

Late night thoughts

I usually spend Saturday evenings at my oldest daughter's house. This is 1 hour away from where I live, so it is a bit of a drive to get home. We go late into the evening playing all sort of games, the normal game is some sort of 'role playing' game. The games are always fun for me, but that is not the focus of this post.

Nope, the focus is my thoughts on the drive home, and the 45 minutes to an hour I need to spend to 'unfocus' from my drive home. Driving late at night, I push my body awake. Kind of like a coffee kick without the coffee. I can just force myself to be alert, unless I'm really very tired. This comes in very handy on long drives, or other activities that need my full attention. It is a 'gift' I've always had. As with all gifts, there is a downside. It does take some time to unwind.

Anyway after all this, I was thinking on the drive home about where I am in life. I am an only parent, but my daughters are growing up. Two are married and out of the house, one is engaged to be married soon, the youngest is now a senior in High School, just months from turning 18. They don't need their dad as much as they did 5 short years ago. I've been a widower for 5 years, so in most peoples eyes I would be considered single. I won't go into the ins and outs of all the differences with this label, but for me, I prefer the widower label to the single label. I never made the choice to be alone, it was kind of forced on me. That in and of itself is enough for me.

I now know of some people trying to 'set me up'. Dating, while it has crossed my mind, isn't my main concern. I'm not out there looking. If someone falls in my lap, so to speak, I guess I wouldn't mind. But looking for someone to be with is not my primary goal right now. I have good friends, wonderful daughters, somewhat strange, but likable family, and hobbies

that keep my mind occupied. I've been busy trying to find out who I am. For so many years I was part of a well oiled team. That team got split up, and now I'm a solo act. I'm just starting to find out what is important to me. There really hasn't been any time to spend dating. I'm not even sure I want to go through the hassle of getting to know someone again. Never enjoyed that when younger, I'm fairly certain I won't now. My wife and I kind of just clicked together. Not from the first meeting, but within a few dates, it was like we knew each other forever. Spent 20 years both knowing her and getting to know her better, not a bad way to spend 20 years. Now, I'm not even sure what I would be looking for, but then again, I wasn't sure 25+ years ago either.

I was also thinking about my weekly gaming sessions at my daughter's house. Does this infringe on the time I should be spending with the two younger daughter still (at least somewhat) in the 'nest'? Do they need more of my time, or is this a good use of my time. I tend to enjoy the gaming, and it does relax me. Good point in dealing with the day to day troubles/situations my two at home can give me. I'm thinking I should just talk to the other 2 involved. Yep, that is the answer there.

Also thinking about how much time I should spend with the theater. Yes, I'm currently preparing for a show, I'm on the production board, I tend to volunteer for other projects. Am I spending too much time there?

Do I spend too much time blogging? Yes, sometimes I do. (like now) Could I use time better? Sure. Are other interests suffering from this? You betcha. But this is the place I clear my head, so I have more room to fit all the other stuff going on. Doesn't need to be a daily habit, but the clearing is beneficial.

Yes, all this and more went through my brain on an hour drive. Now I've relaxed and I'm able to get much needed

rest. Read through at the playhouse later this afternoon.

5 years ago... Final chapter ??

I don't know that I will have much time to blog in the next few days and I wanted to get this down. 5 years ago this weekend, I spent as much of the weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) with my wife. The two youngest were spending time at Grandma's house (with Mom), so The oldest and I were back and forth taking care of the multitude of animals.

I really don't remember anymore what we did on Friday or Saturday. Those days were lost in the many days traveling back and forth from home to Toledo. But the final Sunday I remember very well indeed.

I took my oldest in to visit (Again, I don't know what day), and that Sunday my in-laws took my youngest 3 out for the day. I spent Sunday the 28th with my wife. We didn't do a lot. She sat and did some word search puzzles and a crossword or two. I was reading various magazines and books. A nice quiet time. Around lunchtime I found out that the movie [The Incredible Mr. Limpet](#). Sarah and I both liked that movie, so we watched it while eating. We had Campbell's Vegetable soup and some crackers. I drank coffee, she had some hot tea. She dozed on and off while watching the movie. When it was over she said she was very tired and wanted to get some rest.

She leaned on me walking down the hall, so she wouldn't lose her balance. I tucked her in gave her a hug and kiss. She slept the rest of the afternoon and into the evening. The rest of the family came back. I took my 2nd daughter back home that evening. Late in the evening my wife went to the emergency room with breathing problems. Shortly after that she was

transferred back up to the Ann Arbor Hospital.

That Monday I found out that the cancer had grown back to more than the original size. She had developed pneumonia. She had very little time. That night (early morning really) at 3:55 she passed away. That will be 5 years this Tuesday morning.

For the first few months, I would wake up every morning at 3:55. Then it was every Tuesday at 3:55. Then it was the 30th of each month at 3:55. Finally it was only on the 30th of December. I'm not sure what will happen this Tuesday, it doesn't matter really. The memories are different this year. The anniversaries are more introspective than really sad and depressing.

Many things have helped over the years. Wonderful family, good friends, theater therapy and many other things. I've been lucky and blessed.

There is one other thing to mention. The night after Sarah's death my three youngest were at home. We tried to welcome in the new year. Not a joyful evening, but one of shock. The thing I remember of that night is seeing all the girls in their mother's Eeyore sweats. Bittersweet, yes, but again I remember feeling blessed with my daughters.

So this is the final entry of what happened 5 years ago. Starting the 31st it is the 6th year of being a widower, I have no idea where that journey will lead.

Five Years Ago (Part 6)

Christmas Eve 5 years ago was not an experience I would ever want to go through again. My dear wife was very sick and

feeling bad from the latest round of radiation. Snow was falling heavily, and it took much longer to get to Toledo than anticipated. On top of all that we were going to put our dog in a kennel so we could spend the holidays with family in Toledo.

It snowed so hard, that I could not find the kennel. It was my first time there, my oldest sister set it up for us, our Christmas gift. Road signs were covered with snow and we spent a long time trying to find the right turns. The dog never made it to the kennel. There was no room for him at my in-laws, and a cold cramped basement for him at my sister's, were Christmas Eve dinner was.

Tired and angry, I took my daughters to dinner with my side of the family. After dinner, I dropped the two youngest off at Grandma's and took the dog and my second oldest back home. With about 8 hours of rest, my daughter and I went back to Grandma's to have dinner with my wife's side of the family. For me, it was a very tense day, but I put it behind me as much as possible to make sure my wife had the best day possible.

We really didn't know how much more time she would have, and I didn't want to know.

After that Christmas, I tried to forget the events of the night before. I was never able to. 5 years later I remember almost every word. Words said in anger and frustration. If I could take them back I would. Little did I know how they would haunt me. That Christmas Eve was not the one I would ever have wanted for our last one together.

5 years ago (part 5)

Five years ago this evening, my second youngest daughter celebrated her 16th birthday. It was the last birthday dinner with her mother, and our last evening out as a family with her. That dinner was no my daughters pick for a favorite place to eat, but it was close, and we had some gift certificates to go there. Money was tight at that time, with all the bills and extra gas that was used for trips back and forth to Toledo. It was a place we could afford. Not exactly what you want for a sweet 16 birthday, but it was the only thing available. I was sorry at the time, but I couldn't put it into words for my daughter.

Today that same daughter turned 21. The family left at home went out for her birthday again. She brought along her fiance. It was a better dinner, at least it was a restaurant she chose. With others in the family we went out for Pizza last Sunday, also her choice. I'm hoping the 21st birthday was better than the 16th.

Here is to my latest 21 year old. I hope you had a happy birthday, and wish many more for you. Love you bunches.

listening to old songs

It started with the Billy Joel's "Piano Man" in the car this evening. Darling youngest wanted to hear the whole thing, but we need to get out of the car.

So here I am finding old songs and listening to a few tunes.

Anyway there are a few Beatles songs that just hit a certain

part of my being... This one hit tonight..

The Beatles "I Will"...

Who knows how long I've loved you
You know I love you still
Will I wait a lonely lifetime
If you want me to—I will.

For if I ever saw you
I didn't catch your name
But it never really mattered
I will always feel the same.

Love you forever and forever
Love you with all my heart
Love you whenever we're together
Love you when we're apart.

And when at last I find you
Your song will fill the air
Sing it loud so I can hear you
Make it easy to be near you
For the things you do endear you to me
How you know I will
I will.

Just one song that brings back so many memories.

5 years ago (Part 4)

5 years ago at this time, my wife was spending her time at her parents. This is 1 hour away from our home, her husband and 3

of her daughters. On the nights we couldn't visit, we had to make do with phone calls.

It was also at this time that I took one of the afghans she made to provide a bit more warmth while sleeping. I woke up early this morning under that same afghan. My early morning mind was thinking of how it was like being wrapped in a hug. I guess in a way it was.

5 years ago (part 3)

There are times I remember going up to Ann Arbor for radiation treatments. I didn't get to many of them, because I was trying to make sure the girls had as normal of life at home as possible. Her parents, my oldest sister and I all took her up for the treatments.

My memory is of one day. We were in the waiting room until the staff was ready for her. My dear wife started talking to another patient, laughing, joking and smiling about what they were both going to face. The other patient came in feeling quite down, and left with a very big thank you and smile. I've often wondered what happened to the other patients we met.

I'm not sure, but I imagine that this happened more than just on my trips to Ann Arbor. It was her way of dealing with the stress. Sometimes she seemed just so tired, but she found time to laugh when she could. After her death, I receive multiple cards from the doctors and nurses that knew her during her hospital stay and treatment. I had multiple comments on how infectious her laugh and smile were.

Today, I miss that laugh and the smile. There are many things I wanted to do that year. One was to get a video camera to

record some family history. I did not get the camera at that time. It took me until after she died to finally get that stupid camera. And what do I do? My first taping, I misplace the tapes. My daughters were in their first play at the playhouse. I put those tapes someplace safe. So far, I've only found 1 of 2. I haven't even played it through yet. Not even sure which act I have.

It was my hope to get some of our history recorded before we lose it. I don't have a recording of her laugh. I do have pictures of the smile. As my memory fades, I lose the sounds of her voice. After 5 years I guess that is the hardest thing. Forgetting more each day. The memories are still there, but they have lost the warm vibrant colors of years gone by. Each day they fade just a little more.

I miss that laugh.

Five Years ago Today (part 2 – The blur)

Those days between Thanksgiving and Christmas were a blur. Seemed like non-stop travel from home to hospital, or home to in-laws. When my wife was released and scheduled for cancer treatments, she had to stay within an hour of the Ann Arbor Hospital. Our house did not meet that restriction, so she stayed with her parents. So between work (we still weren't accepting the forgone conclusion), taking care of the girls we would drive to see her often. Ann Arbor is about 2 hours away, her parents 1 hour. That meant a lot of time in the car. Often in very poor weather. It became a blur. Very few days stick out in my mind. I remember the blur.

The stretch of 23 between Toledo and Ann Arbor has been in my nightmares. I saw that road too many times during that month. I've had dreams of car crashes, getting lost or stranded on that section of road. It was not a road I traveled often before that November/December, but it became one to avoid if at all possible. It brings up memories of the Blur.

Five Years ago today (part 1)

Day 1 is almost finished. 5 years ago today, I found out that my wife had terminal cancer. We knew it was cancer before that day, but we didn't know anything about the kind of cancer. At the University of Michigan Medical Center we found out it was a very rare aggressive cancer, most likely terminal.

This day five years ago put a gray shadow on the Thanksgivings that were to follow.

I don't care what people say, time does not heal all wounds. Time makes some wounds bearable.

Well I did make it through the day. Actually had a relaxing time. Spending time with people/family who knew my wife and were not afraid to bring her into the conversation of the day helped.

We didn't have a traditional Thanksgiving meal. There was no turkey or dressing. The mashed potatoes were part of a Shepard's Pie. Breads of all kinds filled the table. There was plenty of food and even more conversation.

I had a long talk with my dear wife's parents. They do treat me well. Saw two of my four daughters. One is still many states away, the other spent the day with her future husband's

family. That is the way life goes. Families grow and the young leave the nest. This really isn't a sad time for me, I'm proud to see my children grow and become adults.

So there are things to be thankful for after all

Good night folks.

Looking at the past

There are times I spend contemplating the past. I've done this most of my life. Quiet reflection on the things I've done, the things I've seen others do, what I could change, what I can't. Pondering the what ifs in life.

Then things happen, and I stopped doing this for a time. Contemplating the past was, to say the least, painful. Too many things happened in too short of time. The what ifs in life were overwhelming.

It took a long time to get to the point when I could look backwards without dwelling on those what ifs. But recently the what ifs have crept their way back in. As I've mentioned before, I think it has something to do with the turning of the calendar, but also with the weather this year. There were days in 2003, late October, early November when I was taking Sarah to this Doctor or that specialist that were unseasonably warm. Nobody knew what was wrong. The weather later turned cold, as Novembers will, and the bottom dropped out. A week before Thanksgiving we knew it was cancer. That date, that day is in a few short weeks. Sobering thought that. As with the early months of 2004, I now wonder what if.

Writing this help to clear my mind, as I so aptly put on my

page header. The what ifs aren't so pressing. A futile wandering of a tired mind, that sorely misses its best part and partner.