

Dear Dad:

I have for sometime over the last few months been formulating a letter for you. I wanted a chance to express all that needs to be said and understood between you and I so no questions were left unanswered.

However, as I watched you becoming weaker and as the oncologist said to you your cancer is marching on I realized that a letter would not be possible, and the spoken word now becomes important.

There was a Friday evening several weeks ago when you and I were alone in the house that this opportunity presented itself. I have only seen you cry twice in my life Dad and during your period of transition I watched you shed quite a few tears. You were fearful and questioning why this was happening to you and that it surely makes you humble. I told you that I did not have a good answer for you as to why this was happening however, I did have a theory. As Grandma Crow once said life is full of hard knocks and painful lessons. Maybe just maybe this was to show you how much you are loved by your family. You are totally reliant on us now and the kindness of others that care for you. All of the activities that you could once do such as walking, feeding and caring for yourself are slowly being taken away. We now care for you because we love you and indeed we had to remind you that you were not a burden. "Maybe" you said, "maybe that is what this is all about". What I didn't add was that you are worthy of that love. You see there was a time about 10 years ago Dad when life did not seem to be worth living and you did not feel worthy. However, you came through it with a second chance to see how precious and valuable life is. And yes, you had to realize that ok that was not a good choice and there was a sharp turn in the road, a big hiccup. You had to learn to hold your head up proud and not be ashamed, put one foot in front of the other and look into your own heart to find your own self worth, your own self love. When you are able to do that hearts shine back at you. And we see you Dad, not the apparent mistakes however the heart of you. That is all any of your family ever saw was you and the goodness that resides there.

During that same Friday night you also remarked that you wish you were a 10 year old boy fishing again down by the river. You told me about the colored people that would come over from Detroit on weekends and fish. They would say "child come and have supper with us tonight." You told me about how they could cook up some of the best ribs & chicken. But don't run out of worms for fishing as they would get very upset when Grandpa would run out of worms. You also talked about how others would speak unkindly about these folks based on the color of their skin, and that you never judged them in that way and that they were always very good to you. Isn't that interesting that we can embrace each other's differences and also share our likenesses. A young boy and a group of people lined up with their cane poles for the sheer pleasure of fishing. Isn't that a lesson in compassion and kindness. I like to think it is.

On that same Friday evening the question of compassion and kindness presented itself again as you remarked about your younger brother Douglas and why he was still here and what quality of life does he have. As your own parents worried as to who would now care for him, I assured you that your family would now do the same. I also talked about how I believe that certain people are placed on this earth to show us how to be patient, tolerant, caring, compassionate and accepting without judgement of others that live in an altered world, or are different from what we believe is "normal." They become our greatest teachers as we learn the virtues.

Each of us have free will and free choice when we are placed on this earth as to how we will conduct ourselves & God will not interfere in our plan. However, when we turn away from the lessons that life presents us and the opportunities that are there, life continues to present these same lessons as opportunities. And yes sometimes it is the most painful of lessons as we are making our way to the other side of life we realize what is really important. We begin to have gratitude for what we have or have had, and not looking at what we don't have. We are able to see the footprints we have left behind and the seeds of love that are planted in others. You have surely done that for me Dad and I am truly thankful.

So I send you love and blessings this day Dad and I will surely miss you, however, I know your presence is always with me as I look up where you now reside in your new home. And yes, you can be that 10 year old boy fishing again with your cane pole down by the river.

Love your daughter Selina