

Alf was born August 15, 1939 in Gamlakarleby, Finland. He died July 14, 2003, in Hollywood, Florida. He was the second youngest in our family. Alf lived as a single man on the East Coast of Florida right on the ocean. He loved the ocean, and whenever I would talk to him he always mentioned the beauty of its color and the warm weather. Seems it was always 82 and sunny there. He loved to bicycle along the beach, visiting all his friends along the way.

On a warm day in May of 2003 he was sitting on his patio enjoying the ocean and the sun with a glass of cold ice tea when he noticed his left hand start to tingle. He lost the grip on the glass and it crashed to the floor. Now he felt his entire left arm go numb. He was rubbing his arm to try to get the blood to circulate, when he noticed losing vision in his right eye. He started seeing stars and immediately called his friend Marina. She came over and rushed him to the hospital. There it was determined that he had a 95% blockage of his carotid artery on the right side of his neck. He was having a stroke. He was taken to surgery, the blockage was removed and fortunately he had no residual affect of the stroke at all. The doctor said he was very lucky, and the prognosis for him was very good. Cut down on salt and don't drink so much Bud-Light, was what his doctor told him. He was sent home to recuperate, and continue his life on the beach. I talked to him a week after his surgery, and he was in good spirits and looking forward to getting back on his bike again.

On the morning of July 15, I had a call from the Hollywood Police Department saying that Alf had been out riding his bike the day before, and was struck by a truck...he did not survive the accident. The rest of what the officer was saying was just a blur in my mind. How could this happen? This was not supposed to happen. He was supposed to be sitting on his patio enjoying the ocean and the sun, and now he was gone. He had survived a stroke and surgery, only to be taken by a tragic accident.

My brother's death has really made me think about the frailty of my own life. We are not guaranteed a long and healthy life, none of us. We all live in a fragile state that could at any time be cut short. Like my brother did, we all expect to have a long productive life, grow old together with someone, and pass on together. The one thing we don't know is the day or hour of our passing. What more important reason to live our life, the good life, than that. Our last word to our loved ones or our friends might just be that, our last words...so let's always make our last words to each other words of love.

Alf's ashes were scattered out on his beloved ocean, which he loved so much to sit by, and marvel at the beauty of its color. The blue sky, the white clouds, and the deep color of the ocean will go on, and like the vision we now have to have of our mother, who no longer sees the blue sky, the green fields and the birds on the wing, we now need to marvel at the beauty of the ocean for my brother.

Let's not dwell upon the sad things in life though, there are too many of them. Let's instead remember the good things, there are just as many of those. We need to live our life as if every day will be our last. Live the good life. Live each day so that we can always be proud of the days that we have left behind us.



There is a lone lily white seagull gliding high above a gentle wave in the ocean. Far below her there are some people bent over the edge of a boat scattering something in the water. A few quiet, murmured words drift up heavenly past the seagull about a life cut short, about a man who

will be sorely missed, about a father, a brother, and a friend. The seagull makes a wide loop and descends closer down. Just as the ashes disappear from the waters, the seagull swoops low by the boat and climbs back high into the air. Tearfully all eyes follow the seagull as she climbs on an invisible wave of air high up into the sky...the soul of my brother is carried on the wings of a pure white seagull on its way to Heaven.

Kaj Håkan Granholm July 16, 2003