

I almost started crying the other day smack in the middle of DSW. You see, it seems that Bass Weejuns have made a come-back this year in women's fashion and so the aisles of the shoe store were suddenly full of every possible variety of classic penny loafer – exactly the kind of shoe my father, of blessed memory, used to wear. When we think about loss, we often anticipate the times and occasions that will be difficult – birthdays, anniversaries, life-cycle moments, holidays. But almost as often, at least when it comes to missing my Dad, it is the simple, everyday things that set me off. I'll see a car of the same make and model that he used to drive. Or I'll write something that I'm really proud of and want to share it with him. Or I'll say goodbye to my mother back in Boston and we'll smile over his famous line, "Who am I going to hug tomorrow?" I am sad for all the big things in the life of our family that my father has missed these last many years, but I'm sad for all of the small things too. So much of life resides in the daily and mundane.

Today, March 9<sup>th</sup>, would have been my father's 71<sup>st</sup> birthday. Given that he died at 64, I often try to imagine what he would have looked like, what he would have been like, if he had continued to mature. I sometimes think that I catch glimpses of the older version of my father in other men about his age that I know or in family friends of ours that share certain of his qualities. I wonder what kind of advice he would have given about different situations in my life, which of my new friends and congregants here in Chicago he would have been the most drawn to, what kind of crazy antics he would have dreamt up to delight his grand-children. Loving his job as a doctor so very much, I wonder if he would have worked until the day he died or whether he would have at some point retired to spend more time with my Mom whom he adored. I wonder how he would have felt about turning 71.

"At the rising of the sun and at its going down we remember them," write Sylvan Kamens and Rabbi Jack Reimer in their poignant poem, *We Remember Them*. "At the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them." These words, of course, are a merism – a combination of two contrasting terms used to reference the entirety between them; here, the fact that we think of our loved ones, now departed, all year long and every single day. Memory at times feels more urgent or more immediate or more devastating but it's always there in the background, ready to be coaxed out by something as small and trivial as a pair of penny loafers in a crowded shoe store. The sadness I could sometimes live without. But it's nice to feel that my father's presence is never too very far away.

Happy 71<sup>st</sup>, Dad – we miss you every day!

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rabbi Annie Tucker