

THROUGH MY EYES

Through my eyes, I first detected light on March 10, 1952, while resting comfortably in my mother's arms.

Through my eyes, I gazed upon the Mainstreet of Disneyland in 1956 when I first started to dream about magical places. I was four years old.

Through my eyes, I sat quietly next to my father while he wept as we both viewed the horse-drawn carriage carrying the caisson of John F. Kennedy to the steps of the Capitol. It was the first time that I saw my dad cry. It was a Monday in November; I was eleven years old.

Through my eyes, I watched intently at the huge screen in the Pacific Science Center, Seattle, Washington on July 21, 1969, as Neil Armstrong took the first step for mankind and stepped onto the surface of the moon. I was seventeen years old

Through my eyes, I glanced back at a beautiful woman who had dropped me off for rehearsal and had driven away in my car ("The Red Sled.") I thought to myself; she is the one! The person I would ask to be my life partner. Nearly five decades later, she is still at my side. I was twenty-one years old.

Through my eyes, I held three babies in my arms as they detected first light and started their journeys through life. I was in my thirtieth decade.

Through my eyes, I looked back at the footprints that I had made in the sands of time. I saw countless numbers of students staring at me with a shared love of music. If one's life has breathed easier because I have lived, then I have known success. "It's not about you; it's not about me...it's about the music." Remember? I was fifty-two years old.

Through my eyes, I saw a blue sky, smiles from those who loved me, and birthday wishes from those who called me a friend for life. asked, "How can life get much better?". I was sixty-two years old.

Through my eyes, I saw two sets of glimmering eyes looking back at me. "Push me faster Grandpa, and I love you Grandpa" ... my heart melted with glee and thankfulness. I was sixty-five years old.

Through my eyes, I sat quietly as I observed my son walk across the stage to receive his jurisprudence doctorate and begin his career as an attorney. My mind was filled with memories of my father, my college days, and the pride he must have felt when I walked across the stage, to be the first in my family to graduate from college. I was grateful to my parents for their sacrifice and guidance. I was sixty-six years old.

Through my eyes, I became astutely aware of the terms diastolic/systolic, A1C, and cholesterol levels. At my favorite restaurant, a cinnamon roll was offered on a menu that would have driven normal glucose levels off the scales. For twelve months out of the year, these delectable creations were off limits by order of my wife, Laura. Today, with a signed note in hand from Laura, I ordered a cinnamon roll with

a tall glass of milk. I was happy as a clam at high water. For the next year, it will be back to oatmeal and water. I was sixty-seven years old.

Through my eyes, I looked across the Capitol steps in Washington D.C. as an elected representative of my city. Each day, more and more legislators announced positive cases of Covid-19 among their staff. As the President of The Dalles City Council, I was asked to meet with national elected officials and persuade them to support legislation favorable to my city. I watched the Covid-19 Pandemic ravaged our nation. One year later, the grip of this deadly pandemic seems to be declining, and hope is on the horizon. I am thankful my family was spared and hopeful that a new beginning will prevent this from ever happening again. I am sixty-nine years old.

Through these eyes, I learned the meaning behind the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson: "If one life has breathed easier because I have lived, I will have known success." Six lives have breathed easier because I lived and never lost faith. Six lives will now understand the meaning of freedom and live without daily fear of violence and oppression. This is the year that the Rankin family from Nigeria finally arrived in America. I am seventy-one years old.

Through my eyes, I watched, looked and listened to individuals that helped shape who I am, what I was to be, and how I will live out my life with honor and dignity. Of course, my family (mother, father, siblings, wife, children, grandchildren) was and is the most influential.

Mr. Bert Soderstrom - Band instructor 5th grade

Dr. Edwin LaBounty - Professor at Western Washington University

Mr. Jack Harmon - Vice Principal The Dalles Junior High School

Sister Wanda - Principal St. Mary's Academy

Mrs. Peggy Fadness - Business Woman and friend

Dr. Jack McPhearson - Professor at Central Washington University

Dr. Charles Haynie - Surgeon and fellow musician

Mr. Mark Kendrick - Friend

Mr. Darrell Westmoreland and Ron Davidson - Lifelong friends since infancy

Through my eyes, the birthday cake read 74 years old. I am grateful that I have lived this long. Many of my family, friends and comrades cannot say that.