

The Path of Courage & Grace - Poem
June 10, 2018
By Shannon Sullivan
(inspired by Grandma Paula)

The path, sometimes not so easy as
it seems, to walk, and yet
pushed forward - sometimes - falling forward.
Was this a decision she even made for herself at all?

A young girl, 13, maybe...
Eats one small meal each day,

If lucky, of potatoes or bread.
In the off-chance the family gets meat to share
is a good day indeed.
But mostly it is a shared meal
from a single brown paper bag -
crumbs of white bread -
tumbling out onto the wood table

To be a dancer, singer or actress - wouldn't that be grand?
What a wish it was... Only a wish suddenly dashed -
her dreams die broken by cries of War!
A family scattered and torn apart, at age 16,
she decides to make a brand new start.

Her sister and her run hand-in-hand through farms
-in the dark -
across the Czechoslovakian land,
hiding away from the Reich's darkest hands.

On the run, once across the border into a small, safe German town,
she begins work as a nanny,
caring for a child she knows very little about.

Was this part of her path, a calling of sorts,
Or was she running from danger - for survival -
not really part of her original plan.



In her new role as nanny, not that of an actress or singer,
as she had once dreamed.
Instead, she meets a young man, United States Air Force,
and into his arms she ran.

Not a nanny as a calling but for survival, a choice.
Not an actress but a wife of the US Air Force - survival once more.
Just maybe sometime survival is part of the path.

Moving along her path, displaced and alone,
she survives and she thrives and
onto her new path she is born.

Her small family, their final post - she would soon call home -
a station in Yuma - her two daughters, her husband
and her new citizenship gained,
led her to a school district becoming a baker -
where no children would starve under her care ever again.

Her path born of survival,
pushed her forward to a place
where a seed deep in her heart to feed hungry children
was set in motion, for which she played a part.

For 60 years her hands baked fresh donuts and
crafted beautiful wedding cakes, baked teddy bear cookies
and jam filled spitzbuben desserts,
peanut butter bars and moist dinner rolls.

Her soul never resting.
Each school child fed kept pushing her forward
from a past that had seen too much death.

To survive the worst
To have lived the best
To find herself free and
To have fed so many children,
allowed her soul to finally find a little rest.

I pray that as we travel on our paths, our journeys,
whether together or apart, that we remember a piece of my grandmother's wisdom -
she took the darkest times and still was able to shine so brightly.

May we all walk our paths just as we are in each moment - whether we step toward, fall down onto, are pushed into, are shakin' about, leap toward, step backwards or stumble upon... May we be held in Spirits arms as we travel and may Grace always be close at hand.

A-ho

