

Tangible Stories: Commemorating Our Connection.

It was a warm and sunny day in October 2020. My dad had just finished stacking a cord of wood for winter and started painting a new baseboard on the house. I was hanging clothes on the line from my deck, when I saw him struggling to stand. I rushed down to help him into a chair. I didn't know it at the time, but he was having a stroke that would take his life the next day. We watched the steller's jays hanging, gathering seeds from giant sunflowers, while he tried to catch his breath and hide his vulnerability. These last moments with him are etched in my mind as both beautiful and painful, and the event became imagery as well as a creative catalyst.

This solo exhibit is a collaboration between me and my dad, our memories, our family, and friends. The work is conceptual and is as much about the process and materials as it is about the finished product. Each piece tells a story and contains tangible evidence that Ken, my dad, is still with us.

I have learned time isn't so linear. It is a looping and winding road, passing over paths that we've walked before.

He died during covid so there wasn't a funeral. Spending time with old slides and photos, ideating with him in mind, wandering our 5 acres of land I grew up on, gathering metal and materials he's touched and salvaged, was cathartic and a way to process grief. I talked to him like he was here, and I could imagine his voice and laughter in response.

Dad's work jeans are braided and stitched together with our family's, in a spiral. I made teal copper oxide paint with wire from his shop. A machinist, mechanic, and welder, my dad sometimes made sculptures with the metal scraps he saved. Foraging our land, I've found his hydraulic manuals, collaging their yellow pages into flower crowns. I've gathered broken shovel heads and a crushed-camper's siding for petals around seeds of encouragement. I welcome you to take one if it speaks to you. Old silk screens salvaged from "Uncle" Don's Sign Shop, frame images that connect us to our past together.

My Dad played music with Uncle Don and his band mates since he was a teenager. It was the first time he felt like he belonged. I read this in his secret folder of poems and songs, so I know it to be true. For as long as he could, he played with his friends in their bands. This is when he was happiest; dancing with mom, playing drums, wherever there was music.

Though these works start with my shared stories, each contains unconditional love and an inherent openness that invites you to connect with them in your own way.

Dad once told me, "Follow your dreams, the money will come."
Maybe the money hasn't shown up in bounty, but my life is so rich. With all your hard work, love and encouragement, you gave me all I need to thrive. Thank you, Dad.