

For Russ



As I struggle to come up with words to fit what I'm feeling right now, I fondly recall a time in the not too distant past when you and I both struggled for words. Remember, not too long ago, when you had that film paper due on Hitchcock, and I was helping you write it?? We only spent a couple of hours together, you and I, watching the film and then writing about it, but I remember mostly your laughter, my laughter, the fun we had working together. It's such a silly thing, really, to pop into my mind, but when I think of you, I think that you always do that-- bring laughter and joy to the mundane. That is your gift (one of many gifts, actually.) A trip to the Wawa to pick up some last-minute apple juice, an inspection of my office to determine the type of insect that invaded my home, regrouting my shower stall, hanging in the park with me and the Con-man, a 101 degree garage sale...countless flashes of memories, instances where an ordinary day was brightened by being with you. You still have that gift. There will be many days ahead that you will brighten.

Across from me as I write this sits the picture of you with the Coke can, the tennis one, you in your red and black, reminiscent of high school days, the absolute personification of youth and vitality. To an outsider, you might appear different now, but I know that you are still, and will always be, that person in the photograph. Our bodies are just shells, and the person is on the inside, and you are still in there. The young man in that picture is fiercely competitive and incredibly determined, and these things will carry you through this challenge in your life.

Right now it must seem frustrating for you, there must be so much you want to say and do. One day you will look back on all this as a mountain you had to climb, a trial that was long and agonizing, but one that you will have conquered, one that made you a stronger person.

And I will look back one day, more proud of you than ever, not at all surprised that you succeeded once again in taking a circumstance and making the absolute most of it.

Love Always,
Aunt Val