

I don't have a good sense of what my parents' relationship felt like to them. I don't know exactly how they met or what brought them together. I know my mother had reluctantly returned home to Wisconsin in 1935 to take care of her ailing parents, and she and my dad got together while he was home visiting his mother. They had both studied in and loved Chicago during the roaring '20s (they didn't know each other then) and after that they (separately) experienced some of the deprivations and reduced expectations brought on by the Depression, though both of them always had jobs -- my mom doing social work in Pennsylvania, and my dad doing architecture and design, first with the WPA and then for an architectural firm.

So they had Chicago in common, and their Wisconsin roots, but I never felt there was a strong bond between them. They married late for those days -- in their 30s. I know nothing of my dad's romantic history, but I know that my mom had never quite gotten over her high school sweetheart, who'd dropped her when he got to the University of Wisconsin and became a football star. My dad

loved his work and spent long hours at it, and when he wasn't in his office he was usually in the garage doing woodwork or outside building a wall or... My mom did some volunteer work, and belonged to a few women's groups, but she didn't seem passionate about anything. Except travel, that is. I remember coming home from school and finding her in her favorite chair poring over travel magazines, and the thing I remember best about my life growing up in my family is the trips we took together.

Most of our friends and neighbors didn't travel at all. It was the end of the Depression, and then pretty soon the Second World War, and no one had much extra cash, but also travel just wasn't something most Midwesterners thought much about. My parents, on the other hand, used every spare penny and every vacation to explore the country. We always traveled by car. One winter we drove down along the Mississippi, visiting romantic old plantations and beautiful gardens; another year we followed Route 66 to California and then traveled up the coast from L.A. to San Francisco. We never had the money to travel abroad, but one winter we drove down through Mexico, visiting the pyramids and floating gardens near Mexico City, winding through the mountains to the silver town of Taxco, and ending up in Acapulco where I mainly remember the amazing cliff divers and the bougainvillea.

Whether because of nature, nurture or a combination of the two, my sister and I both ended up with the travel bug. We started taking off on our own in our late teens, with our parents' full blessing and support. I used a small inheritance I received at the time of my dad's death on an extended trip to Europe, knowing he would thoroughly approve, only wishing he could have come along. Throughout my life I've seen a great deal of the world and travel has been a central focus. It's been the binding element in my nearly 50 year marriage to a man with a very different background from mine, but an equally strong urge to hit the road. I don't believe that my parents are looking down at me from Heaven, and don't usually wish that that they were, but I do wish they could have known how far I'd roam, how wonderful it has been and how much they had to do with it.