

The following letter was written on Tuesday Jan 2nd. I was hoping to share these stories with her before she passed. So after sending out the pictures on the previous page, I decided to also post a copy of my letter here for anyone in the family who might be interested.

Jan 2nd. 2024

Dear Eileen,

First of all let me apologize for not handwriting this letter. But after 50 years of typing on a computer, my penmanship leaves a lot to be desired. Some people say a typed letter is somewhat impersonal but I only want to spare you the agony of trying to read my handwriting! I assure you this letter is most heartfelt!

I am writing this as if I am speaking to the congregation at your funeral. This is what I would want everyone to know about how important you have been to me in my life! And I thought you would like to hear these things too.

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Steven Alexander, Eileen is my sister! We shared the same mother but had different fathers. Eileen was already grown up and moved out of the house by the time I was born as she was 22 years older than me. She was 1 of three sisters that mom had from her previous marriage, but Eileen always was the one that was more present in my life.

My earliest memory was when I was 4-5 years old. After I had out grown my crib, my mother let me move from the front bedroom to the middle bedroom where there was a big boy double bed. But that was it, all my clothes and toys were still in the front bedroom. The closet and dresser in the new bedroom was full of moms stuff. It had now been over 2 years and mom still hadnt made the switch. Eileen came over one day and she saw the situation and proceeded to make the transfer which took all day, but finally thanks to my hero sister, I finally for the first time had my own room.

I lived on Jennifer Street Near Joy and Beech-Daly which one could describe as a 55+ neighborhood, meaning not a lot of kids. It was somewhat of a lonely existence feeling like an only child living with parents the age of most of my friends grandparents.

But it was always great to go over to Eileens house on Virgil Street about 3 miles away near Plymouth and Telegraph. That is where many of my fondest childhood memories began. Even though I had great relationship with the Dekkers and the McNamaras, I always felt a bit more connected to the Shaheens cause they lived closer and I spent more time with them.

In 1964 when I was 9, Eileen took me to my first movie at the theater. We saw "Mary Poppins". That movie had such an amazing impact. It was like Eileen became my real life version of Mary Poppins.

I would always look forward to coming over to Eileens. When I would get there she would have a project for us to do, like cleaning the basement, raking leaves or shoveling snow. It didnt seem to matter, I always enjoyed helping her with these little tasks

Organizing the basement where all the toys and games were kept, seemed always to be the most fun, Like the Mary Poppins scene cleaning the nursery. When we finished, we would call Eileen to come down and we would put "King Of The Road" 45 on by Roger Miller, cause we thought she liked that song and she would be so happy!

Sometimes we would take our project down the road to Sito's house. Eileen would drive us over to mow and edge her lawn. Sito was always so gracious and appreciative for our help. It was years later that I learned that Sito wasnt her real name! In 2013, while attending our sister Pat's funeral, I was sitting with Eileen when one of the Shaheen grandchildren (Dont know which one) walked up to us and called her Sito. That sounded completely wrong to me, I never wouldve thought of Eileen as Sito, that name was reserved for Rose.

One day we were at the park and having a great time riding the teeter totter. Till this one brat made little Shaheen get off and started bouncing me up and down on the other end really hard and laughing about it. I tried to get off but he kept on jumping giving me no chance to escape. All of a sudden, Eileen came out of nowhere and while holding on to me pushed my side down real hard forcing the other kid to fall off. He ran off crying and never came back. She would probably get in trouble today, But she was our hero back then!

Eileen was the one who came to many of my school events. I was in a Christmas show when I was in 6th grade. We were doing the 12 days of Christmas, and I was the kid who at the proper time held up the big sign that said 6 geese a laying. I had a crush on the girl who was holding 4 calling birds, so I was really hoping for the 5 Golden rings, but stupid John Kowalski got that part. Anyway, I was so happy that Eileen was there and she took the time watch our show!

It was around this time, that we started to notice that something wasnt quite right with mom. They didnt have a name for it back in 1966, but we now know it as dementia / Alzheimers. She was forgetting things and having trouble with her balance. And so starting in 7th grade, I was pretty much on my own as far as getting myself ready for school, homework and day to day living. since mom was in and out of hospitals and dad was working everyday. But for the next 3 summers, I lived with the Shaheens on Virgil. It was nice to feel surrounded by family.

It was an interesting change going from visiting Eileen to living with Eileen. All of a sudden there were chores and daily routines that I was not used to. Quite a difference between from when I would come over to help out with projects on the weekends. I didnt mind the change. I quite enjoyed the feeling of belonging and gave me an insight to what it would be like to have a family.

Eileen didnt seem to care for going up and down stairs. It seemed like there was always a bag of canned goods that needed to go down to the celler and a laundry basket that needed to be brought back up. We werent allowed to make the journey without something in our hand. Sometimes Eileen would actually send us back if we forgot to do one or the other. Sometimes we would run downstairs fast without carrying anything just to see if we could do it without her catching us, even if we had no reason to down there!

Eileen loved to shop! She was the bargain hunter of all bargain hunters. Back then, it was a common practice that school always started the day after labor day. So sometime in late August we'd started hearing the 3 worst words in the English language "Back To School". And Eileen's shopping brain would kick into action as she would take us shopping for new school clothes. The goal was to get 5 pants and 5 shirts. So off we would go and after 6 hours of trying on 23 pairs of pants, We would achieve our goal. The first 3 or 4 pairs were just to figure out the right size. After that it was a matter of mixing and matching so one could theoretically get 10 different outfits for the 5 shirt and 5 pants combination. She was a genius, but as a 12 year old boy, I would have rather been riding a bike or playing baseball on what was left of our summer vacation. It wasn't until years later, that I came to truly appreciate the effort she put in for us, cause I'm sure there were plenty of other things she would have rather been doing as well!

Eileen was the one who drove me home after I had my 4 wisdom teeth pulled out. She made sure I had ice cream and soup till I was ready to eat solid food again.

Eileen was the one who came to my high school graduation and I was so glad she was there. Without her, I would have had nobody!

Eileen was the one who cheered me up when my high school sweetheart Diane and I broke up. She spent hours on the phone helping me to move on from that first heartbreak!

After high school, I was considering taking a year off before going to college. Eileen was the one who talked me into going straight to college. I am so grateful she did. Getting an education was always so important to her. I remember coming to her house on Perth and seeing where she proudly displayed all of her children's graduation pictures on their family room wall.

In the end, Eileen was always there for so many critical points in my life! When I think of her, these are the things I most remember!

In 1980, Not long before I moved to Georgia, I was invited to a private party where a co-worker friend was hosting a psychic reader. I was a last minute invite and I was curious so I agreed to attend. When it came time for my reading, the first thing he did was draw 4 circles on a his scratch pad, and one circle was high up on the page, the other three were lower and close together in a triangler upside down pyramid shape.

He said the higher one was my primary mother figure, and she has passed. The other 3 were also mother figures, but one of the those was more of that role then the other 2. I was blown away, he had no way of knowing that I had 3 sisters whom always looked out for me.

Eileen, you have always been like a mother to me, taking the place of the mother that I never really got to have. You will always be that closer circle that has meant so much to me as you have stood by me all these years!

Eileen, I hate that you have been suffering so much during these last few months. I am sure that the other circles will be looking forward to greeting you when you are ready. We here on earth are in NO way in a hurry for that to happen, but when it does, I will be relieved to know that you will no longer be in pain and you will be reunited with my other mother figure circles!

I Love You!

Brother Steven