

His quilt is in rags.

Fifteen years of cigarette smoke cling to the remnants of the once scrappy themed quilt. It was gift to my baby brother, three years younger than me. Now, he needs a clean, fresh quilt to sooth away the worries, to chase away the chills. I had none for him. Had I but only thought ahead I would have brought another with me when my husband and I loaded up the CRV and headed to Great Falls, MT. to visit, perhaps one last time, with my brother.

Greg has been diagnosed with a brain tumor. He was told about his life ending soon. At first, the tumor's pressure on his brain did not allow him the understanding of "cancer and two months to live" conversation with his doctor. Now, medication has relieved pressure on the brain and he allowed Hospice to care for him. So, maybe he understands, maybe not.

Our four day visit was good for both of us. We hugged and kissed and laughed and cried. We were closer than ever. Love and near death does that to a relationship. Greg is a bachelor. His 65 years were consumed with work, gardening, and bowling, having a beer and, of course, smoking. I like to think that he was happy with his life choices. He never complained.

He was always a quiet person, giggling when tickled, crying when falling. As a youngster he loved hanging out with the nuns who taught us during grade school. He would erase the chalk boards for them. His needs were few. He liked to be liked. Greg has blue eyes and was teased by our mom who sang to him, "What do you want for breakfast, BLUE EYES? He would giggle and eat whatever she fixed for him.

Two weeks ago he said that he remembered those songs. Then he fixated on "When do I get my hair cut?" He did need a haircut. However, he had two more hours to wait for the barber to "get the job done." I told him that I would let him rest and return after his lunchtime. He nodded. Then he asked about his hair cut. "Soon," I said as I hugged him before leaving the room. He did get a haircut but started fixating on a shave. That came later.

Fourteen hours spending driving and riding in a car separate us from hugging. I know that he is well taken care of, though. I telephone him; however, he fails to answer the call. I am searching for someone with an IPAD who will visit him so that we can FACETIME. What a surprise that would be for someone with no computer savvy. FACETIME or not, there is little substitution of being there in person.

We have two sisters and a brother. Our brother resides in Great Falls and keeps us sisters informed of Greg's care. Two of us have visited and helped in getting business taken care of for Greg. Lots of planning, lots of preparation and finally accomplished comfort care was handled by all of us.

Life is like a quilt. The longer we fill it with our love, with our fears, with our regrets and with our accomplishments the fuller it becomes. Each seam takes on our life's journey giving us comfort pulling at threads. Perhaps, life and quilt, becomes our portrait with our every step. But it's our steps, our journey that create our quilt of life.

Lana Russ

