

I remember the first time I met Tracey – it was at a department chair’s meeting my second year at the university. She walked into the room...and I thought ‘what a tiny person’....at that meeting, and as our friendship grew, I discovered, as many of you know, that there was a tremendous amount of energy, knowledge, things to say(...Tracey could talk...), and a big heart on that tiny person.

Tracey was a very passionate person...that showed in all parts of her life.

Tracey loved UWRF. She didn’t see school as a place to go to work – she saw it as a community - we were her family! Her purpose in life was to ‘help students learn.’ And she certainly did that to the fullest! Student’s always came first. She didn’t only help students learn, she also helped me! Tracey was a mentor to me....and I don’t know if she knew that. If I needed advise on anything, I could go to Tracey. Whether it was from dealing with a student who had plagiarized a paper, to applying for the assistant dean position in the college – Tracey was always the first person I would look towards for advice. I truly respected what she would say. If she didn’t know how to help me, she knew somewhere to look, or who to contact to figure it out. Tracey had an incredible memory. And from now on, every time I get a complaint from a student about ...whatever....the phrase “You can’t always get what you want, You just might find, You get what you need” will pop into my mind – thanks to Tracey (and, of course, Mick Jaeger....she wouldn’t want me to give her full credit for that).

Tracey loved her girlfriends....particularly girls day out....our crafting days. Going to the tea shop, and Café Latte. She loved to bead and knit. She taught me how to knit...I bet that many of us have either a piece of jewelry, an ornament, a scarf, blanket, or hat that Tracey made.... I know that every time I pick up a knitting needle, I will think of Tracey. She was always the one to initiate these days out....ladies, you know who you are, we need to continue these outings.... Her girlfriends, we were her posse.... And I think that most of us agree with Tracey, “You can never have enough chocolate.”

Tracey loved their cabin in Stone Lake and inviting friends up for a weekend. When my husband, Kevin, and I went to visit, it was a weekend soon after she and Jim had bought their pontoon boat. She was proud of that boat! We will always remember her driving their new toy pattering around the lake and learning how to park it at the dock. She had fun just sitting under the shade of its canopy and reading a book while watching our dogs Hunter and Tuxedo play in the water.

Tracey loved to celebrate ‘big’ on the ‘5’s. By this, she meant that on your birthday years that fall on the ‘5’s’ ...30th, 35th, 40th ...etc. you need to do something special to celebrate. On her 50th she and Jim took a trip to San Diego. On my 35th, I bought a new house and got married. This year would have been her 55th, and I know she will be celebrating BIG wherever she is. And I know it will be something I will do for myself the rest of my life....because of Tracey. If you are someone who doesn’t like to celebrate your age and getting older – take some advise from Tracey....she would tell “it is what it is” so embrace it.

Tracey loved books. While I was pregnant with my son Davis, I went into premature labor and was home on semi-bed-rest (Tracey called it “house arrest”), she brought me two grocery bags full of romance novels or, as she called them “smut books”. Tracey enjoyed to read anything from Nora Roberts to Nietzsche. The other day, Suzanne Hagen shared a small illustrated book with me called “The Next Place” that I would like to share with you....I think that Tracey would enjoy it:

The Next Place
By Warren Hanson

The next place that I go
will be as peaceful and familiar
as a sleepy summer Sunday
and a sweet, untroubled mind.

And yet...it won't be anything like any place I've ever been...
or seen....or even dreamed of
in the place I leave behind.

I won't know where I'm going, and I won't know where I've been
As I tumble through the always
and look back toward the when.

I glide beyond the rainbows.
I'll drift above the sky.
I'll fly into the wonder, without ever wondering why.

I won't remember getting there.
Somehow I'll just arrive.
But I'll know that I belong there
And will feel much more alive, than I have ever felt before.
I will be absolutely free of the things that I held onto...
that were holding onto me.

The next place that I go
Will be so quiet and so still
That the whispered song of sweet belonging will rise up to fill
the listening sky with joyful silence, and with unheard harmonies
Of music made by no one playing,
Like a hush upon a breeze.

There will be no room for darkness in that place of living light,
Where an ever-dawning morning pushes back the dying night.
The very air will fill with brilliance, as the brightly shining sun
And the moon and half a million stars are married into one.

The next place that I go
Won't really be a place at all.
There won't be any seasons – winter, summer, spring or fall-

Nor a Monday,
Nor a Friday,
Nor December,
Nor July.
And the seconds will be standing still...
While hours hurry by.

I will not be a boy or girl,

A woman or a man.
I'll simply be,
Just, simply, me.
No worse or better than.

My skin will not be dark or light.
I won't be fat or tall.
The body I once lived in
Won't be part of me at all.

I will finally be perfect.
I will be without a flaw.
I will never make one more mistake,
Or break the smallest law.

And the me that was impatient,
Or was angry or unkind,
Will simply be a memory.
The me I left behind.

I will travel empty-handed.
There is not a single thing
I have collected in my life
That I would ever want to bring...
Except...the love of those who loved me,
And the warmth of those who cared.
The happiness and memories
And magic that we shared.

Though I will know the joy of solitude...
I'll never be alone.
I'll be embraced by all the family and friends I've ever known.
Although I might not see their faces,
All our hearts will beat as one.
And the circle of our spirits
Will shine brighter than the sun.

I will cherish all the friendship I was fortunate to find
And all the love and all the laughter in the place I leave behind.

All these good things will go with me.
They will make my spirit glow.
And that light will shine forever in the next place that I go.

Whenever Tracey and I were saying good-bye, either on the phone or in person, she would always say, "Do me a favor, and give Davis a hug for me." Well, Tracey, it is now your turn to do me a favor..."give Tux and Hunter a hug for me."