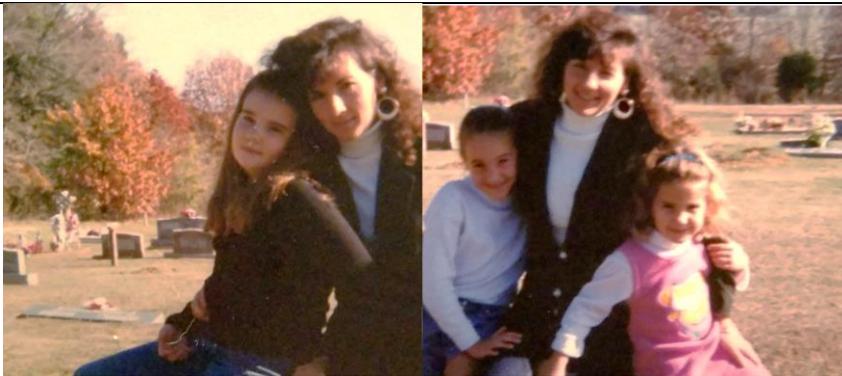


Timeless Transformations

Living in the Dash

One of the great things about aging is the accumulation of our memories. Each memory is like a picture saved in our mind that represents an energy captured in time. When I look back through our old photo albums, each picture triggers a little movie of the moments that were going on in our lives when the picture was taken. With Aunt Betty dying this week, I've thought a lot about the times we would travel to Denison to visit Granny Sweeney, which would also include seeing Aunt Betty. I remember taking you three to visit Granny and we stayed at Aunt Betty's house. You probably remember she had that rickety old house in that terrible neighborhood. I remember all four of us lying in bed and I could hear the whistle of the trains and the wind whipping through her cracked windows. I was so glad when we woke up the next morning and we were all OK.

Your dad and I were talking the other day and he asked me if I had ever been to my dad's grave. I told him yes and that one of my favorite memories was the time we traveled Denison to visit Granny. It was that time we stayed in Aunt Betty's house. It was the week of Thanksgiving in 1999. We were actually having Thanksgiving with Aunt Niecy in Plano but we went up early so we could visit Granny. It was a gorgeous fall day and we drove out to the cemetery. I felt like we didn't have a care in the world. We walked around and looked at all of the graves. We took these pictures. Aren't you girls so adorable?



This memory also reminds me of a poem I heard years ago called *The Dash*. I thought you might like reading it.

I treasure this memory. I knew at the time that day was special. I had all three of you to myself. You were so impressionable and I felt like I was your world. I also knew that day would pass. I never took it for granted. Now almost 20 years later, that time has passed but with every passing moment, our lives have unfolded into a beautiful life.

The Dash Poem

by Linda Ellis

*I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of a friend
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
From the beginning to the end*

*He noted that first came the date of her birth
And spoke the following date with tears,
But he said what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years*

*For that dash represents all the time
That she spent alive on earth.
And now only those who loved her
Know what that little line is worth.*

*For it matters not how much we own;
The cars, the house, the cash,
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.*

Timeless Transformations

Living in the Dash

The next time you go to a cemetery, notice the tombstones. Each tombstone represents the life of a person with the day they were born, a dash, and the day they died. That small punctuation mark of the dash represents their entire life. As we go through our lives, we are just **living in the dash**, moment by moment. It's what we do in between the time we are born and the time we die. It's our identity.

When I think of Aunt Betty and her dash as it relates to me, my memories aren't so good. I believe it is because I saw her as so judgmental, so closed minded, so hypocritical, so stagnant, so limited, so self-centered.... the list of so's could go on a long time. Now she is gone, I have a new perspective. Who I am today is partly because of who she was. I wanted to be the opposite. Her being in my life helped direct me to be someone different. She shaped my dash! For that, I am grateful. So when I travel to her funeral this week, I will close a big chapter in my life. My dad's parents and siblings are now all gone with her passing.

The question I asked myself that day in 1999 and the question I ask each morning is how am I **living in the dash?** Our dash is our legacy. It's what we will leave behind to future generations. I believe at the end of our lives we all hope our dash meant something. We intrinsically desire to leave the world a better place because we were here. What we do with every moment in our lives is up to us. How will you be living in your dash?

I love you more than all the moments that will be counted in my dash - Love Mom