

I don't think I'll ever understand my Dad's death.

But for someone who was a mountain of a man, and a monumental father, I guess it seems natural that he could only be taken by something so phenomenally low as pancreatic cancer. It is natural, that a man whose love of nature was himself a force of nature...Natural that my Dad, my inspiration, be reduced back to nature, to that place with what he called permanence, our family's land where we spread his ashes. But in that permanence of him forever being on the land, I will remember the opposite, the complete abandon he felt whenever up there. If you ever saw my Dad in the mountains, you really saw my Dad.

A lot of us knew this extraordinary, unparalleled person; my Dad sought out perfection in everything he did, everyone he touched. When he was dying he looked up at me and said, you live your life each day, do something creative, do something for someone else, do something good, something fun, and that way you can always get into bed each night and say; that was a perfect day.

And as the days go by after his death. Death, I might not understand. But life. The good life I will, because of my Dad. And he died just that way. The way he lived, demonstrating that grace, he showed that being exceptional is to always live up to your expectations, to always be true. When we found out about the cancer, we'd wait for news from the doctors, and somehow the worst possible news would be delivered. And then the next day, things would somehow be horrifyingly worse. Still, my Dad was stayed positive, he showed grace in how you treat people, everyone who worked in the hospital. Even then he was teaching us, setting an example, living every moment. Showing us how to be the best person he could be as if it was the only thing to do. He didn't want us to have any regrets, he pulled me aside to make sure I didn't have any. Taking care of us was what he was concerned with, not that he might be dying.

Through him I learned to see this good life, the virtue in other people, the value of a great laugh, he wanted me to see how powerful words are. He is why I write. He wanted me to ask why, to stay curious, to know how things work.

That's why you could find me awakened on a snowy morning before school learning how to change a carburetor. Why at 5 a.m. Dad? (When else?). If you wasted time you were wasting life. He helped me build my first rocketship. Taught me how to build a roman aqueduct modeled after those built in 312 BC (as if he was solving water problems even before his time) . He helped me make my yearly Halloween costume, even when I wanted to be a life size pizza - with - oh the horror - red meat on it.

He wanted me to understand love - the giddy, infectious love he had for my mom, the love for his daughters that is only truly audible once you have thoroughly lost your voice howling at a referee at one of my games.

He filled my mailbox at college with letters each week. And up until the end he made me understand things that are unspoken. We had a conversation about that when he was dying in the hospital. He said there were things that he always has wanted to say to me, but understood

that I probably knew. Then he held my hand asked me to tell him a childhood memory, and I told him all the ways I remembered him always being there for me, with me, that I had watched him live, and have seen the good life. His. And that I understood.

And I understand life and love because of him, even if I will never understand this death.