

SENIOR MOMENTS

A phone call triggers a flood of memories

"So, you are renewing your membership for you and your husband?" the pleasant-voiced man at Descanso Gardens asks on the phone.

I am silent for a long time.

I want to tell him that George and I had a tradition of moonlight kisses at Descanso. How we attended the summer concerts every year and sometimes would wander off on a walking path and dance to the music.



Patricia Bunin
Columnist

I want to tell him how we enjoyed picnicking under "our tree," a massive oak that has a trunk shaped like a bear's claw.

I want to tell him that the year we were late getting to the Lilac Festival, because I dawdled, the celebration cake was all gone and he teased me about it every year.

"So am I finally going to get some cake or do you have to change your shoes again?"

I want to tell him that we named the ducks after singers and loved sitting by the pond and calling out to see if they would come to us. "Look, here comes Elvis."

I want to tell him we once squeezed ourselves into the caboose of the kiddie train and rode through the gardens laughing like kids.

I want to tell him how one soft summer evening we sat in the rose garden gazebo rehearsing lines for a play and got so engrossed we didn't notice the gardens were closing. "You folks spending the night?" the guard asked us.

I want to tell him that the weekend before my mastectomy we were at Descanso for the pops concert and I told George that I wanted to take it all in "just in case this was my last one." He said there would not be a "just in case." We would be back next year ... and we were.

And I want to tell him how it broke my heart that I could not make the same promise to George when, 20 years later, we found out he had terminal cancer.

"About the renewal, ma'am?" the pleasant voice breaks into my silence.

I tell him that the membership will now be only in my name. One name. Two hearts.

Email Patricia Bunin at patriciabunin@sbcglobal.net. Follow her on Twitter @PatriciaBunin.