

*Picture of the Week: February 2, 2015 – The Sails Within*

Hope you enjoyed your weekend, whether you watched the Super Bowl (I didn't have much of a rooting interest) or did something else special, rest and relaxation included. :)

There was an unfortunate event that my family and I took personally this weekend. As many of you know, my grandmother has been in a nursing home for several months and not well. It has changed my life and perspective on living, making the most of the time I have left, and gratitude. What I hadn't mentioned was my grandmother's roommate, Mrs. Wallace. Like my grandmother, Mrs. Wallace was on a ventilator and feeding tube, but what was different is she was mentally and socially aware and engaging. Though her voice wasn't audible due to a tracheotomy, if you could lip read, you could talk to her like anyone else. She would always tell members of my family and me when she needed something, and we'd get a respiratory therapist or nurse for her. Sometimes it got annoying, as she could be snippy at times, but mostly she was grateful for the help. Mrs. Wallace had one visitor at the nursing home, her son, who came most days of the week to take care of her after his work. But as time passed it seemed my family became her visitors too. She'd compliment us on our clothes, ask how we were doing and even say I love you.

I'd always come to the nursing home with my journal to write while I was with my grandmother. I remember when I first saw Mrs. Wallace, I thought she found me interesting because she always saw me journaling. It wasn't until I got to know her son when he told me his mother kept a journal like I did. Mrs. Wallace was also a fan of Albert Einstein and National Geographic, as she had pictures of Einstein on her side of the room. I liked looking at those pictures. She also always had her TV on for noise. When her son would come, he'd turn the channel to the Game Show Network, and we'd watch Family Feud or Let's Make A Deal.

Even though Mrs. Wallace probably wasn't going to leave the nursing home, I thought she had a much better chance of outliving my grandmother. It was a notion I'd grown accustomed to, but one that wouldn't last. Sometimes it seems life is different day, same things. We think everything and particularly, everyone, we see in life will always be there. If they're not, we'll at least have time to prepare for the end.

On Saturday morning I got a text from my mom while she was at the nursing home. Mrs. Wallace was sent to the hospital after she had to undergo chest compressions from what seemed to have been a heart attack. I took a yoga class, and when I got back to my phone, my mom told me Mrs. Wallace died. I'm grateful how yoga has helped me handle many things with more ease, but I was shocked at this news. Up until that day, seeing Mrs. Wallace was certain like seeing my grandmother. I couldn't fathom an empty bed until I saw it yesterday. The room never seemed so quiet.

In my last interaction with Mrs. Wallace on Thursday I didn't say goodbye as she was asleep. Now, it's goodbye, at least in this realm, for good. I'm still surprised, as are the members of my family who knew her.

As the saying goes, "tomorrow is not promised today." Yet even if we treat people in the most loving way possible like it's our last moment of life, we still cannot entirely predict what happens from there. We can only give our best in the present moment because the present is all there is. I'm sure all of us

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have lost people unexpectedly and contemplated our last interactions with them. We may not always have the closure or ending we wanted when these people die, but we can be grateful for their life and what they meant to us. We must also remember the other loved ones still alive who may need our support too.

If nothing else, every moment we are conscious of it, we should give in love. We don't have to live every moment like it's our last, but what a gift that would be if we did. Have you ever contemplated what you would do or say if it was your last day to live? Such a question is so big, even I can't entirely fathom it. But I can give my best and love my best in every interaction I have, including my interaction with myself. Unpleasant surprises happen. Things change. We all have bad days. It's part of this human experience. Life is about the present, the only thing for certain.

As always, I appreciate your support, interest and sharing my words with others. I do it because I love to write, and I'm glad to have a positive influence on people as much as I can. As you know I have my own ups and downs like everyone else. I'm just here to make the most of my life because I hope when it's my time to die, I'll be content to do so.

The picture to the right is from my November visit to Monterey in California. May you always find a feather in your path. Thank you all and have a blessed week.

