



Kristin's Fat Old Dad Recalls . . .

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Foreword

You were born with a special flair for life, Kristin. You approach every moment as an adventure, always expecting (and sometimes demanding) joy and satisfaction in what you do, and giving your every energy to the new adventure.

You have been an inspiration for many, including me. If for even one moment I could approach life with your energy and expectation of joy, I would be the better for it. I am convinced that it is for this reason, if no other, that you are in Jessica's life, too. Those of us who find ourselves stuck in contemplation of ramifications and consequences frequently miss the opportunity to *just be*; you provide us with an excellent example of how to really live, and we're all the better for having known you.

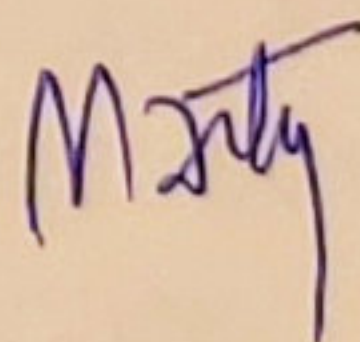
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You came into this world at an otherwise rather sad and negative time in our lives. Personally and financially things were kind of tough. Even from the very first moments of your life you brought with you a self-starting joy, utterly impossible to dampen.

And so it goes that you, Kristin Joy, should have to endure the recollections of your Fat Old Dad. I want to capture at least a few of the memories I most treasure about you, and this is the way I've chosen. I hope you enjoy these, if not now, when you have to explain them to your children.

I love you, Kristin.

Warmly,



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The Trail To Adventure

One day during August, 1991, you, Jessica, Aunt Kathy and I went to visit the Japanese Gardens in Portland. It's a beautiful place, one of the nicest spots in the Pacific Northwest.

We came to a peaceful place beside a stream and pond and sat on a hand-carved bench beneath some gorgeous willows. After taking in the site for a moment or two, we stood up and started back up the trail.

You were, of course, several steps ahead of us and found that the trail forked just ahead. Jessica was immediately in a quandary as to which fork to choose. Neither alternative was very clear as to outcome, and she was obviously laboring over which one to choose.

You, on the other hand, shouted out

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to us, "Come on, let's have an adventure!" You said these words as you skipped backward toward one of the trails. Your approach to the dilemma of trail choice was refreshing, to say the very least.

Immediately it was clear to me that this little snapshot was a model for the way you lived your life: Make a choice and expect a wonderful adventure. It also was a snapshot of the way Jessica (and I, for that matter) approach the same situation: Fret over the choice, then second-guess what choice we made, then feel cheated that we didn't make the other choice. Your way seems like a heck of a lot better way to live. Thank you for providing us with this example!

Incidentally, both paths led back to the same place, and neither one was significantly different from the other.

The Evil Sandwich

When you were about four years old, you really liked *The Little Mermaid* and watched it over and over. Often you would tell us about The Evil Sandwich, going on and on about it, and none of us had a clue what you were talking about. Your rather animated stories about a lunch food devil kept us all guessing.

One day Jessica figured it out: You were referring to *The Evil Sea Witch*, which was one of the characters in the movie.

Often you were most fascinated by the evil characters in movies you saw, wanting reassurance that the characters were only make-believe.

Chief Poop-In-The-Woods

When you were four, you went to school at KinderCare, where it was common for there to be celebrations on holidays. Thanksgiving was one such celebration, and it was a real big deal for your class.

You made little turkey and Pilgrim figures, had Indian corn all around the room, and all of you made Indian head bands with paper feathers. The head bands had special Indian names for each of you, such as Running Bear, Clear Sky, Flying Eagle, and so forth.

All the parents were invited to a luncheon featuring the typical Thanksgiving treats. The arrangement was that the parents would check out the artwork on the walls, then their little one would show them to the table where the feast was to be had. The tables and chairs were for little kids, so it

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was all most of us adults could do to just get seated.

You were seated at a table with several other kids, and, as it turned out, I was the only adult sitting at the table. I made some comment about your Indian name, which was Running Fawn, if I recall it correctly, whereupon you asked me what *my* Indian name was. My response was that I was Chief Poop-In-The-Woods.

You immediately cracked up laughing and proceeded to share your Fat Old Dad's Indian name with your buddies around the table. Pretty soon they were all laughing, probably because it was an adult using a **poddy** word, and they all scattered into different parts of the room saying "Chief Poop-In-The-Woods" over and over, interrupted only by laughter.

Boy, was I ever dog meat to some of the parents in the room, as they didn't think it was too cool for an adult to talk like that. But, you know, the only thing that mattered

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to me was that I had made you laugh and have a good time with your buddies, who thought you were pretty cool.

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“I’ve Learned Three Things.”

One day in the early fall of 1991, you proudly announced to Grandma that you had learned to do three things recently.

The first, as you explained to a fascinated Grandma, was learning how to draw the drapes. You were always interested in the drapes, particularly the ones in the kitchen, which were unusual in that they were the vertical slats of plastic.

The second thing you had learned to do was to read. As you phrased it, you had taught yourself to read. This is not too far from the truth, too. Reading instruction at KinderCare was minimal, and you didn’t get a whole bunch of instruction at home, either.

The third thing you had learned to do was to wipe your own butt. Now *this* was a

big deal, particularly to me. From the time you were old enough to sit on the big-person toilet, you would do your business, then call out “Daddy, wipe my butt!”

It was customary for you to get up from the dinner table in the middle of the meal and go to the bathroom. I always knew what was in store for me and that momentarily your call would be coming. What a treat!

Well, it was a grand occasion when you took up my daily challenge to wipe your own butt, and it was a rather peculiar source of joy and pride for you when you finally did.

Anyway, Grandma thought your ability to recognize the similar pattern of three entirely separate events concerning three entirely separate situations was remarkable. So did I; remember, you were only five years old.

When Your Fat Old Dad Was Sick

Unfortunately for me, I was hospitalized in the summer of 1990 for an operation on my head. It turned out to be a pretty big deal, and I came out of the operation with my head all bandaged.

When you went to the hospital, Karen had warned you to expect to see me with a big bandage on my head. Just going to the hospital was a big deal, but the expectation of seeing your Fat Old Dad in that condition was pretty scary for you.

When you entered the room, you covered your eyes with your fingers so as not to see me. You came bearing flowers and a get-well card, and you had to more or less shuffle due to the fact that you couldn't see where you were going with your eyes covered.

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Your compassion for my condition was obvious and very compelling. It took quite a time and numerous reassurances from all of us that I was going to be okay before you uncovered your eyes.

About a year or so later, when I was having another headache attack that put me on my back in bed, you asked Karen if I had my turban on. That is what my bandages looked like to you when I was in the hospital, and you thought that I had my turban on again, since I was sick. Kinda cute, huh?

You always made me get-well cards when I was sick, and they always made me feel better. Thank you.

Attack Of The Crotch Hawk

On one of our walks through the Valley River Center, you, Jessica and I bought a toy recommended by a lady working in the cool little toy shop near The Bon. It was a plastic bird which flapped its wings to fly.

This was a rather technical bird, requiring pretty involved assembly and winding-up. You tried to get it going, but it was a bit much for you. So your big sister grabbed the bird from you, condescendingly telling you, "Here, let *me* do it."

Jessica wound that poor little plastic birdie up so tight that the rubber band was about to break. Then, with confidence, Jessica released the bird for its maiden flight.

Boy, was she surprised when the bird

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immediately took off, turned toward her and buried its beak in Jessica's crotch! Of course, Jessica started screaming as the bird furiously flapped its wings, ignoring Jessica's cries for mercy and attempts to push the attacking bird away.

The attack continued for what seemed like a long time, but was probably only a few seconds. It sure was a long time for Jessica! You and I laughed hysterically and immediately named the bird Jessica's Crotch Hawk.

That was the last time I can remember Jessica treating you quite so condescendingly; after that she realized that she had a few things to learn still, too.

We Used To Call You Booger

When you were very young, only about a year or two old, you almost always seemed to have the sniffles. Although this condition never seemed to bother you much, most of the time there was a booger trail oozing down from your nose.

Jessica, by now of sufficient years and sophistication to appreciate the social impact of this condition, would frequently jump your case on the subject.

I added to the focus on this condition by nicknaming you, lovingly but shamefully, "Booger." Your Grandma Bette would always grimace at us referring to you by this terrible moniker.

Then came one day, your fourth birthday. Yes, it was December 18, 1989. Jessica and I, the main culprits, agreed to

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grant you the respect you deserved and to call you by your name, Kristin, henceforth.

Well, Jessica and I have pretty well stuck by the commitment we made to you that day. While I feel kind of ashamed, in retrospect, for having called you Booger, I hope you can appreciate that it was a term of endearment, and one that we gladly abandoned when you reached the point of being sensitive to the term.

Honey

You must have heard Karen and me refer to Jessica as “Honey” over and over when you were very young. You must have been about two or so when you started to call Jessica “Honey,” too.

Honey carried this nickname for years and years. I have to admit that it’s heck of a lot easier to say “Honey” than to say “Jessica.”

When you tried to pronounce “Jessica,” what came out was closer to “Jez-ka.” Not bad for your first tries at pronouncing a pretty tricky name. None the less, you gravitated to Honey much more comfortably than Jessica.

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Making Up Your Own Rules

By the time you were five you had come to enjoy knowing what the rules were, then trying to live up to the rules. I think this came from your time at KinderCare, where there were rules for *everything*.

One example of your wanting to know the rules was our trips to Valley River Center, where our route through the mall was to be predetermined and predictable. You found comfort in knowing ahead of time what the deal was. You had a particular routine for most activities.

I think Jessica reinforced your need for rules, as she also found comfort in being able to rely on a predictable system.

What I found particularly interesting was that around age five you developed a system of creating your own rules, making

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them up out of thin air, then living up to them rigidly. You were really quite hard on yourself in conformance to your rules. Some I can remember include your having either a drink *or* a cookie on our Valley River Center excursions, and not *both* a drink *and* a cookie; cleaning up your room at the end of the day (I had let you know that this was important, but you're the one who made up the rule); your coming into me each morning, breathing in my face to demonstrate that you had brushed your teeth.

It seems to me that people have a need to know that they can count on things around them, and your making up rules for yourself appeared to me to be another manifestation of this need for you. It made me more aware of how important it was for me to be consistent, visibly so, for you during these years, and I resolved to do so. See there, you got me making up rules for myself, too!

Our Trip To San Diego

In the summer of 1991, you, Jessica and I went to San Diego for a vacation. We flew out of Eugene on a little 18-seat airplane, then routed through Seattle to maximize air mileage for my Frequent Flier Program account. You guys thought the trip was pretty fun, although keeping track of which cities we were in was quite a challenge for you. You got it right, however.

We stayed at a motel just off the beach. The unit had a kitchen and was very large. Your Aunt Julie had checked it all out before we booked the unit. You see, Julie had lived in the area for several years and knew the ropes around the area.

We had lots of fun in San Diego. We went to the San Diego Zoo, Sea World and the Fun Zone, which was just down the way

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from our motel. Much of our time was spent on the beach, with you frolicking in the waves and befriending little kids doing the same thing. We ate most of our meals out, and I didn't make you guys do many of the things you typically had to do each day. Shamefully I admit that I even let you guys eat candy for lunch one day; you thought this was really cool.

One night Carlene asked us over for dinner at her place. The home belonged to her boyfriend, Don, and they were in the process of remodeling it. When Carlene showed you one room under construction, you exclaimed, "This is a pigsty!" You also had some difficulty with Carlene's name, calling her Aunt Carla. Of course, Carlene was your *cousin*. Everyone, particularly Carlene, got quite a kick out of you.

We all partied well into the night and found ourselves pretty exhausted from just having fun. I don't recall even one negative episode on that trip, not one time when you cried or we raised our voices. You and

Jessica got along well, too. It was a grand time.

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Front Seat . . . Back Seat

Going somewhere in the car with you and Jessica was a challenge. Both of you were at the stage of development during which fairness, *absolute* fairness, was critical and worth creating a stink over.

Our car was the old 1984 GMC Jimmy, which was a two-door utility vehicle. The front seats would have to be moved forward to create a space to enter the back seat.

Seating was a big priority for you guys, and it constantly set the scene for bickering between you.

Karen had worked out a system by which each of you would alternate in receiving premium front seat accommodations. Each time you went anywhere in the car, there was a discussion

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and reminder as to which of you had been seated in front the last time.

This system was a big pain in the butt for your Fat Old Dad, so I made a management decision and directed you to have the back seat (selling it to you with a couple of obscure reasons which you probably found utterly silly) and Jessica to have the front seat.

You girls deferred to my decision, although it did come up for review with some frequency. The bottom line was that you simply learned to live in a two-door, one-front-seat world. I thought this was extremely cool of you.

“Thanks For Dinner, Grandma”

Grandma Buzzie made dinner for us each night. Food was always the focus of much of her attention, this due to the fact that she grew up amid a terrible lack of proper food to eat. The importance of food was to her on the highest order of priority.

Each day Grandma would have a complete meal prepared and waiting for us on the table as we came home. We ate early, about 5:00 P.M., and this was none too early for you, by now starving from a busy day at KinderCare.

After dinner each night both you and Jessica would pack up your dishes, then turn toward the sink with plates in hand. As you would turn, each of you would say, “Thanks for dinner, Grandma. It was *really* good.” Then you would run off upstairs to mess around in your rooms.

Grandma always got a kick out of your after-dinner-thanks routine. Sometimes you would change a word or two in the sentence, but ninety-nine percent of the time it came out as above. I was just glad that you girls had the courtesy to thank Grandma without reminder.

Is This Heaven?

Your Aunt Vicky died in early 1987, when you were just a baby. Although you never really knew her, we spoke of Vicky often.

On special occasions we would go to the place where Vicky's remains are buried, which is Rest Haven Cemetery in South Eugene. It's a beautiful spot.

We had tried to explain to you that Vicky had died and that now she was in heaven. Although we never were very specific about heaven, you had the idea that heaven was a beautiful, peaceful place.

One snowy day as we passed the Rest Haven gates on a pilgrimage to Vicky's grave, you asked, "Is this heaven?" The weight of your question and the obvious clarity of your association of Vicky's

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whereabouts and heaven took us all aback.

I can remember fumbling with some lame explanation about death and heaven, and I'm sure you weren't satisfied.

Your question made me better realize the depths of your ability to assemble information. This was an important moment in my appreciation of your mind; and the tone of your voice made me appreciate your heart, too.

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Ballet Recital

One of the activities available to you at KinderCare was having a lady, whose name escapes me, come in to teach you ballet. Well, it was *sort of* ballet.

Anyway, came the day of the grand recital, and it was a real big deal. Invitations were sent out, a special area cleared and seats brought in and assembled so as to accommodate the parents of the performers.

The lights were dimmed, and then about a half-dozen little girls came into the room, dressed to the nines with flowing scarves and the like. Prancing around to some ethnic music and assertive orders barked out by the ballet headmistress, you girls strutted your stuff. Most of the performance was a modified run-skip move in quick-moving circles, punctuated by

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giggles and the more-than-occasional miscue.

After each musical part finished came a flowing bow by the dancers, complimented with applause from the adoring audience. Camera flashes flashed, ballet slippers clapped the floor, and increasing giggling filled the room.

About the time you were perspiring profusely, the performance ended, and came to me to receive your hug. The ballet part was marginal, but I was sure proud of you.

“Can You Pick Your Nose Again?”

When I would drop you off at KinderCare in the mornings, sometimes your buddy, Astrid, would greet you. These were especially good days for you, as you and Astrid liked to hang out with one another. She was a fatherless child and would cling to me when I dropped you off.

One day you and Astrid came outside of the KinderCare building to the area next to the parking area. You asked me to lean over the two-foot-tall fence and give you a hug. Of course, Astrid also wanted a hug, which I gladly gave to her. As you waved to me during my departure, I pretended to pick my nose. Well, you and Astrid thought that was the *greatest* thing you have seen. You were kind of proud of the fact that your Fat Old Dad was so weird, and Astrid and you cracked up immediately.

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For several months after that day, you would ask me as I was leaving, "Can you pick your nose again, Dad?" Being the compliant Fat Old Dad I was, I obliged your request. Actually, I kind of enjoyed it, truth be known.

Train Ride To Portland

One weekend in August, 1991, I took you and Jessica on a train ride to Portland. We stayed with your Aunt Kathy, who picked us up at the train station and then delivered us back there the following day.

The trip up to Portland was interesting to us, for at least a couple of reasons. It was your first train ride. Exploring the train, its smells and sounds was a new experience for you. You, Jessica and I shared a large, two-seat space. Directly in front of us were seated two obviously California young men. Because we were seated so close to them, we could overhear most of their conversation.

One of the young men looked off into the endless fields of grass through which the train tracks were located, then asked his

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companion what the distant fire was. It was some field-burning going on, typical for that time of the year.

You spontaneously answered his question by saying, "It was a big wreck." The man was greatly taken aback, shocked by the unexpected and unrequested response from behind him, and the obvious falsehood of your answer. He and his buddy started cracking up, figuring out right away that you were full of it.

How or why you ever came out with such a statement is a mystery to me. Those young men probably will always remember the little girl from Oregon who enlivened their visit.

The Simpsons

Every Thursday evening at 8:00, you, Jessica and I would be glued to the television set to watch *The Simpsons*.

In case you don't remember, this show was an animated situation comedy built around a family with a lower-ability father who worked in a nuclear power plant, a lame mother whose hair went into the clouds, a goody-two-shoes daughter, another baby girl who sucked a pacifier constantly, and the star, Bart, who was a bad boy.

It was Bart's utterly predictable naughtiness which was the cause of our undying devotion to the program. Every Thursday we could count on Bart redefining the lower limits of pubescent behavior. It was really cool, and you girls really got a kick out of the show.

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Often you did not understand what we were laughing at, but you knew that it was somehow cool, and you laughed, too.

At the time, *The Simpsons* was a bit controversial, as many thought it to be a bad influence on children. The point was well taken, although I didn't think the show would be bad for you to watch. And so it was, each and every Thursday, except for when the television station would show the TrailBlazer basketball games, for a long time.

Aunt Kathy's Wedding

It was an interesting day to select to get married, the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, but it was the day your Aunt Kathy selected to marry her long-time friend, Richard. It was to be a grand affair, with all the trimmings.

She was married in a church in rural Marion County, near Hubbard, and around two hundred people attended. Richard was the minister of the church, and three other ministers took part in the ceremony.

Well, you, Jessica and Karen were in the wedding party. Your Uncle John and I were ushers. Preparations for your dresses and such were made over what seemed to be months. We bought you special shoes and stockings. It was one of the rare times we'd seen Jessica in a dress! You girls all had your hair done up specially for the occasion.

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Karen's hair was roached up and back, showing her forehead. Jessica's was braided and swept back. Your hair was curled, and you thought it was the coolest thing ever to have your hair done by a professional hairdresser just for the day!

Your role in the ceremony was as flower girl, and you went through the rehearsal with the rest of us. Organizers of the occasion told you when to start walking down the aisle, how to walk, when and where to turn, and virtually everything you needed to do . . . except how to spread the flower petals.

When the Big Day arrived and everyone was properly seated, the procession started. The rest of the wedding party had already arrived on the altar and was looking back toward the rear of the church when you started down the aisle. You walked in cadence to the music, and as you did, you grabbed and compressed little handfuls of petals. You kind of threw them from side to side, frequently hitting innocent

wedding-watchers with direct hits of exploding petal clods.

When Jessica observed you, she cracked up, rolling her eyes backward, giving the rest of us a clue that something was up. The congregation got quite a kick out of your petal-broadcasting job, especially your Aunt Kathy, whom I heard chuckle warm-heartedly from her place on the altar.

In truth I must confess that this was the high point for me at the wedding, and it was a lesson good to learn. Sometimes the very best things become available only when we don't plan them to happen at all. Thank you, Kristin!

Me And You, For Reals

When Jessica was a little girl, she more or less made up her own language, which we adults came to learn.

You didn't make up your own language, although you had a few speech inventions of your own.

One of the most memorable things you said was, “. . . for reals.” This term was what you used to mean *for real* or *really*, and it came up in conversation quite frequently.

Another thing you would say came directly from your little buddy, Astrid, from KinderCare. You and she were thick as thieves, so it shouldn't have been surprising that you would pick up one another's speech habits.

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Astrid always said, "Me and Mom . . ." or "Me and Kristin . . ." Now this grammatical assassination was met with unwavering disapproval by Grandma and me (or was it *me and Grandma?*) and would constantly expose you to a stern pointing-out of the error.

Somehow you always figured out how not to take things of this nature too seriously, able to put it into proper perspective as not being worth worrying about. And you know, it probably wasn't worth worrying about!

Tooth Windows

You were approaching your sixth birthday when your baby teeth started to fall out. Now this stuff is a big deal to kids your age. You were utterly proud as heck to give hourly reports on the increasing shakiness of each tooth.

Finally the hour of your first tooth's departure arrived. The tooth was one of the ones in the bottom-front of your mouth. I asked you if I could just lift it out, enticing you with assurances that such a procedure would be painless and kind of fun. You agreed to allow me the task, and, as advertised, then I merely lifted the tooth out. You were on Cloud Nine.

The next tooth to come loose was top-front. This one was hanging by a thread for several days, then finally gave up the ghost in what Karen reported to be a sneezing

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blast you gave it.

As your teeth came out, you were left with the necessary gaps in your smile. These gaps you referred to as “windows,” in the proper way your other KinderCare buddies referred to them.

You sure were proud of your windows, Kristin.