

GRAND DAD

It has been 20 years since you left us.

Suddenly, I am aware that I am the now the same age that my mother was then.

I miss you. I still miss you. I miss you at the oddest times. When I am reading the paper or driving home. Whenever Wheel of Fortune comes on, or an old Perry Mason rerun. I miss you when I sleep.

I dream about you. I dream you are a part of my life still. I sit down next to you and lean against you warm and safe. You smoke your pipe or a cigar and you tell me something impossible that you can do or something incredible that you know. I am wide-eyed! You are wonderful!

You are my own coffee-colored John Wayne, tall and tough. You are cool and stoic when your wife kisses you and I pretend not to see you blush. You are defiant too with your secret stash of cookies that she says you're not supposed to have. I am your loyal confidant and if need be your accomplice. I never saw your insulin needles until after you left.

I am missing you right now. Right now I feel as if I am losing you again. I cried when you left but I do not remember my own grief as much as I do everyone else's.

And so I am missing you. Because you were more a father to me than anyone then, though I am your grandchild. I think I never grieved for you properly because I did not think my love could compare to that of nine children. But I don't care about that anymore. I just need to tell you for myself: Thank you, I love you and goodbye.