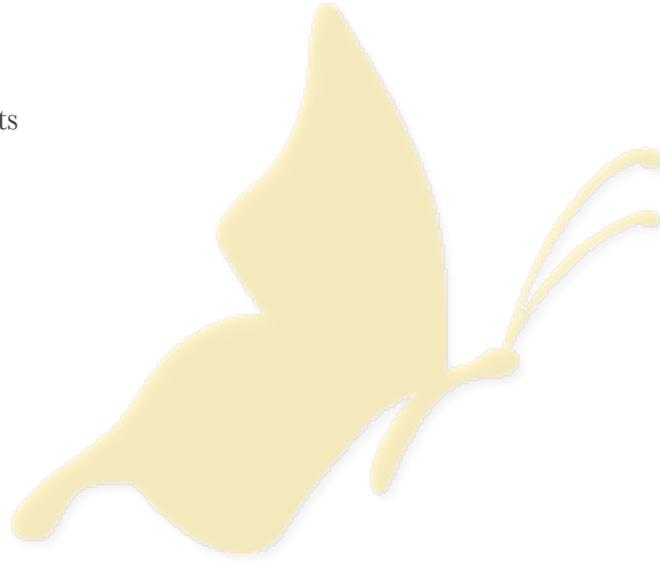


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Hingham, Massachusetts



## A Mother's Eulogy

### Memorial Service for Elizabeth Rose Olsen

Thank you all so very much for being here today for Len and me and to join in the Memorial Service for our dearest Elizabeth Rose. Over the last 3 months the outpouring of love and support has carried us through what can only be described as a nightmare.

This is certainly not how things should go. There are no words. But there are looks, hugs, touches, tears and even smiles. We should not be saying goodbye to our daughter, especially not so soon. Our lives have been turned upside down, fraught with tears and sorrow and endless questions, how, why, what if, what if not.

Elizabeth was the gift God gave me and all too soon called her back to himself. She was only here for a short time but she certainly did make an impact, a forever lasting impact on so many people. We loved each other from day one until the end, and I know that love is still very much alive today. For that love and that bond there will be no end.

Today I will do my best to share a love story, that of a mother and daughter who were only given 26 years together. A mother, ill-equipped to be a parent, especially to a daughter so confused by life's early childhood events that we always seemed to be looking for answers.

Dear Elizabeth,

Today is your day. Your day to shine. Your day to know that all you did for others was so much appreciated. All the love and support you gave to those most in need was a gift that they will never forget. Your goodness, not your illness will define you. Your kindness and caring will live on. That I promise you, my little one.

You brought a light to the world and everyone who was fortunate enough to really know you saw your radiance. You had an infectious smile, eyes that sparkled and an outward beauty that left most people captivated. Your heart was so full of kindness. Your energy boundless and your determination to do it your way unfaltering. You loved and played real hard. Sometimes, too hard. You wanted what you wanted when you wanted it, no if's and's or but's about it. You absolutely refused to take no for an answer. That all started at a very young age often involving screams, tears and the occasional thrashing on the floor.

This is my chance to say thank you Elizabeth Rose for being my hero being the best daughter, the best friend, the biggest cheerleader, the best one to love me to the moon and back. The person who gave me the strength to move ahead as a young widow and single mom when I felt I couldn't take one more step. The best one to help me make a change when I didn't want to even though I knew it had to be done no matter how scared I was. Your love gave me the power to live my life for us the best way I knew how. You helped me find my way, not at all the path I would have chosen, but the path God has asked me to travel with you by my side. You made me a better person.

Your early days were full of joy and happiness. You had a twinkle in your eye and a smile that never quit. You were a sweet, loving mischievous little girl who grew up to be a very empathetic young woman. You wanted to be wherever I was and that suited me just fine. We were The Olsen Girls. A Team as you always called us. Our theme song *Have I Told You Lately* by Rod Stewart said it all. *Have I told you lately that I love you, have I told you there's no one else above you? You fill my heart with gladness, take away all my sadness, Ease my troubles, that's what you do.*

It took a lot to get us down. We always did our best with what we had to work with. You brought joy to so many people. You were the world to your grandma Gladys. She became a new person when you were born. She absolutely doted on you. There was nothing she wouldn't do for her Rosebud, loving you during good times and especially during the bad ones. She spent summers in Hingham, caring for you while I worked. She took time to teach you so many basic life skills. She was so true to you, and you to her. She was your Jammin' Gramma. I cherish the picture of you two in the frame that says, "If you don't believe in Angels you haven't met my grandma." And now you are angels together.

Enter Len. You captivated this man's heart and he loved you like his own. There was nothing he didn't try to do for you. He deeply cared for you and gave you the best he could. He made our world so full. It was wonderful when you stopped calling the house and saying "Where's Mom?", rather engaging Len in a conversation and me having to

ask for the phone. That was such a beautiful sign to me of your true bond with each other.

In looking back over the past 8 years of our journey with your disease of addiction I have realized just how hard you tried to get well. You surrounded yourself with a fabulous sober community in Delray Beach. Countless great friends and supports. You had outstanding sponsors and you too were a wonderful sponsor for many who had no other options. You gave of yourself until you had nothing left to give. You were too critical of yourself and judged yourself much more harshly than you ever judged another human being. You stood up for anyone who was beaten down. You were a voice for the unheard. I remember you coming home from Middle School telling me stories of kids who were being picked on and how you would stick up for them. Even at a very early age you showed your true compassion. And when you were in the treatment facilities you would ask me to bring necessities to your roommates there because they had nothing. No matter how sick you were, you loved.

As any mother would do, I keep wondering if there was just one more thing we could have done to stop the events that lead to your all too soon passing. Did you say or do something we just overlooked? Did you ask for help and we were too busy? Did you reach for a hand that wasn't there or make a phone call or send a text that went unanswered? Were you not shown the compassion you so freely gave to so many? In my head I must say, I don't think so. I do not believe anyone of us had a role in your ending. But I believe we all had a place in your being. You were given to us for a reason, on loan we might say, from a higher power, giving us a chance to know and love you and share in your journey. I just think your journey was entirely too short and now it is up to us to keep you alive, even though we grieve. Even though our hearts are broken.

I have been told over and over that you are at peace. My head understands that; my heart doesn't like it. My head understands that you were very sick and fought against a relentless disease. My heart is grateful that you won many, many battles over the last eight years. My heart is angry that you didn't win the war. I know I have to say goodbye. But it hurts.

Len and I are completely devastated at losing our daughter. She was such and integral part of our world. We loved and laughed like most families. We had regular visits and phone calls and just enjoyed being together. We supported each other in good times and bad. Len and I were always on the ready for what lay ahead. But NOT for this.

I won't deny that we had many sleepless nights, several times we got the dreaded phone call that there was a new crisis unfolding for Elizabeth and us. But we managed and together we three made it through. We had accepted that this was our normal. We never expected it to end so soon. We were in it for the long haul, we never gave up.

But on the morning of July 6<sup>th</sup> our world came crashing down when we found out the unimaginable had happened. And here we are, raw and shaken. Scared about life without our daughter. Learning how to go on without hearing her voice, "Hey momma, hey Len.

Do you guys want to get dinner?” That was Elizabeth speak for us going to Delray, taking her out to dinner then putting gas in her car. But wait. First came the instructions, “Don’t leave just yet. I have to go to the gym, shower and get ready. And we NEED to order some Herbalife and get me cigarettes”. More Elizabeth speak – the fashionista needs to prep, do her makeup and hair and we should bring some extra cash. We never minded, and Thank God we never said no. We just wanted to be with our Elizabeth. The last time we saw her was to celebrate Len’s birthday. Oh but for one more time.

And if it was just us girls we always ended up shopping, of course. Lunch at our favorite place, Bagles With. Me the greasy pastrami sandwich and Elizabeth a salad. Then over to TJ Maxx, Marshalls, and ULTA. Yes, Elizabeth truly was a slave to fashion. And she always looked so good. Always. And then there was hair, the longer and the blonder the better. I must confess I did keep a little piece.

I never planned to bury my dear, dear child. We planned to grow old watching her grow up, beat that hideous disease, bring illumination to the dark world of addiction and shine her light on those who needed her help. With love and respect for Elizabeth’s search for truth it seems the only thing we can do is pick up her torch. Len and I will work to try to help those she didn’t get the chance to serve. To be her voice and her actions. To try to be her smile and her beauty in what can sometimes be an ugly world.

For those who knew and loved Elizabeth there is a takeaway. We need to be more like she was. Always strive to look our best. Always reach out to the person who is down. Offer a ride to someone without a car. Make sure a friend or even a stranger has food, coffee and maybe a smoke. If you are in a 12-step program, be sure you have a home group and that you show up to meetings. Find a sponsor, be a sponsor. Love your family. And above all, CALL OR TEXT your mother, every day. We moms worry.

And so my little one, I hope your friends and ours will continue holding you close in heart and prayer by loving Len and me. I hope they will reach out to us. By sharing their stories and memories of you we can all keep you alive. I hope they know their hugs mean so much because it is now our only way to hug you. Their joys will make us happy and their sadness will be met with our love, warmth and support.

I love you Elizabeth, I miss you more than words can express. My heart is broken. And now as you show yourself to us as a beautiful yellow butterfly, please know I feel your beauty around me. Please continue helping me be strong, just like you did as a little girl. Peace my little one. Peace.

Love, Memmy