

Shades of Purple

Personal Narrative by Jenna Willis (2006)

(top spotlight (1) ON)

[Large 1972 black and white photograph of Joan]

"Aaah! Joanie,

you have no bra on!"

It was 1971, and my mom,

Joan, had worn a purple silky shirt to work

and for the very first time,

she had no bra on.

It was the current trend and she thought no one would notice.

Wrong!

My mother is not just a mom but also like a sister and best friend.

We will always be close no matter what happens in our lives.

My mom and I share memorable moments in shades of purple.

In that same purple shirt,

this time,

she was wearing a bra.

she met George Willis while getting an estimate on her damaged car at his bodyshop.

They hit it off right from the start.

[sit on stool between photos]

By 1979, Joan had been living with George for five years and really wanted a child,

especially a girl.

George wasn't really too hot for the idea

but Joan firmly thought he was finally mature enough to be a parent.

July 9, 1981, I, Jenna Carol was born.

Bundled in a purple bunny blanket, my mother took me home.

My mom and I share memorable moments in shades of purple.

[holding bouquet of orchids]

On a ski trip to Lake Tahoe in '84,

our friends, Bob and Mary, unexpectedly announced that they were getting married this weekend.

My father said to mom, "Let's get married too. Let's have a double wedding."

Twenty-four hours later, the rented home was all decked out with a food buffet, wedding cake, and about twenty guests.

My mom was in a beautiful lavender dress,

with me in her arms.

she said, "I do."

(bottom spotlight (1,2,3) ON)

[Large 2005 color photograph of Jenna]

(top spotlight (1) OFF)

My mom and I share memorable moments in shades of purple.

Near Thanksgiving in 2004,

dad got sick.

Then in January,

he was diagnosed with stage nine advanced prostate cancer.

As the months gone by, dad had gotten worse and he eventually had to go to the hospital.

We were expecting him to come home soon.

Sunday, August 21, 2005,

I was volunteering at San Jose Museum of Art.

After my shift, I walked outside and turned my cell on. It started buzzing and I answered.

Through my mother's tears, I could barely hear the words,

"Your father passed away an hour ago." *[Orchids]*

All that week my mom and I hardly eat and slept.

We had so many things to do for the service.

[Put on purple shirt and place orchids in hair]

Since my dad wanted to go to Hawaii again my mom had a tropical theme for the viewing.

She did her own floral arrangements and I designed the memorial pamphlets.

My mother met my father in a shade of purple,

married him in a shade of purple,

and at his memorial service we both wore shades of purple with orchids in our hair.

Mom and I went in early to set up the room.

Dad was already there and he looked good in his "Viking Ship" coffin.
Mom unbuttoned his Hawaiian shirt,
fluffed up his chest hair,
and ruffled the top of his head to make him look more like himself.

[sit on stool]

For people to say their last goodbyes to my father,
we had a message board and all of the notes were cremated with him.

This is what I wrote:

Traits alike we share.

Good work ethic and stubbornness.

Life changes is not always fair.

Plenty of good memories will be remembered and brought to light on this day of sorrowfulness.

Our relationship as a unique bond.

Full of mixed emotions and blended with care.

Even though you are gone.

At least you still have your hair.

In celebration of your life,

Dad, no matter what, you will always be in my heart.

Love always from your little crab.

When times are good, they could be better. (bottom spotlight (3) OFF)

When times are bad, they could be worse. (bottom spotlight (2) OFF)

My mom and I share memorable moments in shades of purple. (bottom spotlight (1) OFF)