

It is Just Another Adventure.

The extreme majority of the Earth's inhabitants, when Death claims their bodies are lucky to leave a simple mark on a wall. Like someone licking their finger and placing a smear on the window of a tall building that will quickly dry away. And there are others who garner a place in history among the inventors, orators, and leaders of nations. There are saints and despots, heroes and villains, but most of us simply leave Life owing what our descendants must repay. Many of us will leave Life with things undone. That is my greatest fear.

That early Monday morning when Terese passed away, I had to quickly write several obituaries for her and found it frustrating not to be able to write one fitting for this amazing woman. After arriving in Brazil, for several hours a day, I would sit on my balcony with strong drink and rich cigars contemplating her life, and decided to write an obituary fitting for her. As I began to review the years I loved her, I realized a simple obituary would not suffice. I have written elsewhere, there are unforgettable characters who shape our lives. Terese was one of those who left her mark not on windows, but on the souls of everyone she met, never to dry away.

The first time I met her, she was the Medical Technician at the industrial plant where I worked. I had just finished doing electrical work in the First Aid office and happened to tell her my first grandchild had arrived. She gave me a congratulatory hug. Afterwards, I noticed she had my dirty handprints on her back.

When Terese entered the world, she was placed in Father Baker's Home at Our Lady of Victory in Lackawanna, NY. A vibrant couple, Frank and Melva Slish came to look at adopting a little boy. Terese told me the story that was told to her, that a little girl crawled over to Frank and climbed into his lap and went to sleep. That is why they did not adopt a little boy. Terese was nine months old.



The Ballerina

She told me her love for ballet started when she saw a performance on the Ed Sullivan show. She was about 5 or 6 years old and decided at that point, she wanted that gift. I did research and found that the Jerome Robbins Company danced then. She was mesmerized when Rudolph Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn performed the second act of the 1895 ballet, *Swan Lake* on the show in 1965. But Terese's favorite ballet artist is the incredible Mikhail Baryshnikov; and her favorite ballets were *Swan Lake* and the *NutCracker*, both the work of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

When we made a trip to Saint Petersburg, Russia in 2008, we happened across the Tikhvinskoe Cemetery. We entered through the simple wooden archway and wandered among the centuries-old graves. Terese remembered that Tchaikovsky's grave as there, and it was. She stood quietly at the memorial for a few minutes and as we walked away, she had tears in her eyes.

It is said if you are familiar with the ballet, you can recognize it in someone even if they haven't danced in years. I found that to be so in Terese. When I first met her I noticed the way she always sat with her feet on point. Only her toes touched the floor. Her simple hand gestures had a fluid movement, and even the turning of the head had grace. It was a beautiful thing to see.



To get to that point required a great many hours of hard work. She would get off school, eat quickly and head to ballet. She had very little personal time. At one point, one of the coaches at the high school complained because she was not taking any physical education. Her doctor sent a note saying she gets physical activity every day, much more than any of his football players. She was thin as a rail with long flowing hair. One of the teachers at the school accused her mother of not feeding Terese, but again, the doctor tore into the teacher pointing out Terese was in perfect health and ate very well; she just burned off what she consumed with her dancing. That tells you how much work goes into the ballet when passion is involved.

One summer at the age of 16, she studied at the Joffrey Ballet Company when it was then located in Harlem, and lived in a hostel with other aspiring dancers. She told me she had no fear riding the subway to Harlem, as the Black Community not only respected her, but protected her because they knew she was with the Joffrey.

When we lived in Moscow for two years, it was a prime opportunity to attend the Bolshoi Ballet. We attended several performances, but only one at the Bolshoi because it was under reconstruction most of the time we lived there. But Terese told me she felt like she had come full circle with her ballet when we walked into that magnificent theatre.

Every ballet we attended, left tears in her eyes. Things that touch the soul will do that, like a delicate sponge that gives up its moisture when gently caressed.



When my brother and his wife visited us in Moscow, we took them to see *Swan Lake* at the Kolobov Novaya Theatre. To me, what ballet I saw in my early life was people swirling around and jumping up and down to classical music. That is pretty much the way most people view it. I just wished they would put more clothes on the male dancers. But it wasn't until *Swan Lake* did I see it differently. As we sat through the performance, Terese would lean over and whisper in my ear what to watch for. She would say, "Notice the expression she has when she is looking at her lover, and then see her face when she looks away at the audience." One of love and the other of deceit. She would say, "Notice how she is holding her hands. One facing up and the other down, because ". I now see the ballet in a totally different way, but I still wish they would put more clothes on the male dancers.

Somewhere in storage I have a pair of her ballet slippers. I would think to wear those and dance the way they do would be torture, and I would be correct. Many of the lifelong dancers have deformed feet because of the ballet, including Terese; but their love for the art overcomes its agony.

I believe it was after high school she did some modeling in Southern Mexico. Somewhere in my storage unit in Texas, I have a magazine with her picture in it. This tribute to her, although it will be released, will not be complete until I add several pictures that I have yet to access.

When I met her parents for the first time, her mother was already placed in a nursing home with Alzheimer's. It was sad to see when I went to meet her. As soon as her mother saw Terese, she had a look of joy on her face, then quickly washed away with frustration, trying to remember who this beautiful person was. One of the most poignant photos I've taken of Terese, she was sitting on the floor next to her mother holding her hand. In the image, you can feel the pain she has for her mother.

Her father was a stern man and very intelligent. I only got to meet him a few times before he succumbed to Parkinson's and brain cancer, but from the short visits I had with him, I had wished I knew him a

decade earlier. He would have been most interesting to discuss a multitude of topics with. There were a few people who had a hard time dealing with him due to his personality, but he was like many other good people I know with hard personalities. I have found those are the ones who I enjoy visiting with, and he was not the first I met like that. At his funeral service, Terese wore a vibrant red scarf, bright and alive, instead of the usual depressed colors. I found it to be fitting for both father and daughter.

I know very little about her mother, but from the way Terese spoke of her, she was as interesting as Terese's father. I felt she had a good outlook on life and knew how to deal with a hard husband. She taught Terese how to cook and sew. Unfortunately, many mothers today do not pass that life information to their children. But I feel that if I had the opportunity to know her before Alzheimer's took over, I would have loved her.

I am a technician by trade and I love to troubleshoot problems with machinery. It is like a taunt or riddle that I have to take on. A puzzle to solve. So, with Terese's hesitant permission, I started searching for her birthmother. With the help of online assets, I found who she was and sent gentle letters to her in such a way that if others found the letter she could easily say, *Nope, that was not me*. I never received an answer from her. We know Terese also has a sibling, supposedly older than her, and I had hoped we could have joined the three together. I find it sad her birthmother will not know how incredible this child she bore was, yet Terese fully understood the pain and guilt she had and bore no animosity toward her. Only the sadness for what she must have felt.

The Medic

Terese worked at a nursing home and saw the loneliness that many residents endure. On the occasion when they were at the end of their precious life and no family was present, Terese sat with them. Whether they were sleeping or comatose, she lovingly talked with them, holding their hands until they were no more. I don't know how many she had attended to this way, but though it may only be one, it is a beautiful gesture of love, compassion, and selflessness for others. This is one of many ways Terese was stronger than me. I never could have endured that.

In the years that followed, she became an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). She excelled in the profession because she worked with her hands and loved helping others. I listened to many stories she told when she had to crawl into an upside-down vehicle to retrieve someone, or their body. Many times, she had to use the jaws of life to extricate someone. She regaled how she had all sort of thoughts run through her mind on the way to the accident, but as soon as they rolled up on scene and her feet touched the ground, it was like the curtain had raised and it was performance time. Everything counted. No second chances. This was beyond the dress rehearsals and she loved it.



Before we married, she attended a wilderness training weekend, in which they act out extracting a patient from the wilderness. Unfortunately, she sprained her ankle just hours before, but she had no intention of missing the training. Below are a few pictures given to me by her close friend and co-worker who was with her. What you see is fake blood.



Terese told me when they were at an accident and a medical chopper was called, everyone had to stay with their patient. As the chopper came in everyone leaned over their patient, coordinated like a ballet movement, to protect them from the dirt, gravel and leaves blown into the air by the rotor.

Terese was very intelligent, but not an academic person. Neither am I. Like me she had her passions, and when someone is living their passions, let them teach it; and Terese was a perfect instructor. She had ways to instill her love for the profession into her students. While I was in Afghanistan, good friends of ours were given the opportunity to butcher a cow for the beef. The rancher had to put it down and didn't want it to go to waste. Our friends invited Terese to help and she jumped at it. As the carcass hung on the back of a backhoe, Terese crawled into it with a sawzall and cut the lungs out, took it home and put it in the freezer. It would have baffled me to see the frozen blob in our freezer not knowing what it was.

The next time Terese had her class, she thawed the blob out and took it to her students. She blew into the lungs to inflate it for her class to see. Afterwards, they cut it open to see what the lungs consist of. Not just a bag like many of us think. Her class learned a great deal that night. It is no wonder Terese's students received their EMT certification more than any other instructor. She was able to instill her passion for the profession into others. No telling how many people benefited from her gift. A drop of water in a pond travels outward to the shores.

Terese loved flowers. No, she loved the beauty of flowers, and since they are plentiful in Russia and Ethiopia, our apartment always had flowers on our table. When we went to someone's house for a gathering, I was perfectly happy with pulling a bottle of wine out of our rack to present to our hosts. Terese instead wanted to give flowers on our arrival. When someone came to visit, she always chose to present them with a bouquet of flowers to welcome them.

Her gift to Life extended to the Creator's amazing Animal Kingdom. While I worked in Afghanistan, Terese and her daughter kept the house up, but let animals run through it. I did not grow up in a house with animals so I was uncomfortable having them roam freely in the house, but Terese loved it. When I finished my tour, I came home to a house with one momma dog, four puppies and four cats. I placed an ad in the local newspaper for the puppies and within 36 hours, all were gone to good homes. Of the four cats, two lived under the bed in a back room and had no quality of life, so those two were solemnly put down. The other two cats, along with the momma dog were taken to a vet to be fixed. No more puppies or kittens from those three. Then I had Terese's daughter take her cat, leaving us with a respectable one dog and one cat.

When we lived in Moscow, we attended a gala at one of the Embassy's housing compounds. At the end of the evening we climbed into the shuttle to take us home, and a lady from HR who was always trying to find homes for the stray cats at the Embassy, handed Terese a small box to hold as she climbed in. Terese's curiosity made her look into the box and saw a ball of silver fur with two gray eyes looking at her. Without taking her eyes off the little one, she calmly stated *with absolute resolve*, "This one is mine". I knew there was no way to argue with her. Not even a topic of discussion. At that point, the Damn Cat entered our lives.

One of the advantages of working overseas, I was able to travel to places in the world few think about. One time Terese met me in Bangkok, Thailand for a vacation. She arrived a few hours before I did and met me at the airport in a taxi. It was her first time to be overseas and she loved it. She did comment how scared she was riding in the taxi to pick me up, with the right-hand drive. It was like traveling in the wrong lane at a high rate of speed. Thai taxi drivers do not drive slow. As with any unexpected change, she viewed it as "Just another adventure". When we got lost driving, (hardly ever) she would always say, "Just see it as another adventure." I found it difficult to do that, but I admired her for her outlook on life.

One gift I was able to give her was the sea and the oceans. She loved the water. Many, many times I saw her sitting in the water on a beach, just soaking it all in. She could have spent the rest of her life there, and we had planned to. I contacted a beautiful friend of ours to ask about her memories of Terese, and she sent this:

... the Virgin Islands. Terese loved when we took a boat out to the Soggy Dollar, a tiny, tropical island in the middle of the Caribbean, and had some cocktails out there.



That friend reminded me of a recipe they concocted which they named, "*The Terese*" *Blanco Pear Sangria*

White wine (sweet)

Pear juice

Seltzer

Assorted cut up fruit such as pears, apples, cotton candy grapes (freeze the grapes)

Ice cubes made from pear juice

"Sounds delicious, right? I don't remember what kind of fruit we added, but that sounds about right."

Once we were at a resort on the Thai island of Koh Samui, and Terese ask the young waiter for a pina-colada. A few minutes later, I noticed him clambering up a nearby palm tree to cut several coconuts loose. As they thumped on the ground nearby, I told her, *Baby Doll, there is your drink.*



Terese told me her dad raised butterflies and taught her the wonderful art; it was one of many things they shared. The last time we were in Thailand, we stopped at a butterfly garden. She loved being there among the delicate winged creatures and spoke of her dad exclusively during the visit.



Of all the places we shared, the first place she took me on my first trip to Niagara Falls, sits on the edge of the Niagara River. It is a small outcropping of land with several flows of the river running between them. It is called Beaver Island. This is a place that Terese would often go to hide from the world as she grew up, and to sit with her thoughts. It was a solemn moment when she took me there to share that spot. It was in essence sharing a bit of her earlier life with me, and I have now decided it will be her resting place. Not really a resting place as she will become one with the river before going over the Falls. She will flow with it eternally. I know she would approve.

Moscow

After I returned from Afghanistan, I accepted a job working for a Contractor at the American Embassy in Moscow. This was a nice gift to both of us. After working 84 hours a week, living in a tent with 7 other smelly men, I could now live in a nice apartment with my wife and only work 40 hours. It was time for us to be together again and enjoy life as it is meant to be.

I was a bit shy at the time, but Terese was always in perfect form. It was in Russia that I saw she was a natural diplomat. When with others, she could communicate in proper form as diplomats do. She knew when to stand, when to smile and to listen. I was happy just being a potted plant and watching people.

The foreign diplomats we met loved Terese. They could talk to her for hours. They hugged her and wanted her to stand with them as they greeted their guests; but she knew just how much to give and when to politely excuse herself. The

Brazilian, Peruvian, and Columbian Ambassadors loved her the most. It must be the food they ate. Meanwhile, I was happy just being a potted plant.

Terese was given a job in the Consular Section of the Embassy. She had the task of finger printing applicants who came in for visas. It was hinted people seldom last 6 months in that position. In the year and a half she worked there, she took fingerprints from over 53 thousand applicants. At the time, there was only one other woman in the world who had more, and she worked at the American Embassy in Beijing, China.

Terese would come home in the evenings and tell amazing stories about the people she finger-printed. I told her she needed to write these things down, but again, she was not an academic person. Here are a few I remember.

There is a green electronic screen where people would place their fingerprints to be recorded. Many times, she was not looking at the people, but at her computer screen and only four fingers, or three or less would show up. When this first happened, she was baffled until she looked up and saw they did not have all their fingers. These were usually the farmers or construction workers. She was a bit embarrassed at first, but the applicants found it humorous. And she loved it.

One cool story is an Orthodox priest who came to her window, and when she took his prints he made the sign of the cross toward her. She said, "Oh, thank you, Father!"

He replied, "It's not for you. It's for the machine." (computer)

Later, after his interview, he stopped by her window and gave the thumbs up. He got his visa! Then he gave the sign of the cross again and said, "This is for you." And she loved it.

Terese, being the perfect diplomat, realized something few of the foreign officers do. She knew that she was probably the first American many of these people would interact with. Understanding that, she greeted them with a smile and gave them her upmost respect and patience. Many were nervous, especially the elderly. After being with Terese, they relaxed and felt more comfortable. What an amazing gift to them!

She spoke how many of the older people would dress in their best clothes to be interviewed. It was clothing that was probably kept in a trunk in the back of a closet, or under the bed just for such occasions; seldom worn. Many proudly wore their military medals as a show of their patriotism and commitment to their country. These people would travel hundreds of kilometers to apply for a visa, and Terese fully understood that they wanted to look their best.

Unfortunately, many of the Foreign Service Officers are arrogant and show little respect for these people. Not Terese. There is a report in her record when an officer who only had a few days left at post was at the line interviewing people, and was looking forward to leaving. At one point, Terese heard him say something that was totally inappropriate as the applicant walked away. Whether they understood or not made no difference. Terese was mad as hell and came out of her chair and went to him and told him to leave immediately. "Get out ... go do paperwork."

He left very quickly.

I contacted her former Supervisor at that time, who she loved and had great respect for. I asked him what he remembered about the encounter, and he responded with this:

Terese and I agreed that every human being, even the ones applying for visas, deserves dignity and respect. We talked about this a couple times. Terese had seen just about everything in her life, including lots of folks who had not done well and were struggling. She didn't expect people to be perfect or even to always tell the truth. She had a realistic view of human beings and still thought that each one deserved dignity and respect. I don't know if this came from religious belief that each of us is created in God's image or just her native empathy for others – or maybe both.

Anyway, one day in Moscow, a young idealistic officer was getting heated and inappropriate with a visa applicant. I think it was a Summer Work and Travel applicant. You have to understand that Foreign Service Officers are the elite of the Foreign Service and even the Federal Government. At least that is

what we believe about ourselves. Once I had to correct this particular officer for refusing all student visa applicants to Community Colleges, because he did not consider these “real schools.” He had gone somewhere in the Ivy League himself. This officer may have been a genius but his experience in the real world was pretty thin. And there was Terese next to him, respectfully and courteously (and even a little playfully) taking fingerprints from Russian applicants. She had less than a Harvard degree but had more sense in her little pinky than this guy had in his whole brain.

She turned to this officer and told him that what he was doing was wrong and told him to get off the line and not return until he adjusted his attitude. The stunned officer logged off his computer and walked sheepishly off the line. When he returned he was a corrected officer. Someone older and wiser for whom he had a great deal of respect had held up a mirror to him.

Terese was respected and loved by all in Moscow’s Consular Section. She was the first American that many Russians saw as they came through our visa process. She smiled at them, welcomed them, patiently guided them through the process, empathized with their confusion and nervousness. And she expected no less from any of us, even those who outranked her. Every human being was sacred to her in some way. Every human was made in the image of God. “You don’t mess with a human”, she might have said. In another time and place, she would have saved Jews just because it would have been the right thing to do.

The Maker of Humans will have noticed Terese. Maybe He presented her with an “Extra Mile Award” for that time when she told the Officer to get off the interview line. “Well done good and faithful servant.”

Now understand, every one of the Officers were her superiors, and here she threw one of them off the line. Word went up the chain, and her action went into a report which added with many other things, got her an award. The Extra Mile Award mentioned above, and she was very proud of it. Rightfully so.

There was a Russian Pop Star well known throughout Russia. I did research to determine who he was but could not find him. He only had one name and we often saw him on Russian TV. He was wearing a hat and sunglasses to hide his identity from all the Russian girls in the waiting room. When he came to Terese's window before the interview, she recognized him immediately. Normally, they make everyone remove their sunglasses and hats throughout the process. Terese told him she understood his reason and asked him to remove his sunglasses long enough for her to verify his passport picture. Afterwards, she allowed him to put them back on. He was most appreciative.

Let me tell you about the most interesting applicant she had to me anyway. One day when all the applicants had finished, her Supervisor asked her to stay a little longer. After a few minutes, in walks Mikhail Gorbachev! The hairs on my neck still rise when I think of that, yet as I write this, sadly I realize the Millennials today have no idea who he is, so allow me to explain. Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev was the eighth and final leader of the Soviet Union, having been General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985 until 1991, when the party was dissolved. (Wikipedia). There is a famous speech by Ronald Reagan, when he profoundly stated, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" The Berlin Wall divided West and East Berlin since 1961. This was an astounding moment in History, and the man who dissolved the USSR to become Russia stood before Terese to be finger-printed! Terese usually spoke the process in Russian for those who did not understand English, but her natural diplomacy asked Mr. Gorbachev if he wanted the instruction in English or Russian, thus acknowledging his proficiency in our language. He smiled and said, "English, please." Afterwards, as a show of respect, she complimented him on his excellent language skills.

A few months later, Terese finger-printed Irina Mikhailovna Virganskaya, Mr. Gorbachev's daughter. But to ask Terese who she found to be the most incredible people to come to her window, she would say it was members of the Bolshoi Ballet. She spoke of that many times, and she loved it!

Here is an interesting story. Every Mayday, (May 1st) the Russians have a parade to show off their weaponry and aircraft to the World. One Mayday, Terese and her beautiful friend Sita sat in front of the Embassy on Konyushkovskaya Avenue to watch the parade. As the tanks rolled by, Terese and Sita would wave to the officers riding in the tanks. The officers

usually sit stone-faced, but when they saw the two beautiful women waving at them, they would smile and sneak a wave back.



Another. When Michael Jackson died, many Russians placed memorials at the Embassy wall. Terese watched closely and one day when she thought no one was around, she snuck out to look at all the expressions of love created to him. As soon as she stepped out, some Russian newsman came out of the stonework to interview her. In her natural diplomacy, she exclaimed how he was a legendary artist. She kept her words short, but ended up on Russian TV, much to the chagrin of the Embassy Security Officers. Another time, Terese and Sita were invited to a display of the Russian *Policia*. Expectantly, they both ended up on TV. I know Terese was on Russian TV three times, but I cannot remember the third time. Suffice to say, there are people who are thrust into the limelight and Terese was one who performed diplomatically and with the grace of a ballerina.

I have often made the comment that Terese could strike up a conversation with a signpost. Once when we were in Atlanta waiting to board a plane for Moscow, she started visiting with a young couple next to us. It turned out they were headed to Moscow for the process of adopting a young girl. Adoptions in Russia are made to extract as much money as possible, so their visit was one of many expensive trips to Russia, so the invitation was given for them to stay at our apartment on their next trip. It would save them perhaps over a thousand dollars. I believe it was Terese who first offer, but she always said it was my idea. But it paid off as they are very good friends to this day.

Ethiopia

The next post we worked was Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. That itself holds many wonderful stories. One of the most talked about was her short dance sequence with a bull. To best explain the fiasco, and with your permission I will inject excerpts of what I wrote about it on my blog at the time.

... In what I have seen in and of the world, I have realized Life is stranger than Fiction. Hollywood can regurgitate from now until Hell freezes over, and can only dance around reality. The most interesting and thought provoking stories are those born from real life experiences.

The Pretty Lady, (my wife) is an incredible Lady. When I first met her, the first thing I noticed about her, is her ingrain gracefulness. The way she sits with her toes on point, the way she walks barefoot, her simple hand gestures; and when I found out this pretty woman had over 20 years of Classical Ballet, it all made sense.

Now, enter El Toro.

An expression we use often in Ethiopia to explain the bizarre is simply, This is Africa.

Sunday afternoon, I had to fly out to Mauritius, down off the coast of Madagascar, just off South Africa. I've been several times and was not looking forward to the long-cramped flights. All baggage was loaded into the Embassy vehicle to take me to the airport. Terese and I were saying our goodbyes and dasvidaniyas, when the driver slid the driveway gate open.

We often see livestock being moved along in the street, usually by someone who knows how to deftly use a stick. Out in the roadway, walking like a thug looking for a fight, was a bull with a bad attitude. What I am about to

describe is an encounter with the bull from entrance to exit, that lasted maybe 4 seconds. It doesn't take a bull much time to do its thing and move on.

The driver said, Maybe we close gate?

Terese said, No, we don't need to. I thought the same. The bull is probably out for a Sunday walk, like any other thug on the street.

The bull was about 15 feet from the gate and as soon as he saw us, he dropped his head and charged. Terese was standing in the space between the vehicle and the gate, where the bull saw daylight behind her. For several hours afterwards, I kept thinking I should have pushed her away, but I had to realize, there was absolutely no time to do anything. Not even speak.

Terese went over his head and landed hard on the pavement. It happened so fast, I cannot fully replay it in my mind, but I instinctively dropped down to her to see how bad she was hurt, unaware the bull was still in our front yard, a small space the size of our kitchen

In the second I was down with Terese, the bull jumped over us and was gone. I shoved the gate closed to avoid an encore performance. (I later realized, I closed the gate so hard, I bent part of it)

Terese being a medic, knew not to just jump up and go kick his ass. I helped her slowly get up as she assessed herself. She had a small cut on her eyebrow which bled like a stuck pig and a skinned knee. She also had a foot that will be the main injury. The bull evidently stepped on her foot during their short dance sequence. How her foot was stepped on as she went over his horns, I still cannot play it out correctly in my mind. But a later assessment will reveal a badly torn ankle and broken toe.

In the house, she assured me she will be okay and convinced me to leave for the airport. She even went back out on the porch to see the driver who was badly shaken up over the incident. I got into the vehicle with the driver and on the way to the airport, he kept thanking Jesus she was not hurt more. (I later found out, he was thrown against the vehicle and had some aches and pains also.) As I sat in the seat, it was then I realized the fact the bull jumped over me and Terese while we were down, without hitting either of us with a hoof or stepping on us. A blow to my head with the hoof of a bull would have killed me. To have the bull step on us would have ended with death or paralysis. Yeah, I think the driver was right. I thanked the Good Lord myself.

Once I got through Security at the airport, I called the Duty Officer at the Embassy to report it. This is an individual who is on call 24 hours to assist with problems like this. I had to start by saying, You're not gonna believe this ...

The Duty Officer in turn called the Embassy Medic and had her call Terese that evening to check on her. I placed a request for Motorpool to pick her up for work so she wouldn't have to drive. The next morning, she hobbled to her office and was asked, So, you were run over by a bulldog? Terese said, No. A bull! They said, A bull as in cow bull? Yes, cow bull.

They sent her to the Medical Unit, where they basically said, Yep, torn ankle and toe broken, and here's some pain pills; now go back home and do not come back for a week.

Over the next few days, Terese learned the bull had gotten out several times before and has hurt at least 12 other people, including two officers. Several of them were in the hospital with severe injuries. He also attacked two taxis, but we don't care about that. The last report, both bull and owner have been caught and locked up. Hopefully in the same cell.

The woman has been down many times with injuries from all directions. Been through childbirth several times, been in three roll-overs, had cat-scratch fever, had the H1N1, endured two husbands and many crazy in-laws. And perhaps many things I don't know about. Terese is a tough woman, but the bull was tougher.

In the years that followed, her injuries haunted her, specifically her neck. It became evident she landed on her head and suffered injuries to her spine. Yet she took every injury as she did with life. It was simply another aspect of life that you have to look at and say, It's just another adventure.

At our apartment in Addis, we had a day guard who was also the gardener. As with everyone she met, they became close friends. She introduced him to pumpkin pie, roasted turkey and chocolate chip cookies. He in turn became a bodyguard to her. When they went to town she let him do the driving. On the sidewalks, he walked in front of her and kept the beggars and vagrants at bay. Small guy, but had a black belt in the martial arts. When he graduated from University with his Electrical Engineering degree, she took him to get a tattoo of a dragon as a gift. With his Ethiopian skin tone, it was perfect.

In my time working overseas, I had to travel to several constituent posts. When Terese was able, I took her with me. I had always felt that if she had a chance to enjoy life, I would do my best to provide it. Because of security issues, when I work away I stay at 4-5 star hotels. It is pretty much a requirement and Terese enjoyed going. To her, it was another adventure.

No matter where we were, Terese was always treated like a queen. I don't know why, but she always received free everything. As with any hotel, it was free coffee and drinks for her.

One of my posts was Djibouti City, Djibouti. A nasty little country next to Ethiopia. When I had to work there, I stayed at the Kempinsky Hotel which was the only thing good about the trip. I always likened Djibouti to be an extension of hell. During the heat of the summer, the afternoon temperature was always in the 110s (43-45C). Terese would cool herself in the pool in her black bikini and many of the guests would flirt with her.



One day, an Italian merchant ship docked at the port. The seamen checked into the hotel and headed for the pool in their tiny lumpy swimsuits. There was about a dozen of them in the pool meandering among the bathing beauties, and several hung around Terese. As alcohol was consumed, they began to serenade her. They began to sing opera to Terese! Italian opera! The others nearby left the women they were flirting with and joined in, and Terese loved it. I would have loved to see the expression on her face as she was serenaded by this Italian "choir".

I never worried about Terese in situations like that. As I stated before, she knew when to smile and when to politely excuse herself. The only problem she had in Djibouti were the ugly black birds that stole the chips from her sandwich.



She told me one time a bird flew over and knocked the comb out of her hair. She bent over to retrieve it, and as she rose, she noticed her chips were gone!

When we flew out of Addis Ababa for the last time we were sad to be leaving. As I went to another airline counter to pay for excess luggage, Terese stuck up a conversation with the airline attendant telling how much we loved Ethiopia and sad we were to leave. When I returned and we walked to the gate, Terese handed me my boarding passes and pointed out we were given complimentary business class to Munich. That was Terese all over. It was on to the next adventure!

Turkey

Our last post together was Ankara Turkey, but when Terese went to work at the Consular Section to do finger-printing, the arrogant officers chastised her for taking too much time to finger-print the applicants. All they saw were numbers



and a few even blamed Terese for the poor performance, so she decided it was time to quit the Consular section. But it gave her another adventure to work with the incredible Turks. She became a security escort and loved it. She could be herself and not have to deal with politics. Working with these amazing, hard-working people and making them feel good was perfect for her. And she loved it! In my position, I have to make sure the escorts maintained security and it was no problem with her. She understood the fine line between job and friendship. She became very well loved and respected by the Turkish community. When they learned of her death, it was decided to honor her by dedicating the smoking bench to her.

Because of her natural diplomacy, she had respect for those in the upper echelon. One story she liked to tell was the day she was escorting the housekeeping crew in a secured area. She happened across a new employee, a tall amicable gentleman in one of the offices. He was one of those individuals who you knew you could have an interesting conversation with. If I remember what she told me, he politely said, *Hi, and who are you?* Terese replied, *I am Terese Nolte, the Security Escort, and who are you, sir?* He smiled and told her his name, and said, *I am the new DCM.*

Terese almost swallowed her tongue! The DCM is the *Deputy Chief of Mission*. In a sense, he runs the Embassy. She was embarrassed that she did not already know who he was; but the beautiful story behind this is that from that day forward the two became very good friends. He and his wife were greatly saddened by her death. In his reply to this tribute, he graciously added these words:

What I especially loved and appreciated about Terese was her ability and willingness to speak truth to power -- always politely and respectfully, but without question. That is a rare gift, and one that most people are afraid or unwilling to deliver. It is particularly important when you are in a senior position to get peoples' honest opinions, as they are the ones who will tell you when the emperor isn't wearing any clothes. I always knew I could count on Terese to tell me what she thought, and that was golden. ...And when she arrived at the Pearly Gates I assume she gave St. Peter her honest opinions too. Bet he enjoyed that!

I had two constituent posts I covered while in Turkey. At every hotel I stayed at, even though she accompanied me only about half the time, the hotel staff knew her better than me. After the first trip she came with me to any hotel, every time afterwards when I checked in, they would say, *Welcome Mr. Nolte. Did you bring your wife with you?* And when I said, *No, not this time.* They had a look of disappointment on their faces that said, *Well welcome anyway.*

In the mornings after I left for work, she would go down to the outside patio and have her morning cigarette. I don't think she ever had to pay for coffee. It seemed like everyone wanted her there so everything was free. When I was with her, it was a different story. It would be: *That will 65 Lira please. Charge to your room?*

Terese was a menagerie of all things beautiful, outside as she was inside, and she appreciated those things that adorn the female. When I was in Afghanistan I had the opportunity to purchase Pashmina scarves. At the time, I didn't know their value as I paid \$3-8 for each. I would guess that I sent maybe 30 home to her over the two years I was there. She in turned gave most of them away as gifts, which made me happy as I could help her love others. One of the many things amazing about Terese was her selfless acts. I do not remember seeing anything selfish in her as it was always someone else she thought about. She was one of those people who would purchase cheap umbrellas and hand them out to those who were caught in the rain, never expecting to get them back. That reminds me of the saying: *You have never really lived Life until you have done something for someone who can never pay you back.*

As I sort through her personal items, I find a great deal of jewelry, cheap and not so cheap, that was as rich with beauty as she was. Over the years we were married, she purchased many fine clothes. I never minded it because it made her happy, and they complimented her physical beauty. And yet she never hoarded them, but instead gave much of them away. Every time we moved from one post to another, she would sort through her clothes and give most of them away to the local women she worked with. There was one particular Ethiopian friend of ours who was exquisitely beautiful. Terese appreciated her beauty and invited her to our house to help sort through her clothes. She spent hours with her trying on the garments and ended up taking all she (and I) could carry to her taxi. I know it made Terese a little sad to part with them, but it also made her feel good that her clothes would be worn by such a beautiful woman, who otherwise had very little clothing. As I helped her carry her treasure to the taxi, she told me she will be sharing the clothes with her mother.

Just as with her clothing, she had a great deal of shoes and purses. After arriving in Brazil, I had to sort through all she had kept after Turkey, and had to determine what to do with. Nearby where I work is a breakroom for several dozen young Brazilian people who work in the Visa section helping the applicants. Most of them are females, so I invited two of them into my shop to look through Terese's shoes to see if they wanted any.

As they bent over digging through the box, I pulled out a shoe and held it to my big feet to jokingly show they will not fit me. The girls paid no attention but asked if they could take the whole box. I said, *Sim.* (Yes) I bent down to help them pick up the box, but they pushed me aside and ran off with it like thieves. I had to sit down and laugh. I knew Terese was watching and she too, was laughing.

As I sort through all our household effects that were shipped to Brazil, I find all the memorabilia she kept throughout the years we were together, and I asked myself why she kept these things. It was then pointed out to me that these were an indication she had a good childhood. Just like the rest of her life, she kept those things that brought her happiness. As with adoptees who do not know their origin, they tend to cling to things of their past.

As I continued unpacking boxes from Ankara, I came across a small suitcase of hers that still had its contents from her last trip to Istanbul. Terese was a procrastinator like me and never got around to emptying it, but instead just had it packed in our shipment bound for Brazil. When I saw it, I sensed it held something that would touch my soul, so be prepared. As I sorted through it I came across a small piece of paper with writing on both sides. She was formulating a note to my mother for her birthday and had intended to put it in a birthday card. It expressed her sincere thoughts for my mother. Whether she completed the task or not, does not deter from her honest thoughts. I gently add the words minus the corrections and strikeouts.

Mom E,

Where do I start? You humble me. You amaze me & always bring joy.

When my life was crumbling, your son & I found each other & in turn brought me to his amazing family that is so full of love. I am never really sure what you think of me @ times but you are always the lady that lets me be me....

For these few things and so many more, I truly love you.

Happy birthday mom E. You rock.

She had a rich relationship with my mother few women have with their in-laws. Terese loved to tell about the time she was sitting with my mother alone, watching the sprinklers in the yard. They got to talking and jokingly decided how they would love to strip down and run through the sprinklers naked. It is not a scene that I would want to see, but it shows how comfortable both women were with each other. I know in a few years when my mother departs this tired and wearisome earth, she will be greeted with the Holy Mother first of all, then Pop and my brother Alan; and behind them Terese will be waiting to give her hugs, kisses and flowers. Whether there are sprinklers in Heaven remains to be seen, but I hope they do their act before I arrive.

All good people have demons they must fight, and Terese had her share to endure. Lies were told to her children about her, and each of her kids had their own demons as well. Terese hardly ever cried in front of me, but I knew she did many times alone. When I could, I held her as she let her emotions loose. At one point she was overloaded with pain from two of her children at the same time. She was so distraught, she couldn't respond to either of them and all she could do to survive was to place herself in a shell to avoid the pain that hammered her from both directions. It was frustrating to see her this way, and all I could do was hold her until sleep took over.

I came across a note she sent to her children's father in which she gave advice to him. This is advice all parents should heed.

Listen (even when you REALLY don't want to hear it)

Be happy for them, no matter how small (or boring) the accomplishment may seem.

Set limits (yes, they still need them)

Remember, they love you.

Always choose your words wisely. The less you say in anger & hurt, the deeper they will love you.

Love our children as if their lives depended on it.

After her death was known on Facebook, I received many thoughts of love for her. I read through all the messages people wrote but there were two that meant more to me than the others. Two unrelated friends had commented on how Terese accepted everyone, and each said they would use Terese as a guide to live their lives. Whether they did or not, I feel just to desire to emulate someone's life is a great honor you can give them.

I was not there for her at the death of her parents, or the many times she had to deal with her children's father. Yet she was always with me during what few crises I had. And it is most sad I was not there when she returned Home.

A very good friend of ours who is a beautiful, vibrant individual with a strong spirit, sent me this message a few months after Terese passed away.

Two nights ago, Terese visited me in a dream. Normally I would say that I dreamt about a person, but in this case, she visited me. She was stunning in magenta and black fine clothing. She was adorned in pearls and diamonds. She was already seated on the passenger side of a red shiny old-style convertible and a young man in a suit, was walking towards the driver's side to whisk her away. She waved goodbye with a fabulous smile.

I am a firm believer in the Afterlife, so what she wrote touched me deeply. It made sense all was well with Terese. I felt as if she was saying:

I'm on to my next adventure! Ciao!

That was just like Terese. She was elegant, and in love with everything given to us humans. And I dare say, I feel the Creator smiled when she arrived, and gave *her* hugs and kisses. As her former Supervisor said of her, *The Maker of Humans will have noticed Terese. "Well done good and faithful servant."*

~ As I write this, I have realized how amazing this loved creature of God is. My greatest regret was not fully appreciating her while she was here. I also realize everyone has a story to tell, and if we were to take the time to write a tribute about any of our loved ones while still living, we would see we walk among many wonderful people on this Earth. I have learned to see the incredible in all people, because of Terese.

I usually end my discussions with "Kick butt", and now that can be interpreted to mean, *On to your next adventure.*

