

To My Father

Year of entry: 2018

Being told the flutter in your heart is going to give you about a year to live at the ripe age of 30 seemingly took a toll on your disposition. Maybe this is why I grew up with a perpetual sense that my life was not meant to work. Try as hard as I might, it was like I had a special talent for falling right between the cracks many couldn't fall into even if they tried. But Lo and behold, it was just that feeling of having nothing to lose which has gotten this far. And in hindsight those cracks were exactly where I needed to fall. Instead of using my reductionist talents to bully the peasants, I fell in love with them. Instead reducing my brain to what could be ascertained from a book, I became socially aware, somewhat experienced, and passingly intelligent.

You never said it, but to me 30 years of evidence supports the conclusion that perhaps you were simply doing what was necessary to be with your people. Why you suddenly fell in with a crowd you did not belong with was as much of a mystery to others as it was to you. And I would not be the first to wonder if there was some larger purpose behind you being who you are or were. To this end I can only say that of all the many people you've come across in your life I am but one, and I'd not be who I am if not for you.

You sucked the cool right out of the room, so much so I thought there wasn't any left for me. You were a total ladies' man, I was an awkward kid.

In my heart, I didn't understand why people you associated with either adored you or were inclined to put a label on you – as if a guy drinking a beer meant he was by extension automatically guilty of any offense which could be contrived. To this I always questioned if maybe you were someone else entirely when I was not present, because I simply never seen this contriving person others sometimes painted you to be.

When I looked into those contemplative blue eyes I saw something you would not share, not even with me. But I did not see malice. Time and time again I saw that quiet wisdom in them come to life when you handled people and situations, so often classy and compassionate, and other times fiercely - but never without reason. Yet when those people spoke of you they did so behind your back, and not without looks akin to Hyenas waiting for confirmation that their prey has weakened before mustering an attack. In my thirty years, I am only beginning to understand this seemingly natural resentment I saw in some toward you.

Those crazy blue eyes. Occasionally in their long moments of contemplation a fearsome look would come over them while the classic rock playing (it was *always* playing – even when the radio was off) in the background hit a crescendo. In many ways I am what I am because you are who you are, but it is just this kind of look which overtakes a man in the midst of his most intimate moments of contemplation that rubs off on a kid the most. I did

not know it then, but I sensed it. And as I grow older I realize how much it is true; so much so that sometimes I think I am but dancing to another man's tune.

As for you, you have lived a hard life so far. Caught up in the mainstream rush of things, many of us favor the fruits of action and seek the worldly gratification that comes with it, all the while losing sight of the larger goal. Why is so many of the best of us have a tendency to – nay an affinity for – letting worldly opportunities pass them by?.

That is above my pay grade. But there are a few things I'd like to let you know.

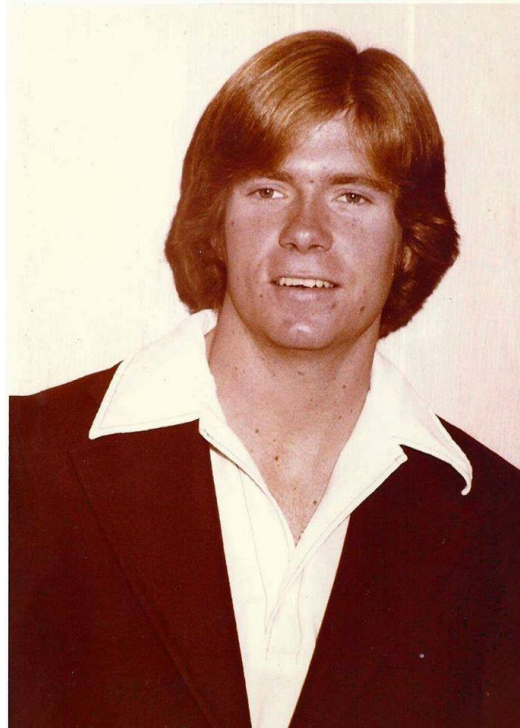
Everything I do in this world has your name on it, 'Pal'. Though I'll never take the easy way out of this place, when your day comes, be it tomorrow or thirty years from now, I will be looking forward to the day I follow in your footsteps.

Like most men I am sure you've been putting one foot in front of the other and letting the patterns emerge and accomplishing the will of some force other than your own in the purpose. In this random walk you've touched many lives. As for mine, all I can say is you created a stone-cold communist.

“To lead people, walk beside them. As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate. When the best leader's work is done the people say, ‘We did it ourselves.’” — Lao-Tsu

R.I.P Wade Wignes

9/4/1957 – 6/18/2020



Many of you here had the pleasure of knowing my dad before the time he was told over thirty years ago that he only had a year to live. In hindsight, especially as I look at all the old photos of him I had never seen until now, I realize what a difference there may have been between the two people. He smiled a lot in those photos. This is not the dad I knew, least not until just a couple of years ago after one of the multiple times he died and came back to life.

After this he straightened up. More than that, it was like another side of him came out – one he had buried long ago and which I never knew existed. It was like meeting my father for the first time in thirty years. I am very thankful for the time I've had with him since then. He started opening up about his past and the things he loved and those he regretted. Believe it or not, family – all of his siblings included – was one of those things. And I got to see him get back to being a working man. In fact, his last job – what may have been what finally did him in – was a digging job. A 63 yr. old man with a heart implant who had spent the last forty years beating himself up every way he could and who hadn't been to the gym in three months because they were all closed down – it was in this condition he took on a digging job.

I'm actually kind of proud of him for that.

But even in his darkest times he was my hero; even when he messed up – especially when he messed up. It was strange like that.

What I remember about him in those times was that he did not speak much, but he thought deeply. Though I may have tested him with my intellectual curiosities, he was always strong in his faith and in his beliefs. There was in fact something profoundly spiritual about my dad if and when one was willing to look past his vices. Whatever it was, I think him being told at a young age that he didn't have long to live only served to amplify it. In hindsight, I think he's been preparing for this day for a very long time now.

Though he was a deeply intelligent and faithful person, god never really seemed granted him the words to describe all the things going on in his beautiful head – least not to me. I like to think there was a reason for that. And I will be spending the rest of my life thinking about what that might be.

At his worst, I remember seeing him hurt himself far more than I ever seen him hurt others. On the contrary, my dad was usually the one sticking up for others.

In some ways my sister is a lot more like him than I am; beneath his tough exterior, he was a sensitive person. He used words like mental abuse to describe the things that hurt him, and terms like mental intimacy to describe what wanted out of people. I can count on two fingers the number of times he put a hand on me – I cannot even recall him raising his voice at me. More than that, he never once put me down.

While I am profoundly blessed to have known him, wherever he is now, I am not too worried about him as I feel he is okay. In this last week in fact I've realized that I am no longer crying for him, but for myself; because I lost him. It makes death seem a desirable thing to me – like a means to steal the peace that was taken from me. But while men can easily find death, only god can grant peace. And I feel as though my father walked the path god put before him, and that he has earned his peace.

I pray and I hope one day we can all say the same.

Dad,

Words cannot describe how much you are loved and how much you will be missed.

While I will try to live my life to the fullest, you cannot stop me from looking forward to the day that I follow in your footsteps.