

Sometimes family is more than just relation

I am thankful to have family that isn't technically my family. Confusing, yes, but I'm not one to keep things normal.

Last week, my good friend Holly called me to let me know that Ma Dorothy was very sick; she didn't have much time left.

She knew I'd want to know.

Ma Dorothy Kessler, a big part of my teenage/college years, passed away on Tuesday.

Of course, I told my husband shortly after hearing the news.

The conversation went like this:

"Ma Dorothy passed away this morning."

Confused, because I have no living grandparents, Adam asked, "Oh... and who is Ma Dorothy again?"

"Well, it's Pa Junior's mom."

Adam: "Ah, gotcha."

You see, Adam knows good and well that both of my Grandma's are deceased, as he attended their funerals.



Crystal Cecil

Record-Herald Staff

He also knows both grandpas passed away long before his time in my life.

Who are these people?

I call Pa Junior my almost-grandfather-in-law. Ha.

The first time Adam met Pa Junior Kessler, we walked in to cheer on the Dragons and I ran and hugged this man, a stranger to him, with everything I had in me.

Let's keep in mind I am NOT a hugger.

A little surprised, Adam continued on to our seats while I chatted a bit.

Eventually, I returned.

"Soooo... who was that?"

"That's Pa Junior!"

..... "Huh?"

"That's Holly's dad."

Now, mind you, "Holly's dad" also hap-

pens to be the grandfather of my high school/college sweetheart... but no need to bring that name into the conversation (ha!).

Adam knew Holly was his aunt and I am extremely close to that family, still. He had no qualms and we went on about our Dragon cheering.

As goes the rest of our 10 years of marriage—I see Pa Junior and Ma Margaret Kessler... and they always get a hug from me. They treat my husband and children just as well as they always have me, as does the rest of their family.

I spent a huge amount of time with the Kessler/Hunt/Ferguson clan from the age of 14 on. We vacationed to Florida together every year. I celebrated my birthday with them (so happens he and I were born on the same day, only hours apart; they were there the day I was born, unknowingly, of course). I looked forward to holidays and special occasions. They have always

treated me as their own and I'm not sure they realize how important that was to me then... or now. It was just my mom and me, so having their big family was wonderful and slightly overwhelming at times (in a good way).

Each year at Thanksgiving, we gathered at Ma Dorothy and Pa James' house on Henry Street. (They were the great-grandparents of previously mentioned high school sweetheart, the parents of Pa Junior.)

When I say "WE gathered"... I mean everyone—they had a daughter and her family, and two sons and their families—five grandchildren and their families, including 11 great grandchildren, etc. etc.

How fun!

Ma Dorothy was the BEST cook and the sweetest person. It was always a nice visit; even if no special occasion, I'd often find myself in her living room, hanging out and chatting.

And of course, that

was one of the first stops for the traditional prom photos.

...

I stopped by the funeral home Thursday evening before heading to baseball practice.

Covid-19 restrictions or not, the first thing I did was hug Pa Junior when he opened those arms. It broke my heart to see him sad, although he knows his momma isn't suffering anymore... and she's hanging out with Pa James now. And, as I told him... she lived a good 90 years!

Sue, Ma Dorothy's daughter and Pa Junior's sister, also greeted me warmly.

"We were going through photos at her house the other day and she had all kinds of pictures of you," she said.

I am so thankful for those memories.

Although I have my own wonderful family and I married into an amazing family, I am beyond grateful for those sweet and precious individuals who have loved me, regardless of circumstances.

No, we aren't actually related, although I'd imagine there were a lot of bets made that we eventually would be.

I consider them my "almost-family," and they will always be special in my book.



Lost someone special to suicide

My beautiful friend lost her battle with depression and died by suicide. Why didn't she call me, I ask myself, while knowing the answer? She had made up her mind and that was it. She lived in a high velocity hurricane; she suffered from depression; she lost her battle last Thursday. Just as someone loses their battle with cancer. Understanding doesn't make it any easier. She was a phenomenal woman—brilliant, vibrant, generous, vivacious, creative, sparkly and flamboyant. She was unlike anyone I've ever known. I can hear her saying, "You haven't mentioned my name." Sandra, like so many others, is gone far too soon.

In these Pandemic Days, people are suffering in isolation. Isolation is a catalyst for depression and suicide. Suicide Prevention is a specialization for me; I train professionals on suicide in webinars. Last month, I added a section because in these Pandemic Days depression will be on the rise and there will be thoughts of suicide. If you are reading this and you have thoughts of suicide, it is understandable—even predictable. What you do with those thoughts is critical. Tell someone. Don't suffer alone.



Dr. Angelia Bryant
Licensed Clinical Counselor

When we talk about suicide, we can discover other ways to deal with the thoughts and the depression. I know the lies of a depressed mind: "I am a burden." "This depression will never get any better." "I will have to live in this pain forever." "Everyone will be better off if I die." These lies are real to someone suffering from depression. Remember, People love you; don't break their hearts.

If you, or someone you know is suffering from depression. Don't wait. Don't be ashamed. Don't hesitate to take action. Ask directly about thoughts of suicide. You can save someone's life—maybe your own. Depression is treatable. You can call (new National Suicide Prevention Line—Call: 988) or text a crisis line (Text CONNECT to 741741). During this pandemic, sessions can be on your phone (Adanta · Phone: 606-679-4782 · Crisis Line: 800-633-5599) or go online to visit the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for more information.

This is personal for me having lost someone to suicide. My heart is broken and Sandra's life on this earth is over. My hope is in you. Remember Psalms 23:4, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with

me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Seeking peace in faith, hope and love. Be Grateful in all things. Love God and All People. Amen..

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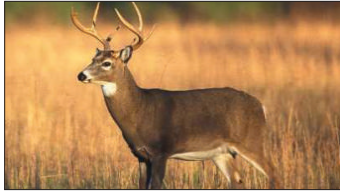
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T	A	L	C				R	F	D			E	R	A
A	L	O	H	A			A	R	E			E	B	A
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Crossword puzzle found on page 3B