

Kathy Brown

Thank you all for being here. It means so much to be surrounded by family, friends and colleagues—both Laird’s and mine—and neighbors, people who knew and appreciated Laird’s dear soul.

I especially want to offer my heartfelt thanks to the people who spoke today, and shared about their connections to Laird’s life, and their memories: Andy ... Geoff ... Sam ... Deb ... Mimi ... David ... and Ann, whose sharing was read for her.

I have a bit of a story to tell, myself, that focuses on one of the qualities that rises to the surface when I think of Laird these days, and that’s his *indomitable spirit*, and his love of fun and humor, which others have already given you a glimpse of.

Several presenters have made reference to Laird’s quiet, dry humor. But life with him at home was consistently filled with downright laughter. Mostly at little things. We would laugh helplessly at something and then later we’d remember what we’d laughed at and laugh again at the memory of laughing. And this didn’t end with Laird’s stroke, which seemed to keep the humor territory of his brain blessedly intact.

Even after that stroke, even in the midst of all his physical issues and cognitive issues, Laird consistently found things to make light of, and to laugh at. And the people around him—caregivers, nurses, OTs, PTs— would simply crack up, at a perfectly timed word or two.

Now, for years, he and I had kind of a standing joke. If someone said, “Wow—how have you guys stayed happily married all these years?” We would look at each other and chuckle, because we know what’s coming, and Laird would always supply the punchline. With a totally straight face he’d look at the person and say: “Separate bathrooms.”

And everyone would laugh. And—the funny thing is, it’s true—in a house with two bathrooms and no kids, that’s possible to manage. And of course, such a long marriage takes a whole lot more than that. But it’s a great line, and one that Laird relished.

Even in the care home, somehow this question got asked a fair number of times, and Laird’s punchline was one of the funny things we shared.

One day we had a visit from a new nurse, and when she learned we’d been married for 32 years she asked the question—How do you manage to stay happily married for 32 years?

Laird and I looked at each other, but he had a funny look on his face. Instead of supplying the punchline, like he always did, he looked at me, and he said, "You tell her." Well, I was surprised but I followed his directions and said, "Separate bathrooms." And before we could even start laughing, Laird chimed in, "Yes, mine is at the Circle-K!" and as we're cracking up he adds in, "That's why I always smell of coffee and hotdogs!" And now we're laughing even harder.

The nurse finished what she had to do and left, and the room was finally quiet. And I turned to Laird and said, "OK—how long have you been working on those lines?" And he gave me a rather sheepish grin, and said, "a couple of days"—and then we were laughing again.

Believe it or not, the laughter with Laird is continuing. But first, a bit of an update on me. It's been six whole months—half a year—since Laird's passing, I'm grateful and more than a little astonished to say I'm actually on the other side of a huge and quite intense grieving curve, that truly began not six months ago, but a year and six months ago, when he had his stroke. And life has now evened out considerably for me. Most days I'm actually quite content, living in the present, and just curious about the future.

One thing that helps is that Laird frequently lets me know he's around. When he shows up, there's enough of his personality that I recognize him, but it's like he's in a different state, a more expanded state, without that heavy cloak of burdens that makes life so challenging for incarnations here on earth. He's lighter. Sometimes I actually hear very clear messages from him. And sometimes I ask for his help.

A few days ago I opened a box and came across... *his hat*... the one he wore at the care home when he went outside in his wheelchair. I'd been finding new homes for many of his things, but this hat truly stopped me, a wrenching feeling in my heart, as it so represented *him*. I had a bit of a weep over it—more than a bit, really—then I looked up and actually said out loud to him, "Ok, Laird, what do I do with this hat?" Immediately I heard, "Get rid of it! You're not planning a Laird Brown memorial museum, are you? Why would you need it?"

So there I sat on the floor, holding the hat, laughing—tears in my eyes, but laughing. And in it went, into the donation bag. And I could hear him chuckling, off in the distance now.

Indomitable spirit. He loved life, he loved to laugh.

Which brings me to what may be a non sequitur, but I'll begin anyway:

I'm a language person. I love words, and I pay attention to how words go together.

During all the planning of today's event, every time I said the words or wrote them, it was always the *Celebration of Life for Laird*. The *Celebration—of Life—for Laird*.

So, imagine my surprise, about two weeks ago, when I was writing in my journal, and those words switched themselves around.

I found myself writing *Laird's Celebration of Life*. I looked at the words, stunned... *Laird's Celebration of Life*.

There was a thunderous silence, and then a powerful awareness descending into my heart as a full-blown knowing, which is *this*:

It's true—*Laird wants today to be HIS celebration of life, HIS encouragement to life—FOR US*.

It's his desire for us to truly live and celebrate living, celebrate love, and celebrate connection to each other—*while we have each other*. And happiness. And laughter. And joy, and FUN! And *not wasting a moment*. It was incredibly vivid.

Find all the happiness you can. This is what he wants for us.
I've never been more sure of anything in my life.

Laird's celebration of Life. That's what today really is. That's what I'm celebrating, and that's what I invite you to join me in, as well.

So I thank you all again, for being here. I love and appreciate you all.

I do wish we were truly all in the same room together, for heartfelt hugs! Maybe one day soon.