

## The New Year ~ A New Beginning.

January 10, 2018

I guess with every new beginning there has to be a purge of the old.

I've lived in this house for about sixteen years. I bought it shortly after coming back from working for the Technical Services Program at the University of Vermont. I left the great job in Vermont to become the second Biomedical Technologist at the then York County Hospital, now Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket.



My Mom and my sister lived in a small townhouse and my Mom helped Hannah's Mom and I with childcare, something my Mom loved to do, Hannah was never any problem, they were two peas in a pod and in some ways Hannah was keeping Grandma young! I'd worked in Vermont for a year with the last four months responsible for the medical equipment at the hospital in Ogdensburg, New York across the river from Prescott, Ontario. Before that I was a Float Technologist and helped out at a number of hospitals and clinics in and around Vermont, New Hampshire and upstate New York. Almost every weekend I was home as I considered Barrie my home.

For those who remember Y2K, for those who don't search it, I was in Huntington, Vermont when the clock struck midnight to ring in 2000 and the world didn't end. After doing more than a years worth of testing on thousands of pieces of medical equipment for Y2K compliance and only ever failing one device I knew nothing adverse would happen.

If I'm not mistaken I moved into this house with my Mom, my sister in tow, in the spring of 2001 about a year after starting at Southlake. Over the years projects got started, things accumulate ... I may need that ... oh, that's useful ... gadgets, furniture and sixteen years later there's a lot of stuff.

With what happened last year between my sister I knew a huge purge had to start and projects completed. I'd do some sorting through things and stuff and would find it got hard; I'd find things that would trigger memories, memories of my Mom,

memories of Hannah, memories of Abby and Oscar and even memories of my sister. This would cause depression. I'd find it hard to continue and depression would slowly worsen.

From my experience with Hannah's health I have a strong support network around me and although this is something other than what the support group and network I've been part of for a long time has been through it still a good group and the people I've known over the years through it care about me. My situation with Abby and having no wheels prevents me from connecting to them. As well a Mentor I've worked with on the Bakery has been very supportive and caring but I'm not able to connect with her.

Having dealt with the post traumatic stresses of Hannah's illness, stress from bullying in the workplace and the agony of working in a job where I've never felt so devalued and not accepted I've had my fair share of grief. Couple that with losing my father when I was fourteen and an older sibling to diabetes when I was twenty five I can honestly say that Grief and I are good friends. Depression is all part of my grief.

As mentioned in my last post I'm not crazy about this time of year already after having my life changed hearing Hannah's official diagnosis a number of weeks after CT scans. From that December on I've always felt so alone at this time of year. It's a bitter sweet time of year for me and already emotionally rocky. This year perhaps a bit more than others.

A few months ago I was asking Hannah if she wanted some of her Grandma's things otherwise I'd be getting rid of them somehow, kijiji or scrap. She had just finished moving into her own place and had to purge, mostly clothes. When I asked her if she wanted any of the things she said, "It's just stuff."

Indeed it is just stuff.

I was doing some work around the house late last week and found something Hannah made probably when she was about ten years old. Like most kids when they're small they collect stones. Hannah was no different and in fact I made a few inukshuks in the yard and the front fairy garden.

When Hannah was young and was out somewhere with Grandma and my sister she picked up a tiny stone, a small pebble but that day Grandma and my sister invented a new word. They asked her if she knew what a pebble is and she answered

yes, a small stone. They then told Hannah that the tiny stone she was holding was a pibble. She was probably in her teens before she knew there was no real word pibble but I reminded her that english is a living language so it could be a word depending on how many people were to use it.

The thing I found on the window sill of the powder room was a small hand painted stone I knew was always there but forgotten about. Just some of the stuff you tend to accumulate.



Yeah, it's just stuff but it's also memories.

In my last post I mentioned that I'm temporarily without wheels. Last week I'd been texting and talking to a good friend Tony. Tony is finding out first hand about ageism. He's about fifty five and was just downsized from an excellent job with a medical device manufacturer. He's been with the company for eight to ten years and was responsible for a large home based client base. He has an SUV and trailer hitch and agreed to come up and help me with a load or two to the dump.



Today I started in earnest emptying the garage, the catch all room. Tony and I took a small load to the dump clearing out a huge chunk of the junk ... the 'I could use some time' stuff. I have to say that it was very therapeutic.

Yeah, I'm tired but it feel good. Some of the stuff I cleaned out were a couple of small sand boxes I used to make some sand molds of a couple of piece I sculpted with Hannah to cast and with plaster reproductions and give as gifts, Pink Angels. They were adorned with pink trim hand painted on the edges. I wrote a story about them explaining why each person received the particular Pink Angel set. Each person was a member of my family, Hannah's Mom, and some other important people in Hannah's life so the story had a personal connection to everyone who got a set.

It was so nice to watch some people open their small boxes see the Pink Angels then read the story. To see people chuckling one moment to tears the next was one of the most rewarding experiences i've ever had.



So much stuff ... So many memories.

To move forward I'm finding I'm having to revisit my past. I'm learning that there's a difference between stuff and memories.

I have one memory that's triggered by winter and the snow. I live on a corner townhouse lot, the first driveway past a right hand turn. Let me tell you that is a curse for sure in the winter as that driveway gets plowed in by snow. Most of the time after a modest snowfall the bank at the end of the driveway is at least knee high, two or three driveways down it might be slightly more than ankle high. The banks along the length of my driveway can get head high too.

There was one brutal winter when Hannah was about ten the bank at the end of the driveway, the side of the right turn was over head high. On a mild January day I took the hose out and sculpted a long slide along the inside curve of the snowbank. It was probably about a one hundred foot slide. I sculpted steps into the driveway bank so she could climb up safely and a plateau where she could get on her saucer for the ride. Her and her friend Megan spent many hours that winter sliding down that. Today's mild weather helped remind me of that.

You don't need 'stuff' to have memories.