

Random Resources for a Recovering Widower

By Ted Bowman

Almost as soon as my wife, Marge, died in late July, I began to receive cards, texts, emails, calls, and even a few books...all sent as caring gestures of condolence for a grieving widower. I, of course, was not the first nor will I be the last to receive such acts of care. In the mix were many cards whose cover messages were surprisingly profound. Some of those and others, when opened, revealed personally written words that were also rich in depth and meaning. More than expected, many carers sent me poems, folk wisdom, song lyrics, and related words of condolence that probably had meaning for them...and was their gift to me.

I began to put those that left a mark on me into a special “keep until later” pile. To be sure, all the cards did just that. For anybody to take the time to find, purchase, and mail a card these days is a hero or shero to me. I treasured my supportive circles of care. Each of us grieves in our own ways. One of my primary ways is to find words for my losses, my grieving, and my attempts at coping. The collected pile of cards contributed to my mourning by giving me random resources for recovering.

It’s important to note that I was also surrounded by books of words, file cabinets with examples similar to those received, even some of my own words in books and articles. I chose, however, not to turn to familiar resources; rather I decided to let random words speak. When one engages in improvisational activities, I have learned, many parts of the brain light up. I hoped my use of random resources would inform and support my grieving days.

Here are some of my random words for your consideration as grieving re-

sources. (Note: some sources were not known or found)

“Separation”

Your absence has gone through me
Like thread through a needle,
Everything I do is stitched with its
color.

by W.S. Merwin, from *The Second Four Books of Poems*.

I was changed by Nathan’s death,
because I had to be. Our life together
here was over. It was my life alone that
had to go on. The strand had slack-
ened. I had begun the half-a-life you
have when you have a whole life that
you can remember. I began the practice
of sitting sometimes long hours into
the night, telling over this story...

From *Hannah Coulter* by Wendell Berry

They lived and laughed and loved and
left. ~ James Joyce

Waking up this morning, I smile.
Twenty-four brand new hours are
before me.

I vow to live fully in each moment
and to look at all beings with eyes of
compassion. ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends -
It gives a lovely light!

Figs from Thistles: First Fig
by Edna St. Vincent Millay

There is nothing that can replace the
absence of someone dear to us, and
one should not even attempt to do so.
One must simply hold out and endure
it. At first that sounds very hard, but at
the same time it is also a great comfort.
For to the extent the emptiness truly
remains unfulfilled one remains con-
nected to the other person through it.

From *Separation from those We Love* by
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Welcome, welcome, welcome.
I welcome everything that comes to me
today
Because I know it’s for my healing
I welcome all thoughts, feelings,
emotions, persons, situations and
conditions

A part of *The Welcoming Prayer*
by Father Thomas Keating—remind-
ed me of Rumi’s *The Guest House*

Autumn carnival on the edge of town
We walk down the midway arm-in-arm
One minute you’re here
Next minute you’re gone

I thought I knew just who I was
And what I’d do but I was wrong
One minute you’re here
Next minute you’re gone.

from Bruce Springsteen’s “One
Minute You’re Here” from his new cd
Letter to You.

For those
who walked with us,
this is a prayer.
For those
who have gone ahead,
this is a blessing.

For those
who touched and tended us,
who lingered with us
while they lived,
this is a thanksgiving.

For those
who journey still with us
in the shadows of awareness,
in the crevices of memory,
in the landscape of our dreams,
this is a benediction.

by Jan Richardson

*Marge Grabn-Bowman, daughter, sister,
beloved aunt, spouse, mother, stepmother,
grandmother, friend, colleague and much,
much more died suddenly of cardiac arrest
7/29/2020.*