

## Looking Back Informs Looking Forward: Exploring Foundations

by Ted Bowman

When invited to speak at the twentieth anniversary event for the Leeds Bereavement Forum (England) last year, my hostess asked that I put their work into the larger history and context of grief and bereavement care. As part of my preparation, I began pulling together dates and persons that have been pioneers and influential for the work of grief care. It was a teaching moment for me and served to stimulate spirited discussion at the Forum's anniversary event.

The conversations that began there continued here in Minnesota when I shared what I had done with four grief and bereavement colleagues: Gail Noller, Ed Holland, Paul Johnson and Judy Young. And the list of dates and persons I had collected for an English audience was modified and enriched with a strong American and Minnesota presence.

What follows is offered to you as a reminder that our work is not our own. We stand on the shoulders of well-known and anonymous practitioners that have paved the way for the work we do in grief and bereavement care. I'm reminded of a poem by local poet, Heid Erdrich, about the inextricable intersections between past, present and future. With appreciation to Heid for her words about words, I wrote a parallel poem about our work.

*We never write alone, but by a ghost:  
a blue spirit tangles our words  
makes our work sister and brother,  
related through strings we tie and tug  
to pull us through the years. (Erdrich)<sup>1</sup>*

*We never work alone, but by a ghost:  
a blue spirit tangles our work  
makes our work sister and brother,  
related through strings we tie and tug  
to pull us through the years. (Bowman)*

You are invited to consider influential persons and dates for your preparations and current work in grief and bereavement care. If there are additional suggested entries that you wish to share with MCDES colleagues, please send them to me, Ted Bowman, at tedbowman71@gmail.com. See page five of this newsletter for a listing of these noteworthy dates in grief and bereavement care. This was compiled by Gail Noller, Ed Holland, Judy Young, Paul Johnson, and myself. As we receive further suggestions of other persons and dates of influence in grief and bereavement work, we will include updated versions of this list in future *Coalition News* issues.

<sup>1</sup>Stanza four from *The Mother's Tongue* (2005) by Heid E. Erdrich. Cambridge: Salt Publishing, p. 77.

## Some Important Dates in Grief and Bereavement Care

prepared by Ted Bowman, Gail Noller, Ed Holland, Judy Young and Paul Johnson

1908 ♦ The Program of Mortuary Science at the University of Minnesota established, the first program of its kind in this country to be organized at a state university.

1917 ♦ Freud is often cited as aiding in distinctions between depression and grief. He is also one of the early “teachers” about a more inclusive understanding of loss...as more than death.

1914-1918 and 1939-45 ♦ The two World Wars raised awareness of bereavement, especially in Europe, because of the numbers killed.

1942 and following ♦ Erich Lindemann given credit for notion of “grief work” following Coconut Grove tragedy, anticipatory grief also named.

1959 ♦ Margaret Torrie started Cruse Bereavement Care in England (now a country-wide resource of bereavement care, often provided by volunteers).

1961 ♦ C.S. Lewis’ *A Grief Observed* published, one of the first “classic” memoirs of loss.

1963 ♦ President John Kennedy’s death led to public mourning and reflections about death.

1967 ♦ Dame Cicely Saunders founded St. Christopher’s Hospice.

1969 ♦ Elizabeth Kubler Ross’ *On Death and Dying* published.

1969 and following ♦ Academic courses on death and dying were developed by Robert Kastenbaum, Clark University, Robert Fulton at the University of Minnesota, Dan Leviton at the University of Maryland, and James Carse at Yale University, among others. In 1969 Fulton established the Center for Death Education at the University of Minnesota (now the Center for Death Education

and Bioethics at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse).

1970 ♦ Robert Kastenbaum founded *Omega: The Journal of Death and Dying*, the first professional journal in the field. In the same year the first conference on death education was held at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1977 Hannelore Wass founded the journal *Death Education* (later renamed *Death Studies*).

1974 ♦ Opening of the Connecticut Hospice, the first home-care program in the United States for the terminally ill, led by Florence Wald.

1975 ♦ At Mount Sinai Hospital, Minneapolis: The Program Concerned with Death and Dying, providing specialized home care and hospital care for dying patients as well as grief and cancer support groups.

1976 ♦ The Forum for Death Education and Counseling. Over the years, the organization grew to become the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC).

1977 ♦ The Minnesota Coalition for Terminal Care formed, later became MCDES.

1978 ♦ The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization was founded in 1978 as the National Hospice Organization.

1980 ♦ Birth of the Minnesota Hospice Organization, now known as the Minnesota Network for Hospice & Palliative Care (MNHPC).

1983 ♦ The National Hospice Organization Annual Meeting and Symposium was held in Minnesota.

1985 ♦ Janice Nadeau launched *Growing Through Loss* with congregations in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. Similar congregation and

hospital-based grief and bereavement support programs were being started at this time.

1986 ♦ The Medicare Hospice Benefit is made permanent by Congress.

In 1980 Bethesda Hospital was chosen as one of the 26 Medicare demonstration projects which led to the Medicare Hospice Benefit.

1989-90 ♦ *Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health* was a landmark case. The first “right to die” case ever heard by the Supreme Court. The Court affirmed it was acceptable to require “clear and convincing evidence” of a patient’s wishes for removal of life support. A significant outcome of the case was the creation of advance health directives.

1990 ♦ American Medical Association adopts the position that with informed consent, a physician can withdraw treatment for a patient who is close to death.

1994 ♦ Oregon Ballot Measure established Oregon’s Death with Dignity Act which legalized medical aid in dying (commonly referred to as physician-assisted suicide) with certain restrictions.

1997 ♦ Princess Diana’s death—often cited for the impact on public mourning.

1990’s ♦ Continuing Bonds, Dual Process Model, and many other frameworks.

1990’s forward ♦ Social media as an integral forum of grief and bereavement care.

2018 ♦ Crescent Cove, the third in the United States, pediatric palliative care and children’s hospice opens in Brookline Center, MN.

