

He Is Not Gone

by Sheila Luecht

A while ago I had written about my cousin who was very ill with cancer and how he was in the ending of his struggle. While he passed about a year later, that struggle was in a downward spiral during that last year only because of the wear and tear on his body. When the event first occurred, I had sat down to write about my immediate feelings and experiences, and somehow in all of that did not save the work. I had wrote about what actually happened, what I tried to do and how I had determined not to attend the funeral.

Since then I have come to feel his absence and feel that it might be time to try and write about this again. I used to spend a great deal of time managing things on facebook for a very large group with over 10,000 members. While some might not understand what that means, it for me was an opportunity for some activism on subjects very important to me and since it was global, people were on at different times in all sorts of time zones. I had a team of people who assisted me with this, but I was the lead person. So I would usually work from early evening on. Most of the time when I was just about to retire for the night, my cousin in a different state and time zone would pop on.

Usually he was unable to sleep due to his condition and would be awake in his recliner trying to pass some time. He would be looking at facebook and reading and there he would be private messaging me and asking how I was. It was always something interesting and worth my time. He would ask me something or tell me something and we would talk for a while then I would finally retire.

Many times after his death I expected that interruption. I would be up working late and then think of him just as I was about to retire. Once in a while someone would message me, and I would at first expect it to be him. How strange we are trained to think of someone,

yet we know they have passed, and yet it was them, you were certain.

The ability to be comfortable with those feelings is part of the grief process I suspect. I could finally verbalize how much I missed him and also missed that connection. The talks that no one really knew or cared about, but that helped him along his way and helped me by making me feel that I was connected and doing something to help him.

When he passed many people who were friends of his on facebook, old high school friends and work friends were there. They spent weeks on facebook afterwards sharing the impact of this smiling man. I could understand how they felt, he had reached out to many of them too, bonded over the things they shared and their upbringing.

We didn't share that much. I had not seen him in about five years and not seen him for a few decades before that. Yet, this fall, I remember him and think of his writings, late at night. His pictures of deer and wild turkeys reflected his interests, this fall when I see a wild turkey among the red and gold leaves, I think of him.

