

SPECIAL THINGS ASSOCIATED WITH MY FATHER'S PASSING

My father passed away on September 12 at the ripe age of 99. He was blessed in that he was able to live in his own home till the last week of his life, which he spent in hospital following a fall. In the days after his passing, several out-of-the-ordinary nature things happened. I'll share some of them in this article, believing that they were somehow connected with my father.

The Magpie (Friday, September 16)

Alex and I took a walk near my dad's house after selecting his paintings to go with the funeral. A lot of magpies live in that nature area. This can also be the swooping seasons – while they nest or have young, they can be quite aggressive. As we were walking, one or two birds descended from a tree and sat on Alex's back – which he felt uncomfortable with, being afraid of its beak -- and then it landed on my shoulder. We were not sure if we were in



Photo: Alex Peck

their nesting area and they were going to get mean, so we turned to walk back. The one bird just stayed with me and rode on my shoulder for about three minutes. (From the photo, I just noticed that the second bird followed in flight.) We then came to a bridge with a high railing and the bird hopped off and sat on the railing long enough for Alex to take another photo (after photographing it on my shoulder). It was quite amazing and lovely to have this bird sit on my shoulder and tweet into my ear, even though I didn't have any food to give him. I don't discount the idea that my father sent it to let me know he was OK.

The Rainbow (Friday, September 23)

On Friday afternoon before the funeral, Alex suggested we buy a Subway sandwich and take it somewhere followed by a walk, and then stop at dad's house to pick up the books that we had created for his art and photography some years ago and which we planned to give to the funeral attendees. We parked near the sea. As I opened the door, a friendly dog appeared and ran to the car to say hello while I was still sitting inside. He seemed to be on his own, but actually belonged to the fisherman who parked near us. The dog ran to his owner, but came back several times to be patted. My dad loved dogs and would say hello to all the dogs he met. I wonder if he sent this particular one.



Photo: Eva Peck

We ate at one of our favorite seats facing the sea. The weather was sunny and beautiful. As we finished our walk and started driving to my dad's house, I noticed dark clouds in the distance. We found the books and put them in the car. By that time, the sky clouded over. The couple that lives next door just got home. They live with their mother who is about 5 years younger than my

dad was, but in a much worse shape. We had a good chat with them, which was lovely. They were sad and surprised at dad's passing.

As we talked, there was a gentle shower from the cloud overhead. Before long, the sun came back as it continued to gently rain and created a spectacular rainbow just as we were driving out of my dad's street. It was one of the nicest rainbows I have seen. The rain was light enough to be able to get out of the car and take photos – which didn't do the reality justice. I am sure this too had something to do with my dad.

The Dolphins (Monday, September 26)

We saw the funeral director Elaine, to tie any loose ends, this afternoon. Then we had a bite to eat and a walk at one of our favorite areas near the lighthouse. This is a kind of an inlet for small private boats to leave from and return to, as well as a Marine Rescue station. Quite some time ago, on a one-of occasion, the inlet had a lot of dolphins just swimming around, not being bothered by the coming and going boats. Today, as we passed it, I kept looking if by a small chance the dolphins were back – and they were! It was amazing to see them just frolicking around for maybe 10 minutes. Perhaps another sign from dad. (Several days after the funeral, the dolphins were back again.)

Four Magpie Stories

The day before the funeral, I mowed the back lawn and after that, a magpie mother and her young were walking on it for a considerable time – half an hour or more -- with the young one squawking noisily wanting mom to give it food. This was unusual because we hadn't had magpies in our neighborhood, but many live in my dad's area.

The day of the funeral, after the proceedings, we stopped at a country restaurant on the way home to have lunch. We sat on the outdoor verandah, and on one of the nearby trees there was a flock of magpies – at least ten of them. One even landed on the chair back at the table next to us, where the people were still eating. We struck conversation with the lady who was from Ottawa, Canada visiting her daughter in the area. After a while, the magpies left when she threw some scraps below the verandah. But they were soon replaced at first by one and then two kookaburras with a loud laugh.

The day after the funeral, a magpie came again to the backyard and was ripping the frayed edges of an old lounge chair that, after it finished serving me, remained there for our previous cat, Blackie.

This morning, the second day after the funeral, a magpie came back – maybe the same one – walked around the alfresco area, flew onto the railing near the house, squawked, walked around a bit more and then flew away.

Others we know have also reported special experiences following the passing of their loved ones. These occurrences can certainly be comforting and reassuring.



Photo by Jon Pleizier
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