

Things the Internet has Ruined (Hope)

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Before the Internet, people just died
and maybe you didn't know they had died
because the last you heard they had moved somewhere
like Fort Meyers or Punta Gorda

and they passed out of your life with ease,
so that sometimes you might pause
to think of something that they had said or did
which would cause you to smile

and then you would wonder what happened to them,
so that you would think that they were sitting on a beach somewhere
sipping a cocktail and watching waves
while you were stuck in Belle Fourche still working the same job

you've been working for twenty years,
and you might have felt some envy, but mostly, you were comforted
with the thought that someday you would also be on a beach somewhere
sipping a margarita and watching the waves.

Now, when you have the memory of a person,
you wonder whatever happened to them,
and where did they move to,
so, you search their name on your stupid phone or your laptop

and you find out that they are not sipping a Rum and Coke in Pensacola
but that they are dead
and have been dead for years.

The unknowing of a death is gone:
accessibility
has destroyed tranquility.

Which is what happened when I searched for my old secretary,
who had moved to Florida before the Millennium,
and saw that she had died seven years ago,
and all this time I had not thought of her often,

except to share the joke we played on her stalker cop-ex-boyfriend
or to think of her chipmunk happiness, her adorable face,
her independence:
the reinvention of herself after forty, after divorce.

This time has passed, not seeming like years at all,
unless a year becomes a day or an hour at this age,

and all the while I have thought she was wearing a sarong,
shopping at Coldwater Creek, listening to Jimmy Buffet songs,
with a man of some wealth and years, or no wealth and less years,
laughing alongside her,

and I wonder what she died from, and I hope she did not suffer,
but mostly, I want to hold her in the present,
the ocean-side, now-should-be-late-sixty-ish-imp,
that this awful screen has stolen from me.