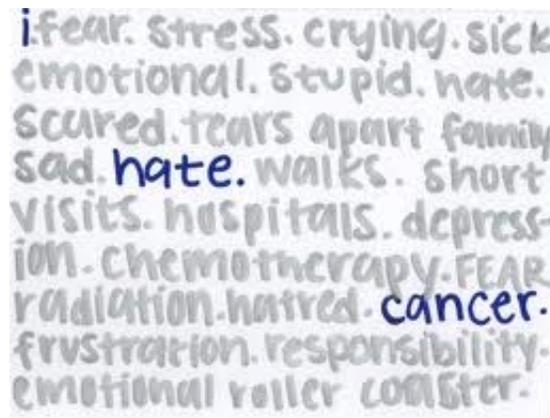


No Ordinary Road Trip

Sometimes I wish I could rewrite some of life's journeys. Seeing people you love in pain is one of the hardest things to endure. But, then, unexpectedly you find a silver lining in some of those journeys. My silver lining comes out of a couple of Diet Dr. Peppers and a road trip. A little background first:



My mom has been in either a hospital or a nursing home setting for the past 8 weeks. **And we are trying to get her home - like really trying hard.** I will spare the details, but it literally has been one step forward and two steps back.

You see, she was diagnosed with cancer and received chemo/radiation treatment last fall (6 months ago). And she is struggling in the recovery phase of the treatment. At this point, the cancer is not the issue but the side effects of the radiation treatment.

My dad, who is in beginning stages of [dementia](#), is still living at home with my mom. Now, let me just state, my dad has a few little "qwerks". Sometimes those qwerks makes it a challenge to take him to visit my mom in the hospital. One challenge is his daily schedule. He goes to bed very early and gets up very early. Oh, let's face it - it's more like the middle of the night! Because of that, his daily meal schedule is much different than mine. He likes to eat lunch between 9:30-10:00 a.m. And at his age, there's no changing it to a "normal" schedule. But, I have learned that I need to meet him where he is at in his life and I'm not going to change it. So I just go with the flow and let it roll. By accepting where he is at in his life, I am at peace and my attitude is much better. Life lesson.



During our trips to the hospital, I pick him up at his home. When I walk into the kitchen there on the table are two Diet Dr. Peppers - one for him and one for me. An unspoken gesture. He drinks a Diet Dr. Pepper every single day. Even though I would never drink a Diet Dr. Pepper at 7:30 in the morning at home, there is no way I could refuse. Just a simple and special gesture.

On our trip I would ask him questions like, do you have enough food, do you need money, do you need some laundry done, and what else do you need? And for the most part, his answers were usually no. He would then tell me how quiet the house is and how lonely he is. He says, "I need someone to argue with!" followed by a half-hearted laugh. My answer is always the same, "Yes, dad, I know. We are trying to get mom home as soon as we can." But it seems like every time we turn around, there is another setback. It has been heart-wrenching.

On the monotonous two hour road trip that we have taken so many, many times, he loves to point out the wildlife he sees. Statements that go like this:

"Have you seen any pheasants lately?"

"I saw my first robin the other day."

"Oh, look at all those crows on the side of the road!" (as they are pecking away at a dead raccoon)

"Oh, look! That pond is all opened up." (meaning the ice is gone)

"This snow won't last long. You know, it's that time of year."

And usually these phrases would get repeated numerous times during trip together. And it's perfectly fine with me. It is the time we are spending together, just the two of us--no matter how ordinary sitting in a car and drinking a diet Dr. Pepper at 7:30 a.m. it may seem to others.

And as I reflect, sometimes looking at the ordinary and realizing it really isn't ordinary. **These are the special moments.** I know I will look back at this time and, as painful as it has been with what my mom is going through, these pleasant moments with my dad will stay with me. And I know I will

never drink another Diet Dr. Pepper without thinking about my dad and our road trips. It's about life's simple connections.

"Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things."

Do you have any special moments like this? Some that may seem ordinary but are anything but ordinary? Are you recording these moments so you don't forget? If so, how?