10 December 2011

Lena Hittelman

Dear Lena,

Your Dad's passing, following so closely upon that of my own father, has me reflecting on the three senior Hittelman siblings, Celia, Nate and Joe, the Titans, as it were, of our pantheon. They were very different from each other, and extraordinary, each in his or her own way. Celia, the Queen of Arts, fiercely protective and loyal, and always ready with amusing and insightful reflections on our history. Joe, the steadfast healer, indomitable beacon of integrity and personal commitment, and Man of the Mind. And your father, Nate, whom I believed to be *Superman* and *Everyman* at the same time. *Superman* because for as long as I can remember I knew he had the prowess to do so many things so well, from mathematics to building things to athletics to father- and unclehood, yet without a hint of braggadocio (oh, maybe a little when it came to athletics). *Everyman* because I always thought of him as the salt of the earth — warm, approachable, engaged, interested, non­judgmental, encouraging, supportive and smiling. An engineering metaphor is perfectly apt for him: he was a bridge between the two very different, more esoteric universes of his siblings.

Although I left Planet Los Angeles many, many years ago, one of my joys in returning periodically for family celebrations was to be able to see your parents. A baffling thing happened to me when I left the family orbit: to some peoples' minds I became frozen in time, always the same age I was when I left. It's as though for some I wasn't allowed to change, and I persisted as a snapshot. But Uncle Nate and Aunt Mary seemed to accept change as completely natural, to acknowledge evolution, with no apparent expectation that I should or would always be as I had been. And even though in recent years I wasn't able to see them in Los Angeles as regularly as I would have liked, I made it a practice to telephone them a couple of times a year, with no agenda, just to talk. I felt these connections were warm and immediate, and I will always be grateful for that.

Three fallen Hittelmen in one year is truly a tragedy. If there can possibly be a bright spot at this moment it is that the senior luminaries of the greater Hittelman family are now three extraordinary women, Mary, Celia, and Betty, whose teachings and spirits continue to guide us. How lucky we are to have them!

Karl Hittelman

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