

MM Summer Blue Sheet a-morgan@peak.org

WHAT CAME NEXT

"It's that unexpected and often unwanted call that interrupts our plans that steers us. At least that's how it seems to work for me. More later" (ACM "Summer Thoughts Blue Sheet")

I wrote those words after seeing Ken for the last time in Ashland. The "unwanted call," came the next day when we were at Max's graduation party. Though expected, some calls stun us. This one sent me off on a private walk in the sun along Shady Lane in Albany. Many have known such moments.

Another call, also unwanted, but when compared seems unimportant, came from Puget Sound. You may remember that we left our boat "securely moored" on a neighbor's buoy. Apparently not. Neighbors were on the search. We were still 250 miles away and not returning until the next day. Surely it would appear as it has in the past, resting on some friendly shore.

Two kinds of emails have been flowing in. The first in response to news about Ken. The second in response to news about my absent boat. I appreciate thoughtful concern. It is interesting to notice how we use email and Facebook to communicate many heartfelt greetings. One could not handle the same volume of contacts by phone.

Now back at our summer headquarters we're still trying to realize the fact of Ken's absence, yet having repeated remembrances of our lives together. And I'm still trying to get used to the idea that when I look out at our moorage the boat is gone. There is something of a similar feeling in both absences. The expected presence of someone or something valued, now out of sight.

We sat around the fire pit gazing at the silent flames untangling the knots of these last hectic days. Even the fire pit spoke memories, since Ken and his grandchildren gathered those rocks and put them in place one summer. Ken isn't going away soon.

Our grandson Max and girlfriend, Danielle arrived in the night and were ready for their work assignment for the day. The priority was to try to find the sailboat. They went to work on a borrowed motor, since ours was out of repair, and borrowed a neighbor's sturdy boat. There are whitecaps on the water as they splash along. So far no call reporting the sighting of our boat. The Sheriff's officer hoped the boat left on its own, but commented that thieves are looking for the kind of motor we had. We still hope.

A 14 year-old neighbor boy offered use of his kayak. He would accompany me in a brief search past the ferry dock. No sailboat that direction either. We decided to do the lagoon, a mystical piece of water entered by ducking under a bridge at high tide. It goes back into the dark overhanging trees, some of which have fallen into the lagoon leaving hidden snags. We paddled in silence, noting shoreline paths of the night creatures, and water life that scurries about in search of the daily feast. We go until the water is less than 4 inches deep, and so narrow our paddles push against the water grasses. We go until we have to back out. It's an awesome adventure. One I would not have taken were I not out in a kayak, taking a break from my search for the lost sailboat.

This day ends with absence as the dominant emotion. Wind blows, campfire glows, guests planning our evening meal. A nap won my time in late afternoon—in a landlocked lounge chair instead of my favorite berth on a gently rocking boat. I wonder how others are living out their personal times of absence.

— Art Morgan, June 13, 2011