

~~Annex A~~

~~Release of Personal Information~~

Intro. to College Writing

October 26th, 2009

The Last Goodbye

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil...” The verses rang out loud and clear in that small hospital room. Gripping his hand as if I were his anchor, tears streaming down my face I watched in disbelief as the life drained from his body. A sea of memories, questions, and fears flooded my thoughts. At the age of eleven the life I was so familiar with came to an abrupt halt and it would never be the same.

Everyone deals with the loss of a loved one differently. But how does losing a parent affect teenagers differently than adults? I often get lost in my own thoughts and “what if” scenarios with an unanswered question always stuck in the back of my mind. What differentiates the way an adult deals with a loved one passing away versus a teenager? My oldest sister, Audra, is incapable of showing very much emotion; in fact it actually makes her extremely uncomfortable. So, when I asked her how she had dealt with the trials that followed the loss of our father she responded logically saying “I wouldn’t really call them trials, I try to see it in the view that bad things happen to good people everyday and I am not the only person who lost someone and I surely won’t be the last. The best way I have come up with to handle it is to not forget him and what was important to him and to remember that he wouldn’t want me to dwell on him being gone but on what he left behind.” After this

statement I began to wonder if it was not only age setting the stage for these differences in coping, but also the individual personality and character traits? I think I've had to deal with a lot more than what I would have had to if my dad hadn't passed away. I'm a much more emotional individual, so I think I really dwell on the whole "daddy's girl" scenario. I see all the things I never got to experience with my dad and all the major events to come. It's been eight years and the pain has yet to subside.

Hearing from just one person wasn't enough for me though. I felt like the question still lingered waiting to reveal its secret. My middle sister, Michaela, was next on my list, so I asked her the same question keeping in mind her personality. "I have really struggled in the field of friendships over the years since he has gone. I have had to come to terms, sometimes unsuccessfully, with the fact that I will not have him around to enjoy in the celebrations of the majority of the major milestones in my life. My first real boyfriend, high school graduation, and the birth of my first child are all things that I had to experience without a father. I believe that my life would be dramatically different if my father were still around." Getting a heartfelt answer from my sister is extremely rare, because for the most part she doesn't convey her emotions honestly. She puts on the "I'm tough" act as a defense mechanism, because she fears being hurt. Where Michaela tends to shy away from friendships, I cling to the people I care most about. I crave that male attention that I missed out on with my father so much that I hold on too tightly for fear of losing them as well.

Apart from the overall big picture of the long-term affects of losing a loved one, I wonder if there are also differences in the day-to-day lives and routines of these young people as well? When searching for an answer to this question I decided to turn to a good friend and roommate, LaToya. LaToya is an absolute inspiration to me with her courage, faith, and constant joyful attitude. Through tragedy she lost both parents, being forced to grow up more quickly than most her age. "There are so many different things that you need your parents for. It is hard for me growing up without a mama and daddy. I have struggles all the time. There is no one in the world who can replace your mom and dad. It will never be the same." I couldn't agree more with her response. Even though I lost my best friend and the milestones I won't be able to share with him, I know that he loved me more than anything and that's what matters the most to me.

I don't think I would have done myself or the still lingering question justice if I didn't include the initial reaction to the losses experienced. Audra said "Shock. I felt very numb and angry at everyone around me for a while after that." Michaela gave a little more detailed insight: "When my sisters and I were pulled out of school on a Thursday morning I knew that something had gone wrong at the hospital and that I was about to be faced with the most difficult time of my life. When my mother told me that they were going to take my father off life support I remember feeling a sense of dread and shock, but I tried to be strong and not fight the decision that my family had made. I tried to see it as the right thing to do for my father." My family and I had about 3 weeks to prepare us emotionally for any events to come, whatever they may have been. LaToya was taken by surprise with no warnings whatsoever.

“When I found out I was stunned and didn’t know if I should believe what I was being told. All I could do was cry. I was hurt and traumatized.”

When I looked back over the emotions and life changing moments, all derived from one single event it was extremely humbling to see the one concept that seemed to repeat itself through each interview. Even through tragedy and heart breaking losses we all seem to agree that everything happens for a reason. As hard as it was to lose someone so close to me, I still feel blessed.

x

Works Cited

Knight, Audra. Email. September 15, 2009.

Knight, Michaela. Email, September 9, 2009.

McCoy, LaToya. Questionnaire. September 17, 2009.