

Frightening Memories ©

By Connie J. Schlosberg

I remember almost drowning off the coast of Daytona Beach, Florida when I was eighteen years old. My dad had just gotten over a serious operation and was out of a job because of his illness. We moved in with my Aunt Ethel and Uncle Joe who were living in Deland, Florida at the time. Both my aunt and uncle worked all day. My dad decided we needed a break from all the stress we were under for my dad not having a job to support us. We went to Daytona Beach for the day to go swimming and just lay out in the sun.

The day started out warm and sunny but we were unaware of any storm arrival. It turned out that a hurricane was on its way. The beach allowed cars to drive right up to the ocean side so you could park in the sand and set up your blankets right next to your car. We sat on the blankets that we got from my aunt's linen closet. They were old but sufficed for the purpose. My dad and I went for a swim in the ocean. My mom hates the water and the sun so she stayed near the car. The water was warm but the waves were pretty rough. At first, we were in shallow water but the waves got bigger. The silky sand under my feet kept slipping by. I couldn't keep up with the undertow. I'm a petite person and the water kept rising above my head. I'm also not a good swimmer. I couldn't hear my dad but felt him grab my hand. His hand felt extremely soft to me. I swallowed salty seawater and I think seaweed had coiled around my numbed legs. The experience felt surreal like I could leave at any moment but I couldn't.

My dad yelled for help and I heard him gulp some ocean water. I yelled for help too. I saw him put up his hands but that was about it. I turned to find two bulky lifeguards with life preserves. I'm not sure how we ended up grabbing the life preserves but I remember being pulled in. They helped us walk onto the beach. My dad told them about the operation he just had and they checked out his vitals to make sure he was okay. Thankfully he was just fine. My dad even introduced me to the lifeguards like he was trying to set me up with one of them. Dad has a sense of humor even in danger. I was nervous but glad to be out of the ocean. My mother had no clue what was going on until a teacher and her daughter on vacation from Alaska told her. Mom came over to us shaking like a leaf. I can still picture the paleness of her already alabaster skin that looked almost see-through. My dad was still breathing heavy. The cloud covered sun was still warm. The beach looked normal. The dark blue ocean mocked us as we turned our backs on it. Our ordeal seemed private. Everyone was going about their day.