

The Gradual Eclipse of Uncle Jack

Category: Dementia

written by Susan Berry | March 23, 2025

We all need one cherished relative—someone who knows exactly what to say to you when things are spiraling out of control, who guides you through life's stormy seas. For me, that person has always been my mother's youngest brother, Uncle Jack.

From my earliest memories, Uncle Jack has been a steadfast figure in my life. When my childhood home was fraught with tumult and chaos, his house became my sanctuary. His children embraced me like a sister, and in that loving environment I always found solace.

Later, in my adulthood, when I faced the trials of divorce while pregnant with my son, Uncle Jack opened his arms to me once more. The world around me felt unforgiving, but his generosity and devotion never wavered and he once again provided me refuge in his home.

But, as with everything in life, a change has come. I have known for a while Uncle Jack has been battling the ferocious beast of dementia. However, nothing could have prepared me for the call I received from my aunt telling me he'd been asking about his mother, unaware that she'd passed away 20 years ago. It was the first time I had to really come to grips with what was happening to him, and it broke my heart to realize how far away he had drifted from the vibrant man I've always known.

In an effort to rekindle the memories of his mother's death, my aunt embarked with him on an emotional journey to her gravesite, an 80-mile pilgrimage. And although she assured me upon their return that he had accepted the truth, I knew the forgetfulness would soon return—and that the day will come when I may become nothing more than a stranger to him.

I can't find adequate words to describe the depth of despair I feel at the thought of losing the gentle spirit whose laughter has lifted me up on my darkest days and who has taught me the power of compassion, the strength to be found in resilience, the profound beauty woven into life's moments.

For now, all I can do is hold close the precious time we continue to share, little treasures that I hope will offer me comfort when the inevitable day arrives that I must release him from my grasp.

To me, he will forever remain an irreplaceable part of my heart and soul, forever cherished, forever adored. Forever, my beloved Uncle Jack.

I love you...

Susan Berry
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