

Turning a Fair Day into a Great Day!

Since Bob's death, the first-time experiencing holidays and special occasions without him has been difficult. Our 41st anniversary came quickly on the heels of his passing and was very tough. Then Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, our Birthdays, Easter, Kyle's MBA Graduation, Father's Day and on and on and on. Every special event is a big reminder that Bob isn't with us anymore and a big reminder of how much he enjoyed all those occasions with me and with our family. Special days are still special but a bit hollow without my guy.

Along comes the San Diego County Fair. I really wanted to go. But who did I want to go with? Bob. Really no one else. Bob and I had our own favorite things at the Fair and we usually didn't vary much from our routine. We didn't like the rides or carnival games so we spent our Fair Day looking at the garden exhibits, the commercial booths, the gem and woodworking displays, the children's art, the fine arts, the unusual collections, the craft displays, the animals, and we would sit and listen to music along our way throughout the Fair. Bob would be patient while I looked at High School Yearbooks. I'd be patient as he looked for a new baseball cap or sweatshirt. We had a sweet routine.

Bob wouldn't fuss if I wanted to buy some odd pain cream, a vegetable peeler, a flagpole, or a carved wooden sign. Yep, and one year (over 33 years ago) we even bought a spa! And of course, we tried so many crazy foods—especially fried foods or decadent sweets!

I couldn't imagine not doing the same old things. I couldn't imagine going with someone who had a different Fair routine. I didn't feel I was ready to move on and establish a new

routine. I just wanted a “Bob and Susan Day” at the Fair. I got a little bit emotional and almost talked myself out of going. What kind of person goes to the Fair by themselves? Isn’t it a friend and family event? Was I being overly anxious about keeping our old routine? Was I clinging to memories when I should be letting go a bit?

Well off I went. A bit uncertain about how the day would turn out but certain that I wanted to give it a try. My attitude was good. I had confidence that Bob would be glad I was giving this a go and I felt he was cheering me on. “Go and enjoy” was what I heard him saying.

And enjoy I did. I stuck to our traditional routine but found myself spending a little more time at the photography and paintings and a little less time at the animal exhibits. I sat longer and listened to the bands/music and skipped the Pig Races. My “Bob and Susan Fair Day” had some variations. Mainly the old routine but a bit of the new. I ate somewhere Bob would have never eaten (an artichoke sandwich) and lingered longer looking at the table settings and quilts. I had a strawberry sundae instead of our traditional gingerbread. Of course, I still visited all the Law Enforcement booths and thanked them for their service. Bob would not have left the Fair without doing that!

It felt good to be mixing in some new with our old. I think that’s what my life going forward will be like. Bob will always be there even when I’m trying new things or going about my life a little differently than I would have in the past. I’ll be carrying Bob with me as I forge some new traditions and have new experiences.

So, who knows? Next year I might even be able to go with a friend and see what their “Fair Day” looks like! Maybe.

*A God Moment! After I posted this blog, I read my Grief Share daily email and this was the prayer for the day: **Righteous***

God, strengthen me, one step at a time, to face the old precious memories and to create wonderful new ones. Amen



New Fair Routine with 6 month old Kyle!! 1990



Bob and Kyle loved this part of our routine!



Fair Selfie 2017



Fair Selfie 2019



We had this picture tradition throughout the years with Kyle



At some point, Kyle no longer fit in the cab of the truck!

Just One Picture Please

Last night was my last night of my grief support groups. 13 weeks of Grief Share. But that's a story for another time.

Today's story is about a favorite picture of Bob.

We were asked to bring 1 photo of our deceased loved one and share a story about them to the grief support group.

Bob and I met when I was 26 and he was 40. I'm now 70. That's 44 years of photos to look through and pick ONE favorite one. I looked thorough photo albums (I have so many), looked at

framed pictures throughout the house, looked at loose pictures in boxes, looked at pictures on my phone, and looked at pictures on Facebook. What a weeklong trip down memory lane. How was I going to pick just one photo of Bob? Would it be our wedding picture, our younger days skiing, our early grandparent days, our wonderful vacations, or celebrations at our home? I couldn't sum up all that I wanted to share about Bob in just one photo.

I looked at photos of us both happy and healthy. I looked at photos of us struggling as we dealt with Bob's health decline. I looked and looked. Lots of smiles and lots of tears as I hunted for the ONE best picture.

But finally, it stuck me. Why was I looking for MY favorite picture? I needed to share Bob's favorite picture with the group. The picture Bob would want to share if he had the choice. I easily knew what that picture was. If I moved it out of the room or moved it to a different location out of Bob's line of sight, he would quickly move it right back to where he wanted it. If someone came to visit, he would point out this picture to them. It was a picture that he treasured. So that's the picture I shared last night.

It's of Bob and his 4 kids standing together in our backyard. It's at Christmas time a few years ago. I'm not in the photo as I took the picture. It represents a happy time in his life. Bob and his 4 children together. Blessed times, for sure.

Bob loved his children and out of everything he did in his life, this picture would sum up what he was most proud of. His children. And of course, the overabundance of grandchildren and great grandchildren, too. I hope they know that he loved them all and cherished family time together.

Bob and his first wife Beverly were young parents. I've heard the stories of how the family camped, swam, and even surfed. There are tales of a hippie wagon with flowers painted on it

that would carry the longboards to the beach. There was softball and little league and all the things that young families did together.

When I met Bob, those 3 “kids” were young adults starting out on their own. Before we married, we had made the difficult decision to not have any more children as Bob felt three was plenty. We quickly became grandparents in our first year of marriage and more grandchildren came along in the following years. Our lives were full and there were plenty of good family times and little ones.

After many years of our marriage, Bob suggested that we have our own child! Totally out of the blue for me as I had long ago put that idea to rest. But once I realized he was very serious, we excitedly changed our plans. Kyle was born in 1990. 9 years after we were married. Bob had his first three children by the time he was 22 and had his fourth and final child at nearly 52 years old! (You know I could go on and on about our son Kyle but that’s a topic for another day as well.)

So, our family has morphed and changed over the years. It’s grown in huge numbers. Many of our grandchildren are older than our son. Who’s who in our family takes a flow chart! Currently there are 19 grandchildren (counting spouses, fiancés, and significant others) and 20 greatgrandchildren. Usually, a year doesn’t pass without the birth of a new family member. Yep, that’s why I need my organizational chart!

Bob loved being in 4-generation pictures and pushed our oldest great granddaughter Kelly to have a child so that he would have a 5-generation picture! Kelly is 22 now but I think he started talking to her about babies when she was about 18. Fortunately, she didn’t succumb to her great grandpa’s wishes and didn’t have a child just to please him!

So, I shared Bob’s favorite picture last night.

I shared his legacy.

I shared his loves.

I shared him.



Steve, Bob, Julie, Kyle, and Shelly

My Grief Plan (at least for now)

I've had lots of mixed emotions since Bob's passing. I've felt so conflicted with my emotions. I've felt guilty when I was happy but I'm just not the person that is going to sink into depression and sulk my life away. That's just not me. But if

I'm enjoying life and finding happiness in the things I am doing, am I dishonoring my newly deceased husband? What's the right way to grieve?

Well, I have sorted it out. I've attended Grief Share, read several books on grieving, read scriptures, talked with others who have lost loved ones, prayed, and more. What I have found is that everyone handles grief differently. I am firm in my decision that there is not a right way or just one way to grieve. For me, there is going to be joy in every day.

Being happy doesn't mean that I am not grieving. I miss my husband terribly. I would prefer that everything I am doing, Bob would be doing with me. But since that isn't going to happen, I am NOT going to put my life on the back burner for some unknown period of time to "properly grieve". I am going to wake up each day looking forward to the day ahead and when I put my head on my pillow at night, I am going to say a prayer of gratitude for the happy moments of the day. Yes, I will still be missing Bob. I will still be grieving my loss. But my outlook will be positive and joyful. Enjoying all the blessings that God has heaped on me. Grateful for the family and friends who make me smile. Thankful for the opportunities God places in my life.

Great granddaughter Aubri recently asked me if I was living by myself now. When I told her that I was, she seemed so sad for me. I explained that even though I missed her great grandpa very much, I was fine living alone. I have personal freedom like I've never had before. I told her that I'm not afraid to be on my own and that I love the newfound independence. I've discovered that I don't like the TV on all day, and I like to sleep on the other side of the bed. I'm sure that an 11-year-old thinks I'm nuts but I'm content on my own. It's the first time that I've lived alone for 42+ years and surprisingly I like it. Never would have imagined that. Never did I want this. But it's my new reality and I'm going to make the very best of it. Who doesn't like more closet space?

People often suggest that I get a dog or cat and tell me that I need a heartbeat in the house. I know they mean well but I don't want a pet to care for. My caregiving days were difficult and stressful so I'm happy to only be responsible for myself. My own heartbeat is enough. I'm glad that I can say that and mean it.

I recently traveled to Kansas and Texas to visit family and some friends for two weeks and had a BLAST! It was my first post-covid and post-Bob trip. I had a grand time and there was much laughter and happiness being with loved ones. But of course, there were sad moments and tears. Not because of any feelings of guilt that I shouldn't have gone on this trip. Or guilt over having fun without my husband. Just moments when I just missed Bob so very much and wished he were with me. I realized two things—I still can have fun and I can travel on my own. Two big lessons learned.

So, if I were going to write a book on how to grieve, I wouldn't. I'd just say, do it your own way.

I have a cute sign that says, ***"what I love most about our home is who I share it with"***. I kept the sign and put it by a big picture of Bob as a reminder of how much we shared and loved in our home. Maybe I should get a new sign that says, ***"what I love most about my HEART is who I share it with"***.

My life with Bob was not perfect but we were perfect for each other. Missing him is not ever going to stop. Bob has a home in my heart and he's not going anywhere. But by the grace of God, I can smile, laugh, and enjoy my life.

That's my grief plan.



CLUBBING!

So, I am a member of a few “clubs” these days. “Clubs” I really hadn’t given much thought to before Bob’s death. Not that I wanted to become a member of some of them. I’ve just been thrown in. Others that I’m happy to be a part of. Glad I am eligible for membership in a few. Some I’ve been in for years and I am appreciating them more and more.

The widows’ “club”. Now that’s a “club” that I never wanted to join. It was such a foreign thought that I really didn’t know if it was widow or widower. Now I know. Membership

comes at a very steep cost and being in the “club” is a constant reminder of my loss. It’s also a very very very big club. Before, I never paid much attention but there surely are lots of us widows. We’re everywhere!

There is a benefit to hanging out with other widows. They recognize why you might be having a rough day on certain occasions, and they want to make sure you’re ok. They don’t have to check with their husbands to see if they are free to spend time with you. When you do get together, you can talk for hours. Usually about those husbands you both no longer have. But your fellow widows’ “club” member cares and listens.

And then there’s’ the Grief Support Group. Oh man, I surely joined a sad “club” when I signed up for Grief Share. I’m sure I can benefit but right now it’s a hard “club” to be part of. To discuss my loss and grief makes it all so real. To listen to others as they discuss their loss and grief is heartbreaking. It feels like the air has been sucked out of the room and the other “club” members look as sad as I feel. We have a common connection in this “club” and it’s not a “club” that any of us wanted to join. Some are still in denial that they really are in this “club” and others would do anything to trade places with their loved one who passed away. I feel a bond with all these people although our stories are all so different. We share one huge thing. We miss someone terribly.

Our facilitator asked us to commit to a minimum of three classes of the Grief Group before we decide to quit the “club”. I’ve attended 4 times now, so I guess I’m committing to the entire 13-week program. I wonder if I’ll be sad when it come to an end. Will the “club” have cured me by then? Will my grief be over? I am sure I’ll still be somewhere plodding through the grief process, and I’ll miss the support of this “club”. Hopefully I’ll forge some new friendships with some of the other broken-hearted folks. Maybe we’ll form the

after-grief support group “club”.

My Alzheimer’s/Dementia Support Group has turned into a huge part of my mental survival. Now that’s a “club” you don’t want a membership in. To have a loved one with Alzheimer’s/Dementia is a nightmare and I wouldn’t wish it on anyone. Even if the “club” has been a great means of support for me, I wish I never had needed them. I’m so glad that they are continuing to allow me and others who have lost our loved ones to still be members of the “club”. Losing this “club” membership would be awful. I know that I couldn’t have dealt with Bob’s illness and death without the support of this “club”. They get me. They really get me.

I was thrown out of another support group! It was a caregiver’s support group and once you are no longer a caregiver, they don’t want you attending. I was a bit shocked that I was being booted out of that “club”, but I guess they can’t hold my hand and coach me through life forever. Even though I had benefited from that “club”, I guess it was time to move on. One less “club” commitment since I am no longer meeting the entrance requirement.

Funny side note. One of the women I met in the caregiver’s group has reached out to me and we are going to meet up and go to a Soccer Game this month. I’ve never met her in person as this was a “club” that met on Zoom. I’m eager to meet her in person and I’m eager to attend my first professional National Women’s’ soccer match. Maybe I’ll join a new “club” of soccer enthusiasts. Go San Diego Wave!

Now let’s talk Jazzercise. Even though I am totally out of shape, the “club” of women at Jazzercise are wonderful and the crazy mix of the dancing, music, and sweating is great. What a great “club” to be in. I’m grateful for the hour of time when I can step out of my head and just dance and have fun. It’s a welcome diversion. And who knows, I may be able to do a sit-up or a plank someday.

I've attended Bible Study Fellowship once a week for many years and I have to say that this "club" changed my life and matured my faith. Learning the Bible with other Christian women is fantastic. Just to make sure that I get all the bible and Christian fellowship that I need during this rough patch, I've joined a second women's bible study at my church. "Clubbing" with these Christian women in both of these bible study "clubs" is just what I need. Luckily there's no entrance requirements. Come as you are!

The best "club" that I have joined recently is the "club" of baptized believers! That's a topic for an entire blog of its own but I can share that I LOVE being in this "club" and am thrilled beyond thrilled to have been obedient to God's word. I'm still riding a baptism high!

What other "clubs" am I in? I'm in Bronco B.A.B.E.S. group (because of my new Bronco Sport but I don't even know what B.A.B.E.S. stands for) and a Sisterhood Travel group (travel tours for solo women) on Facebook. I'm considering joining a writer's guild or a memoir writing group.

I'm exploring who I am without Bob. Do I have a new identity separate now from being Bob's wife? Do I have a new purpose if it's not being Bob's caregiver? Maybe I'm still the same Susan but I'm exploring and looking at other "clubs" to join.

Hope to run into you while I'm out clubbing!

Even though my grief is my own...



Thanks to those of you that are clubbing with me!!

Guess Who?!

First Valentine's Day with Bob

1979. Bob and I had only been dating a few months and I thought we had something pretty special going on. Bob was the patrol sergeant at the northern division (SDPD) and I thought it would be great fun to send the grizzly sergeant a bouquet of flowers. I ordered them from a local Pacific Beach florist, and they were delivered early in the morning at the lineup.

I waited with anticipation to hear from Bob. Was he surprised? Did his coworkers tease him? Was he happy to be fussed over by his new girlfriend? I didn't hear a word from him. Now granted, this was before the days of cell phones and text messages, but I did expect a phone call.

I had a dinner planned for Bob that evening at my home. I had prepared a special romantic meal and was eager to hear all about the flower delivery when he arrived at my home. He arrived. Nothing was said about the flowers. I was a bit tense. He seemed a bit tense. Had I done something wrong by sending flowers? Had I embarrassed him? Was it over the top for how early it was in our relationship? Why didn't he mention the flowers or thank me for them?

Well, the truth came out. Within a few minutes of arriving, Bob nervously blurted out "did you send me flowers? I said I had and followed up by asking him why in the world did he have to ask. Who else would they be from? Oh my! He explained that I signed the card "**Guess Who**" instead of using my name. He wasn't sure they were from me. His previous girlfriend always signed cards "**Guess Who**" and he thought the flowers

might be from her. Oh my! I didn't know that there was a previous girlfriend who still might be sending flowers so there was lots of discussion about her. Not quite the first Valentine's Day Date I anticipated.

The funniest part was that Bob had spent the better part of his day trying to track down who had actually sent the flowers. He did an extremely hard press on the florist to see if they would tell him who had ordered the flowers, but they wouldn't. He tried a phone call and then went in person in uniform to the shop to try to convince them to "give up the source". But they stood firm and didn't give him a name. Can you imagine the frustration when the policeman couldn't solve the case?!

The craziest part of the night was that Bob admitted that he was so convinced that the flowers were NOT from me, that he thought about giving me the flowers that night. Fortunately, he had second thoughts on doing that and he lived for us to have another date.

And another.

And another.

And another.



Disneyland 1979



Tecate Ensenada Bike Ride 1979

Bob's Younger Wife

I was 26 and Bob was 40 when we met. Being a younger woman didn't bother me at all. Bob was young at heart and perhaps I was an old soul. I never felt the 14-year age difference made much of a difference for us. We were the perfect age for us! We married when I was 28 and Bob was 42. We had our "late in life" son when I was 38 and Bob was 52. Bob was my daily reminder that I was young. At least younger than him! I loved being Bob's younger wife!

People would ask about our age difference, and it would only confirm that I was the younger wife. Being with an older guy was a reminder that I was younger. I was never the old person in the room. Bob was!

When our son Kyle was born, Bob had a daily prayer. He wanted to live long enough for his son to remember him. Not sure why Bob thought that might not happen, but Bob was grateful as the years passed. Once Kyle was old enough to have many memories of his dad, Bob's prayer turned to living long enough to see Kyle graduate from High School. When High School came and went, Bob prayers became living to see Kyle graduate from college. When that happened, Bob would pray to see Kyle be happily married. That beautiful milestone was met over 6 years ago. I know Bob LOVED celebrating his 80th birthday with family in Maui and commented over and over how he never thought he'd live that long. He was thrilled he had lived longer than his dad did and would mention that frequently.

Did Bob have hopes of living to experience other milestones with Kyle? I'm not sure. Bob's ability to project into the future or think about things to come disappeared with his dementia. Or if he had those thoughts, he couldn't verbalize them. I think he was content with all the wonderful things that had happened in his life with Kyle and with all his other children and family. And with me. His younger wife.

What I find interesting thinking about all of this is that I never once thought about my own possibility of dying. I felt young and healthy and perhaps invincible. It was Bob's thing to worry about his death and when that might come. I was young. Or at least that's how I felt! His younger wife.

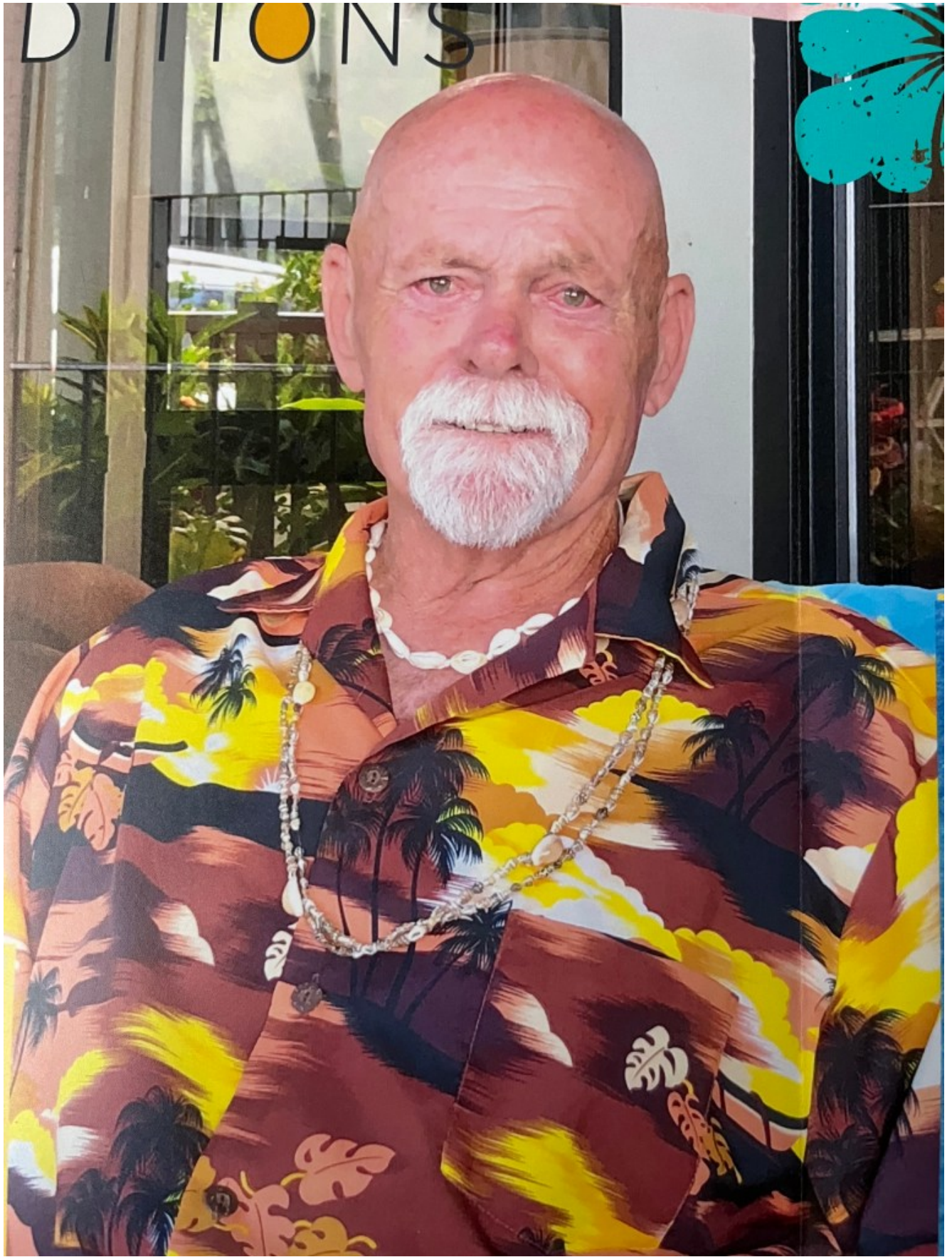
I thought Bob's initial memory loss or confusion was just a sign of his aging. I attributed it to him being older than I was. It never occurred to me that he had a cognitive issue until he started really mixing up words and mumbling. I thought he had a stroke and off to the neurologist we went. Mild Cognitive Disorder was the diagnosis at that time. What a shocker! My older husband wasn't just older, he was having cognitive issues that would only worsen with time. I think I began to age in reverse. I felt younger as Bob declined. Or maybe it was that Bob just seemed older and older as the disease progressed, and I felt the same. I thanked God repeatedly for His wisdom and plan in bringing Bob and me together all those years ago. God's provision allowed for Bob to have a wife that could and would be able to take care of him. Had I been Bob's age, perhaps I would have needed care myself or not been able to handle the rigors of taking care of him. So, Bob aged, and I stayed the same. His younger wife.

When Bob died, I was 69 and he was 83.

Now here I am. A nearly 70-year-old widow who feels very old for the first time ever in her life. I don't have that older husband to make me feel younger and healthier by comparison. I don't have a daily reminder that I'm not all that old. Now I just feel old, and I am thinking about my life in a totally different light. I'm the one praying to have more time with my son and my family. I'm the one praying to make more milestone memories. I'm the old person in my household of 1.

Dang. What wouldn't I give to still be Bob's younger wife?

I miss you in so very many ways Bob. This is just one.





**IT SHOULD
BE AGAINST
THE LAW
TO LOOK
THIS GOOD AT
EIGHTY**

© Birthday Gifts For All™



Bob turning 80 in Maui and turning 82 in Alpine. Milestone Memories!

The Aftermath #2: NEW YEAR. NEW WORD.

For the past two years, I have selected a word (or did a word select me?) to focus on throughout the year while dealing with the challenges of caregiving. Last year my word was **JOY** and the year prior, my word was **GENTLE**. I have enjoyed going back and reading my blogs as to why those words became my words. My blog surely helps me to remember where I was mentally at that time. So that's why I'm writing again today. I'll need to look back and remember this day.

KINDNESS. This word is my new word for 2022.

The kindness of others has carried me through the months of Bob's decline and then his passing. It's true that a rough time brings out the best in people. I've been surrounded by kindness. It's amazing how much love has been heaped upon me. Special family times. Flowers in abundance. Sympathy cards with beautiful sentiments. Long letters. Sweet Facebook posts. Phone calls. Emails. Texts. Handholding. Prayers. Delicious homemade meals. Crying with others. Laughing with others. Heartfelt small gifts. Unexpected big gifts. Special Christmas ornaments. Sage advice. Listening ears. Meals with supportive friends. Invites to go places. Caring hugs. **KINDNESS** over and over.

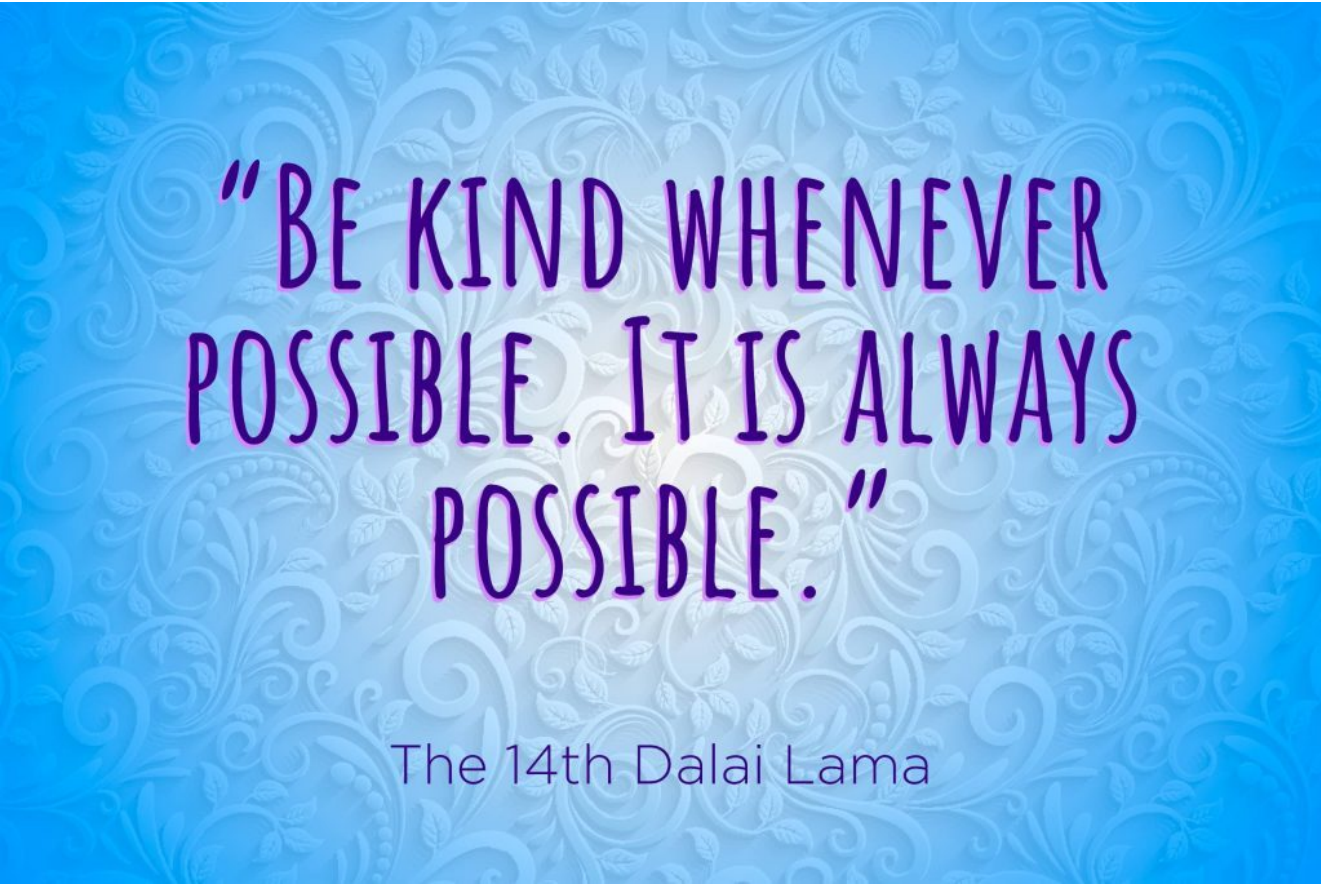
So, what I've noticed about myself is that I'm much more sympathetic towards others now. I don't think I understood how devastating it can be to lose a loved one until now. I never felt such deep heartache until Bob's death. I know I was very sad when I lost my grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, in-laws, other relatives, and even friends but I don't

think I was as empathic to the surviving spouse or family as I would be now. I needed to feel the pain myself to be able to feel it for others. And boy, do I feel it now. Bob's death brought feelings I never knew. The pain and sadness that someone else is feeling is so real to me now. I'm sorry that it took Bob's death for me to feel this deep of a compassion for someone else's loss. The loss of my husband has changed me in many ways, and I think this is one of the better changes. Yes, my emotions are so raw right now, but I feel my heart is more open to the feelings of others. It's like I'm set on super sensitive mode!

So, I need to remember to be kind to those that are hurting. And I think you'd agree that we all fit that category. We all have something going on in our lives that is hurting us. We all have some kind of struggle. We all could use kindness. I'm grateful to all of you that showered me with kindness and paved the way for me to choose my new word (and my new action) for 2022!

Here we go 2022!

Be Kind. Please.



"BE KIND WHENEVER
POSSIBLE. IT IS ALWAYS
POSSIBLE."

The 14th Dalai Lama

The Aftermath #1 Dismantling Bob's Life

47 days have gone by since Bob's death.

So much has happened. The "to do" list when someone dies is long— notify social security, notify the banks, notify the credit card companies, notify the insurance companies, notify your friends and neighbors, and write an obituary to notify people that still get the printed paper. Every time I had to make one of those notifications, it brought Bob's death back fresh again. Yes, my husband died. Thank you for your condolences. Yes, I'll reach out if I need help.

I am an extremely organized person and I have a binder titled

"What to do upon our Death!". May sound a bit weird but it's full of contact information and guidelines to follow. Step by Step. Lots of lists. Do this. Do that. Be sure to remember to do this. Don't forget to do that. I'm not sure what people do when they don't have a binder with advice and all the information they need right there at their fingertips. Lists bring me comfort. As brain dead as I was (or still am), I needed all the help I could get to start on the process of dismantling Bob's life. Yes, that's what it feels like. Dismantling 83 years of Bob's life with phone calls and paperwork.

I was talking to one of our Credit Card companies to remove Bob's name from my account and terminate his Credit Card. The representative had to read me a disclaimer that said if I went ahead with removing Bob from the account, that it was irreversible, and I couldn't add him back on the account. I was a bit caught off guard and I assured her that his death was irreversible too and I would have no need to add him back on my account. Not sure if she thought I was funny or just a crazy grieving widow!

I've emptied out Bob's wallet and now I can't throw the contents away. I'm not sure what others have done with their deceased husband's ID card, Medicare card, Kaiser card, Covid Vaccination card, pacemaker implant card, SeaWorld pass, a picture of Kyle as a newborn, and many old business cards. There's nothing in my binder of *"What to do upon our Death!"* that tells me what is considered proper with all of that. Do I shred the contents or set them aside to look at every so often? I've chosen the set them aside route and I ponder every few days as to what to do. That's the same route I've taken with copious files, health records, and old paperwork from his years on the SDPD. I just touch them, move them, reshuffle them, and set them back down. I have a feeling I'll still be wondering what to do with many things for many more months or even years.

I was quick to clean out one of Bob's closets. Not sure why that happened so easily but I think it's a purely selfish reason. I wanted that closet space for myself. I kept three of his robes and I love wearing them. The blue plaid flannel one brings me the most comfort. Hardly a day went by in the last few years that Bob didn't wear that robe. I'd say it was the anchor piece of his wardrobe. Bizarre that an old bathrobe can warm my heart these days. But it does.

I parted with a few of his belongings—high school ring, police academy ring, engraved money clip, key ring, years of service pins from the SDPD, name tags, and a few of his favorite baseball caps. It felt good to give those items to Bob's children and let them have a tangible piece of their dad. They are of little monetary value, but they represent a part of their dad's life. It was great to see them take these little trinkets and look at them like they were treasures. I've kept his police shield and his \$10.00 Walmart watch. Those two things mean so much to me. The police badge makes sense as Bob LOVED being a police officer and he was so proud of his 30+ year career. I can't quite figure out why Bob's old cheap watch means so much. I think it is because it represents who he was. Humble and unpretentious. An inexpensive watch suited him best.

I have so many other aspects of these weeks since Bob's death that I want to write about but for now I think I'll take a break, go put on his plaid flannel bathrobe, and sit in his recliner with my good memories.

Maybe I'll turn my binder into a guidebook for others about what to do upon a death of a spouse and I'll put "wear their bathrobe and sit in their favorite chair" at the very top of the list!









James and Susan Manis Family

What to do upon
our death!!!

Important paperwork and information

(Actual Trust is in a separate Binder)



Last Chapter or Just a Plot Twist?

This might be my last blog entry. My sweet hubby Bob passed away on November 11th and so ends our journey of living with Dementia. Boy, what a journey it was. If you had told me at the beginning that it would get as hard as it did, I wouldn't have believed you. But it got harder than I ever imagined as I watched my husband slowly fade away over the years and then finally pass away. Dementia is a cruel, nasty, mean disease.

Bob only spent 9 days at the care facility. 9 days where he was looked after and cared for so much better than I could ever have done at our home. The care was top-notch and so loving. He was treated kindly and with the upmost respect. He spent his last days sleeping nearly 24 hours a day. He woke and opened his eyes occasionally but then quickly fell back asleep. He didn't speak or respond. He only ate a few bites of food (he was on a pureed food diet) every now and then. It was clear that it was never enough to sustain him. It was so hard knowing that he was moving closer each day to his final day.

Hospice added an additional level of care. We were visited by the hospice caregiver, several hospice nurses, the hospice social worker, and the hospice chaplain. All of them made the death process much easier. The hospice caregiver would give Bob a "bed bath" with such gentleness. The nurses made sure he wasn't agitated and was kept comfortable. The social worker and chaplain wanted to make sure I had all the support I needed. We couldn't have asked for a better care team during this tough period.

Bob's final couple of days are all a blur—family coming by to say their goodbyes, a visit from our pastor, hospice visits, and owner and staff from the care facility making sure I was ok—visiting with me and bringing me snacks and meals.

I was able to be with be with Bob as he passed. Quietly without any fanfare. Just breathing one moment and not breathing the next. And just like that his life on earth was over. And just like that, I imagined him with a new glorified body and mind. Oh, I can't wait to be with him again. The promises of our faith are what sustain me.

But in the meantime, my revised life goes on. Not quite sure what it looks like at this point. But I know it is not a life without Bob. No matter what, that goofy guy won't be out of my heart ever. No not ever.

My prayer is for the difficult times and sad memories to fade away and leave me with a cache of good memories. Boy, we had so many. Right now, my mind can't quite move off the past few weeks but every day I find more minutes of the day when I'm not sorrowful.

I've been told that there are 5 stages of grief, and everyone experiences them in a different order.

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

I feel that over the past 4 years I went through stages 1-4 even though Bob was alive. I've already experienced denial, anger, bargaining, and depression. All of those in abundance. I've done my share of crying and feeling so helpless. I've been so mad that Bob had to have such a horrible disease. I've had times I just curled up and cried and cried. Times I screamed in anger. There were times I was on my knees begging God to take this all away. I was so lonely and sad even while Bob was alive. I was missing Bob terribly already and he wasn't even gone. I mourned the loss of the life that I thought we would have, and I grieved over the loss of the

person Bob had been.

Am I at "Acceptance"? Maybe. Maybe not. How can I know only 10 days since Bob's passing? When people tell me I am doing well, I tell them it's because I have been doing horribly for a long time. I've been mourning and grieving for a prolonged period. I've moved through all those stages of grief and here I am.

So, Bob with 10, what's the plan? Let's continue our journey and see where my life goes while I carry you in my heart. Let's go!

Blessed
IS THE ONE WHO
TRUSTS
in the
Lord
JEREMIAH 17:7

Nothing To Laugh About!

When I first started writing my blog about Bob with 10, it was a way to share our experiences with this disease and also share some of the humor, love, and joy we have in our lives. In the past few days, I've wanted to write and update all of you, but I can't find any humor in the situation. So here goes anyway. I hope you feel the love and the joy.

Bob's disease has progressed to a point where he is sleeping

18-20 hours a day. He is either in his bed or in his recliner. The only walking he does is when I assist him and get him from one place to another. Occasionally, he doesn't even walk that short distance and I roll him on his walker.

Dementia really has taken a toll on him. But then something new came along to make matters worse, his kidney function greatly declined. He became dehydrated and that threw his one functioning kidney into severe chronic kidney disease. That threw him into even more fatigue and confusion. So, after a couple of days in the ER getting tested in all ways, they determined there was no infection and no other issue with the kidney. Bob was dehydrated and nutritionally anemic. So, they hydrated him and then he was released with orders to drink more fluids and eat better. That's a tall order for someone with dementia who has no appetite or ability to understand that he NEEDS to eat and drink.

They also did swallow tests on Bob and put him on a soft food diet. They are concerned he could aspirate food into his lungs. They also had to sedate him and have a "sitter" in the room with him as he was extremely confused and agitated during his hospital stay. A few medications were changed, and he was taken off his Pradaxa (blood thinner) as he is a fall risk. The doctor in the ER talked with me candidly about Palliative Care and Hospice Care. More difficult matters to ponder.

I have had Bob on a waiting list at a Memory Care Facility in Alpine since August. It's a small popular highly recognized facility and there aren't openings often. But on November 1st, prayers were answered. There is a room available, and BOB IS MOVING IN THERE TODAY. He's sleeping right now as we're awaiting the medical transport van to arrive. I'm writing instead of pacing...

On top of that blessing, the Hospice process was started. They jumped through hoops to get Bob evaluated, approved, and signed up. So, Bob will not only be getting great care from

the staff of the Alpine View Lodge, but he will also have the extra layer of care from the Hospice nurse, health aide, social worker, and chaplain. Blessings upon blessings are coming our way.

Had Bob not had the decline in his overall health and the ER experience, I might have felt that I could take care of him at home with some intermittent help. But God, in all His wisdom, wanted to clearly show me that Bob needs more care than I can provide. I'm convinced now that Bob needs to live in the care facility and I'm confident in that decision. That doesn't make it any easier. I'm still going to have that little voice in my ear questioning my choice, but the voice will be softer and easier to ignore!!

And to all our family and friends that have lent a listening ear and a caring heart—GOD BLESS YOU!!

And to myself, it's ok to be sad after making the right decision.

PS: Bob slept the day away in his new room while I moved in his clothes, personal items, TV, and a few pictures. It was hard to walk out of his room and go home tonight but I know that he will get the care he needs there 24/7. And I'm looking forward to a great night's sleep. Tomorrow I will meet his hospice nurse and the hospice chaplain. And I get to be a wife visiting my husband and I don't have to be his caregiver. Now that's LOVE AND JOY!

