

Dear Family,

Yesterday I went down to Wilmington to pick up Mom's urn at the crematory and her few belongings from C.N. Davis, and because I wanted to go by myself one last time. I've been doing this now for almost 10 years since Mom moved to Davis, first with Dad, and then these last two years with Mom. The drive is long but familiar, and I use the time to and from for thinking, writing letters, listening to favorite music - and remembering. The time with Dad was always rich with the evidence of his love for Mom, for us, and the people in his world. Remarkably, the time with Mom was beautiful in its own way too, and so I went to Wilmington expecting, I guess, some sort of closure to these journeys which would soon be only memories.

I thought it might happen when I picked up Mom's urn, but nothing about the crematory or the urn had any connection to Mom. I signed the papers, wrote a check, took the urn, and continued on to Davis. When I got there, I was greeted with condolences from the staff, and like always, walked down to Mom's wing and checked the common area where she was usually sleeping in front of the TV, but she wasn't in her chair. I walked down to her room to look for her, but she wasn't there either - in fact, someone else already has her bed. She is really gone. I talked to Andy about her last morning for a few minutes, and since I couldn't find her anywhere I decided I might as well pick up her things and go home. On the way out I passed the chapel, and thought, maybe I can find her here, so I went in, sat down, and waited, and waited, for what, I didn't know, but I was reluctant to close this chapter of my life by just - driving home.

I waited for some minutes in sad contemplation, the last member of the audience to my Mother's life, sitting in a deserted theater long after the star has left the stage, reluctant to leave, but knowing there will be no encores, and the lights are going out. In my grief, words formed in my mind. "Whom do you seek?" I was asked.

And just as swiftly, I knew the answer. "I'm looking for my Mommy. I'm looking for the person whose face and arms and were my first definition of love, whose lullabies formed the bridge between daylight and dreams, whose smile taught me to laugh, my first and best teacher, my cheering section, my advocate, my Mom. I was looking for the woman whose tears taught me remorse, whose character, generosity, honesty, and humility still form the moral corner posts of my life, the woman who set the standard by which I would chose my beloved Chris, the woman to whom we as parents proudly presented all of you, knowing that her delight would follow you from that moment to this day. I was looking for the tiny, beloved person who lingered in body long after her mind had mostly departed, kept here to be loved and cherished, by Dad, and Sherrill, and Melissa, and Dana, and me. I did not find her at C.N. Davis. She is not there anymore. She has moved elsewhere. So, I loaded her belongings and came home.

But I am comforted. Knowing that she is absent from this life seems to be (for me) a prerequisite to becoming aware of her continued life elsewhere. I am sure of this, and in the days and weeks ahead I expect to see more and more evidence of it. One of Mom's favorite hymns that Dad chose to have sung at her memorial service is

**O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be.**

Her life, I am sure, now reposes in the great ocean of love of which we all are a part.

With love,

Allan