

Amar's Farewell to Ba

My Ba,

Shardaba has been a constant in my life. As I sat down to write this, trying to sort through all the memories of Ba in my head, I realised I had spent half my life living in the same house as Ba, the same or even longer than having lived with Komal or Anjali.

The first 7 as a young boy, of which I have few memories. Another 4 years as a moody teenager who in hindsight did not appreciate Ba anywhere near as much as I should have. I cringe when I think back to my school days, I'd be trying to get to sleep and Ba's TV would be on full blast in the next room. I would storm over and (not so politely) ask her to turn it down or just pick up the remote and do it myself and then walk back out without saying anything.

Luckily I got to spend another 3 and half years with Ba as a somewhat mature adult when I moved back to Switzerland in 2014. I'll be forever grateful for this extra time. The memories I will cherish most are part of the simple daily routines built up during this time.



Walking into the house, whether I'd been away for a few hours or a few months, the first stop was always to go say hi to Ba. So ingrained was this reaction that it was still my instinct to do so when arriving back in Zurich last week for the funeral.



Taking Ba's tea down to her in the mornings and at 4 o'clock on weekends. Not after 5 because that's too late and she wouldn't be able to sleep. 2 sugars, and bring some biscuits with it or don't bother at all.

The noise of the elevator opening and Ba's shuffling feet meant she was coming up to lunch.

The fact that she lived in this house 15 years and still, without fail, got mixed up between going upstairs vs downstairs, is amazing.

During those last years when I was in Zurich, age had started to take its toll as her mobility suffered, first using the cane and then the walker. At the same time it's remarkable how self-sufficient she was at the age of 90, still able to go on walks by herself and even cooking for me on occasion when mum and dad were out. As she spent more and more time in her room and became more reluctant to venture beyond the house to socialise, I used to wonder what she was getting out of life. And I realised that her happiness came now from the happiness of her family. She was less focused on herself but still made multiple calls a day checking in on the wellbeing of others.





My teenage self begrudged that loud TV sound. Now the lack of that sound makes the house eerily silent, makes Ba's absence all that more noticeable. She had been saying with increasing regularity for multiple years that her time was almost up, that she wanted God to take her. Each time I would say, "No chance! you're going to live to 100!" The look on her face told me she was dismayed at the idea. Well she was right, she didn't make it quite to 100, but she did make it to 94, having lived a wonderfully rich life, and surrounded by family until the very end.

BA, you will be missed, but never forgotten. X

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Amar

