

Aug14

Breathe

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“Having a great time. Wish I was here.”

I saw that while browsing [Amazon.com](#) the other day, and immediately ordered the book. If I get no more benefit from it than this quote, it will be worth the purchase price.

August 11th marked the four-year anniversary of my mother’s death. I miss her for a million reasons, not the least of which are the lessons she taught, by her example, at her life’s end. She had few regrets (the only one she mentioned was a lack of patience with her children) and no dreams left unfulfilled. She was not afraid, and reassured us over and over that she was prepared, and content.

This year, a dear man, beloved by many, died on that same date. Jim was a teacher for many years here on Beaver Island, respected and appreciated for his ability to inject interest and humor into high school lessons while maintaining order in the classroom. He was a former marine, a volunteer firefighter, an emergency responder, a husband, father and grandfather, a good friend, a kind and helpful human being. There has been an outpouring of grief here, a sharing of memories, and a unanimous sentiment of “gone too soon.”

When Mom died, I did a little arithmetic. She was twenty years and one month older than me. If I lived as long as she did (she probably took much better care of herself than I have!), I would have about 7,300 days left. What an eye opener! I promised myself I would make the best of it. I would work toward the goal of having a satisfactory life, with no big regrets. Mainly, I wanted to be *aware*. The years up to that point had flown by, leaving me with a small collection of memories and the feeling that I’d wasted a lot of time. That needed to change.

I started this writing practice with the goal of *paying attention*.

I wanted to notice the moments of the days as they flew by. I wanted to note the quality of light, and the feel of sunshine or raindrops. I wanted to really *hear* what is being said, and *feel* what is being felt. It was a lofty ambition but, as with many things in my life, easy to forget, lose interest, or let it fall by the wayside. Where have all the moments of all the days of the last four years gone? Too often, it seems, I am doing one thing while thinking ahead of the next thing I need to do, so that I am never fully experiencing the moment I am in.

It’s a small thing, to appreciate this life, but it’s the very best thing to do...for myself, and for the ones who are no longer here to experience it.

I need to continue to work on that... forever.