

Red Heads and Lime Green VWs

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Thursday, September 24, 2009

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When I think of my Aunt Gayle I think of a big, lopsided smile and red hair. Her hair had been many colors through her life, but mostly it was red. Folks who knew her called her a lady. She always presented herself perfectly coiffed and perfectly dressed. Her manners were in the same mode, but she was as earthy as my father was prudish. I say earthy, but more in a matter of fact Mother Nature sort of way. It was a refreshing combination.

Her online handle was Sewing Mama. She had always sewn, but in the later part of her life she discovered quilting. She was very good at it, and was widely acknowledged as being so. She obviously enjoyed the process and the recognition.

She was married to Bobby who has a magic touch when it comes to business, and the two of them had made a very comfortable life for themselves. I discovered one of the family jokes at the funeral that is a good illustration of Gayle's character. It was said if Bobby died before Gayle, she would stay busy giving away all his money. She had a generous heart and was more than willing to help those less fortunate than herself.

I had lost touch with her over the years. For some reason that I have never been quite sure of, we were not close to my father's side of family. We would visit occasionally, but it was usually on the way to somewhere else. Gayle discovered computers and email, and the last few years we shared an email correspondence. Primarily, we contributed to the endless circulation of humor through cyberspace. But we on occasion we would get more serious, and visit about things of substance and discuss issues. We both treaded lightly as she and Bobby were stout Republicans and I am a borderline Socialist. But we did manage some conversations in those areas. I try to remind myself and others that without conversation there are no solutions. We had a few conversations. No minds were changed, but we could converse.

Gayle was only 11 years older than me, but fact that she had Aunt in front of her name made for a slightly different relationship than it might have been. Her younger brother Mike is only 8 months older than me. Can you say, "yee-haw."

One thing Gayle had wanted for years was a lime green VW bug, and she really liked the new style VW Beetle. Bobby has a thing for black vehicles, and also thought it better if Gayle was in a bigger vehicle

with lots of metal around her. I remember her driving big, black Suburbans that always looked like they had been freshly detailed.

Gayle finally prevailed, and a lime green VW Beetle with all the bells and whistles was ordered for her in Nashville.

Last Friday they drove from Bowling Green to Nashville to pick it up. They drove back on the interstate with Bobby in the lead. Some folks afterwards were wondering if the VW's wheels were touching the ground. Gayle was so elated about getting this vehicle they were sure that her elation would have kept it a foot or two off of the pavement.

As they were headed north Bobby suddenly realized that her car had swerved into median. He whipped his truck around and rushed back to VW. There was Gayle slumped over the steering wheel, the doors locked. They had to break the glass to get her out, and she was rushed to Vanderbilt hospital in Nashville. It turned out she had a heart attack and a brain aneurism burst almost simultaneously. She lingered in a coma for a few hours and died that Saturday.

Folks who know me know that I am agnostic, and that I believe that if there is a god it is not the personal god that is so often touted in religions of this world. But I am going to step back from that for a brief moment.

If there is a deity that is personally interested in each of our lives, I am trying to understand this chain of events. Here is a very good woman that finally has gotten a material possession that she had wanted for years. In the scheme of her lifestyle, it was not a particularly luxurious item. She had this possession probably less than an hour and dies. One side of me wonders if this deity has a very ironic sense of humor. It seems a terrible thing to let her have it then take her from this life. The other side could see it as a very generous involvement since this deity is supposed to know the record of our lives in advance. They knew it was her time to leave this existence, and wanted her to experience, at least briefly, the joy this new possession brought to her.

Who knows?

My heart wants to go with the later, but the Holden Caulfield in me has a tendency to think of this deity as the Big Joker in the Sky.

What ever the answer, a good, sweet, generous soul has passed through this existence and will be missed by me, and many more. She will especially be missed by Bobby. They would have been married for 50 years in a few months.

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