

The Second Anniversary of Betsy Orman's Passing

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As we mark the second anniversary of Betsy's passing, I find myself returning to the words she left our family: don't be lonely, don't be sad, and live a great life. She wasn't simply wishing us happiness. She was challenging us to live intentionally.

Of course, I miss her every day. Including our three-year engagement, we shared 45 years together. I miss her laughter. I miss her voice. I miss her bright smile. I miss her unpredictable spontaneity.

Betsy was a force of nature - full of energy, fearless conviction, and singular purpose - and yet she had an extraordinary gift for noticing the quietest person in the room and making them feel seen. No one ever left our house empty-handed. They left with food, a gift, encouragement, or simply the feeling that they mattered.

I've often wondered what comes next. Having retired, I've asked myself: Should I return to work? Should I travel? Should I write? Like many people entering a new chapter of life, I found myself holding back, uncertain about which direction to take.

At the cemetery, as I reflected on Betsy's words, something shifted. I realized that perhaps I've been asking the wrong question. Instead of asking what job I should have, maybe I should be asking what kind of life I want to live.

Betsy's message wasn't about filling my calendar. It was about investing in our children, serving others, volunteering, writing, building community, pursuing the things that matter, and discovering where I can bring purpose and joy.

That realization has brought me a surprising sense of freedom. I don't feel the pressure to find just another full-time job simply to fill my schedule. I want to remain open to discovering what gives this chapter of my life meaning and then have the courage to step into it.

That spirit led me this week to do something both impulsive and long overdue: attend a



concert at nearby UC Berkeley's Greek Theatre.

As fate would have it, the performers were, oddly enough, a Grateful Dead tribute band.

Oh my God. I was not ready for it.

My son and I felt as though we had been dropped into a time warp. I hadn't seen that much tie-dye since the 1970s, although, truth be told, I missed much of the '70s while pursuing my own spiritual journey. Around here, people jokingly call Berkeley "Berserkly," and for several hours, I understood why.

I marveled at the sea of gray hair, hearing aids, walkers, and canes. The music was amazing and watching hundreds of people dance with the same enthusiasm they had decades ago, until their hips gave out, was

both surreal and weirdly inspiring. And if you were wondering, I did not inhale.



It was not a scene I would have remotely imagined finding myself in. And yet, somewhere between the tie-dye and the music, I was reminded that life doesn't stop because we grow older. We can still laugh. We can still be surprised. We can still try new things. We can still dance, even if it takes a couple of Tylenol afterward.

As I walked home, I realized something else: I felt alive.

And I think that's exactly what Betsy hoped for us. Not that we'd simply carry on, but that, like her, we would keep living boldly by embracing new experiences, loving people well, and finding joy wherever it appears. Grief never completely leaves us, nor should it. Love doesn't disappear. But neither should our willingness to keep living a full and purposeful life.

Her passing seems like only yesterday, and I still miss her deeply. I suspect I always will. But the greatest way I can honor her is to carry her spirit forward by being a "yes" to life.

I think she would smile at that.

And I think she would remind me: Live a great life.

