

Clothing Tales ...

thoughts on year two, May 13, 2017

Sometimes I spray Dior Homme Eau for Men liberally on my body. It smells like Bob, and it smells like his clothes. It is a clean and spicy smell as appropriate for me as it was for him. It is pungent and long-lasting. Even at the end of a long day I can catch a waft, a memory, a vision of him, of his scent, lovely and dear.

And I am dealing with his clothes. It's been over a year since he died. In the two-tiered closet in our bedroom hang his sport jackets and suit coats. On the bottom rung are his khaki pants and good gaberdine slacks. He's got his best ties in there and a few nice belts. "Barrett's closet" in Barrett's old room contains his shirts, sweaters and casual fleeces. His shoes are on the floor either in boxes or shoe trees. Personal items reside in a highboy in our bedroom. We shared this tall dresser, with two of the seven drawers devoted to his underwear and dress socks, the other to bathing suits and athletic gear. Bob was a neat person. He cared to keep things organized—cleaned out his closet, drawers, "things" as needed.

I have to admit he had less "guy stuff" than my "girl stuff." But he liked clothes, had good taste. I'd say it was "Brook's Brothers" with a flare. The last thing we purchased (and I say "we" because I bought it *for* him, loved that I could do it) was an elegant black pinstriped suit, the stripe a subtle purple. He was slimmer then, down from a 42 regular. He wore it maybe twice—once to a wedding, replete with a pale lavender slim-

line shirt and spiffy tie. I have pictures of him with our son and two of our grandsons at that wedding. He has a “Cary Grant” elegance about him, silver hair and all. Now I wear the jacket regularly myself. I wear it with jeans and another of his slim-line white shirts and the lavender one as well. My kids have given their approval “as long as you don’t wear the pants, Mom.” For now I’m going along with it but not forgetting the Annie Hall look that Diane Keaton made famous in the 70’s.

I know his closets, his drawers well. I am known to deep-breathe a cashmere sweater, especially the navy one he wore to all of Hayden’s Yale football games. I’ll never wash it, never have it cleaned. I am keeping it for myself. I love his socks. I wear a couple of his fleeces, and a cherry red cashmere that he always wore around Christmas is mine now, too. I’ve given many of his best clothes to people I love. It’s a joy to do so. Grandsons look amazing, their lithe fit bodies rockin’ Papa’s look. I’m happy when shoes and belts fit a friend, or a winter jacket is not only a perfect size but needed, too.

Now I am finding it in me to take the next step. I am finding that I have a need to get serious about dispersing his things to a variety of places or people. But what will that be like—to see his empty closets? To have too much room in the highboy for a change? Will it be one of those smaller deaths that I experience every day? Deaths like his empty leather chair in the family room. The fire pit heaped with branches needing a burn. His Dopp kit on a shelf in our bathroom cupboard, replete with shaving cream, manicure scissors, a comb.

Even as I mull the eventuality, I find that my heart is beating a bit faster, that tears are close.

I know that grief is unique to every person, regardless of commonalities. And for me the empty closet of my best friend, the love of my life, the person who fingered those clothes on a given morning, who strode, all showered, scented, dressed to the nines to work for the well-being of his family as a commissioned salesman all his born days ... for me it will be just one more reminder that he has died. 🌿