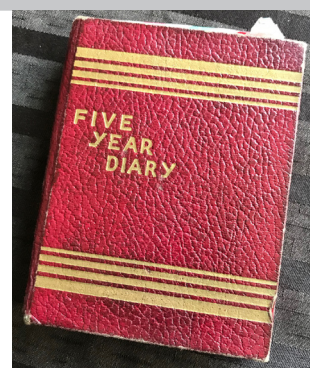


AFTERWORD



I have had this diary in my possession since we cleaned out my dad's house after he died in 2009 but this is first time I have read it all the way through. I have laughed and smiled more often than I've cried doing so, and that is an accomplishment because I've been grieving my mom's loss most of my life — I'm 56 and was just 17 when she died on May 10, 1981, on Mother's Day.

But this diary is a revelation. The person I discovered between the red covers of her travel diary is a gift. She is smart and fun. She is adventurous. She revels in travel and learning. She likes the boys, she enjoys singing and dancing, and a drink now and then.

What was I doing at 22? I was engaged, finishing journalism school, starting my professional life. Everything seemed possible.

I believe that's how it was for her. That while she'd never known her mother, and her father's death when she was a young teen had forced her from her tiny hometown, she remained optimistic and hopeful and full of life.

I have to believe it — it's all there, in her own handwriting.

A photograph of a handwritten page from a diary, showing cursive text on lined paper. The text is written in blue ink on a piece of lined paper with blue horizontal lines. The handwriting is fluid and cursive. The page is placed on a dark, textured surface. The text reads: "came home. with them from there. Arrived home - at last - at 9:00 P.M. ^{Sept} 13. Dead Beat. It¹⁹ was a wonderful trip, something I will never forget meeting all those wonderful people & seeing all those fabulous places & things, just hope I have the opportunity to do it again. THE END." The word "THE" is written above "END" and "END" is written below "again".