



Pouncing On Love & Life

Submitted by Dawn McMillion, Notting Hill

Retirement often brings-to-mind travel, hobbies, more time with friends and family - and sometimes, the joy of doing nothing at all.

But what about the years leading up to your last breath?

Yuck. Icky! Right up there with writing a will or medical directive. But the story I want to share with you has nothing to do with who you leave your stuff to, or cumbersome legal paperwork.

What if you were able to get a glimpse into this somewhat unexamined chapter of our lives through the eyes of two free-wheeling, fun-loving newlyweds in their nineties!

It's said that we come full circle in life. Therefore, my mom, Eileen and her new beau Dan were essentially teenagers during their blissful, seven years together - bolstered by a lifetime of wisdom and resources to do whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted.



But younger family members' concerns grew as Mother Nature began to knock their parents down now and again. And soon, conflicts arose when the "little ones" made assumptions about what they thought was best, with phrases like, "But you shouldn't at your age... it's not safe", yada, yada, yada.

As the couple ventured far from home often, they confronted burglars in Mexico, climbed on rock walls in Europe, enjoyed their Monday morning breakfast with their eclectic Island friends and drove across the U.S. many times - even for their bi-annual booze run. Their adult children seemed to be OK with their parents' romance - until the engagement! Some of the "kids" didn't like that idea. Then Dan's world was further rocked by my mom's memory growing seriously glitchy four years later.

Still, the couple lived with a vigor that rivalled any teenager. And if they had a few hiccups, they powered through them like they were just a temporary inconvenience - like when their oven blew up or Dan's car keys were stolen by a thief in the middle of the night. Can you say new car?

In the fall of 2018, my husband and I moved to Kentucky from Seattle, WA. Dan had passed at 97, and mom had lived with us for a year. Something woke me up at 4:30 am most mornings to piece together journal entries, emails, and texts. I stared out the window at the early-morning blackness and remembered with a smile how much they inspired everyone they encountered. Dan loved his cats, classical music and baseball, and my mom still tells people how much she "loves men, dogs, and martinis". Their adventures just had to be shared. But not by me. An ordinary narrator (like a daughter with whiny biases of worry and safety) would dull the sparkle of their love affair. I decided that the only storyteller who could fully embrace their sassy attitude was Dan's cat, Mahi. And the story took off...

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