

November 30, 2013

Dear Ones,

As I think you all know, mom died Wednesday night, one hour before midnight on November 27. Paul, Matt and Joe had just left and Laura and I were in the other room trying to close our eyes for a few moments. I went in to check on her before trying to get some sleep and she was gone. It had all happened so fast.

Monday when I stopped by to say hi there was a marked difference in her. For a while she had only been nibbling at her food, getting by mainly on Ensure and fruit juice. I looked in the cupboard and she only had five left so I told her I would get more but she said she thought we should 'wait and see' if it was necessary.

She told me she wouldn't be making it to the Thanksgiving party Bert and Taylor were having for all of us. She had been looking forward to it: a chance for her to see everyone at one time. Visits had become exhausting for her, she felt she couldn't keep up her side of the conversation, and that really bothered her.

I realized that this was the moment mom had been talking about for the past few months; when she was just going to let go. We had a wonderful conversation, a final gift to me, about how much we loved and appreciated each other, how much fun we had doing things together, and how much I would miss her but that I knew she was ready to go and she should go.

She asked me what I thought would happen to her when she died and I said I didn't know but that, if nothing else, her energy and the energy of all those who have gone on before would mingle together and she would feel like she was being hugged by everyone she had ever loved.

We talked about how when our family cat died she had gone into the garage, curled up in a ball and stopped eating and I said that was what she was doing. She nodded.

When I got home I called Paul, and we decided to meet over at mom's later in the afternoon, then Helen who alerted the Otterson clan, Bruce who let the Schundlers know, and Chris Ammen (Dad's sister's son) who called his brothers.

By the time I got back to mom's Brian Rodde was already there saying goodbye, Chris and Adrienne came, and Helen arrived soon after. She decided to spend the night with mom. Tuesday morning Heather came before work, then Laura, Ashley, Tyler and Lauren, Charlie, Joe and Matt flew up from southern California, Bert and Taylor, Dana, Tara and Brooke: all to wish mom farewell and tell her what she meant to them. Via phone mom heard from Liz, Sue, Bruce and Sara, and Betsy. Stewart had called earlier Monday morning just wanting to talk to her, a premonition maybe? And those of you who did not get a chance to talk to her, I know, held thoughts of her in your hearts.

Mom slept most of that Tuesday except when someone would enter the room she perked up. She was very lucid and had short conversations with all; a few sentences only but they expressed something about the person she appreciated and wished all a good life. Then she would drift off to sleep again.

By Tuesday night she was disappointed that she was still here having said her goodbyes. That night was maybe the hardest of all; she had fitful dreams, likely due to the pain-killers (her back was hurting-she never stayed in bed very long for that reason), and she kept trying to get out of bed. She had somewhere she needed to be.

By Wednesday she was unresponsive. Paul, Matt, Joe, Laura and I took turns sitting with her and Charlie and the Ammens came by again. At one point I sang to her a song I made up because Helen said mom had asked her to sing her a song. I started telling her the story of her life... "Elsa was born in Brooklyn..." making it all the way to the great camping trips we took in the summer to the Sierras. I stopped because Laura and I decided to go home to change our clothes and shower. I never had a chance to finish her story but then, I guess, she knew how it ended.

When we returned back mom was still sleeping soundly. We talked and passed the time until Paul and the boys left around 10:30. When I

went in to check on mom at 11:00 she was gone. Mom had told Laura she didn't want to die on Thanksgiving and she got her wish.

After my dad died I felt that his spirit lingered for a few days but, I have to say, with mom it felt like she was gone right away. She had been waiting for this day and she was anxious to be off. You know she always did things with determination and a quick step.

The hole mom has left feels huge but she had been preparing us for this day and she let us down pretty gently. She lived her life as fully as she could right up to the end and died knowing she was loved and will be missed.

I think if she asked one thing of us, in return for all she gave, it would be for all of us to stay a close. It is hard with our busy schedules and expanding families but I know she would like us to try.

Lots of love and hugs,
Susan