

Local

Happy Tears

By Lauren Sachs

Lauren holds a bachelor's degree in English and Psychology, and a Master's Degree in Social Work, from the University of Michigan. After completing advanced clinical training at Yale University, Lauren worked as a therapist and consultant in a variety of settings. During her time in Jewish Toledo, Lauren has received the Harry Levison Young Leadership Award and the Shining Light Award, and is currently a board member of the Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo. Lauren is also the author of a forthcoming book about her late husband, his joyful approach to life and work as an oncologist, and how examining his life helped her better cope with her grief. To learn more about Lauren's journey and her work on living well after loss, visit www.literally-lauren.com.



As I stood in the Sistine Chapel for the very first time earlier this summer, I leaned my head far back, holding myself carefully so I could view Michaelangelo's work without bumping into the throng of tourists that surrounded me. The guards continually shushed the crowd, but I was too busy with my own

thoughts to even consider speaking. Our loquacious guide, Sylvia, had described the overhead panels in intricate detail prior to entering. Looking upward, I tried my best to recollect the crash course in Roman and Catholic history. While thoughts of the creation story and Judeo-Christian theology occupied my mind for a time, I soon found myself focused on the smell of the chapel. Still staring upward, I inhaled deeply, attempting to pinpoint the scent of the holy space. Only then did I feel ready to exit, with Sylvia leading the way and my daughters trailing close behind. While the Sistine Chapel is famous for many reasons, no tour guide ever mentions its scent. The focus on my olfactory system during our time in the Vatican compound had to do with one significant person: my late husband. Specifically, I focused on the scent

because of a story he had shared many years before, a story of his own visit to the Chapel right after he had graduated from medical school. While Brad related many tales from his youthful, hostel-hopping tour of Europe, his description of this Catholic landmark stands out. He was quite moved by Michaelangelo's profound work and wanted to share this experience with our family. As he described his Vatican visit so many years prior, he noted that if he closed his eyes and focused intently, he could still remember the scent of the Chapel. Our trip to Europe earlier this summer celebrated several happy milestones: my older daughter's 18th birthday and her high school graduation chief among them. Still, as with any significant life event since Brad's death, it also had a bittersweet quality. The visit was originally conceived of with Brad before the

Covid pandemic. Since my husband died four years ago this month, we have had many "firsts" without him; however, this was a very significant first as we had not traveled abroad since the pandemic and his untimely passing. During the planning phase, we all agreed that Brad would want us to take the trip. As Brad loved to travel and explore new places, we spoke of him often while away, mentioning things he would surely have appreciated or images he would have wanted to capture with his camera and telephoto lens. At times, we laughed at experiences he would have found amusing or remarked on things he might have enjoyed. There were also moments we found ourselves crying, sharing how much we missed him and wishing he could be there. Leaving the Sistine Chapel was one such moment for me. Exiting

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The 10th Toledo Jewish Film Festival took attendees on an adventure this year, including uplifting comedy, *iMordecai*, and documentaries about Gene Wilder; Roman Vishniac; the rise and fall of the Borscht Belt; and Jewish Miss America, Bess Myerson. The latter featured special guest, Director David Arond, who joined in-person for a discussion of his film, *The One and Only Jewish Miss America*.



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