

Moving On

Category: Loss

written by Pris Campbell | July 28, 2025

Denny was one year ahead of me in grad school and a close friend. We shared so many plans about our future! I knew he was gay, but his bisexual partner was the only other person in on that secret. This was the 1960s, and coming out wasn't an option back then if you planned to be employed in certain professions.

After graduation, Denny took a job at another university. I joined him there a year later, and we continued our friendship. Because he was gay, we could talk about intimate things with no fear of crossing the line into sexuality. The man I was to marry was on a supply ship in Vietnam, so I depended on Denny a lot for emotional support. He was fun, easy to be with. He was also mildly bipolar, so he could, at times, sink into darkness. During those times, he would see a therapist, and he always pulled out. On one occasion, when I was away, he signed a letter "And I remain . . . unfortunately, Denny." That frightened me, but he pulled out that time as well.

But then one Monday morning, Denny didn't show up for work. A friend from New York called the department frantically, saying he'd told her on the phone on Friday night that he had decided to do it. She thought she'd talked him out of it but had been unable to reach him the rest of the weekend.

The police went to Denny's home and found him, dead, with an empty bottle of sleeping pills beside him. A suicide note was in his Royal typewriter. In the note, he left his books to me. I was devastated. I should have seen it coming. At first, I resented the fact that he didn't call me, but then I realized why: He knew I would drive over and try to stop him. I fell into depression myself, seeing his empty office daily.

It took me six months to pull out of my depression. I took a new job in Hawaii, which turned out to be a good decision. It was impossible to remain depressed there, amid the relaxed culture, new friends, and colorful flowers and birds.

Finally, I let Denny rest in peace in my heart. But forget him? Never. I still miss him.

Pris Campbell
Lake Worth, Florida