

Winter 2016

And so, this has been a year of endings and beginnings. Who could have ever seen the losses we would bear this year, and yet, there is hope for the future for both me and the children.

I am so hoping that all of you know that Kevin passed peacefully June 17, 2016. We were all with him, though the hospice nurse couldn't get there in time, because a bear was blocking her driveway. At 4am. You can't make this stuff up.

When Kevin took his last breath, suddenly the birds began to sing, and morning broke with a beautiful pink glow and we knew Kevin was in a happier place.

The viewing at the local funeral home was the most amazing testament to those who loved and respected him. He touched many lives and has left a void in many places. He will be missed by many, and of course we miss him the most.

The memorial service, held at the local church where we raised our kids so long ago, was comforting, hopeful, healing, and in many ways joyful. I gave the eulogy, and many coworkers and friends said amazing words about what a wonderful man my husband was, and how he impacted so many. The service ended with my son, in full military uniform, singing an a cappella version of Amazing Grace. Tears flowed. It was beautiful.

And now, some five and a half months later, we are where we should be. The clean out has begun. Those who knew Kevin intimately knew he never threw anything away. We owe a debt of gratitude to the sanitation service that picks up the garbage twice a week, there have been mornings that 20 contractor bags have graced the front of our house. The weekly trips to the dump are freeing, though in an Alice's Restaurant Redux, we were disappointed when we took a load to the dump the day after Thanksgiving, only to find it closed.

And there are the weekly trips to Goodwill, donations to Habitat to Humanity and other service organizations, and the assistance of my family cannot ever be measure by any means. My sisters and their husbands have moved mountains to help me reduce and downsize.

My plans are to see my kids launch (meaning move out in a reasonable time frame) and shore up and simplify my home. I plan to stay, as long as is realistic, if I can get control over the property, gardens and infrastructure. I am in the process of working with a half dozen contractors to clean the place up, bring it up to code, shore up what was failing, and find gratitude in the mess.

Three months after Kevin's death, we lost our beloved dog Bjorn to Pancreatic Cancer. I cried more over that stupid dog, because after losing my husband and my best and oldest friend, my Swedish Sister Annika, whom I spent 10 days with the previous summer in Sweden, to cancer within three weeks of each other, one more loss was more than I could bear.

Though there is still so much to do, I can say that most of Kevin's estate is settled, his office is but a few boxes in the closet, I can park both cars in the garage (something I never thought I'd ever see in my lifetime) and I have a garden



shed with garden tools in it that I actually access. I can find hammers, screwdrivers, power tools, and there is a clean workbench should I decide to actually build something in wood.

And my life as a fiber artist has continued and never took a break. Though I had to cancel a couple of venues in the summer, knowing when we brought Kevin home to die, that it could be five days or three months, (as it turned out it was seven days), I needed to give those venues time to replace me. I had a heavy schedule of teaching booked for the fall, and I picked myself up, headed out to parts unknown and known, and did what I always do, empower students to make something really wonderful from their hands. It is what has gotten me through. It is what will continue to carry me forward.

To say that everything in my life has changed is probably an understatement, but change isn't always bad. I put one foot in front of the other, find gentleness in the days, serenity in odd places, I have friends and family who have carried me through, and my children have been unbelievable rocks. They are their father's offspring. For better or for worse! Brianna has been exceptional in cleaning out things I know nothing about, and she hurls crap with the best of them. Brianna has a new job at a Veterinary hospital in Blairstown, she loves the staff, the opportunities that she didn't have in the old job, and is contemplating a move to Pennsylvania. The hour commute is oppressive. But she never complains. She is weaving up a storm, and took first place in Yardage at the Blue Ridge Fiber Show in Asheville, NC. I am so proud.

And Eric is a Sergeant in the National Guard, and continues his management track with Target. He turns 27 in a few weeks. Is it possible? My children are actually grown? We enjoy new family traditions, cooking and eating together when we can. Eric is a fantastic cook, and I love being his sous chef. We chop veggies and he loves his cast iron skillet. Brianna took a couple of classes in making sushi, and can put out a spread that makes us giddy with glee!

To all of you who have supported us, who came to support Kevin in his last days, who pray for us and who send us notes and texts and messages now and then to check up on us. Know that we are well. We are entertaining a new dog, a two-year-old obnoxious, but lovable Norwegian Elk hound named Ranger, and we are moving into a new life, without Kevin, though his presence is at times overwhelming especially when things go wrong. I know he is watching out for us. We will be fine. A huge thank you to all who donated to our favorite charity, www.petersvalley.org in Kevin's name.



This will be my last Christmas letter. With Kevin gone, and the kids grown, and social media so accessible, I find it unnecessary to continue this annual tradition. I have a blog, which I've kept up since 2008, you can always read my escapades there, www.weaversew.com/wordblog, except when the internet fails, but I now have people for that! I will continue to teach and travel as long as I keep getting asked to, and I will continue to try to simplify my house and my belongings, and my life. And try to keep Ranger out of trouble.

I hope 2017 is better for all of you. I hope it will be better for us. The world is a scary place, but we spread kindness and support for each other every place we can. With love,

Daryl, Eric, Brianna, Saphira and of course Ranger.