

# Even after 5+ years

I've had some good news. I've had some not so good news. I've had some bad news. For 20 years I would go home and discuss the events of the day with my wife. After 5+ years of being widowed, I still miss that time. Talking about the same things with my daughters or friends just doesn't give the same feelings. Funny how some things just hit me.

My logical and analytical side has been thinking about that very thing the past couple of weeks. Deaths, upcoming family events, things at work have been in the front of my mind recently. Every one of these events would have be part of the evening discussions. What was so special about those discussions? 'Twas a puzzlement, but I did figure some things out.

1) Depth of personal involvement. On top of being Husband and Wife, we were best friends. We just enjoyed being together. Anything we did was better when we were together. Trying times a bit less trying. Good times were always better. We were very compatible.

2) We did not agree on everything. I was logical and thoughtful, she was more emotional and reacted with her feelings. I was often slow to react to things. Discussions with her made me think of things differently. It was sort of an instant 'out of the box' experience. I never had to come up with another way of looking at things, she was there to do for me, and I did it for her. We were complimentary.

3) Depth of feelings and empathy. We knew each other very well. We shared our deepest thoughts and emotions from almost the beginning of our time together. She knew that I would often have a 'delayed' reaction to something. I knew that the reaction she was having could have been triggered by a unrelated event. In some ways we were truly one.

Over the past few years, I've learned to be on my own again. I became comfortable with myself as an individual. Even when some of my friends see me as a appendage to one of my daughters (or the other way around), I am just me. For 20 years it was J and S (... S and J?), now it is justj. The meaning and reason behind my blog-name comes to light, and that is a good a place to stop as any.

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## Just when you thought...

Tonight was an evening of celebration. I had a wonderful time with a bunch of friends celebrating a very special occasion. I'm sure someone else's blog will give a complete rundown of the events, so I won't here. But I did enjoy myself. This post is not about that joy and celebration, but more a feeling of loss, when later events happened.

For the past few years, I've always had a few bittersweet feelings at wedding and anniversary celebrations. These were events that would remind me of what I lost. This was the very first such event in the past five years that I did not have the deep feeling of loss. Two of my daughters were married and those events nearly knocked me flat emotionally.

It has been over 5 years since I last held my wife in my arms. 5 years when the wedding vows were fulfilled. You never really think about that clause "until death do us part". At least not until it happens. Today at the celebration, I did not think about the loss I had, only the joy being shared. A good evening.

But then it happened. I was waiting for my youngest daughter to finish up a game, so I did some shopping at the 24 hour place. I ran into a man who I knew and, I haven't seen him in

over 5 years. He did not know of my wife's death. The question "How is your wife?" blew me out of the water. I wasn't expecting to have to tell that to anyone in this area. I live in a small community, I really thought everyone knew.

The comfortable day took a drastic turn with one short question. Emotions filled my every thought. I hesitated on the answer. It was like a punch in the gut. We then shared a few memories and parted. Slowly, the flood of feelings calmed. This is the way of life and death. The memories of our past can warm us as well as send chills down our spines. Those we loved live on through us, and in the stories we tell. In that I found some peace

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## Thoughts on Random Thoughts

Today marks one year of my blog. More on that in the next post... ☐

I was wondering how random my thoughts have really been in the past year. I've written about a lot of different topics that interest me, but I've seem to have posted most about the things in life that are most important to me.

Family and Friends.

Posts written in times of sadness revolved around family and friends no longer in my life. Posts written in better times revolved around family and friends I share my life with now. Theater posts revolve around plays and my dear friends that I've met through that theater. Even posts on space and science go back to family events I've kept in my mind through many a year.

Just how random?

Over three hundred posts and some posts fit into more than one category, but here is a rough break down.

160 Thoughts on Life (default category could contain anything)

100+ posts on Family

50 posts on Friends

48 on the theater

42 on movies or reviews

37 on Widows and Widowers

24 on Science and Technology

10 to 20 on the remaining categories.

If we add the posts for family, friends and widow/widowers together, that is over 1/2 my post total. Yep, kind of shows where my mind is most of the time. This place is a dumping ground to clear my mind and help get thoughts back in gear. I've always know what is important to me, and it is good to see that my thought 'dumps' confirm this.

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## **New Year, comfortable habit**

New Year's eve and I toasted in the new Year. I've made that toast with the same beverage for the Since New Years Eve 1983/1984. My future brother-in-law brought some Piesporter with him. My future wife did not care for wines at all really liked this wine. From that date on, we shared a bottle of some type of Piesporter. It has been a holiday tradition for a long time.

After her death, I kept buying that type of wine for both New Year's Eve and our Anniversary. I have not shared the bottle

with anyone until last night. In the past few years, if I was out for the evening, I would save my toast until I got home. I didn't feel like sharing this wine. This year I spent the evening with some good friends. I did share my bottle with those who wanted it.

If they enjoyed the wine, that was wonderful. If they didn't care for it, it doesn't matter. I also shared a bottle of the same wine with family and friends on the anniversary of her death. This is the first year, I've shared the wine. It may not mean a lot to those who shared with me, but in mind it had a lot of meaning.

To those who shared, thank you for accepting a gift from my heart, and helping me remember the good times I did have for many years.

Happy New Year.

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## **All this and something more**

Did you every have a day you thought would have turned out differently? Did you ever expect one thing, and have something else happen? To answer those questions, yes, I did. Yesterday was one of those days.

It was decided earlier that my daughters and I would go to the Zoo to see the Christmas Light display before it closed for the season. As a family we've always enjoyed visiting the light display. As a family we were members since 1984. The Lights before Christmas started in 1986 and has been our family tradition since that date. We took our small children in strollers, pushed grandfathers (due to health or injury) on wheelchairs. We took relatives from warmer climates on very

cold evenings. We even went on cold rainy nights. It was a winter escape. As a family we enjoyed the evenings together.

Since 2003, we have not been able to attend as a complete family. My wife was too ill to take the cold weather in her final month, and I stayed with her. She hasn't been there since that year of course. The years following one daughter or another has not been there as we toured the lights. This year my daughter in Florida was not in Ohio to attend. I am very sorry she missed it again.

So three of my daughters, my son-in-law, some friends when to the lights, on the 5th anniversary of my dear wife's death. I thought a melancholy day was in order. I forgot how much I enjoy the company of my family and friends. I also forgot the magic of seeing hundreds of colorful lights. A day of memories and togetherness. Not really a sad memory last night at all.

After the evening of lights, we went to my eldest daughter's house and shared a glass of wine and bit of dinner. A toast to her memory and more conversation. A wonderful night. I needed that. It was another healing effect on my life. Family is wonderful.

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## **5 years ago... Final chapter ??**

I don't know that I will have much time to blog in the next few days and I wanted to get this down. 5 years ago this weekend, I spent as much of the weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) with my wife. The two youngest were spending time at Grandma's house (with Mom), so The oldest and I were back and forth taking care of the multitude of animals.

I really don't remember anymore what we did on Friday or

Saturday. Those days were lost in the many days traveling back and forth from home to Toledo. But the final Sunday I remember very well indeed.

I took my oldest in to visit (Again, I don't know what day), and that Sunday my in-laws took my youngest 3 out for the day. I spent Sunday the 28th with my wife. We didn't do a lot. She sat and did some word search puzzles and a crossword or two. I was reading various magazines and books. A nice quiet time. Around lunchtime I found out that the movie [The Incredible Mr. Limpet](#). Sarah and I both liked that movie, so we watched it while eating. We had Campbell's Vegetable soup and some crackers. I drank coffee, she had some hot tea. She dozed on and off while watching the movie. When it was over she said she was very tired and wanted to get some rest.

She leaned on me walking down the hall, so she wouldn't lose her balance. I tucked her in gave her a hug and kiss. She slept the rest of the afternoon and into the evening. The rest of the family came back. I took my 2nd daughter back home that evening. Late in the evening my wife went to the emergency room with breathing problems. Shortly after that she was transferred back up to the Ann Arbor Hospital.

That Monday I found out that the cancer had grown back to more than the original size. She had developed pneumonia. She had very little time. That night (early morning really) at 3:55 she passed away. That will be 5 years this Tuesday morning.

For the first few months, I would wake up every morning at 3:55. Then it was every Tuesday at 3:55. Then it was the 30th of each month at 3:55. Finally it was only on the 30th of December. I'm not sure what will happen this Tuesday, it doesn't matter really. The memories are different this year. The anniversaries are more introspective than really sad and depressing.

Many things have helped over the years. Wonderful family, good

friends, theater therapy and many other things. I've been lucky and blessed.

There is one other thing to mention. The night after Sarah's death my three youngest were at home. We tried to welcome in the new year. Not a joyful evening, but one of shock. The thing I remember of that night is seeing all the girls in their mother's Eeyore sweats. Bittersweet, yes, but again I remember feeling blessed with my daughters.

So this is the final entry of what happened 5 years ago. Starting the 31st it is the 6th year of being a widower, I have no idea where that journey will lead.

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## **Five Years Ago (Part 6)**

Christmas Eve 5 years ago was not an experience I would ever want to go through again. My dear wife was very sick and feeling bad from the latest round of radiation. Snow was falling heavily, and it took much longer to get to Toledo than anticipated. On top of all that we were going to put our dog in a kennel so we could spend the holidays with family in Toledo.

It snowed so hard, that I could not find the kennel. It was my first time there, my oldest sister set it up for us, our Christmas gift. Road signs were covered with snow and we spent a long time trying to find the right turns. The dog never made it to the kennel. There was no room for him at my in-laws, and a cold cramped basement for him at my sister's, were Christmas Eve dinner was.

Tired and angry, I took my daughters to dinner with my side of the family. After dinner, I dropped the two youngest off at



Grandma's and took the dog and my second oldest back home. With about 8 hours of rest, my daughter and I went back to Grandma's to have dinner with my wife's side of the family. For me, it was a very tense day, but I put it behind me as much as possible to make sure my wife had the best day possible.

We really didn't know how much more time she would have, and I didn't want to know.

After that Christmas, I tried to forget the events of the night before. I was never able to. 5 years later I remember almost every word. Words said in anger and frustration. If I could take them back I would. Little did I know how they would haunt me. That Christmas Eve was not the one I would ever have wanted for our last one together.

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## **5 years ago (Part 4)**

5 years ago at this time, my wife was spending her time at her parents. This is 1 hour away from our home, her husband and 3 of her daughters. On the nights we couldn't visit, we had to make do with phone calls.

It was also at this time that I took one of the afghans she made to provide a bit more warmth while sleeping. I woke up early this morning under that same afghan. My early morning mind was thinking of how it was like being wrapped in a hug. I guess in a way it was.

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## 5 years ago (part 3)

There are times I remember going up to Ann Arbor for radiation treatments. I didn't get to many of them, because I was trying to make sure the girls had as normal of life at home as possible. Her parents, my oldest sister and I all took her up for the treatments.

My memory is of one day. We were in the waiting room until the staff was ready for her. My dear wife started talking to another patient, laughing, joking and smiling about what they were both going to face. The other patient came in feeling quite down, and left with a very big thank you and smile. I've often wondered what happened to the other patients we met.

I'm not sure, but I imagine that this happened more than just on my trips to Ann Arbor. It was her way of dealing with the stress. Sometimes she seemed just so tired, but she found time to laugh when she could. After her death, I receive multiple cards from the doctors and nurses that knew her during her hospital stay and treatment. I had multiple comments on how infectious her laugh and smile were.

Today, I miss that laugh and the smile. There are many things I wanted to do that year. One was to get a video camera to record some family history. I did not get the camera at that time. It took me until after she died to finally get that stupid camera. And what do I do? My first taping, I misplace the tapes. My daughters were in their first play at the playhouse. I put those tapes someplace safe. So far, I've only found 1 of 2. I haven't even played it through yet. Not even sure which act I have.

It was my hope to get some of our history recorded before we lose it. I don't have a recording of her laugh. I do have pictures of the smile. As my memory fades, I lose the sounds of her voice. After 5 years I guess that is the hardest thing.

Forgetting more each day. The memories are still there, but they have lost the warm vibrant colors of years gone by. Each day they fade just a little more.

I miss that laugh.

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## **Five Years ago Today (part 2 – The blur)**

Those days between Thanksgiving and Christmas were a blur. Seemed like non-stop travel from home to hospital, or home to in-laws. When my wife was released and scheduled for cancer treatments, she had to stay within an hour of the Ann Arbor Hospital. Our house did not meet that restriction, so she stayed with her parents. So between work (we still weren't accepting the forgone conclusion), taking care of the girls we would drive to see her often. Ann Arbor is about 2 hours away, her parents 1 hour. That meant a lot of time in the car. Often in very poor weather. It became a blur. Very few days stick out in my mind. I remember the blur.

The stretch of 23 between Toledo and Ann Arbor has been in my nightmares. I saw that road too many times during that month. I've had dreams of car crashes, getting lost or stranded on that section of road. It was not a road I traveled often before that November/December, but it became one to avoid if at all possible. It brings up memories of the Blur.