

A Small Blue Bowl

By Sandy McCune Westin



This small, royal blue china bowl, just three inches wide and one inch deep, is beautifully decorated with slightly etched white lines and fan-shaped patterns which catch the eye. The deep blue glazed surface has a sheen, smooth to the touch as fine silk, while the geometric etchings dip just slightly into the surface all around it, inside and out.

Each time I see that little gem of a bowl on my cupboard shelf, I smile and send a hug across the miles and years to my Friend, Ilima, in Maui. It arrived last Christmas by mail, the latest token of what has been a ritual between us over these past three score and more years of our friendship. It had started back when we were both struggling single moms, when Christmas meant taking care to make others' holidays be full of love and laughter, old family decorations, and fresh new evergreen trees. We had begun exchanging just a small gift so that at least that one package under our trees would hold a secret surprise, something we hadn't bought and wrapped ourselves to delight our children.

This tiny blue bowl was to be the last tangible gift I will ever receive from my friend. She passed into that good night just three months later, her battle with cancer finally over. When she was first diagnosed back in 2006, the doctors told her to expect no more than six years' reprieve. With typical stubbornness, we put our heads together, determined to do whatever we could to slay this latest dragon of life. Her ammunition of choice was to be the best nutrition science and nature could provide, coupled with surrounding herself with the beauty and grace of her beloved family and Maui.

Something of that must have worked. The doctors were amazed when she passed by that six year mark, then went on to enjoy four more years of taking care of her clients' bookkeeping, being part of family gatherings and events, and doing her best to ignore the slow ebbing of her energy.

When she phoned me from the hospital three months after the arrival of this small bowl with the simple message, "It's time," I made arrangements as quickly as I could to fly to Maui to be by her side. She seemed relieved knowing I was there, handling the practical realities of life in her stead as I had promised those many years before.

This beautiful little bowl now serves up my daily dose of nutritional supplements each morning, with a serving of love from Ilima stirred in.

+++ June 2016 +++