

A Heartfelt Tribute to Our Faculty Road Neighbors  
on  
Rose's Birthday  
8/10/20

This is a story about you, my neighbors, in particular 12 of you, including my daughter and her husband. As a group you are so special, that I keep searching for other loftier names. Names that sound like movie titles: The Dazzling Dozen? The Angels at Our Door? The Miracle Workers of Faculty Road? None of you would encourage such titles, yet I cannot think of you in lesser terms. Please allow me to tell your story to others who may find hope, inspiration, and joy in it.

This is a story about our neighbors, our friends on Faculty Road. A story of the grace, care, and strength they displayed during a most important life phase, the end of life.

These Faculty Road neighbors have always been good hearted people. They excelled at neighborliness. Theirs was not a distant relating, a wave in the driveway or over the bushes. When we moved here in 2010, these neighbors made sure they got to know us early on. Right from the start, there were invitations to home cooked meals, spring and fall Faculty neighborhood parties where we'd celebrate a new season, hear about recent travels, or the new vegetables they'd planted. Each one of them eager to give us the lay of the land since we were newcomers. At an early gathering, they happily rattled off a number of wonderful places to visit, while one even took notes for us. Such organization!

As time went on, relationships with these neighbors became more special, more interesting, and more close. Writing groups, evening walks to campus theater. Our friend to the right bucking and hauling away a giant limb that had fallen across our lawn. Our friend on the left snowblowing our driveway before I was even awake. Harvests of vegetables or bouquets of flowers appeared on our steps. A gorgeous luminaria shared in sacred remembrance, ice hockey games, and conversations over Thai lunches. Durham United meetings, ORCReads, rainbow flags, welcome signs, Indigenous Peoples' Day. Afternoons of tea and ginger, of setting up lawn furniture, hailing in a new season, of neighborhood parties, and long discussions around recently read books. You get the idea, this was one very special group of people.

With that introduction, I will share a story about what has made these neighbors so invaluable to us. I have thought about them every day since that awful stretch of time, the final months of my wife's life. I cannot imagine how we would have managed without their huge and continuous gifts of themselves, their time, care, kindness, and support. What gifts those were. You see, my wife and I had separated four years earlier, but remained married. I lived around the corner. Our neighbors understood and never once made us feel uncomfortable about it. They remained friends with each of us. Invitations kept coming, as if I'd never left.

My wife, following a long illness, had great difficulty walking, and often was incapable of even moving. Toward the end she needed assistance to simply adjust herself in her chair, get food, or get into bed. These neighbors took it upon themselves to take care of her, in every way. Helping move her, feed her, clothe her, support and nurture her. Putting her in their cars and driving her to emergency walk-ins, and to nearby hospitals, waiting for hours and driving her home. Then spending more time to help her get settled. Making food runs for her at the drop of a hat, sometimes late at night.

Straightening the house up, putting out the trash, and more. This did not happen occasionally, but as often as several times a week. And near the end, several times a day. She asked that I *not* come to help during this period, and she fought the idea of hospice and chronic care nearly to the end. It was in this period that our neighbors and my daughter became everything to her. A daunting series of jobs, yet all given with the most gracious sensitivity, and loving generosity.

Finally, when it became a bit chaotic, one special neighbor called a meeting so that coordination of efforts could begin. Everyone shared cell numbers, and became a true team. Instead of everyone being there at once, they spread the work out more evenly. The mutual support helped as well, since everyone knew what was needed via texting. During hospital stays, of course you guessed it, they would visit her there too, and then help get her settled when she was released. One begins to see the depth and extent of their care. In my estimation, heroic efforts.....truly sacred care.

Rose never gave up the idea that she would go on living, buying new clothes, continuing her writing, imagining future travel, and at the end offering knitting lessons to one of the neighbor's daughter. Rose really wanted to live fully so much longer. In one surprising request, although ill and barely mobile, she asked Beth and Doug, my daughter and her husband, to take her to a play. Though difficult to arrange, they took her to Rochester Opera House, where she enjoyed her last night out on the town, laughing at the antics on stage. A risky evening of elevators and wheelchairs, but all done with grace, patience, and love.

To the very end, our neighbors, both the men and the women, continued to visit Rose, make her laugh, tidy her up, feed her, and just give her their beautiful presence. Pastor Dave of the Community Church spent time with her and helped her spiritually and emotionally in her transition. Several of our caring neighbors, daughter Beth, and the hospice workers were with her when she passed on the afternoon of March 16<sup>th</sup>.

So now you can understand why I search to give these neighbors a new name, a title, to elevate them in the eyes of the world. They surely had elevated the concept of *neighbor* to a far more special, and far more sacred relationship than I had ever imagined it could be.

To you dear neighbors, to all of you who gave so much, I celebrate you and thank you with all my heart. Your loving actions and spirit were immense gifts to Rose as she battled her illness in those final months, weeks, and days. You were there for it all: the hard stuff, the sad stuff, the uniquely personal stuff. I will never forget, not for a moment, the beauty and grace of your caring for Rose.

It is now four months later. I continue to think of each of you every day, smiling inside, with a sense of the deepest sense of appreciation and thankfulness. The truth is, I remain in awe of all of you.

You have my greatest respect, admiration, and love,

*John*

*John Mince  
Durham, NH  
Aug 10, 2020  
Rose's Birthday*