

Hi friends,

Below you will find my description of my dad's last moments with us in what was a truly beautiful and peaceful passing. We are truly blessed to have been part of Al Bowes' life and to look forward to eternity shared with him.

Love

Lisa and Joan, my mom

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From: **Lisa LaLonde** [lisal@lisalalonde.com](mailto:lisal@lisalalonde.com)

Subject: My Dad's passing into heaven on Feb 26, 2009

Sent: Thursday Feb 26, 2009 5pm

Dear friends of Al Bowes,

Dad passed into the arms of Jesus at 1pm today surrounded by me, mom, his hospice nurse, his social worker, his health aide, and his pastor Toni Macon, and an impromptu send-off service. When the hospice friends told us that "his passing is near" mom called Pastor Toni. She came right over and gave him an official send-off with proper psalms and prayers out of the prayer book just the way he liked it. It "just so happened" that the hospice people decided to stop by to check on him. so we had a choir of women's voices singing Amazing Grace. It was a very beautiful send-off. It was also really beautiful to have the hospice people here because they could read all the signs and said "this is what's happening to him now." He had been in a semi-comatose state since yesterday, but his breathing had changed and was very shallow. He had been "staring" into what we call eternity in this state, and we were told to keep talking to him. In fact, I think I finally ran out of words by midnight last night, when the night nurse took over from me. Mom was up sleepless from 2-4 am so she filled in some more words and prayers.

Once Pastor Toni arrived, we witnessed and experienced a most beautiful thing. In fact, the hospice nurse and the social worker agreed that it was the most beautiful and peaceful passing they'd ever seen. The social worker said "we die as we live, and he was a gentle spirit, wasn't he?" Indeed. His breathing which had been very labored, gradually slowed and stopped. Almost imperceptibly at the end. And then his heart stopped. The nurse was right there to walk us through it gently. I commented that it was so much better to be surrounded by all of them and mom than to be alone in the middle of the night when he passed. They laughed and said, "He would never have done that to you." Then one of them told me about a family who was trying to get all the kids out of the room with a terminal patient so he could die in peace. "But," she said, "I believe the patients choose when they want to die. He died when all the kids were in the room with no grown-ups."

And here's the beautiful part. I do firmly believe that Dad was waiting for Pastor Toni. He was her encourager, he was her fan at church, and always cheered her on. And when she started praying a blessing on his journey, something happened. His eyes, which had been staring for days, looking into eternity we believe, suddenly looked up! He was staring heavenward. Something had changed. It was the beginning of his finally letting go. Mom and I both believe he wanted Pastor Toni there.

I can tell you that not only do I know my dad is in the place he was made for, the home we've been talking to him about and reminding him about...the place where Jesus is. He knows his redeemer. He ached for his home in glory. And truly, as many of you have experienced, he shed his body like the old house it is, and took on something wonderful that only he could see. We watched the process, and I do believe he chose his moment. But I also believe that Jesus finally did what we told Dad would happen...he tapped Dad on the shoulder and said, "Al, ready to go?" And Dad leapt into his arms. We had many moments in and out of the room after he died, and I have two observations to tell you joyfully: 1) the furrowed brow of pain was gone when he passed and 2) even the hospice friends said "He looks so much younger!" I kissed him good-bye several times after he passed, and I can tell you with the certainty of the angels declaration on Easter morning: "He is not here! Why do you search for the living among the dead! He has risen." He has risen indeed, just like the Bible says, just like so many before have experienced. He had given his whole life to Jesus and in His death he was truly welcomed home. Friends, the gospel is true.

We will miss him every day of our lives. We've actually really been missing him for days as he fell out of ability to communicate with us. But I know that I will see him again, someday when my work is done and I get escorted into my Savior's presence. May it be as beautiful as this was.

So here are some practical things and some prayer points:

Practical: He has donated his body to medical science for research. So for two years the Med students at the NY Medical College in Valhalla will be studying him so they can become "the doctors in the top half of their class" (one of his favorite jokes when he met a doctor..."50% of doctors were in the bottom half of their class, which part were you in?") So we are not having a wake or a funeral. He said he didn't want anybody gawking at his old shell of a body. Truly. He really wanted a celebration. So we will have a Memorial Service not right away but soon. We want his sons to be involved and we plan on celebrating the life of an amazing man. So start remembering those stories now. If you are on this email list you will be notified when we make our plans.

Prayer points: Right now we want to sleep. And maybe eat. And clean, what is that. We are going to have our waves of grief, so pray that we can remember and learn to live as new people who have gone through something that changes you. Please pray for us as we start to do things like sell his car, sort through his clothes, you know the drill. We are waiting on the Lord for what happens next. After sleep :)

Thank you to everyone for walking through this long journey with us on email. Your prayers have sustained us, your love has encouraged us, and your communication has held us close in community and that has been life. I know some of you will need to grieve, too. All I can say is, let yourself do it. He was a remarkable man, but the good news is: He still is.

much love

Lisa