

When I was a Stranger *by Karen Mascho*

When I was a stranger, you shared your stories, and I wanted to know more.
When I was a stranger, you responded to my need, and I thanked God.
When I was a stranger, you took me into your home, and I understood hospitality.
When I was a stranger, you overlooked my ignorance, and I longed to be like you.
When I was a stranger, you asked me to walk with you on this journey, and I felt accepted.
When I was a stranger, you showed me how to serve others, and I was inspired.
When I was a stranger, you taught me about peace, and I sought to tell others.
When I was a stranger, you promoted unity despite disagreement, and I felt secure.
When I was a stranger, you led me in worship, and I recognized God's presence.
When I was a stranger, you made me a sister...and I wanted to say thanks for all you did..
When I was a stranger.

Do you Remember? *by Dave Janzen*

Do you Remember?

It came out of her silence while I was reminiscing with a friend:

Do you remember? she said.

What? I stammered. What do you remember? Tell me something, anything.

I wanted to grab ahold of the thought before it vanished.

But the silence of her dementia returned even as she smiled.

Was she just repeating an overheard phrase,

Or was this a moment where her past and present merged

So clearly that she wanted to share it?

What might she remember? Perhaps her mother's jokes and custard pie,

Her dad's love of working the soil while raising four daughters, or

Doing serious drama as Anastasia, Helen of Troy, and Arcadina?

Or might it be the insults and spit raining down as she marched with Dr. King?

Surely, she would mention the adoption of our twins, laughing

At her exclamation after the attorney's call: "two penises!"

Or recall the joy of discovering she was pregnant after deciding to

Give it one more try in our late 30s.

No doubt there would be nursing stories,

From fear that she had damaged a child with an injection

To joy of passing the CDE exam with her buddy Barb,

And the challenge of promoting health for people in infested homes.

I hope she would talk about how we fell in love in the turbulent '60s

Where everything seemed shaky including a fiancé with no clue

What life path lay ahead. And as we settled into life in Indiana,

She would certainly recall the struggle being so far away from her family.

And she might describe the morning she woke me up before dawn

To accompany her to the community garden where she thought God had a special word for her.

No direct word came forth, like Jesus heard at his baptism,

But she felt assured she was beloved.

And despite this terrible disease, does she realize she is still loved by her friends, family,
caregivers...and God?

Without words, we hear her voice through her eyes and smiles.

And so I return the smile and answer her question:

Do I remember? Yes, and I will remember for you, that you are dearly loved.