

Memory Loss Connection

Editor's Note: This is a new monthly column provided by the Big Stone County Memory Loss Connection Committee.

By Mary Ross

The Heart Remembers

This photo speaks volumes. It is a tribute to my brother-in-law, Rev. Lloyd Jacobsen and his oldest son, Steen. Taken during one of their final visits, it demonstrates the very real, raw need for us to recognize that although Alzheimer's may steal memory, the heart remembers.



Lloyd was a young kid of 8 or 9 living in Brooklyn, NY during WWII. His main connection to the military was occasionally wandering over to the neighborhood Italian prisoner-of-war camp at Greenpoint. Soldiers, so far from home, would lift him onto their laps. Lloyd didn't understand Italian, but he understood they were lonely for their own young sons and families.

It was an era of free-range child rearing. A nickel could get Lloyd onto a subway and by his wits, and by judicious transfers, he would ride all day, all over New York City. He was a curious kid. As a teenager he got into roller skating competitions and even entertained a Roller Derby career. Coming from a family of practicing Christians, but personally at-sea spiritually, he was deeply convicted one evening while listening to a street preacher. That night he dedicated his life to Christ, trading in his roller skates for a Bible and he promptly threw his skates into the East River from the Brooklyn Bridge.

Lloyd started dating my sister Janna when I was a kid, probably 6 years old. The fact that he was from New York City in itself made him seem exotic in my eyes... a simple kid from Duluth who still hadn't traveled even as far as Minneapolis.

Lloyd was smart, had graduated from high school at age 16, was handsome, and engaging. A voracious reader, one of his great pleasures were the weekly runs to the library, always bringing home a stack of books. He might be re-reading Dante's Inferno, something to Tozer, or some random new author. Maybe "this year" he would read the first 5 books of the Bible directly from the Torah. Once when I was about a 4th grader he asked

me who the president of France was. I didn't know. "You should learn about the world, Mary." I started reading Time magazine.

Lloyd and Janna raised 4 kids. He pastored at churches mostly in the Midwest, but also San Francisco, and in semi-retirement assisted pastors on Long Island, NY and in southern California.

After my sister died he eventually remarried. His second wife, Barbara, was another gem. She understood he already had some memory issues. "I'm going to marry him anyway."

Lloyd's life with Alzheimer's happened far away from my day-to-day life. There were some early signs, which we missed. He was still engaged in the world, and in ministry to seekers at their local church. Gradually there were more losses. He pretty much stopped reading, conversations had gaps, he repeated himself. Alzheimer's took its toll. When it was necessary to place him in a care center, he found himself a whole new "congregation."

His life was worthwhile. Not only was he a great teacher in life, but he taught us how to leave this world with grace. Now it is our hearts that remember.