

Untitled

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2ND PLACE WINNER

When Shedd asked if I'd write a story about my family's experience with Natural Path Sanctuary, I immediately said yes. About an hour later, I regretted it — because what would I say? But I will try.

For the past 7 days, I've been thinking about what I'd write.

Do I share the story of the day my siblings (except for one brother) came from 3 states to have a mini-reunion weekend in Madison, and how, during that visit, I suggested, quite out of the blue, that we take a drive and check out this "natural burial place" southwest of Madison, so that when our mom died some day, the decision about what to do with her body could be mutually agreed upon by all of her children beforehand?

Besides having dementia and needing 24/7 care, our mom was relatively stable. We all knew her life expectancy wasn't long, but we pictured another year, maybe two. In other words, no rush.

Even though our sibling time together was so limited that weekend. Even though it was pouring rain on that Saturday. Even though we all felt a tug to stay put & cozy on the front porch and push the visit to NPS until our next time together, we made a call.

Shedd answered that call, I think on the first ring. He seemed to have all the time in the world to bring us in from the rain that day, to welcome us into his home, to answer our questions, to share stories about his parents, and to listen to stories about our parents. I believe our parting words were, "Bye, Shedd, thanks for everything, see you in a year or two".

Do I share the story about the night my mom fell and broke her hip, two months after that visit with my siblings? And how I was the one to explain to the ER physician why we (including Mom) would not choose to operate on her hip and that we'd have her admitted to Agrace Hospice for a peaceful death, surrounded by family?

And so it was that two months later, all the siblings packed their bags again, for Madison, to be with our mom for her final 6 days — all of us aware of the gift it was to be at peace with our collective decision to bury mom at NPS. We called this what our parents would have called this: Divine Order.

Do I share the story that on day 4 of her 6 days at Agrace, we siblings decided to go to NPS and dig her gravesite ourselves? How, on a whim, we sent a message to our absent brother, whom we'd had not much contact with over the years, to let him know that we'd be digging mom's grave — and how he replied "please wait for me". And how 260 miles & six hours later he came

barreling down the driveway of the Farley Center, coming to a dusty stop, turning off his car, and popping his trunk, to grab his shovel and a pair of work gloves.

How he walked with us, up the hill. And how nothing felt strange about that. This “lost” brother of ours showed up - with a shovel, work boots and gloves. And it was like the earth righted itself a bit on its axis for us— we six who grew inside and were birthed from the same body. The body that was very peacefully taking her last breaths.

Do I share the story about when the 6 of us finished digging our mother’s grave we looked up and counted 7 rainbows in the sky? One for each of us and the 7th for our sibling who died in 1979.

Do I share the story from a few days later when three generations of family took turns carrying our mother, grandmother, great grandmother, wrapped in a beautiful shroud, up the hill and to her final place of rest and how we sang, and shared poems, and laughed, and hugged and cried and connected with some of our family who we had not connected with for many, many years?

Do I share the story about how the full moon rose later that night, as family departed by plane and by car, hearts as full as the moon with promises to stay in touch, stay connected, stay present in each other’s lives. Promises we knew would allow our mother, after 93 years, to truly rest in peace?

Do I share that these promises have been kept?

Do I share all of this? Yes. This is our story.

