

KELVIN BUECKERT

## Lessons Learned in the Mourning

*A collection of poems and essays about finding hope in the struggle.*

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# Contents

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| <i>Welcome</i>                     | iv |
| Kelvinator 1                       | 1  |
| Father                             | 4  |
| Father's Day                       | 7  |
| A View From the Mountain           | 9  |
| Peace                              | 11 |
| Aunt                               | 14 |
| Grandfather 1                      | 17 |
| Hope                               | 19 |
| Differences                        | 21 |
| Seeds                              | 23 |
| Kelvinator 2                       | 25 |
| Grandfather 2                      | 28 |
| A Flower in the Garden of the King | 30 |
| Grandfather 3                      | 33 |
| Visions                            | 36 |
| Grief                              | 38 |
| Golden                             | 40 |
| Kelvinator 3                       | 42 |
| Return                             | 45 |
| Drive                              | 48 |
| <i>Stories From Our Town</i>       | 50 |
| <i>Kelvinism</i>                   | 52 |
| <i>Christmas in Our Town</i>       | 54 |

# Welcome



Welcome to this little book of memories.

These essays and poems are personal reflections pulled from my blog. You could say they are the fragments that remained after the fires of challenge and struggle. However, if you get something out of them, perhaps that made the process worthwhile.

Feel free to get in touch if you want to discuss any of these thoughts further.

Kelvin

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# Kelvinator 1



It was a simple box ad. At least, that's how I remember it. A lot of shows have passed through my brain since I saw that ad. Yet, that ad is significant because that ad is what set it all off.

It was an audition notice for *Anne of Green Gables: The Musical*.

Now, it wasn't that I was a big Anne fan. I wasn't a fan at all to be honest. However, since I had dabbled in acting and writing from time to time, it did hold some interest for that reason.

Still, I brushed off its gentle call.

My sister, however, did not. She was the big Anne fan in the family and so was one of my other relatives. My sister was the one most interested in being a

part of this experience though and since she didn't want to attend the audition alone, she put pressure on me and that certain relative to go along.

"Just come along for the company," that's one of the ploys she used to try and persuade me.

I kept on resisting but long story short, we finally agreed to go along. It was a bitterly cold January night and it would be good to have company while traveling you see.

We arrived at the theater and were promptly sent down to the waiting room.

It was pretty crowded down there! Apparently there were a quite a few people in world who appreciated Anne. My nerves were whispering that that there was still time to escape. However, I was there, so I filled out the form I was given and waited reluctantly for my turn to audition.

Finally it was my turn, I walked alone onto a bare stage and the director asked me to sing a song. A song? My goodness. I wasn't much into singing. However, I was standing there on stage, so why not sing a song? Being young and foolish, I said I'd sing Happy Birthday.

So I sang that wonderful song without accompaniment as the producer, director, and a camera captured every classic moment.

With our individual auditions complete, we went back home and waited for the results of our efforts.

It took a few weeks. I had almost convinced myself that I was safe, I hadn't been chosen. Then, came the day when a pair of letters arrived in the mail. They had official looking return addresses on them and they looked pretty important. So, naturally, we opened them as soon as possible.

In an ironic twist, me and my relative had been cast in the production while my sister had not. She was a bit disappointed but she did get a crew position so she was still able to participate in the action.

I was surprised and stressed out as I realized the magnitude of what I had gotten into. Yet, I was in it, so I began practicing...whipping my voice into shape for the months of singing before me. It was a workout I wasn't quite used to...I've attached a bit of a rehearsal order sheet from earlier on in the production.

Indeed I was in way over my head. Most of the other cast and crew were

highly experienced and knew exactly what they were supposed to be doing while I didn't have the slightest idea. However, I didn't want to be left in the dust, so I kept practicing my songs and my lines every single day in an effort to keep up. Eventually the show opened...and we discovered that every performance had been sold out ahead of time.

As the run carried on, the line ups started earlier with every performance. At least that's what we could see from our positions backstage. The shows themselves got standing ovations and rave reviews. It was a thrilling experience. It was something I had never been through before and looking back on it now, I'm pretty sure it changed my life.

It was a tough slog. Our director was kind but very strict. A phrase she gave us during one of her many lectures has stuck in my mind ever since. "You know, people are spending their hard earned money to see you!" She would say, just before she went on to make the point that we as performers shouldn't waste our audience's time and money. Valuable advice! Advice I've been known to give myself these days. Yet even though it had it's tough moments, that production was where I realized that I really was interested in the whole theater experience after all...and after the run of Anne was completed I began wondering if there might be another show out there that I could be a part of...

So, let that be a lesson, your best friend may be the one who pushes you out of your comfort zone and into a whole new world.

Who knows, your best friend might even be your sister.

...to be continued...

# Father



*On the anniversary of the passing of my Father...*

\*\*\*

Dad liked doing things in a big way.

When he started his farming career at an early age with his brothers, they were collecting tadpoles. They ended up with over one hundred frogs. We haven't yet heard if he or the brothers tried eating any of them.



## FATHER

Dad also enjoyed many types of music. He often talked about how he would sing “I Walk the Line” while walking a cranky baby. I was one of those cranky babies. Maybe I still am.

Another of his favorite songs was Red Sovine’s “Daddy’s Girl” which I’m sure my sisters will listen to a bit differently now.

Dad liked traveling and family trips could happen very spontaneously. One of the family highlights was a two-week trip to B.C. His excellent driving skills came into play when we were driving through the mountains without brakes playing Christmas music all the way.

He really enjoyed taking his wife and family along on semi trips as well.

Much of his time in the semi or working on other things but he was always ready for a good game of crokonole. Or...to organize a game of Prisoners Base at a family gathering.

Dad also liked long walks. So much so that we were nervous whenever he would ask if anyone wanted to go for a walk. We had fun with it though. One especially memorable walk was a family trek through the forest that included a bonfire and porcupine sightings.

Family was really important to Dad. He welcomed every new member of the family with open arms. When his grandson came along, he was absolutely thrilled! Myles was his pride and joy. Dad was very much looking forward to the arrival of another grandchild.

Dad used to say “life is too short, you’ve gotta make the best of it.”

He was very passionate about the things he believed in. This included his beloved farm. He could get very frustrated with it...but he refused to give it up. He applied this same determination in the other areas of his life. Many was the time that he shoveled his semi up an Ontario hill during a blizzard.

But as I’m sure we all know, the area of life Dad was most passionate about was his faith and the sharing of his faith. It wasn’t a faith based on a long list of traditions or rules. It was a simple faith that could best be summed up in the phrase. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

One of the many ways he shared this faith was by teaching boys in his Sunday School Class for the past 30 years. His teaching wasn’t stranded in the classroom either...he loved to have his class out on the farm to butcher a

## LESSONS LEARNED IN THE MOURNING

cow and then they would deliver the meat to Union Gospel Mission and spend some time working there.

Dad was always eager to help; whether shingling, washing dishes or helping out the package handlers at Fed Ex.

This past summer he was able to take drive a bus down to an Orphanage in Mexico where he also spent some time working. This was a highlight of the year for him.

Dad often acknowledged God's presence and protection during all of his travels. About a week before Dad's passing, he was about to head out a trip when he was locked up in the shed where his semi was parked. It was a very strange incident. Dad remarked after that that if he hadn't been locked in the shed he would've ended up in a 16-truck pile up. Why God didn't lock him up somewhere again we don't know. We may never know. We don't need to. Dad's last words were "I'm okay, I'm okay, worry about the other driver, he's hurt bad." And...based on the faith he had, we know that Dad really is okay. He's in a better place now...and I'm sure he'd like nothing better than to meet us all there someday.

# Father's Day



*He gave me life  
and was always there  
standing in the gap  
of my childish needs  
and fears  
he gave us love  
with powerful arms*

LESSONS LEARNED IN THE MOURNING

*and sturdy shoulders  
to carry the pain of our growing  
family  
then in a flash so sudden  
he was gone  
and the scene of his absence  
filled our tired eyes  
well-watered with sorrow  
then, as the burden he bore  
fell to another generation  
I discovered the true price of his struggle  
how he sacrificed his tomorrow  
for everything we have on this Father's Day  
and I just hope that I can live up to the vision of life  
the picture of love he painted only yesterday*

# A View From the Mountain



I took a deep breath.

Sucking in my drug of choice.

As I exhaled, I could feel my mind expanding. New possibilities, new ideas, shimmered throughout my imagination like a million brilliant stars. I felt peace creeping over me, a deep peace that I had never felt before. Some may call it a spiritual awakening, something written of in ancient books of wisdom. Others may simply call it the moment when I finally found myself...outside,

without my smartphone.

Breathing in fresh cool air, looking out at the expanse of a valley glowing with the natural wonder of a forest teeming with wildlife. Across from where I sat a silver stream flowed down the mountainside, a tiny ribbon bursting into a waterfall as it neared the bottom of the valley. A waterfall pouring life into the lake below as light from a full moon caressed every ripple.

Strangely enough, I wouldn't exchange this experience for yet another evening in a seedy apartment, slumped on a couch infested with bed bugs, smoking up and watching the empty babble streaming from the television.

Sure, going downhill is easier...much easier...but no matter how easy it is, it doesn't get you to a view like this...and let me tell you, what you can see from here is a whole lot better than you'll ever see if you spend your evenings wallowing around with bottom feeders...

So, even though the climb may be difficult right now...keep on struggling...keep on climbing when everyone else is content to remain sitting...I know you can do it...and in the end, it'll be worth it...trust me...

Peace

LESSONS LEARNED IN THE MOURNING





PEACE

*Where was the peace?*

*when you gave everything  
and were left clutching nothing  
exhausted  
of any divine desire  
the flame that used to linger  
in the ashes of your burned out world*

*Where was the hope?*

*when your character was murdered  
by the spirits of gossip that traveled  
in the black coattails of jealousy  
attacking in the boastful voices that said  
one thing here  
and the opposite there  
laughing, stabbing, even as you were falling  
and yet, maybe your time of greatest need  
was only an opportunity for a far greater glory  
for your hope was always where  
it always is  
way beyond this world and all its trouble  
and yet, maybe your season of trial  
was only to mold you into a priceless pearl  
for your peace was always here  
in that Holy Spirit of comfort  
a breath of life to spite the shadows  
that healing spring bursting out, flowing over  
your barren fields scarred by battle*

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