

In the last couple of years of her life my mom wanted to be called Elizabeth which is so fitting for a beautiful, dignified, graceful and wise woman.

Elizabeth was not just my mom she was and is my hero and dearest friend. She was courageous and intrepid, ready for adventure and deep introspection.

Elizabeth grew up poor in rural New York, experiencing the repercussions of the Great Depression. Her family grew much of the food they ate and during WWII she remembered saving even the smallest amounts of metal, bubble gum wrappers, for the war effort.

Elizabeth was deeply impacted by a family lineage of depression and poverty, second generation Irish and German. Her father had to leave his PhD program to take care of his family and he had to piece together work after losing his job at Corning Glass Works after just one year of employment. Her mom was profoundly depressed throughout her life and she struggled with the favoritism paid to her younger brother.

Elizabeth's spiritual path began at Mount Savior Monastery, a catholic environment with wise monks. One named Father Martin, she recounted, would say: "My life's work is to clean my windows so that God's light can shine through." Her relationship with

Catholicism evolved over the years, eventually settling on what I would call a hippie activist Catholic church in Denver called the 10:30 Community.

Psychotherapy became an important spiritual refuge for Elizabeth, with the motivation of not passing her childhood wounding onto her own future children. I always saw this as a remarkable hero's journey. She did 12 years of psychotherapy in the late 50s early 60s when therapy, especially for women was not commonplace and with the intension of cleaning her own "windows" for the sake of her children. To me, this was incredibly heroic.

Elizabeth became enamored with Carl Jung's life's work and his approach to psychotherapy. She joined the Jung Society in Denver and before it became vogue, also studied the work and philosophy of Joseph Campbell.

Elizabeth's second spiritual path was her connection with the natural world. "Mother Earth" was a term I first learned from my mom. She and her husband Kent attended the inaugural Earth Day celebration in 1970 and throughout my childhood I remember her fervent messaging around conservation: turning off lights, walking or biking instead of driving, and taking the bus to school. Recycling was adopted early on. And of course, a healthy guilt trip paved the way for my own passion of protection. She would say to us when we

wanted a ride, “do you want me to drive you to the store or do you want to save the gas for your children’s children?”

The Natural World opened up in so many ways for Elizabeth. She co-wrote a book with her dear friend Diane Lauen called High Country Games, a children’s activity book focused on Rocky Mountain National Park. She learned to love spending time in the mountains and lakes with her family, hiking, backpacking, skiing and canoeing,

Our parents took Sarah and me on countless excursions to Rocky Mountain National Park, staying at the YMCA, horseback riding, hiking, backpacking and in the fall, listening to the Elk bugle.

At some point in our childhood, Elizabeth discovered birds. I am not sure when or how exactly this took place but perhaps her grandson, Pablo knows! In the beginning of her love affair with birds, Elizabeth was loony for loons! She and my dad went on many trips to the boundary waters with their friends and family in northern Minnesota canoeing from lake to lake in search of the loon and its mystical call. She made sure that Sarah and I knew the four distinct calls: the hoot, the wail, tremolo, and yodel.

Birds were her spiritual path. While her son is Buddhist, Elizabeth was a “Birdist”. Once she discovered birds, their calls, the intricacies of their habitat and the details of their markings, she

travelled the world with her family in search of these beautiful creatures.

While birds were central, she did take trips to see and experience other animals and habitats. She and my dad went on safaris in Africa, travelled through the jungles of central and south America and hiked to the bottom of the Grand Canyon with dear friends.

Elizabeth's love of the Natural World did not fade in her later years. She would continue to delight in a bird's call and watched David Attenborough documentaries over and over.

The impact of my mom's spirituality on my life was profound. This was her greatest gift to me. She was the first person to teach me how to self-reflect. While this was within the context of psychotherapy, self-reflection or introspection is the very basis of the Buddhist path. Her passion of protection and love of the Natural World grew deep within me spurring me on to become an environmental activist and a lover too of the Natural World.

Elizabeth never feared dying. She and I spoke about her passing for many, many years. She never shied away from conventionally challenging topics, especially those of the heart. Months before she died, she would have conversations with Sarah and me about her beliefs about the dying process.

Days before her passing I saw, for the first time in Colorado, a vibrant red male Cardinal resting on a lamp post. I never had a chance to share this with her but I am certain she would have marveled at this sighting.