sometimes was for him, he was equipped with a sense of humor that enabled him to laugh at himself and make those around him feel comfortable with his condition. When he’d say something odd like “I’m going to mow the dog and wash the lawn,” we would smile at him and he’d reply, “That’s not right, I’m just silly.”

He was silly for sure. The grandchildren have named him “Funny Grandpa” because of his antics. He loved to spend time with them and shower them with love. He taught us girls and our children values that have helped us navigate life, treat others with respect, and to always have a service mindset. His actions spoke louder than words as he was always there to help out in any way he could.

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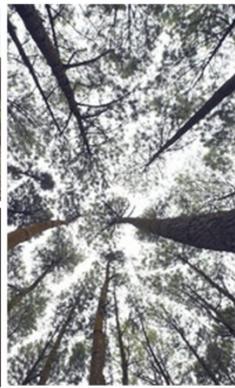
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As I've aged, I've become closer and closer to Dad. Generally when I'd call the house, I'd talk to mom almost exclusively. Over the last year I've had some great conversations with Dad as he's tried to impart his wisdom.

Earlier this week, when I arrived at Hospice, dad was thrashing about trying to catch his breath. He repeatedly said, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe." My sisters and I tried to settle him down and help him to be more comfortable. The situation was relentless. In previous days, Dad had let the other girls know he was ready to go. He said things like, "I'll see you up there," and "I'm ready."

After taking a short break I came back to Hospice, I held dad's hand and rubbed his arm. I started talking to him about Heaven and the promises of God. I told him that Mom was waiting for him on the other side and that he should go to her. I told him that in Heaven he could be free of all of his worries, he would have a healthy body, he could see, and he would have eternal life with Jesus Christ.

I talked this way for about 10 minutes. As I talked his breathing got slower and slower. As I shared more promises, his breathing became even slower. Eventually, his chest stopped moving and he was taking some small breaths from his mouth. Then in a silent rhythm, he stopped breathing. It was the most peaceful thing I've ever experienced. The promises of God are real for Dad, and they are real for us today. Rest assured.

