

Perspectives
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By Cathy Pfeil

Melba Wisdom

Melba came into my life shortly after my mother-in-law Edna was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Although I had met her once years before on a whirlwind tour of western Colorado, I cannot clearly remember that meeting.

Melba's relationship to my partner's family was by marriage to an uncle living at great distance. The possibility of our paths ever crossing at all was remote; that she entered my life was truly a blessing.

Melba moved into my in-law's house to care for Edna. She fixed the meals, kept the house, bathed her, and generally helped out. This was not the first time Melba had played this role; she had helped many loved ones through terminal illness. Her purpose went way beyond caring for Edna; she really cared for us all as we tried to prepare for Edna's transition. She was always available with a cup of tea, a hug and time to listen.

I have to admit I almost missed the opportunity to learn and accept love from her. Melba was soft and round. She wore polyester pants, and seldom wore her false teeth. She was raised in a small town and has been a caregiver of one type or another all her life. The kind of person, much to my chagrin, I might not have seen. She was simply, and profoundly, fully herself in every situation. This is what I call "Melba Wisdom".

There was a shine about her and sparkle of Spirit that outward appearance could not conceal. My first lesson was to really see her, and to keep seeing the real Edna as her physical appearance deteriorated so quickly. Melba encouraged us to say what we needed to say, to express our love to Edna and to risk not pulling back. Melba was quick to hug and quicker to laugh deeply. Many times Melba cried with us. She encouraged us to keep Edna's bedroom full of grandchildren playing. She took time to let us speak our sorrow. Melba said, "Just love each other".

Now I am always on the look out for Melba's in every person I meet. I approach each encounter knowing that everyone holds his or her own brand of Melba Wisdom and it is my job to find that wisdom in each person. Then it hit me - I hold Melba Wisdom too! Today I am always at the ready with a cup of tea, a hug and most importantly, I am available to listen.

May I stay vigilant and not overlook any form through which Spirit moves and not judge by outside appearance. May I recognize the Divine nature in every person I meet. Let me continue to risk love without fear of being left alone. Let me give voice to what is in my heart and listen from a place of healing. May I honor Spirit in simplicity.

Just love each other.

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