Stars peeked out of an alpine afterglow and a chill made us zip our jackets as we trudged down a hill from my brother and sister-in-law's Colorado home.

After Thanksgiving turkey and four sides of everything else, we needed a walk.

Other family members charged ahead, talking and laughing, while I hung back with my dad.

We walked in comfortable silence even though I was shivering.

And thinking.

About how Dad's hair had thinned. And how he'd relinquished some of his driving to my mother.

Even on this trip, I had steered the Buick through Denver and up, over and down twisting Berthoud Pass.

Memories surfaced of how Dad, on family ski trips, used to maneuver those snowy hairpin curves in a rear-wheel drive Bonneville.

These days, my 83-year-old dad admits to being a bit unsteady on his feet at times. But he laughed when he told of my brother hovering behind and in front of his house guest every time Dad climbed or descended stairs.

I told my dad I was proud of the way he still showed up at a gym to work out three times a week—a Jack LaLanne minus ballet shoes and jump suit—and how he still laced up his tennis shoes to stroll through the neighborhood.

The longer we walked that night, the more grateful I felt to be with this man to whom I didn't feel connected for many of my teenage and college years.

He was busy with his life and I with mine.

When our paths did cross, he often laid down the law and I rebelled.

Later, Dad got into state and national politics and I was absorbed in building my career as a journalist.

Then came marriage and a baby and I realized that the world didn't revolve around me anymore. And now, I've started to live my life rather than run from it.

Author Anne Lamont writes about humans wanting and needing exactly the same thing: "To belong, to feel safe and respected."

On this night, with an orange-slice moon pasted above the Rockies, I felt all of these things plus a heavy dose of awe. I think Dad did too.

Together, we passed towering pines shrouded in darkness and climbed the final hill to the warm lights of home.