

Decade-old seed sprouts new life

By Jim Cornelius
News Editor

Katie Diez decided this year that she would finally unbox her late father's old shirts and make something of them to commemorate a life that ended a decade ago.

Though she had never quilted before, she decided to cut up those old shirts and make a quilt for her mom and each of her siblings as a remembrance of Bill Kruger. In the process, she found a tiny something that affirmed the tenacity of life despite loss and the passage of time.

"In February, I found a little tomato seed on one of my dad's shirts and I ended up flicking it off," she recalled.

She regretted doing that, thinking that she might have been able to do something with it. She went back and found one more tomato seed.

Diez kept a journal through the process, and recounted

how difficult it was to start cutting up her father's shirts — and not to use each fully. And she recalled her joy at getting a second chance at the tomato seed:

"I find that I feel guilty when I don't use every scrap of fabric. Almost as if I'm wasting the animal I just shot," she wrote. "Planning the cuts feels like I'm field-dressing a deer, which is ironic — Dad was a hunter. I found another tomato seed. I had discarded the first one and regretted not trying to sprout it. I feel like I won the lottery finding ONE MORE seed! I'm soaking it and will try to plant it."

She did — and found success.

"I've been nurturing it for the past two months and it's now four feet tall and growing tomatoes," she said. "And it was in a box stuck to a shirt for 10 years."

The remarkable occurrence connected her with her late

father.

"My dad was a gardener, and it just had meaning for me to see that," she said.

She wanted to make a presentation of the plant along with the quilts for Christmas, so she kept quiet about the origins of the plant, even though family members had to occasionally help her keep the grow light on it when Katie was otherwise occupied. If they were puzzled by her insistence on growing a tomato plant in the winter, they kept it to themselves.

"They're kind of used to me doing weird stuff, so they didn't ask too many questions," she said.

Katie found nurturing the plant a pleasant retreat from the tumult of 2016, and it proved a fine symbolic gift to the family over the holiday.

She discovered that growing the plant and making the quilts was a way of prolonging her father's story, keeping



PHOTO PROVIDED

Katie Diez nurtured a tomato plant from a seed found among her dad's effects, which included shirts she turned into quilts.

memories fresh and vivid even after the passage of a decade.

And she felt it was a story

she wanted to pass along.

"It's just a neat story that we thought we would share," she said.

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