Embracing Grief and Joy: Dahlia's Arrival

(Written August 4, 2026)

I woke up this morning and before my feet even touched the floor, I was in tears. Why today? What triggered this wave of sadness and grief? What brought the stab of pain to my heart and the tears to my eyes? What was it about this morning that made me miss Bob so much?

I spend time with lots of widows, and I hear their stories of grief and pain. I also hear about times that they miss their husbands. Like when they need a smoke detector battery changed, or a storage tub brought in from the garage, or they need a repair to a ceiling fan. Usually anything that requires a ladder brings on a longing for one's deceased hubby. That's not the case with me as I feel fully capable of handling the chores of life. If I can't do it, I know who to call. Those times of need are not the times that trigger my sadness or my longing for Bob. I would hate to bring Bob back to life to have him tick off a few items on my to-do list. Nope Bob can continue to rest in peace and not have to worry about any mundane chores.

But actually, I do know what it is that brought on the flood of tears. I know why I am missing him extra right now. It's because I'm experiencing something truly wonderful that I wish he could be experiencing. He's missing out and I wish he was still here for this joyful time in our family.

Recently, in Texas my 24-year-old great granddaughter Courtney had an emergency c-section and gave birth to Dahlia. Dahlia is still in the NICU at a local Children's Hospital but she's doing fabulous and as of today, she is breathing on her own. The breathing tubes are removed and she's breathing "room air"

–yes, “room air” which is a new term I learned.

Dahlia represents 5 generations in Bob’s lineage. Many in Bob’s family can remember how Bob loved that he had such a BIG group of 4th generation great grandchildren. We took lots of 4 generation group pictures! I may be off a little on the number, but I think at the time of Bob’s passing in November 2021, he had 21 great grandchildren. There were a couple of those greats that were old enough to have babies and Bob would “tease” them and let them know he would like to have a great great grandchild soon thus giving him a 5-generation family tree! We had to remind those young women that we would prefer that they not have any babies at such a young tender age.

They may not have given their great grandpa the 5th generation that he wanted then but I really don’t think he was really disappointed. Maybe Bob was even relieved that they didn’t follow in his (and so many others in the family’s) footsteps and have children at a very young age.

But now nearly 5 years since Bob’s passing, Dahlia comes into our lives! I’m beyond ecstatic to have another precious baby to love and I’m happy for all of Dahlia’s family. But there’s a big chunk of joy that is missing. A little black cloud hanging over me. I’m really missing the man who made it possible for me to have all this wonderful extended family. When Bob and I married, I became a “stepmom” to three “kids” but there has been lots of growth in the following 46 years. That family has grown exponentially to 4 “kids” plus spouses, 14 “grands” plus spouses, and 25 “greats”. And now a “great-great”. Thank you, Bob!

So now if you see me crying a little while I share a picture of Dahlia with you, you’ll understand. I am just wishing Dahlia’s great great grandpa Bob was here to hold her and take advantage of a 5-generation photo opportunity! Boy he would be so happy. I would be too.


MOM
GRANDMA
GREAT-GRANDMA
GREAT-GREAT GRANDMA
I JUST KEEP GETTING
BETTER


Dahlia

My Heavy Husband

Death brings a big to-do list. Fortunately for me, I am not someone who is daunted by tasks and projects. I think my years of being a real estate agent/broker taught me to take care of the minutia and stay ahead on paperwork. My organizational skills are far above par. That being sad, when Bob passed in 2021, I took on the tasks of dealing with my spouse's death like a champ. I had a notebook full of checklists made by others such as AARP, Hospice companies, and even churches. I had my own checklist to add to that. I was ready to start checking tasks off the lists. Check. Check. Check.

A bit of friendly advice. Have a journal or a notebook handy where you can write down what you do each day. Trust me, you won't remember in a day or so what you did. You'll be more of a haze than you ever imagined. I'm sure you've had brain fog before, but this will be beyond foggy. Brain dead just seems to describe it. Write down everything Who you talked to. What they said. What day did they tell you to call back. You'll be glad you did. Check. Check. Check.

I had preapproved and prepaid Bob's (and my) cremation. We discussed this when he was cognitively healthy and for that I am glad. I not only knew what Bob's wishes for his body were, I had them already in place. We had also discussed that we wanted Miramar National Cemetery to be our resting place, and I had both Bob's and my approval in my handy dandy death file. I gave myself a gold star for handling all that ahead of time. Check. Check. Check.

So, it sounds like all was just peachy, right. Organized me, just sailing along through the final steps after Bob's death. Well, I'm sure you're not surprised to hear that things were not always smooth sailing. Emotions run high. People say hurtful things. Decisions are tough. Family has advice. Friends have opinions. There are hurdles. One of the silliest

things I remember is when I was calling one of our credit card companies to remove Bob from the card, the lady had to read me a disclaimer that one removed, I wouldn't be able to add Bob back on. I told her she could skip the disclaimer as my husband was dead, and I wouldn't need to add him back to the credit card. She said she had to read it to me anyway. I honestly can't remember if I laughed or cried. But that phone call stuck with me.

Then came my melt down. I didn't see it coming. Bob's remains were ready to be picked up at the Funeral Home. They were just going to be handed to me in a basic black plastic box. I had purchased the most beautiful urn online that I would transfer them to that urn by myself at home. So here I am, standing calmly at the front desk waiting to be handed Bob's box. The young man assisting me goes out of the room and comes back with a bag containing the box. That box contains my husband's ashes. He said to me. **"Oh, he's heavy, do you want help carrying him to the car? Was he a big man?"** No words came out of my mouth. No snappy riposte. Not a sound. Well maybe a gasp of air. I just collected up my husband's remains and did a hasty retreat. Once inside the safe confines of my car, the melt down came. Tears and tears and more tears. Gasping for breath. Blowing my nose. Sitting there for what seemed like forever.

What was it in that comment that pushed all my buttons? I have thought about it so frequently and I really don't know. At first, I thought it was because he was making a joke about something so serious to me. Was this funeral home humor? Was this comment normal? Then I thought maybe it was just a statement of fact without any humor connected to it. Were Bob's remains heavier than the average Joe's? Did he seriously think I needed help in carrying the ashes? Then I thought that maybe I was just being super sensitive and there was nothing mean spirited or off tempo in the comment. Whatever it was, at the time, it was the real tipping

point for me. I went off the ledge. I felt out of control. I drove from the funeral hall to the church office of the pastor that was officiating Bob's service at the cemetery. I was shaken and still in tears. I told him that I couldn't deal with this anymore. I wasn't sure I could place Bob's ashes in the wall and leave them there. I had questions. Could I have the service but not leave the ashes for interment? Could I bring the ashes back to the cemetery later? Could I just put this all on hold until I felt up to it? What other options did I have? Could I just cancel everything, take Bob's ashes home with me and call it done? I choked out all these questions while crying. I'm not sure I even got all the words out, but the pastor knew I needed him to listen. And that's what he did. Calmly, kindly, without looking shocked or perturbed. I shared my fears, concerns, and sadness. He prayed and listened. And he heard me. He asked me to tell him what I felt would be the best thing to do. He never judged or said my thoughts we a bit whacky although I'm sure he felt I had gone off the deep end. Honestly, to verbalize my thoughts and having a listening ear was all I needed to get myself back on track. Well, that and prayer! Within a few minutes, the storm had passed. Decisions were made. There would be a lovely commitment service at the cemetery with Bob's ashes in the magnificent urn and then I would hand that urn over to be placed in its final resting place in the columbarium wall. I was breathing again and calm, cool and collected. Check. Check. Check.

I think of this day as one of the worst times in the early days following Bob's passing. I just wanted to take Bob's ashes and run. To where, I have no idea. Just run far from the reality of all that was going on. Run from making decisions. Run from handling affairs. Run from any task that reminded me of Bob's death. Run from my check list. Just hide from it all with my heavy box of ashes.

But now I look at the offhand comment about my **"heavy husband"**

in a different light. Yes, that box of remains that I was passed that day was heavy. Heavy on my heart. Maybe the funeral home staff recognized that and was telling me that he knew how heavy this was for me. Perhaps he meant my husband had a HEAVY life—not heavy as in weight but heavy as in scope and magnitude and meaning. Bob's life was certainly not light and without significance. A substantial life. And yes, Bob was a BIG man. Big in how he lived with kindness, trustworthiness, honesty, respectfulness, faithfulness, patriotism, and love. I now remember the" "Heaviness and Bigness" of Bob when I flash back to this experience. I can only smile now when I remember that day.

I continually give advice and tell widows how to prepare themselves for handling their husband's death and just what to do after his death. I think I'll add a new task to the check list.

Grace, give yourself grace.

Check. Check. Check.





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!!!

Choices. Choices. Choices.

I've come to the realization that as a widow, my choices are endless. I can plan my day ahead or just wing it on the fly. No one to consult or convince or cajole into doing what I want to do. My choice is my choice.

Well, doesn't that sound selfish? It sounds like all I think about is myself. I can, and I often do. I started out last Saturday with a plan to go to the writers' workshop at the local library and then come home and work in my yard to try to fine tune it a bit for the lovely spring weather. But while showering, I started thinking about other possibilities. Go to a friend's moving sale, go run a few errands and get greeting cards for upcoming birthdays and anniversaries, watch the Padre Spring Training game on TV, settle in on the couch and read a bit? All these tentative plans were bouncing around in my head, and I wasn't sure where the day would lead me. But the decision would be mine and mine alone and I didn't have to decide at that moment. I could see how the day played out. Maybe even a few new ideas would pop up.

If Bob were alive and well, I would be consulting him and finding out what he would want to do. And I would love that! Maybe he would prefer a zoo visit or a walk at Lindo Lake. We'd talk it out, weigh out our options and make a plan. I would give anything to have this be the case but as you know I am now a widow. No consultation from anyone is needed. No one to consult.

I guess this is the case for divorcees, single people, and widowers as well. I never ever considered how much time and effort and compromise it takes to be considerate of another person and include them in your day-to-day plans. For me, it just was part of our marriage. I was independent and made lots of decisions on my own but for day-to-day activities I aways willingly included Bob in my decisions. Would he like

to go along to the grocery store, did he want to go to Saturday night or Sunday morning church, would he want to swim or do yardwork, where would he like to have dinner, should we have friends over, should we pay Uno or Scrabble? The decisions we made as a couple were never ending and a part of our life. They happened naturally. The two of us were always considering each other and mutually making plans. Now it seems so long ago and so-so very time consuming.

I've become a one-person show. It seems almost surreal that I can just make my own plans and do what only Susan prefers. It frees up so much time and the thought process is so simple. If I decide that I want to go to the market and head that way in my car, I can take a detour to the thrift shop without consulting anyone. If I never make it to the market, there's no one that needs an explanation. I'll take myself out to lunch. Simple to be on my own when it comes to how I spend my day. If I spend a whole day reading a book, there's no one wondering what happened to our plan to get yardwork done.

How does this work for a person who can't make an independent decision? I wouldn't know as I am 100% capable of making decisions for my life (with much prayer when needed). I wonder if this is one big reason that some single people, widows, and widowers are lonely or miss their spouses terribly. For those folks that can't make a solo decision, could it be that they just don't like making decisions on their own or need someone to approve of their choices. Fortunately, that's NOT me—I miss Bob for a million other reasons but not because I need him to help me make a choice on how to spend my time.

Could divorcees be even happier to be making their own decisions as a solo act? Do they celebrate the daily freedom of doing just what they want without asking anyone? I'm sure as a widow; I don't celebrate the solo decision-making process in the same way as a divorcee would! But I do find it to be a silver lining in my cloud.

So, what did I end up doing that Saturday?

Some of those things and some others as well. And it was a lovely day!

New Year and another New Word!

I pick a word each new year to focus on in the year ahead. I like this better than making a bunch of resolutions. A word gives me a thought to concentrate upon and often becomes my mantra. I ponder long and hard to choose the word that fits how I am feeling, what issues I may be dealing with, and hopefully a word that will speak to me throughout the year. Not just in the moment that I select the word but all year long. That's a huge task. And one I don't take lightly.

In the past years since I've started this new year habit, my words have been ***GENTLE, JOY, KINDNESS, and STRONG***. All have a back story, and all have fit the bill perfectly. I've never regretted my chosen word and felt it was the perfect word for that year. Success!

But now in early December, I find I'm already pondering my word. My head is a jumble of words that all speak to me. But I need a word that will speak to me ALL YEAR! Is it patience, generosity, authenticity, simplify, connecting? Maybe I need several words or even a sentence?! Where do I feel my focus needs to be in 2025? What goal for self-growth do I have in mind? Where is a weak chink in my mental makeup? What is a character flaw that I should work on? What "Fruit of the Spirit" is lacking in my life? See what I'm dealing with? There are a million words that might be my word!

I have three more weeks to sort this out but I'm still worried that I won't have the right word by January 1st. In past years, the words came to me clearly and I didn't vacillate once I zeroed in on the word. I felt drawn to that word and the connection was instantaneous. That's not happening now. I like the word but only briefly until I think of another word. Nothing is sticking! Each word could work but it doesn't feel like the perfect word. Am I being overly picky in my selection process?

As I type these thoughts up, I'm questioning where I'm going with this writing today. As I'm wondering if a word will come to me in the process of writing about my word, I see a handwritten note on a 3"X5" card taped above my desk. It reads: ***Take your eyes off yourself and focus on God***.

So, I change my focus to God. I take my eyes off Susan. And then the word came to me in a flash. ***GRATITUDE.***

My word for 2025 is going to be ***GRATITUDE***. What a perfect way to change from self-focus to Godly focus. What a way to live every day in 2025. Grateful to the GIVER of all gifts and grateful for all the gifts He has blessed me with. Living with an attitude of ***GRATITUDE*** will be an amazing way to live throughout 2025. My word will be on my lips and in my heart all year long.

GRATITUDE will be such a meaningful guiding word in 2025 that I think I'll start focusing on it early. Like this very instance! Why wait until January 1st?

So, I will finish the year out STRONG as that is my current word for 2024. Strong in body, mind, and spirit.
And full of ***GRATITUDE***!


2024
BE
STRONG
BODY MIND
& SPIRIT


2025
WORD
GRATITUDE
→ FOR GOD

It’s a BEAUTIFUL thing!!

I have probably mentioned that I am attending a Writer’s Workshop at my local library. Not because as a newbie blogger, would I consider myself a writer but because I’m trying to step out and try new things and expose myself to new possibilities. Could I write more than my “Bob Blog”? Who knows!

This past session we were given 5 minutes to write a response to a prompt. New stuff for me. I only write about Bob, grieving, and widowhood. Not just a random topic chosen by someone else.

I was asked to write a response to “What was the most *BEAUTIFUL* thing you saw recently?”

Here goes:

Our 34-year-old son Kyle is a dad—second time around but it’s still extremely heartwarming to see him in this role as a father. He’s a hands-on father taking a huge part in all things pertaining to the care of his one+ month old son and his 23-month-old daughter. He is in his happy place as a dad, and it is so gratifying to see. His father, my husband Bob, was the same way as a father to Kyle. Bob took the lead with so many childcare responsibilities and helped in all ways when we had our son. It’s clear to me now that our son learned from his dad! I appreciate now what a great father role model my husband was for our son.

It’s *BEAUTIFUL* to see. I get a more than a little choked up when I see him with his children or when he talks to me about my sweet grandkids. Yes, it seems like just yesterday that Kyle was our precious newborn son but time flew by and now he’s a dad of two. I know we all ask the same question about life. How did the years go by so fast!

But sadly, my hubby isn’t alive to see the results of his love but it’s *BEAUTIFUL* still.

(So how did that happen?! I ended up writing about Bob, grieving and widowhood)



Kyle and PJ



Sweet Family Picture!



Kyle & Emma

A-D-A-P-T!

The word that popped in my head on a walk recently was ADAPT. As I took a leisurely walk, I had this word pop into my mind and instead of waiting to write down my thoughts once I was home, I started recording on my phone. I "talked texted" this blog to myself. I've never done this before, and really like that it seems to follow the theme of this blog. Adapt—do things differently.

I think widowhood and grieving is not a process of healing or getting over your grief or completely mending. I think it's a process of adapting to the changes that happen as you navigate life alone. I think adapting to the changes is the answer. Not surviving, not getting over it, not putting it behind you, not moving on from it but adapting to it. So, I've been exploring what that means to me and maybe as a widow or widower or someone grieving the loss of a deep love, you'll look at it this way as well.

My life is going on without Bob and I feel God has a purpose for me at this stage of my life. I'm paying very close attention to the God "nudges". I am being obedient to His word, and I try to go where He sends me even if He just sends me across the street to visit a friend who needs a helping hand or He sends me to a hospital to visit a friend who is anxious. I'm saying yes to those "nudges" more than I ever have at any other time in my life and in that way, I feel like I'm adapting.

There are some changes I do NOT ever plan on making. I cannot imagine not missing and feeling deep love for Bob. I don't want that to change. I don't imagine ever not grieving his illness and his death. I can't imagine feeling like I survived

this 100% and came out on the other side. I just don't see those things happening. And I'm good with that. That grief is part of my story with Bob. That won't change.

What I do see happening is coping, adjusting, and accepting my new lot in life. One time I thought that grieving and widowhood was like survival of the fittest. Like if I was tough enough, strong enough, smart enough I could get through it. But now (or at least for today) I don't feel like I want to get through it or over it or beyond it. I want to adapt. Adapt. Adapt. I keep saying that word over and over and over. I'm trying to think about what adapting would look like, what adapting would feel like.

I'm going to look up the definition of that word and ponder it and see if it's really the right word. I'm not sure why I feel so inclined to label everything and give an exact meaning to everything. Is it a coping mechanism? Is it a survival method? I am not sure why I feel like I must be so analytical about this. So, here's the definition– to make something suitable for a new purpose or a new use. Also to modify. I think that's a nice description of what I'm doing with my life right now at this stage. So, my new take on widowhood, loss and grief is to adapt!

I'm praying God will direct me in the right path in his perfect way. This favorite scripture says it all! "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, do not lean on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight" Proverbs 3:5,6

So, adapt, modify, go in a different direction, change, transform, – all of those seem obtainable. They seem doable. They don't seem traumatic, and they don't seem drastic. Can I handle adapting? I'm not going over huge obstacles, not making drastic changes, not trying to put something behind me, and not trying to get over something that's insurmountable. I'm just making minor changes. I'm adapting. I'm just moving ahead

even if that means I must modify my former plan. Like reacting to a plot twist!

So, what I would suggest for you if you're grieving a loss is to just go ahead and grieve. If you're missing your loved one, don't try to change that. If you're a bit concerned about your future, so be it. Just start making minor changes, taking a few baby steps and moving in a little bit different direction than you thought you were going to go. Adapt.

As I get very close to the three-year mark of my husband's death (Bob passed on 11/11/21), I get a little melancholier and even a little bit down in the dumps. There are a few more teary days and gloomy moments. The lump is my throat is a bit bigger. It's these times when I think even more about what we might have done these last few years and what we might have done in the years ahead. I miss him. I miss our life. I miss seeing him in my future. Life has changed but I'm ever so grateful that I had Bob and had his love and that will never change.

Adapting has a soft sound to it. Making small changes is necessary. Nothing major nor drastic. I think that's important for you to remember if you're going off on a new path that you need to do it with care. You don't want to just start out on some crazy rocky steep uneven terrain. You want to start out with a somewhat smooth level path, wouldn't you think? You need to acclimate to the new surroundings and conditions. Take a little venture out of your comfort zone. Dip your toes in, test the water, try some new foods, make some new friends, connect with old friends, go where you haven't gone before, learn a new dance, try a new lipstick, read a different style of book, take a class, explore your faith, love on your family, pamper yourself, exercise more, and travel. Just try to adapt to doing these things without your loved one.

You can do it. I am.



Even Darwin agrees with me!!

Revived, Refreshed, and Restored Memories

Emotions were running rampant in me when I started reading a book recently. I had been notified by the author of the book that his book was soon to be released. He had written a book that tells the story of the Sagon Penn Case in San Diego. If you lived in San Diego in the mid-eighties, this name and homicide case will probably ring a bell. Perhaps you'll have some recollection of this murder of a SD Police Officer and the attempted murder of both another SD Police Officer and a civilian ride-a-long. This case took over the news that March of 1985 and for many years to come it made the headlines. Bob was a Sergeant at the time in the Homicide Division and his Team, Team 4, was On-Call and took the lead on the investigation. Our household lived and breathed "Sagon Penn" for many years.

I wasn’t eager to read the book. You see, I already knew the story. I knew about the officers involved, I knew about the killer, I knew about the first trial and the second trail, and I knew about the outcome. I knew the aftermath of the tragedy. How interesting of a mystery would it be if I already knew how it ended? I was actually leery to read the book as I wasn’t sure that I wanted to relive some of the feelings I had at the time based on the outcome of the trial. So, I didn’t order the book.

I mentioned the book to our son Kyle. Kyle wasn’t even born until 1990 and was only vaguely familiar with this case/story. He thought it might be an interesting read, so he was able to download the book for free on Libby (the County Library free download program). My feelings about reading the book changed instantly with this text received from Kyle.
“I’ve been reading the Sagon Penn book. Dad (and you) appears in the 10th Chapter! The book is really interesting and well written. It is so nice reading about dad-especially his quotes. I can read them in his voice and completely imagine him saying them. I can picture him transcribing them onto yellow legal pads. I’m reading intensely just to find the next time Dad appears.”

Yes, that got my attention! So, I immediately went to Amazon and ordered the book. And when it came the next day, I found myself like my son, reading it intensely. What was my takeaway from the book? Yes, it was a well written story about a tragedy for the SDPD. I wasn’t surprised at how the book evoked sad memories. But what surprised me is how it much it made me think about and remember the man who was a Homicide Detective. A man that was well respected in his field. A man who was a leader to his team of officers. A man who possessed keen investigative skills. A man who was an extremely competent report writer. A man who upheld the law. A man who was well thought of amongst his peers. A man who loved his job and eagerly went to work day after day after day. My husband.

To be honest, I quite often think of Bob as he was in his later years. The retired older Bob. The Bob with cognitive issues. The Bob with health issues. The Bob with Dementia. It was so wonderful to spend some time remembering a different Bob. Perhaps I could even say that the Bob of his working years was the “real” Bob. The Bob that I hadn’t thought of in a while. The Bob whose life became overshadowed by the drastic changes in his later years.

The book was filled with names of people Bob worked with who were part of his Homicide team, coworkers, dispatchers, patrol officers, crime scene investigators, lab technicians, attorneys, Police chiefs—-and each of their names and their part of the story brought back a flood of memories of the 30+ years Bob served on the Police Department. I was a proud loyal Police wife, and it was nice to feel those strong positive feelings again. I had renewed pride in my husband!

Quite often when our son Kyle and I are sharing stories and memories about his dad, Kyle ends with a simple comment—*“He was such a silly guy”* or *“Oh that silly guy!”* The Bob of the 60’s, 70’s, 80’s would NEVER have been described as a “silly guy”! Mellowing with age, his retirement, having grandchildren, having our child very late in his life, and then dementia changed Bob’s world. It was bittersweet to be transported by this book back to another time in Bob’s life and remember him in a different light. I was grateful for the reminder of the Bob of earlier years even if reading the book was difficult at times.

I’m glad that I overcame the very strong initial impulse to not read the book. Although I still find the whole incident to be tragic and upsetting, the joy of finding my Bob amidst the sad story was a blessing to me. It’s crazy how a story as heartbreaking as this one propelled me back in time and refreshed my memories. The book actually filled me with many good memories that are totally unrelated to the story.

I know that for many people the release of this book was dreaded and even painful. I get that. Why would anyone want their tragedy to put on display—-once again? So don’t take this as a recommendation to read the book. For me, the book was just the avenue that brought lovely and misplaced memories of Bob back to the forefront of my brain.

Bob’s life is now a collection of memories to me, and it was nice to have some memories added to the vast collection.
And for that, I am grateful.









A look at Bob over his many years on the SDPD. A favorite is always the picture with Chief of Police Bill Kolender.

My Bob Haiku!

I've been attending a Writer's Workshop at my local library. I'm not really intending to write a book at this point but I'm trying to improve my writing skills for my Bob with one "o"

Blog. It’s a really enjoyable experience and I will continue to attend if only just to be around the interesting and creative people that I’ve met there. Retirement and Widowhood open up lots of free time to explore new things in life. This has been a wonderful one of those new adventures.

This Saturday we were given a writing prompt. This is all new territory for me, and I actually thought about sitting this one out. I only write about Bob (and myself) and I haven’t ever written on other topics. So given the phrase ***“Upside Down and Right Side Up”*** and being asked to write a Haiku right then was daunting. Write a poem and use the Japanese style with phonetic units in a 5-7-5 pattern seemed like I was being asked to walk a tightrope. No can do.

But I did.

And here it is.

And of course, it’s about Bob (and myself).

***

Death is life changing

Upside down and right side up

Is this normal now

***

Death, grief, and sorrow

Upside down and right side up

Missing you daily

***

New life does go on

Upside down and right side up

Loving you forever

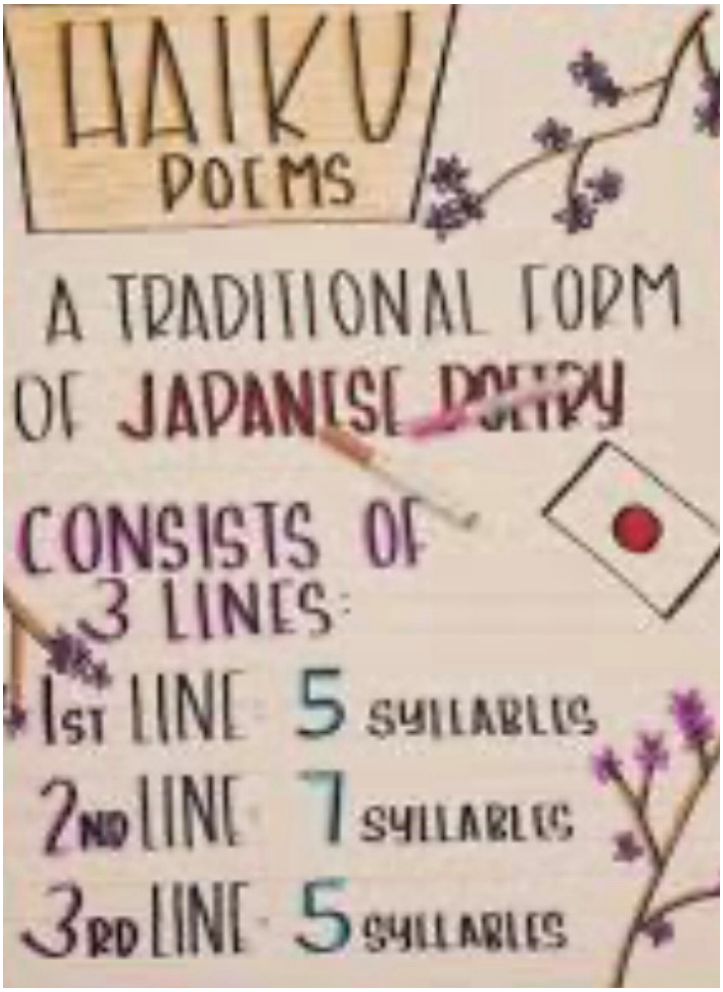
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Memories bring smiles

Upside down and right side up

Joy returns, heart is healed.

…Susan 7/13/2024



Photographs & Memories

(wouldn’t that make a great song title?!)

True confession. I spend quite a bit of time on Facebook social media. I admit it. Not a horrible amount of time where I have carpel tunnel, sore thumbs and a trigger finger but if you’re one of my Facebook friends you know I share my life with posts and pictures a bunch. I feel it’s a bit like journaling. Or at least that’s my rationale. It could possibly be my addictive personality but that’s a blog topic for yet another day…

My favorite part of Facebook is Facebook Memories. It’s fun to have photo memories pop up each day chronicling events that happened in past years on that same date. I especially love seeing Bob in his healthier days and I am glad that I have the pictures of Bob even in his years of cognitive decline and poor health. I pour over all the pictures and soak in the memories—thinking of the good times and feeling the love! The pictures and attached memories are so needed—a blessed reminder of the wonderful life I had with my hubby. I truly cherish all the memories. Even in the throes of caregiving, I was grateful for Bob. Tired, struggling, frazzled, sad, but happy to be Bob’s wife.

Now there’s a new thing going on. Bob’s been deceased for long enough that now I have new Facebook Memories that don’t include him. When these Bob-absent photo memories pop up on Facebook, I’m a bit saddened. I didn’t want a life without Bob, and I wanted more time and more memories. But the overall takeaway is that these new Bob-absent photo memories are a reminder that I am continuing to live. Living a new season of life without Bob being physically here. Bob’s memory is now my “partner”! (Thanks to author Mitch Albom for that expression)

There were times that I wondered if I would mentally,

physically and spiritually survive Bob’s illness and passing. I was a wreck in all those aspects. When you’re in the thick of it, it is excruciatingly hard and the thought of living a somewhat normal life seems quite impossible. But here I am 2 years and 7+ months later, and I am not only living a “normal” life but leading a happy, thriving, productive, and enjoyable life.

And I have Facebook Memories to prove it!!