

Time of Death: N/A

Category: Feeling Anxious

written by Yuki Bailey | August 7, 2018

A few months ago, while I was helping my mother organize a suitcase full of various documents, I came across a piece of paper that I had never seen before: my father's death certificate.

Fifteen years ago, my father suddenly fell ill. After a trip to the hospital, the initial diagnosis was bronchitis. But following three days of unrelenting malaise, my father returned to the hospital and was immediately admitted to the Intensive Care Unit. Two weeks later, he was dead.

The results of his autopsy: inconclusive. A twelve-year-old overzealously intent on regaining normalcy in her life, I did not shed a single tear at his funeral. I refused to look at photographs of him, and I never brought him up in conversation. I had effectively erased my father from my life.

I would never see him again, so why bother reminiscing?

Fifteen years later, sitting on the floor of my high school bedroom, I held his death certificate in my hands. This otherwise nondescript piece of paper was the official testament to the fact that I would never see my father again.

Now twenty-seven years old, I finally understand what that loss entails: the one man I could depend on to love me unconditionally for as long as he was alive had taken his last breath over a decade ago.

To be more precise, he took his last breath at 9:40 am on May 9, 2003. I had actually never known his time of death until it was staring back at me in bold, hand-printed ink: 0940.

Seeing the official time elucidates the termination of his life, and that notion of finality brings tears to my eyes. The pain is agonizing. But while I cry more now than I ever did right after he died, the memories no longer scare me. I no longer vehemently repudiate grief, but rather, I embrace it.

I don't feel his presence. I don't have some sort of sixth sense. But I have learned to find a quantum of solace by reminiscing. Through my memories of my father, I continue to set back the time.

Time of death is simply a string of numbers. Your relationships with people do not truly die until you let them, and I won't be letting go of my memories of my father anytime soon. In fact, I don't think I ever did.

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