

The Perfect Tomato

Remembering Dad brings me back to that day when he, well into his 70's, and Davey, my three-year-old son, walked to the supermarket. Dad's kidneys were already failing, and he tired easily. Despite that, he initiated a conversation with his grandson whereupon they agreed to walk to the store to buy tomatoes and a few other things.

I watched them from the window. They walked slowly, held hands, and engaged in conversation. Not having a camera, my mind imprinted the image, which also included their faces repeatedly turning in each other's direction, sometimes with a smile. Although I wish also for a recording of their conversation, the visual image is framed in still motion and perpetually preserved in my memory.

No longer seeing them, I thought about the walk, over a half mile. *They will tire*, I thought, *and be glad for a ride back*. So I waited a bit, then got into my car and headed to the supermarket.

It didn't take long to spot them. There they were, conversing in front of the tomatoes. I stood, and watched. Both serious, in harmony. Grandpa picked up a tomato, examined it, handed it to Davey while saying something. Davey examined all sides, passed it from one hand to the other, or turned it about with both hands. Then looking at Grandpa, either shook his head up and down or side to side, sometimes saying something. This routine went on for a while. It appeared that if Davey nodded in agreement or gave verbal consent, Grandpa would gently place the tomato in the cart; otherwise, he returned it to the pile.

I recognized this as a moment I had no permission to interrupt. I returned to my car, drove home, and waited for their return.

Eventually, the door opened and in they walked smiling. Davey ran to me with the bag of tomatoes. Grandpa sank into the couch.

Tenderness cannot be defined, only felt. It envelops me each time I replay the image of that journey to the supermarket by grandpa and his three-year-old grandson in search of the perfect tomato.