

Hot Off The Press!

It has already turned summer here in my little town of Alpine. It may only be mid-April, but the days have warmed up and the sun is hot by midday. I pushed myself out of the house earlier than usual today to fit in a little walk around the neighborhood while the temperature was still tolerable. Nice change of routine and I even met a few people and few dogs that I hadn't met before. Maybe I need to get out at a variety of times and mix it up a bit.

But my biggest thing I noticed today was the number of newspapers in driveways. Honestly this is the first time that I've seen any newspapers in my neighborhood. Or maybe it's the first time I have noticed them. Not a big thing in the scheme of things but for me it was a trigger. Yes, those newspapers brought back a flood of Bob memories. Just when I think that I have thought just about every thought there is to think about Bob, I find a whole new memory to dwell on.

Not that I minded at all. I relish these little reminders of my guy. If I can go on a pleasant stroll in my neighborhood while all the time thinking about Bob, that a good walk.

I don't remember a time when Bob didn't get the daily paper. I'm sure he was receiving it when we first started dating and it is something that continued through our married life.

He retrieved the paper each morning and took charge of it. During his years of working, the section with the crossword puzzle was neatly folded and into his work briefcase it went. I've been told that the work of his homicide team didn't start until he had finished that day's puzzle. When he had other work assignments, I am unsure where and when he did the puzzle, but I have no doubts that he completed it. Usually quite quickly in his very neat legible printing. Not so bold to use a pen, it was done in pencil.

The rest of the paper stayed at home for me to peruse and for him to read later. We kept a wicker basket near his chair in the TV room and that's where they went until he deemed them all read. Then to the trash. Yes, the basic trash in those earlier days. To the recycling in later years. I never emptied the basket of newspapers. It was unspoken that Bob would take care of that little task after he had a chance to catch up reading all that he wanted to read.

In his retirement, doing the daily crossword puzzles continued. Now at home, if I was around, he would read me the clues and I could join in. But he held the puzzle, and he did the filling in of the letters. Not my job.

Next would come the Sports Section for him. He might report a thing or two to me from the Sports Section but in those days, I only cared about the SD Chargers and the SDSU Aztecs. I wasn't a baseball fan in those days—times have changed. Next for Bob would be the front-page news section, then the Obituaries, then the cartoons. He'd happily report that it was a good day as he wasn't in the Obituaries. He never tired of that silly joke. I did!

For me, it was the local news, the Heloise or Dear Abby advice columns, and the sales advertisements. We didn't have to share sections as we liked different sections! What a balanced marriage we had when it came to reading our newspaper.

Time marched on. 10, 20, 30, 40 years go by without much of a deviation of routine. I can't begin to remember when the change occurred. Like all other things that changed with Bob's cognitive health, they were subtle and imperceptible at first. The newspaper sat longer on the driveway. Then it sat longer on the coffee table. Then it sat longer in the wicker basket. Less and less of it was being read. Somedays, it wasn't even touched. I suggested to Bob that we cancel our subscription, but he wouldn't hear of it. He was very insistent and so the daily delivery continued.

At some point when more and more of the papers sat in the wicker basket with either a rubber band still around them or sleeved in a plastic bag, I changed to just the weekend delivery. Bob's cognitive health had declined at this point, and he didn't notice the change. I saw it as a benchmark, and it saddened me.

The weekend paper delivery continued until Bob's passing. It was just one of the items on my list of things to do when Bob died. Cancel the newspaper. Such a small deal that was such a big deal for me. I'm sure every widow or widower had tasks that they hated to deal with. This was one of those for me.

Quite to my surprise the newspaper delivery man showed up at the front door soon after I had made my call to cancel. He wanted to know what was happening and why I had cancelled after so many years. Had he done something wrong? Was there an issue? No one prepares you on how to say these three words. "My husband died". I eked out the words and watched his mouth fall open. Honestly, I don't remember which one of us was the most shocked. He in hearing the news or me being stunned that he would actually be concerned enough to check on the situation. Whichever, we mumbled a few more words, and he hastily took off.

So today I ended my walk and came inside to write my thoughts while they were still fresh. And here they are, hot off the press! I'm clinging to my Bob memories and although they aren't big news or worthy of front-page coverage, they are priceless memories to me.

So, thanks to those in my neighborhood who still get the newspaper. You may be a dying breed, but you made my day!



Walk Completed!!!