

## In Memory of Dawn

Born September 20, 1953 my cousin, Dawn, was 75 days older than I was when she died on March 17, 2007. The loss of her companionship hurts me.

Our childhood experiences were completely different. Dawn had a difficult childhood with much drinking and instability in her home. Her father was my father's younger brother but there was no similarity in their attitudes and behaviors toward their families. I grew up on a farm where my mother, who was always there while my father drove truck to provide steady income, was instilling my brothers and I with strong values and work ethics using stern but loving discipline.

I was very isolated during most of my childhood and I remember the times when Dawn and her older brother, Sam, stayed at our house as the highest of the highpoints. They were avid readers, as I was, so I could not wait for Sam to open his suitcase, remove the underwear, pj's and one change of clothes he brought, to uncover the treasure of comics and sci-fi novels he never traveled without.

I did not have a sister or many girls to play with so Dawn was THE girl in my life. What a joy and delight she was. I loved to have her share my room and my stuff. I loved having someone around to talk too. She lived in a housing development and had kids to play with. She had different experiences to tell me. She was the only person with whom I played with my two (count 'em 2) dolls. Our play, however, was dungeons and dragons.

With our sci-fi background, (Sam introduced me to my favorite author, Robert A. Heinlein, at age 8) and vivid imaginations, we created days-long quests involving dangerous treks, tasks, power objects, magical powers, life and death battles with mythical or extraterrestrial creatures (my older brothers, "the bully boys" who were to be avoided at all cost!).

With 220 acres of hills, valleys, creeks, forests, ponds, swamps and fields, we had plenty of land to use. Using the big barn full of stalls and hay bales, the old falling-down barn that could be ruins of anything, the old buckboard with no wheels, the old spring with concrete reservoir, and, best of all, the huge pine tree whose branches touched the ground half-way around, we could pretend to be anywhere. We had a faithful collie dog who patiently participated and some ponies that Dawn was afraid of, but we just wrote that into the script. We often had the friendly spirits of ancestors or murdered friends aiding our quests.

Sam and I were intrepid adventurers, but Dawn usually chose to be a follower and was often timid and fearful, especially of the creatures (my older brothers). I had no idea why, at that time. I was a child, enjoying my favorite people in the whole



world.

After our early teens, our lives diverged as Dawn and Sam moved to Florida with their mother. We all were busily coping with our lives in our own ways.

In 1988, after separating from my first husband, I was supporting my children and myself as a Reflexologist, while continuing my spiritual quest. I was working with the Course in Miracles, Ala-non and a meditation group of supportive friends. I was living on the edge; manifesting what I needed to survive on a daily basis.

As part of my healing, I was working with childhood memories and thoughts of Dawn started surfacing more and more frequently in my mind. I had no idea where she was. On impulse, I called our Aunt Elsie one day and asked her if she knew where Dawn was. She was amazed at my timing, because she just received a letter from Dawn the day before, asking where I was. When I contacted Dawn, after all those years, she was no more surprised than me. To our non-dismay, we discovered we had both chosen very interesting and challenging life paths with many similarities and much desire for spiritual enlightenment.

We reunited later that year when Dawn and her daughter Alexia came to visit me. (My oldest son is Alex. Hmm...) She was thrilled to be able to introduce Alexia to family that she never knew existed. Dawn feared that her divorce from Alexia's father and partner/relationship with a woman would make her unacceptable to me, and her relatives here. I was not at all concerned and my Mother, Aunt Elsie, Aunt Viola and the other cousins here, welcomed her with open hearts and arms.

She and I spent intense days and nights of sharing our lives. We openly discussed everything we had experienced; the pain and joy, the love and hurt, our relationships and motherhood, the lessons learned, the tests we failed and the tools we had gathered to deal with it all. That is when I finally learned the extreme differences in our childhood experiences.

I was devastated to hear how horrible her life had been at certain points. We cried and cried together over it. I did not realize her parents dumped her at our place when they were in strange situations; I always thought it was a vacation. I had no idea of the importance of my Mother and our farm to her; she said it was the only place she felt safe. As adults, we went over everything and wept that I did not understand her subtle messages at the time and that she was afraid to tell my Mother or me the whole story.

Her fear of my brothers and all males except her brother was suddenly understandable. I always considered my older brothers annoying because of their constant teasing and tormenting, but I was not afraid of them because if they got too mean I could tell on them and mom would thump them, but Dawn was just plain terrified out of her wits by them.

Since 1988, we maintained a close relationship across the country. We stayed in contact by phone and email and visited back and forth every couple of years. I visited her and met, and immediately adored, Kirby just as they were beginning to blend their lives together. Mike and I attended their lovely Quaker wedding in 1993 and planned our own ceremony on the flight home, using some of the elements we had just enjoyed in theirs.

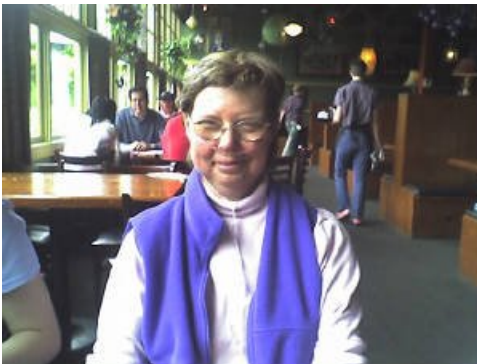
They could not come to our wedding as she was having a difficult pregnancy with Tara but she sent a box of golden origami cranes to decorate our tables and represent her. We came to Oregon so I could help her with Alexia's first wedding and she came to Pennsylvania to be at Alex's wedding and made him a hanging of 1000 golden origami cranes. She and Kirby brought Tara and Alexia and gathered her brother and sister at my house to reunite and bury her father's ashes on our grandparent's grave.

Early 2003, the year of our 50th birthdays, Dawn contacted me about meeting in a sacred place to celebrate. What a wonderful week we shared in Colorado. We spent Mayday, or Beltane, soaking in healing waters in the caves at Indian Springs Resort. We likened it to healing in the womb of our Mother Earth. The experience was profound for me and I recreated the energy in my home. (I published the article [From Dungeon to Grotto](#) last month, as a small tribute to Dawn and our trip, because I knew she was waning.)

We shared old memories and new stories, laughter and tears. We did a lot of energy work on and with each other. I attuned her to Reiki energy and she taught me how to use kundalini energy. Our two objects were to celebrate surviving fifty years and sharing our tools to prepare us for whatever was to come. We each bought singing bowls that resonated to our energies and interesting books to bring home. When we parted at the Denver airport, after playing our singing bowls for the security people who insisted on inspecting them, I came home feeling joyous and stronger, renewed and ready to face the rest of my life.

The following year she was diagnosed with cancer.

I cannot tell you how much I admire the courage with which she faced her cancer and the treatment. I do not believe that we are victims in our lifetimes. I believe that we shape our circumstances with our choices and beliefs, consciously or subconsciously. What a brave soul she was to take on this challenge. She may have been afraid of my ponies, or jumping off the haymow, when we were children but I cannot match her adult leap of faith.



When I visited her last year, I saw that although she was giving her body to cancer her spirit was still strong and growing. She was learning a new way to be. With grace, she was arranging her affairs here to move forward without her. She was terribly sick and yet enjoyed everything we did together, every moment we shared, in a way that awed me. Her smile was a thing of beauty. She was accepting giving up and

leaving behind all that was precious to her and was learning that it was part the divine order.

Dawn honored me by asking me to take on the job of "Chief Aunt and Advisor" to her daughter Alexia. I have maintained contact with Alexia over the last year and hope I have helped her prepare for this. Alexia called me shortly after Dawn's passing to tell me. Because of the time difference, she apologized for calling in the middle of

the night. However, a little while before, I was suddenly wide-awake and had to get out of bed. I was at my computer when Alexia called.

Her beloved husband, Kirby Urner, wrote, "Dawn slipped away quietly, seeming to nudge me awake as she went, as I was slumbering nearby, with other family." I believe she woke me too. I needed to be alert when Alexia called. I will always try to be alert when Alexia needs me but if I am not, I expect Dawn will nudge me.

I do not feel Dawn's death was a "loss of her battle with cancer" but rather a reward for having engaged in the battle. I am sure it is a relief to her shed her painful body and rest and then be free to move forward to new adventures. I am sure that loving beings, some of them old friends, are with her now, nurturing her, teaching her and helping her to understand the meaning of her lessons in this lifetime. We spoke of our visions of the "afterlife" often over the years and I admit envy of the experience I believe she is having now.

I grieve for myself because I will miss sharing the rest of my life with her, here in the way I am accustomed. However, I feel her presence strongly and hope she continues to touch me with her energy until we meet again.

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