

Life Moved On

I have written many stories about Dad, especially after he passed in 2003. I wrote about projects we did together; him building our house on the farm; his involvement with the Anglican Church, boy scouts, and as a 4-H leader. I wrote about our purebred shorthorn cattle and our mixed farm. He was a friend and a neighbour who could be relied on for help. I wrote about him looking after me when I was five, when Mom went back teaching.

Now that I am 69 years old, I have grown to see what my actions after I grew up may have affected him.

Mom passed away when Dad was 69. He had the rest of his life to live without her guidance and friendship. We were all lost at first. Especially the first Christmas when I tried to do everything the same as Mom did.

My husband, Bill, and I lived in the same yard on the farm and I had two boys he loved dearly. He had spent countless hours with Aaron when he was young. Matt was only three and came over to Grandpa's for pancakes every morning. Dad had supper with us almost every night.

Bill and I had marital troubles and he wanted to return to Ontario. When I made the decision to leave with him, it was like pulling the answer from hat, he was going to leave anyway, and marriage vows echoed in my brain. We both left good jobs here in Alberta.

When we left, Dad must have had a chasm in his heart. How could he go on? Mom died last year and then we leave. To make matters worse, my sister Julie left too. Leaving Dad with my brother and his wife Anne, who only visited occasionally.

He managed, but how?

He started dating a wonderful woman, Irene, who he had known as a young man. He had worked for her husband before he married Mom. Dad came to visit us in Ontario soon after we left. Julie and Frank had a cabin on Howe Island and we had a big house near the ferry terminal on the same island. I had a new job and Bill was building a boat for his brother. I was so happy to see him, but it wasn't the same.

I knew I had to have a life for myself without Dad, but my heart broke everytime I left. He was so important to me, yet he seemed to favour Julie. In the end, I was the one who looked after him when he needed help later in life and I was the one he choose to be executer of his estate.

Our love for each other is complicated. I think because both knew we had to live separate lives, we made space for each other, but it was painful to be apart, especially when it involved his grandchildren.