

Will the wallet go extinct?

That was the question I heard on the radio last week.

(Yes, I couldn't figure out how to sync my rental car to my Bluetooth, so radio it was.)

And amid the digital ID and paying with our phones at checkout discussion, I found myself longing to ask my dad this very question.

It was a question he would have loved... ok, maybe *loved* is a strong word.

He would have actually *hated* this question.

That this was even a consideration or a possibility.

But make **no** mistake, he would have **absolutely had an opinion**.

It made me think more about this, and then it made me think about wallets in general. Credit cards, cash, membership cards... and maybe for a sentimental person, a few faded photographs.

My dad was a fiery guy. Nobody can deny it... he was a true live wire.

Often he would be sitting quiet and stoic, but soon enough, you found yourself in a screaming match about economies and different countries' governments collapsing overnight from a not-yet-but-soon-to-be-established coup.

Sometimes you'd be yelling about the same exact thing, **in agreement**, but still yelling all the same.

Inside my dad's wallet we found three photos...

Remember how I said he was a fiery guy? Well, speaking of fire...

The first was a photo with Dad and a few friends surrounding a cake with the words '**Burn Baby Burn**' on it.

In 1965, the night of Dad's high school graduation, he and his friends' celebration got busted up by the cops.

Feeling all sorts of angst, Dad and his buddies decided those Medford Lakes cops had too much time on their hands. Naturally, as one does, it was decided that the cops needed something better to do....

And what better distraction was there than lighting Beach 3's pavilion on fire?

I can't say I condone the arson, but I can't say I'm surprised either.

Dad and his one friend were the only ones who got caught that summer, and Dad never once uttered anyone else's name.

The next picture was with his best friend, Chuck Mullen, after being on the Miss Beach Haven booze cruise for several hours. Dad smiling wide, and Mullen licking the side of his face.

Dad and Mullen were faithful, loyal friends. In fact, as I look out into this crowd, I can see many friends Dad made over the years, despite the ironic and let's be honest, just plain mean nicknames: Sneaky, 9-Fingers, Globby. And if you don't know who was who...count yourself lucky.

And, I can't talk about Dad without talking about Beach Haven. In each of his four children, Dad instilled a love of Beach Haven's magic. He truly loved being at the beach.

In Beach Haven, it was like he could breathe easier than anywhere else.

He loved nothing more after a long week of work than walking into our house on Tenth Street, loosening his tie, and yelling, "Who wants to go for a night swim?"

And I loved nothing more than going with him.

He helped all of us fall in love with the ocean, but always taught us about its power.

He'd often say, just in case we'd forgotten, "Never turn your back on the ocean." And he made sure to always hold my hand when we went under the breakers.

The last picture in Dad's wallet was of him and my mom.

His arm casually hung around her with an easy smile, Mom holding a butcher's knife in one hand and a hunk of raw meat in the other.

A love story **and** a cautionary tale, all in one frame.

Mom and Dad had a storied kind of love.

They met when Mom was 14 and Dad was 17. At first, mom was just Mike Wynne's little sister. But soon, they fell in love.

They danced in the rain at Wilson Field in Medford Lakes.

Their very first dance to "*Till*" by the Angels would later be their wedding song.

Dad gave Mom a star sapphire at 16, which meant that all of his daughters and granddaughters would also get a star sapphire at 16.

He was just that sentimental of a guy.

Music and dancing filled our home growing up: Fridays with Frank, Saturdays with Sinatra. If we heard *Shout*, *We Didn't Start the Fire*, or *Call Me Al*, we'd be up and dancing. Basically the soundtrack of parental chaos in our house.

That picture of him and Mom represented the family he had, and the love that endured over forty-four years.

It's the kind of love that shows up **especially** when things get hard.

In these last two years, Mom took care of Dad with a level of devotion that was quiet and constant. It wasn't easy. But she did it. And I know he felt that. Even when he couldn't always say it.

The photos in dad's wallet were worn and faded, creased at the corners like they'd been held and re-held over the years.

They weren't fancy or for show. Just quietly carried.

They reflected parts of Dad we knew well and maybe parts we didn't.

If I'm being honest, Dad was a complicated man.

To his friends, he was loyal and unforgettable.

To his wife and kids, it was more layered than that.

He could be sharp and funny, generous and withholding, thoughtful and distant. Sometimes all in the same afternoon.

And yet, he kept *those* photos in his wallet.

He carried some version of love with him, even if he didn't always know how to show it.

And maybe that's what we can carry forward, too.

That life isn't meant for us to be some perfect version of ourselves, but a real one of substance and grittiness.

Where we still choose to dance even when our insides hurt from grief and hollowness.

So here's to the love we carry. In all its forms. In all its flaws.

And we'll keep dancing, even with the sadness. Because that's what he'd want. Rest in peace, Dad, and roses on your pillow. We'll keep our promises we made. I love you.