

# “BETTER DAYS ARE COMING”

A number of my friends and colleagues are caring for parents whose strength and faculties are waning. Some folks will be going into care, and some are already there.

It's an old story: while some grandparents suffer inside their disorienting dementia, their grown kids suffer in the idea that their parents no longer remember their names, and the grandkids suffer in the confusion of it all, wondering if this is what growing old is all about. We come into the world helpless and with no memory of what came before, and we go out in pretty much the same way.

Today, March 8th, is International Women's Day, and it's also the twenty-fifth anniversary of my Mother's passing. She had lost a good deal of her past and her memories from brain damage back in 1977, and then as she spent much of her next eighteen years in Riverview, sedated and cloistered away from the world, she slowly lost more. Hers was a premature retirement from all that might have been left of her life if many things had gone differently. Her institutionalized years were, from my young, heartachey perspective, wasted years in a life that had lost its potential. But even if she'd lost many of the more recent memories of her past, she could still enjoy the present: listening to music, or enjoying the taste of a chocolate bar. Those parts of her were still in there, even when lots of other things had changed by degrees.

Last night, my wife and I were sitting in The Fairview Pub while the Soul City Band played the hell out of some blues and rock classics. Over the past thirty years or so, The Fairview Pub has developed a good rep as a live music venue and a neighbourhood watering hole. It's also got more grey hair per square foot than anywhere else this side of a legion hall, and last night at The Fairview, that grey hair was absolutely dancing its ass off and having the time of its life.

The view seems fair indeed, at least for so long as it lasts. This time next year, the old building that the Fairview Pub lives in will be demolished and redeveloped, and another piece of the city will go vertical to convert unused airspace into municipal tax revenue or something, I

guess. The lease rates will rise, businesses and people will move, and things will keep changing.

As the Soul City Band played "Better Days are Coming", I watched a hunched old gent in a sweater vest dancing with a 60 year-old woman. The old boy loved to dance and was at the Fairview all the time, showing us what kind of fun our future might hold. He arrived alone, and had a different dancing partner every time. I learned that he's actually one hundred and two years old! There's a good lesson to be had in watching a very, very old dude jiving and swinging in his glory, dancing his butt off for as long as he can.