

Western Voices 2013, English 180, Third Place, (Instructor, Kristen Bradley)

From His Finger to Mine

Hillary Kelly

I have to say that I have always hated my chunky and annoying fingers; it was a serious issue for me at 16. I even ignored the opportunity to get a class ring because I didn't want my fingers sized and commented on. My friends and family always got on me and told me that I had normal fingers, but how would they know, right? One person who always told me just how special I am was my stepfather, Bill. Bill always had a big smile on his face and he always had this big heart for the world, basically a true hero. Bill was the chief of police in our small town and he was loved so much by everyone in it. He always hated when I kept picking at what I thought was wrong with me, especially my fingers. No matter how many times he tried to change my thoughts, I never would budge. I thought it was the worst thing that I had to deal with, but on August 6th, 2010, my world came crashing down.

My stepfather was driving to a police meeting when he was hit by a woman who failed to yield. Bill died on scene as the lady survived with her two babies in the back seat. When the news came to us, I remember crying so hard that I was screaming my heart out. My mom held me as perfume and cigarettes filled my nostrils, and she finally collapsed in my arms. Soon our whole household became full of many of Bill's friends and even news reporters showed up. I felt trapped as more people began to show up at the house, but I knew they were grieving as well. Everyone came together and began to prepare for the worst part, the funeral and saying goodbye.

On August 11th, I said goodbye to a man who truly cherished the life he was given; it was the hardest goodbye ever. I was doing well until I had to give my speech to the community and tell the lesson I learned. Every word was being forced as tears became more and more dominant and it became hard to breathe. I finally finished and went home to be alone with my feelings as others socialized about Bill growing up. At the house, I ran to his room and lay in his spot and cried my heart out; I could still smell his cigars on the pillow. As I calmed down, I saw his boxes of personal items and soon became curious of the things inside. I sat down and began to go through many clothes and pictures of him as a child. It made me chuckle seeing how goofy he truly was. Each box was full of many things about Bill that I never knew, and I felt as if he was speaking to me through his possessions. I was taking it all in when I stumbled upon a small box with his name printed and a picture of Bill during his senior year of high school. I examined it with such curiosity; Bill wasn't the type to keep such a lovely box away from our family. I slowly opened the beautiful box and found his class ring in the middle of it. I held it with such care and began to laugh so hard: the memory of him getting on me about my fingers lingered there. The memory made my heart smile with such joy and I felt that I was meant to find his ring that day. I began to put his ring on my middle finger and when it fit perfectly, I smiled even bigger. I knew Bill was right all along about me: I was fine just the way I am. That day was filled with closure and a sense of his love for others; still today I wear his ring with love and pride.

The day I found his class ring still replays in my head and when I look at it, all I can do is smile. I knew he truly loved me and so many others in our community; he was a true super hero

to me. I realized he dealt with so much stress from work, but when he came home, he did his best to make us happy and laugh. He really loved us and just wanted us to realize how special we are and the things we were capable of accomplishing. Finding his ring and learning more about the man he was inspired me to attend Western to major in Law Enforcement. I will say that I still cry sometimes but I know I am doing something that will make him proud. I am becoming the woman I am meant to be. The ring remains with me as a motivation and a memory of an amazing man who changed my life and it keeps me going towards my career. I learned to cherish the people in my life and to love myself for who I truly am. I will say to whoever reads this: go and hug your loved ones a little longer and tighter; they aren't here forever. All in all, I find it amazing how he passed all of his knowledge, passions, and stories just from his finger to mine.