

## In Memorium

By Anna Von Reitz



Yesterday, Sunday, December 3, 2023, my Sister and only sibling died. She was 81.

We were named after our respective Grandmothers, Emma after my Father's Mother, who died when he was just 18, and I, after my Mother's Mother, the Founder of Rat Watch, who was 74 at the time of my birth.

These names were odd and antique, far outside the fast lane of fashion at the time. We carried them, grumbling, because we knew we were namesakes.

We were named after good women and we were expected to become good women ourselves. The family joke was that a girl had to look good, smell good, and be good --- not necessarily in that order.

I complained about this requirement to my Father.

It was not, he explained, such a terrible fate to uphold a standard of goodness in the world. If it were not for wives and mothers, sisters and odd aunties and cousins, he assured me, we'd all shortly devolve into a species of ambush hunters, devoid of higher values and little better than weasels.

So, our primary role in life, I gathered, was to be a guardian against weasel-dom.

I had to think about that, but as the years went by and my older Sister grew up before my eyes, I had a fine example of good character, beauty, and fastidious hygiene to follow. Emma was nearly six feet tall, and a "stunner". Literally.

It took a very brave man to ask her out, but one finally did. He was a Swedish rancher who grew up on the edge of the Great Plains, and he was that rare thing, a true gentleman. Competent, quiet, and kind, Don Johnson was like my Sister in heart, faithful and enduring. Together, they set out on life's journey and a marriage that would last over sixty years.

They were quiet people and they lived a quiet life, raising their children and their gardens, helping their neighbors, and loving their menagerie of pets.

Emma was always present like a homing beacon for her unruly little Sister, her gentle humor always ready to make me laugh, her hands ready to help, and her heart was never far away. Come rain, come wind, come sunshine, nobody could ask for a finer or more generous sister. I was well and truly blessed.

She was the one pushing down the label poking up above my shirt collar, smoothing down my wild hair, deftly signalling that I had spinach between my front teeth, floating me a loan, picking me up when I went splat, commenting gently but firmly on every suitor I brought home.

Em was born with only one kidney and she suffered later in life from Hashimoto's Syndrome, an inherited wasting disease of the thyroid that is also associated with blood clotting factor malfunctions, and uncontrollable weight gain. Her blood became very thick and because of this, she suffered poor circulation and damage to her veins. She had to take blood thinners to stay alive.

Slowly, she became quite housebound and reclusive. Tiny but very painful ulcers would appear like bedsores on her lower legs, feet, and ankles. These took a long time to heal and made it difficult to walk.

At the very end, two of the small ulcers got infected and turned to gangrene, and she suffered cluster strokes that took away her ability to speak.

She never complained, though her outlook overall turned humorously gloomy in her later years and I nicknamed her "Eeyore" after the donkey in Winnie-the-Pooh.

Somehow, by a miracle of strength and faith, her husband took care of her at home until one week before she died. The doctor stared at him, open-mouthed and said, "You managed to take care of her at home, in this condition, all by yourself?"

Yes, he did. He stayed beside her bed at the hospital, too, loyal and unwavering to the end.

She didn't want any heroic measures and simply asked to be kept comfortable, which everyone honored. Her husband and her daughter were holding her hands as she slipped away.

As I said to a friend [this morning](#), death is such a strange thing. And so is life. We start out "breathing" water, and then, the next moment, we start breathing air. And with death it's the same way, the difference between a breath and silence. A fleeting moment.

It's all a miracle.

I "died" twice when I was young and stupid, so I know how good it feels to leave behind a ruined and broken body. I know what love awaits her in that realm beyond. Even if I summoned every grain of selfishness left in me, I could not wish her back.

I shall fiercely miss her for the rest of my life, but you can't miss what you never had. So I consider myself lucky in the end.

I am saddened that she won't be here to see the culmination of my life's work, which she shared in and contributed to on so many different levels.

Let all of us who remain rise up; let us choose life and choose love and remember all the dear, sweet people who stand together with us, here and in the Great Beyond.

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