

Juan Ramon Quezada's eulogy for Elizabeth Kreider, July 28, 2024

I'm Juan Ramon, Liz's son-in-law, and she truly was a second mother to me. My own mother, Ana, who raised me on her own, is a towering presence in my life, so someone becoming a second mother to me was as improbable as another mountain rising near Denver overnight. Yet, *overnight* is exactly how it started, just a half-block from here.

Sarah and I first bonded over dancing, but Liz and I first bonded over its sister muse: music itself, Mozart and the like. Soon after I met Liz, Sarah told me that the next morning Liz had confided to her "If you don't marry him, I will!" This went over remarkably well with my beloved Kent, it's one of my biggest boasts!

But Liz loved dancing, too, of course.

That same year, she wrote an essay titled "Salsa". It starts, "Labor Day Weekend... my daughter is home and *dance* is back." As she watches Sarah teaching Christopher some salsa moves, Liz marvels at her daughter's deep relationship with dance, calling Sarah "a streaming ribbon in the hair of the muse." Then she recalls Sarah's childhood, their efforts to understand each other better, and the emergence of what she calls a "mother-daughter dance".

I had the chance to see three decades of this beautiful mother-daughter dance, refined and evolving to the very end. Sometimes Liz led, with her wisdom and her love; and sometimes Sarah led with hers. But most beautifully, I had a chance to see Liz learning to lead *herself with a different foot*. I for one learned to dance salsa the rootsy way... on the 1 beat, right foot first. I have twice given up on learning salsa the "fancy" ballroom way... on 2, left foot first. Believe me, switching your leading foot is not an easy thing to learn.

Now, in life as in dance, we all tend to lead with what we believe to be our best foot forward. No doubt since childhood, Liz understandably learned to lead with her remarkable intellect. And as a bright young woman of the 1950s, she surely had to be assertive about her intellect, which likely redoubled her determination to present as an intellectual. But not pedantically; Liz cultivated intellect, not as a way to stand apart, but

as a way to connect deeply, which I believe it certainly is; it's just not the only starting point, not the only foot you can put forward... and perhaps it's not the best foot forward at certain moments, or with certain people.

Nevertheless, leading largely with this exquisite foot, an intellect as tough and graceful as a ballerina's pointed toe, she learned to bring her whole rich self into every dance that life has to offer: she danced her way through the literatures of 3 languages (English, French and Spanish), she danced through other countries and other cultures, through two Master's degrees and two careers; she danced with nature; and she danced, of course, with her loved ones, friends and family.

But here's the beautiful thing: perhaps starting with her beloved grandchildren, Liz eventually began to try another foot first... that of childlike expression and simple physical affection.

In the last few years, Parkinson's and her traumatic brain injury in 2020 took an ever greater toll on her intellect, on her ability to read long rich texts (and write them), on her ability to follow the long arc of Bach or Beethoven, or to use and follow complex discourse and precise language. But Liz kept dancing. And we saw her fierce determination shine once more, not in persisting on what had to be let go (her slipping intellect), but in bravely adapting by embracing what she still had: the dance of hugs, of holding hands, of stroking hair, of humming simple songs. Sarah told me more than once how her mom's intellect sometimes intimidated her. Yet *my* relationship with Sarah includes rich intellectual interaction; it's just not our first foot forward with each other. Toward the end of her life, I got to see how Liz, with great humility and vulnerability, both *led* and *followed* Sarah, but using Sarah's default first step, dancing on 1 instead of 2. They danced and twirled each other till the end, sweeping up anyone nearby into their whorls of affection.

Thank you so much for every dance I had with you, Liz, on 1 and on 2, with salsa and with Bach. We are all here to twirl you one last time... our fingers must let go, but the whorls of our entangled souls go on forever.

her dancing hands, her new dance style became dominant: a childlike gentleness, a love of hugging and being hugged, an irrational mysticism as she muttered prayers and groped above her for an unseen presence... it was there all along, but it used to take some missteps

Yet, as enriching as her intellect was to all of us, her understandable strategy of leading with it

What is entanglement if not a dance

[We all present something first, and then give more of ourselves: intellect, humor, virtues, even looks.]

(which includes both the sublimely spiritual and the banal ...of good taste... Mozart and restraint, as opposed to salsa... it's still music, innit?)