

A home for Bryan

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My current woodworking project takes me a bit outside my comfort zone but in a good way.

Five years and a week ago I went to the airport to pick up our friend Susan, who had flown back from visiting her son Bryan. She intended to deal with some 'home business' quickly before heading back to Florida. But as we rode the elevator up from baggage claim, she got the call that Bryan had taken a turn and passed away while his Mom was in the air.

Both Susan and Bryan meant a lot to famille McD. Still do. And we always looked forward to Bryan's visits. He had a very dry but gentle sense of humor - which he needed, because he fought his cancer for years through a series of peaks and valleys, hopes raised and dashed, misdiagnoses and misdirected prognoses and ultimately, the downward spiral.

Bryan and his boyfriend hosted our daughter when she moved to Florida to begin her tenure working for Disney and for that, Mary and I were beyond grateful. He was a generous soul.

Susan kept Bryan's ashes in the back of a closet, not able to face the final decision and not wanting to get it wrong. So we had sort of forgotten about it until she asked Mary last week to have me make a wooden box to serve as his urn. She hasn't decided on final disposition but she did want him to have something nicer than the institutional container in which he came home. So we decided on a columbarium box because that will work, whatever she ultimately decides.

Being blind, Susan's stated requirements were limited to 'dignified and smooth feeling.' Other than that, she entrusted Mary and me with the details. But Bryan himself had a very refined sense of design and we want both look and feel to respect his sensitivities. I mean, I don't personally believe in an afterlife of any sort but who says I'm right and if spirit Bryan is watching over my shoulder as I prepare his 'retirement home,' I don't want to give him any reason to be disappointed. So, his mini-manse will be constructed of prime purpleheart from my personal stash with a fitted top that Susan can glue shut if she ever decides to do so.

This box will be flawless and gorgeous inside and out. Because that's what Susan deserves, even if she can't see the finished product. More important, it's what Bryan would want and I can't be sure he's not watching.