

Tales 2 Inspire ~ The Ruby Collection
Gifts of Compassion

The Ruby: *Symbol of friendship and love, opening the heart to promote loving relationships.*

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[Tales2Inspire](http://www.tales2inspire.com)
www.tales2inspire.com

tales2inspire@optimum.net

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A CIRCLE OF HEALING

by Lois W. Stern

All eyes on stage please. You are about to meet a born performer - a gal who loves being a little star. When off stage she is normally rather quiet, even moody at times. She shows a distinct shift in personality as the TV cameras roll . . . cocking her head coyly to the side, puffing out her chest, beckoning her audience with her steadfast gaze. She doesn't stand before you as an actress and needs no special costume to perform, as she wears her feathered coat day and night. Her name is Freedom, a fifteen year old eagle who has been trained as an educational bird.

There is no mistaking Freedom's intelligence. But to truly grasp the remarkable nature of this bird, you need a history lesson with a picture window into Freedom's life and relationship with her trainer, Jeff Guidry.

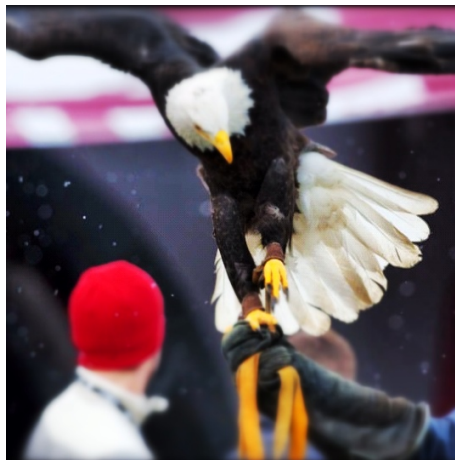
When this three month old eagle arrived at the Sarvey Wildlife Center, she was unable to stand. Emaciated and covered with lice, both her wings were broken, her left one in four places. The Center staff made the decision to give her a chance at life. Jeff, a volunteer at the Center, offered to take her to the vet's office where both her wings were pinned. But even after surgery, those wings never completely healed. Back at the Center, the staff placed Freedom in a huge, topless dog carrier loaded with shredded newspaper. Jeff used to sit and talk to her, urging her to live, to fight; and she would lay there looking up at him with those big brown eyes.

Freedom had to be fed by tube for the first four to six weeks, and even after that she still couldn't stand. It got to the point where they made a decision. If she couldn't stand in the next week, they would euthanize her. "You know, you don't want to cross that line between torture

and rehab, and it looked like death was winning,” explained Jeff.

The plan was to put her down that Friday if she still wasn't standing. Jeff was scheduled to come to the Center on Thursday afternoon, but found it difficult to push himself to make that dreaded trip. He couldn't bear the thought of her being euthanized. But when he walked through the door, to his surprise everyone was grinning from ear to ear. He dashed back to Freedom's cage and there she was, standing on her own, a big beautiful eagle. She was ready to live. Jeff was just about in tears with joy. From that day on, Jeff and Freedom were a twosome.

Freedom would never be able to fly. Her wings had been too badly injured. So returning her to the wild would be nothing short of a death sentence. Instead, the Center director asked Jeff to glove train her. Jeff got her used to the glove, and eventually they started doing educational programs together.



Freedom in Performance

Jeff would show Freedom where to move on stage, using jesses leather straps attached to her ankles, while speaking about wildlife conservation, eagle and owl habits, habitats, diets and more. Jeff noticed a growing confidence between the two of them. “Working with Freedom is like performing a ballet. You need to have complete confidence in your partner. And that’s the feeling we generate when performing together.”

And then, in the spring of 2000, things changed. Jeff was diagnosed with stage three non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, requiring eight months of chemo. He lost his hair and missed a lot of work. When he felt good enough, he would go to Sarvey and take Freedom out for a walk, but when not feeling strong enough, Freedom would come to him in his dreams and help him fight the cancer. According to Jeff, this happened time and time again.

Fast forward to November, 2000, the day after Thanksgiving. Jeff went in for his last checkup. He was understandably on edge, having been told that if the cancer was not all gone after eight rounds of chemo, his only remaining option would be a stem cell transplant. Instead, his newest test results showed that he was cancer free.

The first thing Jeff did was get up to Sarvey and take the big girl out for a walk. He hadn't said a word to Freedom, but somehow she seemed to know. She looked up into his eyes while wrapping both her wings around him. “I could feel those wings pressing in on my back. Then she touched her beak to my nose while still staring into my eyes.”

That was a magic moment for both of them - Jeff standing there engulfed in eagle wings, with two pairs of eyes transfixed on one another.

“Animals communicate with one another all the time, and key up non-verbal cues from people,” explains Jeff. “It just depends on how much time you spend with them and listen.”



A Magic Moment for Jeff and Freedom

By the time Freedom was two years old, she was so attached to Jeff that she became agitated whenever they were apart. She would scream and turn her back as others approached. But Jeff couldn't always be by her side as he spends part of each year in Alaska, training dogs for sled races. There was no way he could take Freedom with him, yet he hated to hear about her behavior, how much she missed him during their absences. Jeff devised a system of long distance communication by sending her mental postcards. “I would picture her, think of her and send her messages as, “I love you. I miss you.” It worked like a charm. She settled down, becoming relaxed and

contented. The spiritual connection these two have formed is unmistakable.

As for Jeff, he will never forget the honor of having this special bird with her magnificent spirit of Freedom so closely connected with his life.

ADDENDUM: Freedom has shown her intuitive, compassionate nature more than once. Jeff tells of a time when a young family contacted him, asking if they could make a stop to meet this now famous eagle en route to Disneyland. The father had recently suffered a third recurrence of a deadly melanoma and wanted to give his family a special vacation before time ran out. At the end of their visit, they all posed together for a picture. Freedom was on Jeff's right arm, touching his wing to the man's shoulder blade. Jeff pulled her back, thinking this rather strange, but Freedom kept stretching her wing further out, to maintain contact with the man's shoulder. Jeff was hardly surprised to learn that this was the very site of the man's most recently diagnosed melanoma.

ABOUT JEFF GUIDRY

Jeff Guidry began his career as a rock and rhythm-and-blues guitarist who has played with artists like Brian Wilson (of Beach Boys fame) and guitarist Roy Buchanan. In his spare time, Jeff volunteers at the Sarvey Wildlife Center in the state of Washington. The years he worked with the bald eagle, Freedom, led to his book, *An Eagle Named Freedom: My True Story of a Remarkable Friendship* (William Morrow / HarperCollins), a tender recounting of Guidry and Freedom's individual battles to survive. Jeff is now the President of Sarvey Wildlife Care Center and sits on the board of directors for two other wildlife organizations.

An in demand speaker, Guidry and Freedom have been featured on Animal Planet, and have made many public appearances at schools, training centers, Native American pow wows, festivals, fairs, and other events to promote the rehabilitation and preservation of wildlife. His presentations will bring hope to anyone dealing with hard times or loss, and affirmation to those who believe in a spiritual connection between humans and animals.

Guidry grew up in southern California and enjoyed scuba diving, body surfing, and underwater photography. His father was a dive instructor in the Marine Corps and they traveled to Mexico and Florida for cave diving trips and dove extensively around southern California. Guidry wound up with a rock band in Hollywood touring and recording. He played music for many years but after a while he knew he needed a new challenge. After moving to Washington state in 1988 when he retired from rock 'n' roll, and after working with the 'Eagle Watchers' program for a few years, a friend suggested he investigate Sarvey Wildlife Care Center. He started volunteering every week, seeking something he could be as passionate about as music. That's when he found Freedom.

Guidry lives in Monroe, Washington.

[Meet him on YouTube.](#)

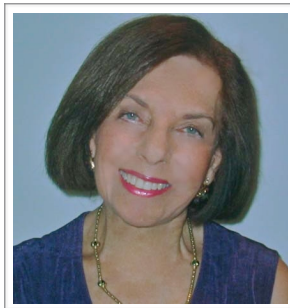
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWz8-6Uxuxw>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After twenty years as an active educator, Lois continued to pursue her love of writing, soon becoming co-editor of a popular Long Island web-zine. As she created and authored her column *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives*, she began to solidify her special niche of investigative journalism and put those same talents to work while writing *Sex, Lies and Cosmetic Surgery*, for which she interviewed over 100 women about some of the most intimate aspects of their lives. She followed up with her second book, *Tick, Tock, Stop the Clock. Getting Pretty on Your Lunch Hour* to address many of the less invasive paths to beauty.

*"Tales2Inspire began a whole new chapter in my life.
Another story for another time."*

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Lois W. Stern

[Watch video to learn more about these books](#)

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LABS 'N LIFE
by Ashley Howland

On a cold and windy day I was introduced to a new student. He walked in with his head hanging down, clutching onto his teacher's arm. The teacher told me she didn't think this would work, but then again, nothing else had worked. I asked her to give the dogs in my Labs'n Life program a chance. I must admit throughout that first session I had my doubts. The boy wouldn't hold a lead and didn't even acknowledge the dogs in the session. Towards the end of that first session, I decided to see if our oldest dog, and also the biggest clown, could break through. I took Obi over to him and showed off some of his tricks. I hid the keys and let Obi loose to find them, which he did with a boisterous attitude. Next Obi solved a math problem by counting in barks and he even opened the door by pulling on a rope. Still, no response from the student, but then, at the end of the session, Obi waved goodbye. There it was, a small turn of the lips. The boy almost smiled. I asked for him to return the following week. Since then this boy has turned up every week, and each week he has grown in confidence and now trains one of our youngest dogs. He is still quiet and lacks confidence, but the change in him is amazing. He talks to his peers and follows instructions. Now he works positively with his dog, no matter how cold and windy it gets. Best of all he smiles!

This student and many others are lucky enough to be a part of the Labs 'n Life initiative. Labs 'n Life is a not for profit organization that takes Labrador Retrievers to young people who are at risk of dropping out of school or worse yet, dropping out of life. These young people learn how to train a companion dog for a child with special needs.

Some of these dogs go on to be placed with young people with special needs, often on the autism spectrum. The other dogs stay in the program and continue to work with at risk youth. Every student experiences something different, but they all have one thing in common. Working with the dogs enables them to be successful. This is a powerful feeling, especially when it's a new experience. The dogs give them this every week, because they love to work. The students are learning how to train a dog, not for themselves, but for someone else. This achievement gives them something they often have not felt before, a sense of pride, self worth, and knowledge that they can do something good and have a positive effect on the lives of others.



Our dogs give the students unconditional love

These dogs make miracles happen every day by being there and simply being themselves. It's incredible to

watch the growth we see in the students in this program. One of my first students now holds down his first real job. There was a time though when we all doubted that he would finish school. One day he was suspended for fighting. The principal told him he had to explain to me why he was suspended before leaving the school. He punched a kid because he teased him about his English accent. I just asked him to think about Rigger – his dog. I asked “What does Rigger do when the puppies are annoying him?” The student replied, “He walks away!” I left it at that. There was no need to go any further. After all Labs ‘n Life works best when the learning is stealthy.

A few weeks later the student came running back in after lunch. The same child had tried to abuse him again. This time though he didn’t react. He simply took a leaf out of Riggers book and walked away. He felt great and the best part is the abuse stopped because there was no reaction. The student felt empowered, thanks to the dogs!

My boy Stitch works with a small girl from the special education class. She’s a funny soul, very sweet. She simply needs someone to listen to her and do as she asks. Stitch is happy to oblige. Every week even when he is already exhausted he gives her every ounce of energy. I counted one day and in the space of ten minutes she had said his name more than one hundred times. Still he followed her, with a big grin on his face. Stitch is a big strong Labrador and he could pull the largest person off their feet if he wanted to. Yet for this tiny, talkative little girl, he is an angel. He just seems to understand that she is different. Each week she comes back just to have that hour with him and to enjoy that moment together.

Many of our students have anger control issues. One young man has a file filled with citations of violence and pain. Yet we handed him one of our pups, a sweet girl called Echo. Instantly he became calm, patient and controlled. Even when Echo doesn’t do the right thing, he

knows she is trying and is willing to help her succeed. Over time he has developed an understanding that mistakes are part of the learning process and that some days things just don't work. He never even raises his voice to Echo and is always gentle. It's all about development, his and hers. They make a great team.



Playful pup!

These are just a few examples of how our dogs have helped our students. Labs 'n Life is not simply walking a dog for credit. It is so much more. By training a dog the students develop the life skills of patience, perseverance and staying positive. It isn't rocket science, it's something more powerful. Working a dog is about unconditional love, which enables even the most disengaged student to feel wanted, successful and most of all, important. These feelings help to develop self-esteem and confidence. This program includes a curriculum all about the dogs. Students who have often refused to put pen to paper or enter into discussions in a classroom

setting, willingly write reflections, discuss genetics, work out costs, measure the dogs, practice first aid and even design training simulations. It all gets down on paper and at the end of the program they have a large folder of work they are proud to show off. Their work can be used towards their high school certificates and beyond into higher education. It even helps students develop valuable employability skills. They are responsible for their dog and they soon learn that being responsible is a good thing.

At Labs 'n Life we have ups and downs, but far more ups than downs. We have tears when the dogs are placed, but laughter as we hear about the dog's success with their child. We see young people flush with pride when they talk about their dogs. They even present their dogs at dog shows. Members of the wider community often comment on how well these students handle themselves in the public arena, not even realizing that these students are in a special program.

For the first time in their lives our students are seen as equals with each one simply viewed as a young person who loves their dog. For the first time in their lives these young people bask in the glow of public admiration. For them, it's a dog's life that makes life worth living.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashley Howland lives in Adelaide, South Australia with her husband Ross, two daughters, Maddy and Aijay, and her spoiled Labrador Stitch. Her girls inspire her every day to write children's books. Stitch and the memory of Obi often provide the material. Ashley also works as the curriculum manager for Labs 'n Life. This requires random extra Labradors to appear in their lives and of course in Ashley's stories.

Learn [more information about Ashley and her books](#).

<http://ahowland.org/wordpress>

and on her [Facebook page](#)

www.facebook.com/authorashleyhowland



Ashley Howland

DUSTY GETS HIS REWARD

by Melanie Sue Bowles

One evening Jim and I were standing outside watching the sun set. I had something I wanted to tell him, but I had to word it just right. "Jim, you know the words, *Count your blessings by the lives you've touched?*" I tentatively asked. "I don't want to come to the end of my life and wonder what I did to make a difference. I want to make a difference in the lives of horses - lots of horses. I want to have a sanctuary where abused and abandoned horses can live out the rest of their lives in peace and dignity." My husband let out a pensive sigh, blinked a few times, gave me a little one sided smile and said, "We'll have to get more land."

We already owned two horses when my friend Kera asked me if I would come along with her to look over a horse she was thinking of buying. She had heard about a place nearby that rested and rehabilitated horses. While Kera looked at the horse she had come to see, I wandered down the row of stalls. It was depressing to see all these horses, restrained and robbed of their youthful exuberance, stored like inanimate objects in a warehouse. But when I came to the end of the barn, the feeling in the pit of my stomach worsened.

Out back stood a small, skinny gray horse standing alone, absolutely motionless. His head was hanging almost to the ground. He couldn't put weight on his left front leg. Sullen and still, as if he had given up, he didn't even bother to flick his ears or swish his tail to shoo away the flies.

When I walked back toward the owner, I asked "What's the story with the little gray out back?" "Well, he'll be going for a ride real soon," was all the man would say. We left, with Kera still talking about the horse she was

thinking of buying. My mind kept returning to thoughts of that little gray.

Kera made her decision to purchase the horse she had considered, and asked me to come along. While she backed her trailer in and exchanged money and papers with the owner, I walked out back, this time all the way to the fence line, to see if the gray was still there. As I spoke softly to him, his eyes seemed to beg, "Do something, anything, just get me out of here."

I returned to the small office at the front of the barn. "You got a minute?" I asked. "I'm kind of taken with the little gray out back," I began. "He doesn't look like he's doing real good. Can I take him off your hands?"

"Sure, you can take him off my hands - for a price," he laughed. "He's nothing but skin and bones, and he's injured besides," I said. "You're not gonna be able to sell him."

"Well, here's a news flash for you sweetie. That skin and bones is going to fetch me four hundred dollars at the slaughterhouse. You want him? That's what you can give me."

Three hours after I'd hauled the injured gray to our property, my vet was at his side. Aside from his obvious malnutrition and depression, cuts, scars, and lacerations over his entire body, chipped teeth (from the stud chain that his abusers had put in his mouth to control him); X-rays revealed numerous additional injuries: several hairline fractures and a bone chip in his left knee, stress damage to his right foot, pin-firing scars up and down all four legs. He was just two years old.

After the vet left, I led Dusty to a freshly bedded stall. He just stood there, motionless, with his head down. I tried to give him chunks of apple, but he wouldn't even open his mouth. I removed his halter, all the while talking softly as I began to stroke his forehead and rub all around his ears. His head was hanging so low that I had to kneel

down to reach him. My face was very close to his as I sat on my knees. He just stared at me, never taking his eyes off mine. I continued to rub his face and softly tell him that he was okay now. No one would hurt him, ever again. Finally he let out a huge sigh and closed his eyes.

I stopped talking then, but continued to rub his face and ears. With my cheek resting against his, I gently hugged his head. After about fifteen minutes, he dropped to his good knee and with great effort, managed to lay down. He let out an enormous shuddering sigh and shut his eyes.

It had been an emotionally exhausting day. I decided we both needed rest and stood to leave. But when I put my hand on the stall latch, his head shot up and he nickered so softly it was more like a whisper. I went back to him and knelt down. There were tears in my eyes as I stroked his neck and eased his head back down. As he lay flat once more, he kept opening one eye to look at me, and then it would flutter closed. He was so tired, but was clearly afraid I would leave if he fell asleep. Finally, I cupped my hand over his eyes and slowly stroked downward, until his eyes closed and he fell into a deep, deep sleep.

I couldn't bring myself to leave, so I leaned back against the wall of the stall, with dirt, tears and pine shavings smeared all over my face, I decided he needed to have me with him when he woke up. Maybe I needed to be there too.

Evenings were our favorite time with Dusty while he was healing. He would rest his head on my shoulder while I rubbed his face and ears and Jim scratched his back and hindquarters. Dusty would sigh contentedly, with his eyes half closed and his lip curled in ecstasy. We spent hours massaging his legs, and ended each evening by helping him settle in. He would just love it when I'd cup my hands over his eyes and rub them closed. I would sit on the floor

and tell him how much I loved him, and how thankful I was that he was here with us.



Dusty at first, an emaciated and abused horse

As Dusty's health improved, his true personality continued to emerge. We watched him transform from a despondent shell to an incredibly vibrant, happy boy. He needed to be confined to his stall for several more months while his knee healed - a necessity that was difficult for this energetic, curious guy. One day he watched me raking out manure from his stall and at first just stood there, not paying much attention to me. Then slowly he strolled over, touching his mouth to my hair. Suddenly he dropped a huge mouthful of water down my back. I saw pure delight in his eyes as he backed away and resumed eating hay as if nothing had happened. On another day, I noticed Jim standing near Dusty's stall, searching for his lost work gloves. "They were right here on the shelf," he said. "And I don't think Dusty can reach that shelf." Just then Dusty

turned away from us, innocent of any misbehavior. Jim began to shuffle his feet along the edge of the stall, displacing the shavings. There were the gloves, buried under six inches of bedding, chewed and hardly recognizable as gloves anymore.

By the time Dusty was healed enough to safely join the other horses, he had filled out to a huge, graceful, muscular teenager. He seemed thrilled to have some equine pals and quickly established himself as the dominant horse. Yet he continued to favor human company and is the first one to come running the moment I appear.



Dusty healed into a muscular, healthy teenager

Things often unfold in life as they should. Out of evil came the gift of this wonderful horse that I love with all my heart.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Melanie Sue Bowles was born and raised in Sylvan Lake, Michigan. She moved to Florida in her early twenties where she earned her living as a professional firefighter/medic where she met her husband Jim. After acquiring her first horse and becoming immersed in the equestrian community, Melanie discovered a disturbing amount of mistreatment endured by too many horses and vowed to make a difference. While continuing to work at the fire department, Melanie and Jim set out to create a sanctuary for abused, elderly and unwanted horses.

When Melanie and Jim retired from their jobs as firefighters, they relocated, first to the rolling hills of western Arkansas, and later, Lincolnton, a small town north of Augusta, Georgia. Each move involved transporting all their horses living at Proud Spirit, which now number fifty-three - a monumental trek of many hundreds of miles in horse trailers.

Today Proud Spirit Horse Sanctuary stands as one of the longest existing privately run sanctuaries for horses in the United States and its highly successful program has been cited as "exemplary" and a "model for other rescue organizations."



Melanie Sue Bowles

RAE THE STRAY by Beth Smithem

Our household consists of four stray cats and two rescued dogs. You'd think we have a sign out front saying, "All Strays Welcome". The house is situated on over an acre in a rural neighborhood which, sadly, makes it a prime area for dumping unwanted pets. I've learned the hard way to never say I *can't handle another thing* because ultimately I'll get it, even two or three more things.

One summer day I noticed a puppy hiding in the culvert under our driveway. I took a bowl of water to the edge of the pipe and kept an eye on her, hoping the owner would show up soon. Morning came and the pup was still there. A little coaxing from me sent her on a beeline for our front door. A predominately yellow Labrador female puppy was now making herself at home in my living room.

I made several calls to see if she'd been reported missing. As much as we wanted to keep her, having another dog would be too much. With heavy hearts, we took the puppy to the shelter. While filling out the paperwork, I looked around at the crowded kennels and got a sick feeling in my stomach. I handed back the paperwork and took the scared puppy home. I couldn't leave her at that place.

She got along with the cats and our dog, Rocky, so we welcomed her into our family. I called the vet to set up spaying and vaccinations. When asked for her name, a favorite character in the movie "Uptown Girls" came to mind. 'Rae' was a lonely, loving girl who only pretended to be tough and it reminded me of the puppy. "Her name is Rae," I answered.

My daily routine includes taking my two dogs, Rocky and Rae, for a hike. Rae doesn't like her leash and tries to wiggle out of her collar so it works better to drive them to a secluded park. October 4, 2013, my 60th birthday, was one

of those rare times I opted to walk in our neighborhood. I saw a car coming and headed toward the shoulder of the road, but somehow Rae slipped out of her collar and back into the road. I thought the driver saw us, but the car slammed right into Rae, who was now rolling on the pavement, screaming. I'm not sure if the driver knew what happened because the car sped away.

I sat down with Rae as blood trickled from her mouth. Rocky, confused, stood there motionless. Being 7:00 a.m., the work traffic hadn't begun but a car drove up and actually stopped. The driver, Sarah, lived a few houses from mine but we hadn't met. She saw us and didn't hesitate to jump out of her car to help. A man also stopped and they lifted Rae into the back of Sarah's SUV. Sarah insisted on driving me to the vet. After getting Rae into the competent hands of the staff, she took me to get my car. Sarah was my angel that morning.

It was tough sitting in the waiting room, not knowing if Rae was going to make it. My thoughts drifted to my husband, Paul, who had passed away a year ago, just three months after Rae found us. Paul wasn't the animal lover I was, but he had formed an indescribable bond with Rae. To lose her too would be a huge emotional blow for me.

Dr. Price took me to see the x-rays. The good news, there was no internal bleeding, but the bad news was that the back right femur was broken in eight places. Dr. Price was hopeful that with extensive surgery, Rae's leg could be wired and screwed back together. My husband's death had left me financially strapped, so when told the cost of the surgery would be \$2,500, I actually hesitated. There never *was* a choice, however, because the thought of another loss just wasn't an option.

Dr. Price opened Rae up and the damage was severe; amputation was considered. After a five hour surgery I was allowed to see her. Rae's leg was the color

of eggplant and twice its normal size. Pins and screws held the bone together and an exterior bar kept it all in place. They wanted to keep Rae for at least a week and unbeknownst to me, Sarah called to check on her and paid for a week's boarding. After numerous follow up calls, Sarah suddenly vanished. She later explained that the trauma with Rae brought the recent loss of her mother painfully close to the surface and she had to step away. I'm so grateful for her role in Rae's recovery.

During Rae's stay, Dr. Price discovered some nerve damage. Her leg dangled and when she tried to touch the ground she used her knuckles. Being doubtful she'd regain feeling, Dr. Price mentioned the option of amputation.

I refused to give up and spent hours massaging Rae's leg, coaxing her to stand on it. Dr. Price went above and beyond to help. Besides spending extra time with Rae and cutting me a break financially, he built her a special splint to keep her foot straight. After two weeks at the vet, Rae was sent home to a long, slow recovery. Keeping a one and a half year old dog quiet was not going to be easy. After four months, the bone was strong enough to remove the screws and pins. Rae was still knuckling it, but moved surprisingly well when running. The momentum distributed the weight to her other legs so she ran like a normal dog.

My house sold and that meant losing Rae's support system. Shortly before the move, Rae started putting weight on her leg with a foot that was flat, not curled. Due to the severity of the break, the leg had healed a little shorter than the others and Rae will never walk normally, so it was thrilling to see her using her foot. To think we'd considered amputation!

I gave Dr. Price a nice card and glass frame that held two photos. One was a picture of Rae shortly after surgery; the other a picture of her standing on four feet. Should a similar case arise, he can show the disheartened clients my photos to give them some hope.



Rae with gauze wrapped bar to keep surgical screws in place.



Rae standing on all four feet

We've been in the new house for four months and I've found several off-beaten trails with NO automobile traffic. I learned my lesson on that one. Rae's ordeal made

me re-examine my *own* life and today's priorities are very different than those of thirty years ago. The once desired big house, new car and fancy clothes seem so unimportant. My needs are met. I have pets that love me unconditionally, and family and friends that are always there when needed. I am confident that one day I will finally get the credit card paid off.

Thank you Rae, and my entire four-legged family, for making me a better person. As the saying goes, "I only hope to be as good of a person as my dog thinks I am."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Beth Smithem and I am the author of the Dust Bunny series and Cocoa Bean and Squirt, three books that I self-published. My deep compassion for animals is evident in my writing and the common thread in my books is the importance of unconditional friendship. Each book includes lessons of love, acceptance and simple kindness that come to life through my characters that are enjoyed by both children and adults alike. I currently live in Orange City, Florida and, of course, have six animals of my own. It's no surprise that I inherited a love for animals from my mother who allowed us to keep turtles in the bathtub! After working as a legal assistant for more than ten years, I discovered that I prefer the world of imagination over the world of lawsuits and torts.

[Visit her website](#)

www.dustbunnysvision.com



Beth Smithem

[Click here](#) to learn more about Beth.

<http://tales2inspire.com/?p=1280>

THE CONSEQUENCES OF KINDNESS

by Cara Sue Achterberg

We were living a fairy tale life, at least the kind of fairy tale life that includes healthy kids, a messy house, and a happy marriage, when a suspicious bald spot about the size of a quarter appeared on the top of my four-year-old's head.

The spot grew bigger and bigger along with our fears. We took Ian to a dermatologist who told us he had Alopecia Areata, a relatively common autoimmune condition. She gave us a topical cream and said his hair would grow back within six months. Only it didn't.



Ian with a full head of red curls

Over the course of a month the rest of Ian's hair fell out, and six months later his eyebrows and eyelashes vanished. I spent the better part of the next year living with

my emotions exposed. People made me cry, and God made me angry. Why was this happening to my child? As a parent, you worry about a lot of things, but worrying about whether your child will grow bald is not one of them. Before alopecia, Ian had a full head of red, curly hair - the kind old ladies love to touch - the kind young women gush over and say, "I wish that came in a bottle".

My husband listened to my fears, but kept his own to himself. When I told Ian's older siblings that they needed to look out for him even more now, his big brother said, "What's the big deal? He just lost his hair." Either he knew something I didn't, or he had great faith in his brother's resilience. My daughter asked if she would lose her hair, too. I explained to her what I'd learned about this capricious disease. It probably has a hereditary factor, but scientists believe the trigger is caused by the environment. That was Greek to her, so I assured her that it was pretty rare for two siblings to have it.

There are a few theories about Alopecia, but basically, no one knows what causes it and no one can cure it. Faced with that knowledge, I did what any good mother would do. I set out to fix him myself. If I couldn't cure him, I would make his body so healthy it could right itself. This led our whole family to begin living an organic life. And while five years later Ian still has no hair (he says he wouldn't want any because then he'd have to wash it and brush it and he might get nose hair "which would be gross"), we are all much healthier both physically and emotionally.

If it weren't for Ian's Alopecia, we might have never discovered how good life feels without chemicals and additives. I might never have learned that when you eat real food from grass fed animals, vegetables grown the way nature intended, and food created by your own hands, you think more clearly, feel lighter, have more energy, and fewer mood swings.

My oldest son no longer suffers from frequent asthma attacks since we removed the chemical cleaners in our house. My husband's cholesterol is under control now that we've ditched the processed food and started adding flax seed, whole grains, and grass-fed dairy and meat products to his diet. If Ian hadn't lost his hair, we might never have known the joy of chicken-keeping.

When Ian is out in public without a hat, people assume he is a chemo patient. They are compassionate, kind, and gentle with him. I watched a complete stranger carefully helping Ian climb through the jungle gym at Port Discovery, making sure he was safe. A security guard at Hershey Park gave Ian a giant chocolate bar and the ladies behind the fudge counter at the farm market began to offer him a free piece of fudge each time we visited. Once a waiter comped our entire check at Pizza Hut. In the beginning all I could do was nod thanks because every one of these encounters reduced me to tears.

Confronting this mysterious disease helped me re-prioritize my life. Early in this adventure my mother-in-law said to me, "If that's the worst thing that happens to him, be grateful." At the time I wanted to smack her, but now I believe that with all my heart.

Most days Ian wears a skull cap to protect his bare head from the stares and the sun. But whenever he goes out without it, we experience an amazing grace. I am blown away by the kindness of strangers. If they ask, I tell that Ian has Alopecia Areata. But if they don't ask, we accept their kindness and figure there should be some perks for living with this unpredictable and untreatable condition.

Ian is in sixth grade now. My earlier fears have not been realized. Most people know he has alopecia and treat his baldness like any other physical feature. Ian is outgoing and makes friends easily. He's cheerful and assumes the best about everyone he meets. I have to wonder if this is

because he is so often treated to the good side of people. When he was little he had no idea why a complete stranger would help him on the playground or give him a candy bar. The only logical conclusion he could come to is that people are nice. And so that's what he expects of people.

Watching the thoughtfulness extended to my bald child has made me wonder what would happen if we treated everyone we encountered with the same reverent kindness shown my son. Imagine if every kid grew up being handled gently and respectfully, offered generosity and grace on a daily basis. Imagine a world full of the consequences of kindness.



Ian without hair, but ever smiling

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cara Sue Achterberg lives on a small farm in Southern York County, Pennsylvania with her husband, three children, several horses, and too many chickens to count. When she's not in her gardens or taxiing her children all over the countryside, she is a freelance writer, local columnist, and leads workshops about the organic life. You can find links to her blogs and inspiration for teen writers on her website www.carawrites.com. Cara is currently in the processing of publishing a young adult novel and a book based on her blog.



Cara Sue Achterberg

THE FLOWERS by Cheryl Stewart

She was a beautiful woman who left her home state of Washington and moved to Alaska. She and her husband had a dream of moving north. They packed up their belongings and drove to the United States territory of peppered tundra, known as Alaska. Not yet a state, they settled in the small town of Anchorage. She was a woman with a pioneer spirit, but never left her house without her signature Coco Chanel red lipstick. This woman, whom I speak of, was model perfect in every sense of the word. She even appeared on TV every Wednesday afternoon for a local show called "The Women's Touch".

That woman was my mother.

Even though she was a stay at home mom, she was the busiest person I ever knew. She loved her new-found state and became a socialite. She got involved in multiple committees ranging from the PTA, local causes, and church functions. Once my siblings and I left home, she volunteered once a week at the Anchorage Visitor's Center.

The Visitor's Center is a log cabin, originally built in 1955, complete with a grass-tundra covered roof, and now stands in the middle of the financial district of downtown Anchorage. It used to be one of the original houses built in earlier time, It is a beautiful landmark building, which provides tourist information about what to see and do.

Every Thursday, while walking to the center, she passed a Native Alaskan woman sitting on a park bench asking for money. Although my mother wanted to help her, she never gave her money. She knew all too well where the woman would spend the cash. Instead, she brought her coffee in the morning, and soup or a sandwich in the afternoon. My mother was curious about this woman and

her story, and started arriving downtown earlier. She sat with her to get to know her.



An Alaskan native family

This homeless street person was initially intimidated by her questions, but my mother eventually touched her heart.

When asked her name, the native woman replied, “Violet”. With her signature smile, my mother responded that her name was Loraene Rose. Without skipping a beat, she told her they already had something in common—both of their mother’s decided to name their daughters after their favorite flower. It was at that moment, their friendship blossomed.

Over the summer, my mom discovered Violet was an Athabaskan woman from Western Alaska, a small village on the Kuskokwim River Delta. Although she felt the woman’s pain of her difficult life, she never understood why the woman left her village—and her daughter as well. It wasn’t until she discovered Violet’s daughter was only thirteen the last time she saw her that my mother broke down and decided to share a portion her own life. She took

the woman's hands and said, "I lost my mother to cancer when I was thirteen, and didn't have a chance to see her again. Don't let what happened to me, happen to you."

My mom knew Violet still had the opportunity of providing her daughter that second chance. However, not unlike most Native Americans, they have a predisposed affliction to alcohol. She knew once they experienced this, it would be difficult to stop. By looking into Violet's eyes my mother could tell that she missed her daughter, but surmised that her daughter was ashamed of her. I think it was that conversation that gave Violet the courage to redirect her shame and blame, and became helpful with other street living native people in Anchorage. She was the matriarch of the fallen natives.

Well, autumn came and the weather began to change. In Alaska, weather changes without notice or anyone's permission.

On a particularly cold morning my mother purchased Violet a new hat and gloves. When she turned the corner onto 4th Ave, she approached The Visitor's Center to bring Violet her coffee and gifts, but something was missing. The park bench was empty. Violet was not there.

It was not uncommon that street people froze to death during a cold night. With their last conversation about Violet's daughter on her mind, my mother ran to The Visitor's Center. She started making phone calls to the local missions and hospitals, until her colleagues stopped her and said, "Violet was here and left you something."

On her volunteer desk was a very modest flower vase, one that you would find at a Goodwill Store. In the vase were two flowers—a rose and a violet. The card read, "From one friend to another. It was nice to know that these two flowers shared the same garden for a while."

Violet left Anchorage and returned to her village, to reunite with her daughter. She thanked my mother for

making her feel special and important. Yes, she was nervous to see the daughter she abandoned years ago, but finally was ready to do so.

My father provided a very good life for our family. Mom wore full length mink coats and her ears and fingers shined with diamonds, yet his modest bouquet of flowers was one of the best gifts she ever received. She often wondered how long it took Violet to save enough money to provide her with this offering of kindness.

Loreane Rose was a great friend to many, a devoted wife, a supporting and loving mother. She connected with all and judged none.



Cheryl's mother, Loreane Rose

How often has one of us walked past a street person and felt afraid to make eye contact? Are we really ashamed of them? Or are we ashamed of ourselves for letting them down? Why are we embarrassed of the poor, and those who are down and out? Perhaps their poverty reflects a country that promised to be filled with opportunities but has let us down.

I hope that this story of Violet and Loreane Rose helps us all see people who are different from us, a bit differently.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Cheryl Stewart. I was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska. I was fortunate enough to attend the University of Salzburg to study history of art and architecture. I received a Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design from the American College of Applied Arts in London.

Today I reside in Seattle, Washington and have two teenage children. For nine years I was the senior interior designer for Starbucks Coffee Co.

I have always been told that I am a story teller, and in the past year have decided to start becoming a writer.



Cheryl Stewart

SEVEN MARATHONS - SEVEN CONTINENTS

by Winter Vinecki
with Lois W. Stern

My dad and I had a special bond. Although it was my mom and uncle who got me into racing, my dad said it was something he would like to do someday. But he never got the chance.

I had caught the racing bug and by age eight already had run a 10K race

But the following year my early interest in raising money for medical research hit terribly close to home. My dad, Michael, was diagnosed with prostate cancer.

I desperately wanted to do something to help and thought that if I could get some other athletes to join with me to compete in races and Triathlons, we could raise money to fight this dreaded disease. My mom helped me form a nonprofit and we named it Team Winter.

I swam, cycled, and ran my way through a triathlon and, with other Team Winter athletes, raised money for prostate cancer awareness and research. It became my mission to get a blue ribbon out there for prostate cancer to match every pink breast cancer ribbon. My website, Facebook, and Twitter pages helped me spread the word, and those numbers continued to grow. Despite all efforts, my dad lost his battle with this terrible disease.

At ten years of age my mom moved me and my siblings from Michigan to Oregon, where she would have time to practice as a physician while solo parenting her four young children. Just months after my Dad's death, our motor home crossed the Oregon border, filled with our most prized possessions. One of the first stops we made was to visit Pre's rock, the historical site of the premature death of a great runner.

After my dad had passed away, I was looking through the Guinness Book of World Records and came across, “The Youngest Person to Run a Marathon on All Seven Continents.” I immediately knew that I wanted this record for my dad and the 1 in 6 men affected by prostate cancer.



*Winter and her dad, Michael Vinecki.
(September 2008)
Photo Credit WebMD*

At age thirteen, I was accepted into my first marathon right in my own backyard, fifty minutes from my Salem, Oregon home. I felt I had a lot to prove that day, not just for myself, but for my dad, whom I knew would be watching. My coach’s voice was echoing in my head as I hit mile twenty-three. *Winter, you can run that course in 3:45:00.* It was as if my dad was right there next to me, pushing me to dig deeper and deeper. Just five minutes shy of a Boston qualifying time, I conquered Eugene

Marathon in 3:45:04. Now serious about my mission. I was determined to run a marathon on all seven continents.

The following year, Kenya, Africa became the site of my second marathon. I knew the competition would be tough. I was running with the Kenyans, historically known to dominate the sport of marathon running. For safety reasons, we each were paired with another runner close to our pace. I was paired with one of the fastest teen boys from the Maasai tribe, but pacing wasn't exactly his thing. He would speed ahead of me and then wait as if I was taking too long, then dart ahead for a quick snack at the aid station until I caught up. But as the miles began to catch up with him, the smile faded from his face. By mile 15 he had slowed to a walk and I knew I would be finishing the last 11.2 miles on my own. I took 3rd place overall female in that race, but ironically had to wait over an hour to cheer on my Maasai running partner as he crossed the finish line,

There is nothing like going from the extreme heat of the Maasai plains of Kenya to Antarctica, one of the harshest, coldest places on Earth. First I flew to *El Fin Del Mundo*, (*The End of the World*), in Ushuaia, Argentina, then boarded a Russian research vessel to take me across the treacherous Drakes Pass. That night, calm waters quickly turned to rough seas. I had never experienced seasickness before, but then again, this wasn't a Carnival Cruise.

Runners should have a chance to get acclimated to the ground after spending so many hours on a boat, but because of blustery weather, I wasn't able to go on shore until just minutes before the start of this marathon. Several miles into running, I saw rolling waves under my feet, an illusion from the motion I had felt at sea. I concentrated instead on staying upright and not slipping on the ice-covered ground. Without a single fall, I had another 3rd place win, and was now the youngest person in the world

to run 26.2 miles in Antarctica's barren hills of ice, among penguins, seals and whales.

What can I possibly say about running my fourth marathon, the Inca Trail? I climbed and descended three mountain peaks, reaching elevations of 14,000 feet over the course of my nine hour run. Sherpas would call out *Runner* as we ran past. It was an unforgettable moment crossing the finish line at Machu Picchu and realizing I had just captured my first overall female marathon win. So many people had said I was too young to run such a distance and yet at age fourteen, I had just run the toughest marathon course in the world.

My fifth marathon took me to the Great Barrier Island, off the coast of New Zealand. and my sixth, to the *Mongolia Sunrise to Sunset Marathon* in the remote, most northern point of Mongolia. Completing my marathon tour in Athens, Greece, on the original course of Phidippides, was a fitting place to set a marathon world record - a place where women were originally shunned or killed for watching the Olympics. I was back to a road marathon, my first full road marathon since Eugene, OR. The spectators that lined the course were amazing, shouting *Bravo* as we ran by. To them, runners are still considered highly respected athletes and are praised. As I crossed the finish line in Panathenaic Stadium, I pointed to the sky, as I always do at each finish line, and said to myself, "Dad, we did it!"



Winter and her mom, Dr. Dawn Estelle, celebrate Winter's world record at the finish line of the Athens Greece Marathon (November 2013). Photo Credit- Marathon Tours

Where did the time go? It seems like I was just ten years old sitting on the couch flipping through the Guinness Book of World Records, and then, at age fifteen, I learned that my name had been officially added to the record books as the youngest person to run seven marathons around the world. Running was by far the easiest part of realizing this dream. The five-year journey to setting this world record? Well that is another story and one that I think will take me years to fully comprehend.

Sadly, my dad did not live to see all I have accomplished. But I do believe he is proud of me. As I move forward in my determination to make Team Winter synonymous with prostate cancer, I know in my heart he is watching.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Immediately upon returning from Greece, Winter exchanged her running shoes for ski boots. Her aerial skiing has now taken precedence in her life as she pursues a spot at the 2018 Winter Olympics. A short time ago she concluded her 2014 aerial season with a Jr. National title and 5th Place podium at the Jr. World Freestyle Championships in Italy. Winter already has taken some great steps forward toward her next big dream.

[Visit her website.](https://teamwinter.org)
<https://teamwinter.org>



Winter Vinecki

SUPER HEROES by Rod DiGruttolo

A seven-year-old boy opens his eyes for the first time in two days. He's been in a coma with his life hanging by a thin thread of hope. Fortunately he is receiving the most advanced medical care in the world. His caregivers are specialists and care only for children whose special circumstances baffle many medical professionals.

Beside the bed his mother dozes in a recliner provided by the hospital so that she can stay at his side. He smiles, even in his deep sleep he felt her caring hand and heard her prayers. He says nothing, she needs her sleep.

Something moves at the window. It's daylight. He doesn't know what time it is or even what day it is and really, he doesn't care. Outside his window a figure comes into focus. It's a man? No, well yes, a man but not just any man, it's Spiderman. The boy blinks. *Am I dreaming?* he thinks, but just then another figure swings by the window and waves, Batman is there as well. The boy smiles; the pain that has been gnawing at his head is forgotten. "Look, Mama, look!" he cries.

Mama awakens and rushes to his side. She rains kisses on him but he keeps pointing and she turns her head toward the window. Spiderman waves and Mama cries.

Next door little Anna is very sick, her stomach rolls with every move and she can only sleep for short periods. All her hair has fallen out but her daddy holds her and tells her how beautiful she is. Anna snuggles into Daddy's chest. Her eyes drift closed but a shadow darkens the window and her eyes pop open. There framed in the window is a big man in a dark mask, gray suit and dark

cape. The logo on his chest is of a black bat framed in a yellow oval.

“Oh my,” Anna whispers.

Daddy is holding her tight and has his eyes closed. “What’s wrong sweetheart?” he asks.

“Look Daddy, it’s Batman!” Anna sits straight up for the first time in two weeks. She pulls away from her daddy and points toward the window.

“Holy, swinging window washers, it is,” Daddy says. “Batman’s come to pay you a visit, Anna. And look, he’s washing your window while he’s here.”

Anna bounced on the bed and clapped her hands. For fifteen minutes after the superhero took his leave Anna chattered on and on about the visit from one of her heroes. Even as she fell asleep her sweet voice faded as she drifted off.

The world has Superheroes. They are formed in the imagination of comic book creators, movie directors and recently, they work for your local window washing company.

The owners of Allegheny Window Cleaning, Inc. brought a touch of whimsy and cheer to the lives of children at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburg when they made it possible for their window washers to dress in professional grade costumes of Spiderman, Batman, Superman and Captain America while washing the windows of the Hospital.

Michelle Matuizek, office manager of the window washing company, learned of a window cleaning company in Great Britain whose window washer dressed up in a Spiderman costume. As luck would have it, a Batman movie was being filmed in Pittsburg at the time and Michelle was inspired. She took the idea to her husband, Edward Matuizek. As president of the company he, at first, rejected the idea. His initial reaction was, “You’re crazy, I’m not doing this.”

Michelle was not to be dissuaded so easily and Children's Hospital Facilities Director, Elizabeth Munsch helped. It didn't take long before Edward relented. After finding ways to overcome issues such as insurance regulations, safety concerns and convincing the window washers to participate, Allegheny was onboard.

Four window washers, masquerading as superheroes, experienced and willing to participate in the program, donned costumes that would make a Hollywood director proud and set out for Children's Hospital. For a little more than two hours the real-life superheroes, Rick Bollinger, Mark Errico, Ed Hetrick and Jim Zaremba cleaned windows in full view of children with the best seats in the house for watching their heroes. Even children walking outside and riding past on bicycles or in cars experienced the thrill of watching superheroes climbing the walls of the building.



The super heroes arrive

To children suffering from a multitude of maladies seeing a smiling superhero waving outside their hospital

window might be the only bright spot in days, weeks even months of pain, boredom and confusion. Superheroes like Michelle, Edward, Rick, Mark, Ed and Jim are bringing joy and wonder to those who need it most. Whether it stems from kindness welling up in their hearts, a faith ingrained in their being or just a wild idea to bring a few moments of happiness to some children, it doesn't matter. It fulfills the mission.



Bringing joy to sick children

Windows are transparent both ways. The children greatly enjoy the superheroes and the hero window washers see the children. They see past their smiling faces into frightened eyes. They see hairless heads, long loops of tubing from IV's delivering life-giving fluids into frail limbs, bandages and casts encasing bodies that should be running in the park or throwing a ball to Dad. They see children suffering from injury, disease and genetic

abnormalities and they cry, but the children can't see the tears under their masks.

As of late, reports of Batman, Spiderman, Superman and Captain America spending their off-duty hours washing windows at various hospitals across the country are coming in. Photographs show them rappelling down the sides of hospital buildings in Tampa, Florida, Chicago, Illinois and in Memphis, Tennessee as well as continuing their work in Pittsburgh at Children's Hospital, St. Benedict, The Moore School, HOPE Centers and more.

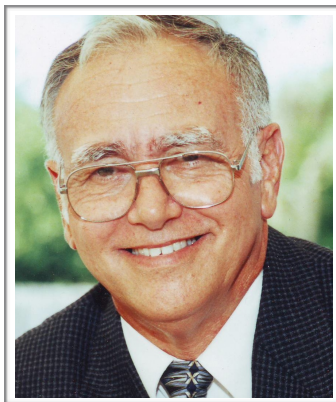
"Mommy, Mommy look, see!"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Living in Sarasota, Florida for over sixty years, Rod DiGruttolo has enjoyed a life few can only dream of. His tales of growing up in perpetual summer are documented in a new book, *Snakes, Spiders and Palmetto Bugs*, available at [CreateSpace.com](https://www.createspace.com) and [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Rod has experience in several fields; he made a career in the automotive repair field where he was a Certified Master in automobile and truck repairs. But, while young enough to enjoy the experience, he worked in a newspaper press room, operated a forklift in a carpet warehouse and spent one summer as a cowboy on a Florida ranch. He became a radio engineer and helped design radio stations all over the country. Following in his father's footsteps, his career spanned forty years during which he interspersed the dual job of serving as a law enforcement officer. Recently retired, he works at his writing and offers his services as a "Story Doctor" to other authors.

[Meet him on LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/rod-digruttolo-89667836)

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/rod-digruttolo-89667836>



Rod DiGruttolo

WHEN COMPASSION REPLACES FEAR by Maria Jordan

As a nurse, working with the homeless population in the streets of Philadelphia, PA was a most enlightening and enriching experience. I met remarkable individuals who touched my heart and taught me some valuable life lessons.

When I met *Joyce**, she was fifty-five years old. Her history was heartbreaking. Due to active psychosis and a reluctance to take psychotropic medication for mood stabilization, her care team was understandably frightened of her volatile and assaultive behavior.

With a childhood rife with physical and sexual abuse, Joyce was fiercely distrustful of people in general, especially men. Her family system was dysfunctional. Her mother was frequently incarcerated for drug-related issues.

Joyce had somehow (*at least marginally*) kept it together through her childhood years. To escape the nightmare she'd been enduring at home, she enlisted in the U.S. army right out of high school. Assigned to active duty in Vietnam, she discovered the nightmare had merely started. Witnessing the death of her friend, as a bomb detonated before her eyes, was the first known trigger for many psychotic episodes through her life.

Hearing these details in report, my mind wandered as I contemplated how I would deal with Joyce. While the circumstances in Vietnam were different, I thought back to a time in my career when I helplessly watched a friend die at the hands of an armed man. I could not understand psychosis. Yet I understood her trauma, grief, loss and suffering. I had lived it just as Joyce had. I knew I had to get past the fear of her psychosis to help her receive the

compassion I possessed. From her soul to the worn soles of her feet, this lady needed me.

For nurses and similarly related care providers, there is a paradox where keeping a distance and holding someone close, emotionally or physically, have distinct advantages. And so, I chose to proceed with my methods of caring for Joyce in these aspects very, very slowly. In this way, I could feel compassion gradually taking the place of fear in my approach with her.

I have always been comfortable with appropriate humor and the infusion of music as therapeutic strategies. I can take the *looks* I get from co-workers and my attitude is *whatever works!*

One day Joyce came to the office with a hairdo that reminded me of the musical artist in a favorite soundtrack, Sade's, *Soldier of Love*. Going with what felt right in the moment, I started belting the song out. Soon Joyce was grinning and joined in, singing along with me. As it turned out, she loved Sade too! The entire office paused to listen, clapping all the while.

It wasn't long before Joyce accepted a two-week injection from me. Risperidal Consta is a long acting psychotropic medicine that helped stabilize her mood. The change in her behavior was dramatic. She looked happier. She said she felt better, even though administration of the shots would always scare her.

Joyce looked like a little girl when I gave her the injections. She closed her eyes *real tight* and together we sang a song. I'd always let her pick.

I was honored when Joyce allowed me to address the condition of her feet. Can you imagine the wear and tear on a person's feet if you are on the streets all day? Comfort, hygiene, support and grooming are all things we can very much take for granted. With Joyce, this took time and patience. It *did not* happen overnight.

One day, as Joyce was coming in to see the doctor, I casually asked her shoe size. After learning we shared the same size, I asked if she would be interested in some pretty sandals I wanted to give her. I was very happy that I had recently found a *BOGO* free sale but really didn't need this second pair. I told her the offer came with a pedicure as well.



Legs perched on park bench modeling new sandals

She lit up and we *booked* the treatment room for that Friday. That day, during her pedicure, more than one staff-member popped their head through the door to check out the laughter and listen to the cool music we were playing on the office boom box.

Afterwards, Joyce felt comfortable enough to agree to see our podiatrist when he next came on his monthly visit. She knew I'd be with her and she trusted all would be well.

A few months later, vocational services approached Joyce about work. She went about practicing her job interviewing skills, including what to wear to a job interview. Joyce stopped by the office the morning of her interview. She was nervous yet excited, completely full circle from the angry and intimidating woman I had met a year ago. And we were proud of this remarkable woman standing before us.

I gave her a pair of patriotic *good luck* earrings to wear. She landed a part-time job at a small restaurant as a hostess. Her customers love her. Realistically, life will always be challenging for Joyce in some areas. But, this may be true for all of us.

Joyce taught me to keep fighting for what I want -- to do it fearlessly and with a compassionate heart. Her accomplishments serve as a perpetual reminder that the efforts are worth it!

***Footnote:** *Joyce's name has been changed for confidentiality.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Jordan was born and raised moments from historic Valley Forge, in peaceful Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Throughout a thirty year nursing career, Maria achieved a graduate degree in the field of Mental Health Nursing. A rewarding leg of her nursing journey was spent serving the homeless on the streets of Philadelphia. Today Maria works as a Professor in a local university, with a specialization in Holistic Nursing. She enjoys helping students get in touch with their inner creativity through the writing process.



Maria Jordan

[Click here](http://tales2inspire.com/?p=1216) to learn more about Maria
and watch a video about her story.
<http://tales2inspire.com/?p=1216>

KUBONA INZIRA
by Lois W. Stern

Our souls are hungry for meaning, for the sense that we have figured out how to live so that our lives matter, so that the world will be at least a little bit different for our having passed through it. . . . What frustrates us and robs our lives of joy is this absence of meaning. . . .

Harold S. Kushner

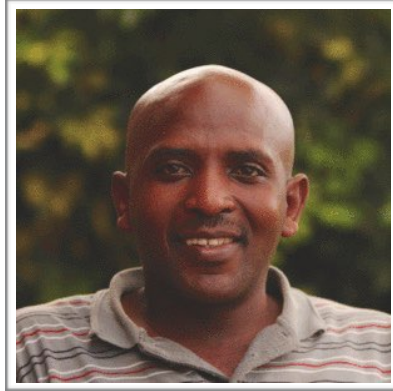
When All You Ever Wanted Isn't Enough

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Michel Kayiranga, a young man born and raised in Gitarama, a rural area of Rwanda, was luckier than most. In 1994, when over one million Tutsi men, women and children were brutally slaughtered during their one hundred day civil war, Michel was outside the country studying at Kenya University. After the war ended and he was allowed to return home, he discovered a country in chaos. His mother had survived, but his father and sister, along with many other relatives and friends, had been slaughtered.

Michel had earned an engineering degree at Kenya University and upon his return to Rwanda, felt blessed that he had drawn a winning lottery number. Armed with a green card and an airline ticket to the US, he found employment as an engineer in Los Angeles and began to settle down. But somehow his life felt incomplete.

Even though the U.S. had done nothing to help his country during the genocide that killed his family, Michel felt a calling to join the military and fight for freedom against the terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attacks in the United States. He served in the US navy, and afterward moved to Seattle to work as an engineer for GE.



Michel Kayiranga

Ten years after the genocide, while Michel's people continued to struggle, an America couple named Greg and Tracy Stone had just returned from a church mission trip to Rwanda. After witnessing Rwanda's poverty they were determined to do something about it. In 2004 they founded Rwanda Partners (RP), a nonprofit with a mission and a dream. Their mission was to fight poverty in East Africa and restore hope to those struggling to exist. Their dream was perhaps even more of a challenge - to help heal and bring peace to the Rwandan peoples. RP began by forming income-generating cooperatives where once bitter enemies would work side by side on basket weaving, beading and sewing projects. Amazingly, friendships began to blossom among the workers.

Greg met Michel and was impressed by his dedication, intelligence and love for his people. He approached him with an offer to serve as country director of the Rwanda Partners project. Although Michel thought he had left that part of his life behind, this offer ignited a second calling in him. In 2007, he sold his condo, packed his bags and moved back to Rwanda to take that position. Today Michel works to serve thousands of weavers in Gitarama, the very region where he was born, lost his

family and then returned as an American/Rwandese citizen.

Members of these weaving groups come from some of the world's most vulnerable populations, including genocide survivors and farmers earning less than one dollar a day. Today their lives have changed. RP has opened global markets for their products, enabling weavers to earn a living wage. Many of the weavers' families were bitter enemies during the genocide, but former wounds continue to heal. As the workers sit side by side weaving baskets, a sense of new family is squeezing out the anger.



Samples of R.P. exquisite baskets

Rwanda Partners now has twenty weaving cooperatives in Gitarama and employs over 2,500 weavers. Designed as a grass roots, bottom up organization, each cooperative has a leadership committee

with a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer, elected by their members.

Michel's leadership continues to shine. He hired a dye master to develop formulas to produce more vibrant colors because he wanted his weavers' baskets to be noted worldwide for their dazzling beauty. Michel and his assistant, Gilbert, mix the dyes and continue to create new colors. Little by little, as they experiment with the powders, they master the subtle intricacies of producing a rich assortment of colors, often using a mix of six or more dyes to get the desired result.

At last count Michel and his assistant could produce twenty-two different colors using the various powders stored at the center, but they have not stopped. More are on their way. Even so, formulas are not an exact science, but must be adjusted according to the amount of sisal the weavers gather on each particular dye day.

Michel is dedicated to far more than these beautiful baskets. He loves the women who weave them with his whole heart and is forever finding ways to serve them in some greater capacity than the organization itself is set up to provide.

Thirty-nine year old Egidia is one of them. After her finance was killed in the genocide, Egidia married, but was continually abused by her new husband, who often drank away the little money she earned. Eventually, she took her four children and left. She was homeless and desperately in search of food and shelter. Michel found her a home and for six months quietly paid her rent out of his own pocket while helping her become a RP weaver. For the past five years Egidia has been earning a steady income through weaving baskets.

"After I was dreaming of one day having 5000 (around \$8 USD) Rwandan francs, Rwanda Partners came and bought some baskets from me and I had 16000 Rwandan francs (around \$26 USD). I was so happy I didn't even know what to

buy. Since then I have continued to weave, and it's as if I have left poverty behind me. I have been able to go to the doctor whenever one of us is sick. Rwanda Partners built me and my children a wonderful house that we live in. I have even been able to forgive my husband, though I cannot be with him."

Now Egidia not only has a dependable income, but she receives a lot of support from her community of weavers. As a single mother, she seeks their advice on parenting and they help her. When she tells them her problems, they comfort her.

Therese shares a similar story.

"As a small child I learned the art of weaving at my mother's knee, and by age eleven I was a professional weaver. I used to earn 150 Rwandan francs per basket (about twenty-five cents) but now earn up to ten dollars per basket. Together, my husband (a farmer) and I provide for our five children. Thanks to weaving, my family's basic needs are all covered; my children are in school, and I can finally say that we are no longer suffering. I love weaving because in addition to the income it provides, it helps me to connect with other women."

Therese now serves as president of her weaving cooperative and proudly says, "I am a professional weaver."

Michel has discovered his life's calling through his dedication to the RP Project. He continues to help those he loves most dearly Kubona Inzira, *Find Their Way*, to self-sufficiency and hopeful lives. At the same time, Michel has found his way to a life of fulfillment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As the creator of *Tales2Inspire*™, I have found much fulfillment in watching my dreams unfold while helping to fulfill the dreams of such a wonderful and increasingly expanding group of talented writers. I admire the skills of my well established authors, but also find joy in helping to nurture less seasoned writers in whom I see buried nuggets of gold. With the assistance of my two most capable editors, Susan Haley and Rod DiGruttolo, I have been able to heighten the visibility of those whose stories are selected for publication in one of the *Tales2Inspire* books.

What joy I feel each time I receive a message from one of my authors, sharing a new success. They thank me for many things: for helping them get started and strengthening their writing skills, for building their confidence, for adding merit to their author platforms. But perhaps most importantly, they thank me for being the first to believe in them.

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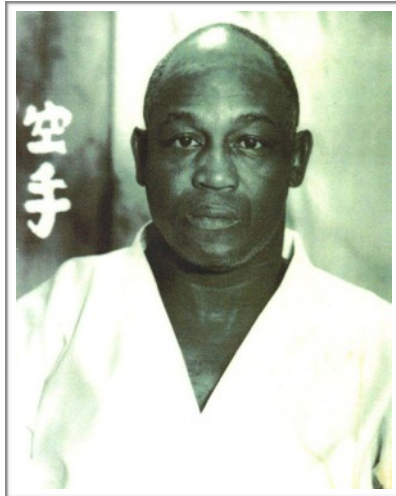
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Lois W. Stern

A HARD HITTING LESSON by John Graden

In the late 1970s, as a young competitor on the Florida karate tournament circuit, I would see Herbie Thompson compete in the black belt fighting division. The circuit was racially charged in those days, with Thompson the respected and feared leader of a group of black fighters from Miami. Though he was respectful and friendly with my instructor, Walt Bone, he was rarely friends with anyone he faced in the ring.



A fearsome Herbie Thompson

Herbie threw trophies and chairs if he didn't win first place and always seemed ready to explode into a street fighting rage if things didn't go his way. One time we had a black belt team competition between our school and a team led by Thompson. I was just a brown belt and was settling in to watch what I knew would be a rough, volatile series of matches when my instructor motioned me to

come over. He instructed me to follow him into the locker room where he pulled out a black belt and told me to put it on. I had been recruited onto an adult team of black belts at seventeen. I was terrified.

In the first fight, our biggest fighter got his nose broken six feet out of bounds by a blatantly illegal technique called the ridge hand. We got the penalty point, but he got a trip to the hospital. After cleaning up the blood, in the next fight our best fighter got knocked out of the match with a powerful kick to the back, which nearly crippled him. I was next. I survived, but lost a lot of points.

In the final match, my instructor was up next against Herbie Thompson. We were way behind in points, but my instructor regained the points and we won the team competition. Thompson went nuts. While excluding my instructor from the tirade, he kicked things, spewed foul language and threw his equipment across the room. In a sport based upon principles of respect and courtesy, this was disturbing and in our view, disgraceful.

Fast-forward twenty years and, we ended up profiling Herbie Thompson for my magazine, Martial Arts Professional. What I discovered was a great lesson in perspective. We asked him about the “old days” when he would throw a tantrum after losing. His response was as revealing as it was unexpected. We discovered that for over thirty years, Herbie Thompson had dedicated his life to using the martial arts to save children in the roughest inner-city communities of Miami from a life of crime. He had mentored hundreds of kids and probably had saved as many lives.

Herbie explained that on Saturdays he would load as many kids into a van as possible and drive them out of Miami to a karate tournament. Some of the kids competed and some watched, but all were out of harms’ way for the day. Between the gas and the entry fees, by the time the tournament started he would be out of money. If he hadn’t

won the cash prize for first place, he couldn't feed the kids, and he would have to borrow money to get the gas to drive back home.



Herbie Thompson today

It's important to understand that Herbie was raised in the same dangerous area of Miami as the kids he was mentoring. Hardship was all he knew. Even while serving his country in Vietnam, things were never easy for him. He was carrying a wounded soldier on his shoulders when he stepped into a "tiger's pit" trap, a hole in the ground with sharp spikes pointing upward. Set by the North Vietnamese, they smeared feces on the sharp tips to insure the worse possible injury. Not only is it hard to imagine surviving such an event, but despite his injuries, he took up karate, an art that requires not just balance and kicking, but has a familiar military foundation of respect and rank. Indeed, the martial arts provided a tradition for his young students to follow and model.

Herbie was not a flashy, high kicking fighter like many of the champions of the day. Herbie could care less about being a champion or winning a trophy. He fought for a pay day to get kids out of harms way. For a day.

Clearly, this was a man driven to help. That doesn't mean he was Mr. Rogers. He knew pain. He knew hardship. He knew he wanted to help change lives. When he lost a tournament, he lost control of his ability to fulfill his mission. Like him, these kids were used to seeing violent outbursts. The difference was that Herbie didn't throw trophies at anyone. He threw them at his frustration.

Did the kids see him lose it? Of course they did. Did they see anyone else literally fighting for their future? Not likely. Did he ever stop trying to help them? He fought until the last round of any competitor. The difference was that he didn't fight for his glory. He fought like a warrior until he could fight no more. Either he won the tournament or he lost, but either way he fought his heart out. Maybe the difference between Herbie and the other competitors was that he fought for more than a trophy. He fought for the kids.

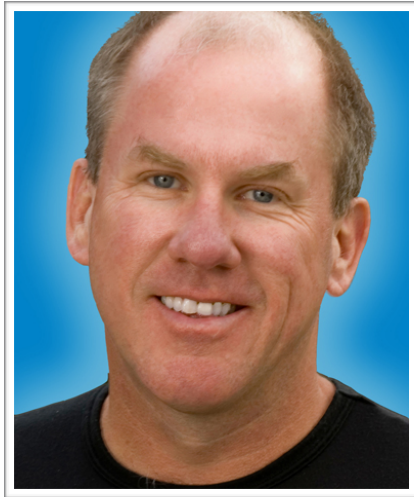
Herbie's story instantly reframed our perception that he was a disrespectful jerk when he was actually a desperate hero to these children, many of whom run their own martial arts schools today.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A Tampa Bay, FL resident, John Graden is the author of many books on the impostor syndrome, self-defense, martial arts, marketing, and near death experiences. John is an inductee to the Self-Publishers Hall of Fame and the Million Dollar Author Club. His many media appearances include "The Dr. Oz Show," a cover story on the "Wall Street Journal", and his book "The Impostor Syndrome" was on the cover of "Publishers Weekly."

[Visit his website](#)

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John Graden

FIVE YEARS

by Stephen Hernández

A lot can happen in five years. Good and bad. My wife died on the 21st of November 2006; that was the worst of the bad. It started with headaches. They became severe so quickly that our family doctor prescribed painkillers much stronger than normal. The pain got so bad one night, I took her to hospital. She stayed overnight and in the morning they performed multiple scans. They discovered a huge tumour on the left side of her brain.

The doctors assured us it was benign but it still had to be removed due to its size. She was sent to King's College Hospital in London, one of the best hospitals in the country and best equipped to perform the operation.

The day of the operation was one of the most tense I have ever experienced and if it wasn't for my fifteen year old daughter I would have been climbing the walls. I knew that I had to remain outwardly strong and calm for my daughter's sake. I continually reassured her that it was just a routine operation for these surgeons and there was nothing to worry about, although inside I was worried to death. I don't know if it relieved her fears or not, but it helped me. From the very start of the surgery a number of things went wrong. The tumor proved to be even larger than they had estimated and haemorrhaging in the brain forced the surgeons to stop the operation until they had it under control. A second surgery went even worse and in the end I was told my wife was brain dead.

For two days I sat next to what can only be described as a living corpse. The only sign of life was a machine that beeped every two seconds.

I came to realize that my wife was no longer there. We had both agreed, way back, what we would do if this sort of dreaded situation actually arose. We'd made each

other promise to do it because, of course, you never believe it's actually going to happen.

On the third morning I said a tearful and heartfelt goodbye and turned the machine off. It was November 21st 2006, the day my life turned upside down.

My daughter and I returned to an empty home. We moved to a neighbouring town which was nearer my daughter's school. But my daughter could not settle and went to live with her recently widowed grandmother. I think they felt solace in each other's company by sharing their mutual grief, each of them at opposite ends of life's spectrum.

I fell into a deep and lasting depression. My business suffered and I went bankrupt. I moved into a bachelor flat. One day whilst I was out shopping I found a foreign student's identity card. From the date, I could see that she had only been in the country a couple of days and must have dropped it without knowing. There was a number to ring if it was found. The voice that answered was English though; it was the landlady. Yes, the Italian lady in question lived there. She gave me the address. It wasn't far, so I decided to take it there myself rather than post it.

As soon as we met, with barely a word spoken, we instinctively knew we liked each other. It was that magical chemistry that no one has ever successfully put into words. We went for a coffee together. The language barrier was not a problem. I was fluent in Spanish but I also knew some Italian and her English, although basic, meant we could understand each other.

Her name was Diana; she was recently separated from her husband and had a son roughly the same age as my daughter. We shared many of the same interests and we loved art and literature. I volunteered to show her the meagre attractions my district had to offer. We became fast

friends and then more than friends. When she returned to Rome I started visiting her there.

My depression lifted, due mainly to her eternal optimism. It made me determined to put my life back on track. It was as much for my own sake, as for my daughter's and my new partner's, whose unselfish love had saved me from myself. But, it wasn't to be....

My doctor phoned and said he was concerned about the results from a recent blood test. In a bizarre twist of events he sent me to King's College Hospital for a series of scans. I had Hepatocellular Carcinoma – liver cancer, to you and me. I was given three months to live.

I had two choices: I could choose to have chemotherapy in the vain hope that I would survive long enough for a transplant, or I could go into palliative care, an escape from reality via morphine.

Diana urged me to choose the first option. She visited me when she could get time off work and we talked every night on Skype. Her visits and texts however short were uplifting and I looked forward to them. It wasn't until I was well into my chemotherapy treatment that I worked up the courage to tell my daughter. It was bad enough that she had lost one parent but to lose the other in so short a time was a hard burden for any young girl. I was proud that she never made me an object for sympathy. She knew how much I would have hated that and we grew closer as the cancer gained an ever tightening grip.

Once I told Diana I felt it would be better for both of us if she moved on. I didn't want her to see me waste away. I suppose it was sheer male egoism but I wanted her to remember me as a strong virile man. I thought it would be easier for both of us that way and as she lived in a different country, far from me, it would for once be an advantage for us. She was shocked that I could even think that way and stubbornly refused to give up hope on me, even in my darkest hours.



Dark Horizons

She made two things abundantly clear: she would never leave me and I was not going to die, not if she had any say in it. No matter how much I tried to drive her away and argue that I was a lost cause, she kept on coming back. She refused to give in and more importantly, she refused to let me give in. I survived ten months but it was only because of her indomitable will. December arrived and I was miraculously given a transplant. Diana spent Christmas by my bedside. It was the best Christmas I had ever had. After the transplant it seemed that a new life opened up to me; a new beginning. And it still does.

A lot can happen in five years...



He who has hope has everything

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen Hernández was born in 1960, in Bromley, England, but spent a lot of his childhood in Venezuela. He has lived and worked in South America for a large part of his life. He works as a translator and interpreter of Spanish. He stopped work for two years in 2007 when he developed liver cancer. He had a liver transplant and has since been on immunosuppressants to stop his body rejecting the new liver. He now divides his time between England and Italy and is studying for another degree in interpreting, with a specialization in medicine. When he is not working, he likes to write short stories.



Stephen Hernández

A LEAP OF WORDS

by Cami Ann Hofstadter, Ph.D.

The death sentence was handed down on a Thursday. The surgeons had removed a golf-ball sized tumor from Andy's head. Nothing else could be done for my fiancé. It was a matter of six months, at the most.

"Time to take up parachuting," one of the doctors advised. What he meant was to do something out of the ordinary before it was too late.

For an obsessive-compulsive like Andy, this wasn't something to be taken lightly because control through rigid routines was one of the touchstones for his particular kind of OCD. His grown daughter and I decided we wouldn't say anything about dying because we knew he'd be obsessing about death instead of enjoying whatever time he had left. If this included parachuting, so be it.

Andy was the first Jewish man for me, the shiksa, the Scandinavian-born academician and writer, who had long depended on her Protestant heritage to get her through life's hardships. He, on the other hand, was a pragmatist, a man who didn't believe in anything that couldn't be proven through the five senses. He scoffed at all religion and esoteric debates were not for him, although he was good-natured enough to go along with the few holiday traditions I observed. Still, he'd get agitated by any mention of faith and prayer.

"How can any intelligent person believe in that nonsense?" he said. "Religion is a scourge. Just look at how it's caused persecution of the Jews. Anybody who believes there's a God has got to be stupid."

"B-b-but..." My speech always became a stutter when he called me stupid.

"This is not about organized religion. It's about soul and believing in something beyond ourselves; that's all."

“Soul, shmoal. It’s all nonsense,” was his usual retort and I knew from his face it was the end of that subject. If I tried to explain myself he got really angry and his verbal outbursts scared me.

Even though Andy didn’t speak directly about his impending departure I believed that he knew, and I wanted to do whatever I could to please him during his last few months. Since his kind of OCD came with an uncontrollable desire to organize and control his environment, and this meant all kinds of rituals that he simply had to perform till he was satisfied, I decided to focus on what gave him so much comfort in the past. As the tumor raged on, I saw how the old routines soothed him even more and I was determined to follow his lead in this.

One night, when I tucked him into bed and we chit-chatted about the day, he folded his hands across his chest and closed his eyes as if in a pose of praying. Instinctively I asked if he wanted me to say a prayer with him, but the moment the question came out I was filled with guilt. Hadn’t I promised myself to let him set the tone for his own passing?

“Yes.” His answer surprised me both with its strength and its message. Yes? Did he really want me to pray with him or was his mind so far gone that he didn’t know what he was saying?

With a bit of hesitation that comes after you regret your impulsiveness, I feigned a cheerful voice as if praying had always been part of our customary bedtime activities.

“What prayer would you like me to say?”

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be ...”

He started on his own and then his voice trailed off as he haltingly continued to recite the prayer. I was too confused to join in. I just sat there and watched him fall asleep, snoring slightly in an obvious state of contentment. Here was my fiancé, an avowed secular Jew,

citing the traditionally Christian prayer, the one Christ supposedly taught his disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray. As the Gentile in this relationship, what was I supposed to do? Hadn't I just promised myself to go along with whatever he wanted?

With me as a confused bystander, a new routine was born that night. At bed-time, after I had tucked him in and he was lying peacefully on his back, I folded my hands on top of his and automatically, he'd then slip into the recital of Our Father. I didn't dare to disturb the tranquility of the scene till, one night, when I decided the right thing was to encourage him to honor his own heritage at a time like this.

"How about doing a different prayer tonight?" I approached the subject tentatively, feeling like a complete fool because I didn't have anything specific to offer in its place.

How I wished I remembered the words to the *Sh'ma*, the prayer that's supposed to be on the lips of every dying Jew. I thought of the apocryphal story about the secular Jew who didn't know what to pray at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem so, instead, he whispered the *Hamotzi*, the blessing of the bread. As the words came tumbling through my head I pictured myself giving the familiar blessing, *Baruch Atah Adonai...*, but before I could say anything at all, Andy opened his eyes as if he knew what I was thinking.

"No," he said.

How thoughtless of me. Change was, after all, the very thing he always hated in his life. I was ashamed of myself and I said no more.

Several weeks later, after an unusually tiresome day of watching him obsess over meaningless details and rituals that made no sense, self-recrimination gave way to self-absorption. I simply had to do something different. When I asked if he wanted to hear the prayer I had learned

as a child in Scandinavia, his “yes” surprised me because it was both unmistakably strong and clear, but also because it showed that he was, after all, open to change. Maybe it had something to do with wanting to please the person – me – to whom he had entrusted his end-of-life care.

From then on, as our fingers were intertwined over his chest, I recited the familiar Swedish words that had comforted generations of Nordic children before me. The non-sectarian stanzas speak to how all of us are small before God and how his love protects us. Wherever we are in the world, he’ll be there to watch out for us. Before I got to the end of the six rhyming lines, he’d be asleep. And then I knew.

In time of need, the gentle rhythm of words can take us to the depth of our souls where we find peace and meaning. Even a children’s prayer in another language can take us there. I’ll never know what Andy would have felt if I had insisted on the *Sh’ma* but I do know that the Swedish verse continued to give him comfort to the end.

It wasn’t exactly parachuting but it was a leap.

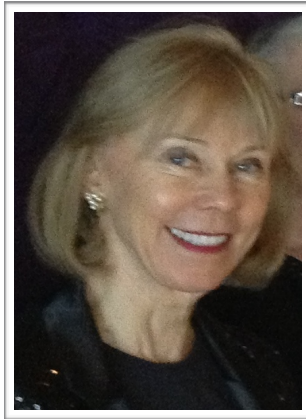


Nordic prayer inscribed on decorated wooden hearts

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cami Ann Hofstadter is retired from university teaching and administration. She lives in Miami, Florida, where she continues her life-long writing career. Under different names for different genres, she's in venues from academic publications to newspapers. She continues to do human interest stories that challenge the thought-processes of her readers and is currently at work on a memoir of her years of caring for a depressive, obsessive-compulsive man. She's also trying her hands at a play about a Holocaust-related incident in her native Scandinavia. Her latest book, *The Foreign Consuls Among Us*, describes in easy-to-understand terms what being a consul in the U.S. really means.

[Check out more of her writing
www.chofstadter.com](http://www.chofstadter.com)



Cami Ann Hofstadter Ph.D.

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HOW TO HELP LOVED ONES THROUGH
TIMES OF ILLNESS
by Kathy Andrews

Introduction by Kathy's mother, Barbara Bernard

I remember the day my daughter Kathy told me she had been diagnosed with breast cancer. To this day, it is still very difficult to describe my feelings of utter helplessness, despair, and disbelief. It was the winter and a new year in 1998. From that moment on, those choking feelings stayed with me twenty-four hours a day, along with many times of quietly crying for my daughter's life. I wasn't sure how to act, but I knew that I had to be strong and supportive of her fight against breast cancer.

After surgery, Kathy had chemo and radiation treatments and for a while the protocol seemed to be working, nevertheless it became necessary to change the protocol and try new cancer drugs. This very grueling process continued on for thirteen years and Kathy's doctors exhausted all possible treatment options. During this time, I was amazed at Kathy's strength and positive outlook. She possessed a powerful will to live and continued to work full time through all the devastating side effects of the cancer treatments. I don't know how she did it. Kathy remained strong-minded and positive throughout this ever tiring battle.

I have always believed in the power of the human spirit and Kathy's courage and strength empowered her to help others. For several years during her treatment Kathy and some colleagues worked tirelessly planting and cultivating a large vegetable garden at work. When the healthy produce was sold, all of the proceeds were donated to those in need. Kathy also actively supported the Cancer Foundation and took part in breast cancer support groups. Upon hearing that someone was

diagnosed with breast cancer or going through chemo treatments, Kathy would contact them and offer her support and understanding. I truly believe that Kathy's caring attitude for others helped in her own personal fight against cancer.

Kathy's colleagues at Estée Lauder encouraged her to write an article about dealing with breast cancer for their newsletter, and she agreed. Kathy hoped that by sharing her experiences she might help others cope with breast cancer or any chronic illness. Her candid familiarity in dealing with this terrible disease eased some of the choking feelings of helplessness and despair I had been feeling. Surely, it gave respite to anyone surrounded by the fears and worries of cancer.

The following article gives amazing insight into my daughter's day to day battle against breast cancer. Read on... listen and hear Kathy's voice.

LETTER BY KATHY ANDREWS

Hello readers! My name is Kathy and I have breast cancer. Many times I am asked by family and friends, "What can I do to help?" Your love, support and compassion mean more than you think. While I do not expect you to know or feel what it is like living with a chronic or long term illness, some of you do and that experience can be very helpful to other's seeking advice and guidance. Support groups are good too, but hearing everyone's story or struggle can be a bit overwhelming. For me, the best advice given was to *Think things differently*. Every day, I would wake up, look in the mirror, and say words of encouragement to myself. It sounds so simple, but positive thinking every day is very hard work and not easy to master. It is easier to be negative, *What do I have to look forward to?* My answer to that is, *I want to live and I*

need to help myself be more positive and always think that way no matter what happens. There were days that I struggled and just did not have the strength to be positive and wanted to give up. It is okay to feel that way as long as it does not last more than twenty-four hours. With that said, positive actions and words daily became my strength and savior.

In addition to positive thoughts and prayers, there is so much more one can do to help. Send a note to help cheer someone up or tell a joke or two. Volunteer to take the patient to a doctor's appointment, CT scan, treatment, or blood work. Shave your head alongside your friend. Although this is an extreme action, why not, hair grows back. A pat on the back and words of encouragement like "Hang in there" go a long way. Also, remember the young children of patients. They need just as much attention and support as the patient, if not more. While they do, in all sincerity need help and support, don't forget about fun and laughter. After all, they are children, so try taking them to a movie, playing a game, or going out for ice cream.

Above all else, remember to keep things positive. Start each day with an affirmation and a good deed for yourself and others. I guarantee you will notice the difference in yourself and how others react to it. It is a wonderful experience, so why not try it and tell others all about it. Good luck with the power of positive thinking!

IN LOVING MEMORY OF KATHY ANDREWS

Life is not forever, but love is.



OUT OF THE ASHES

by Lois W. Stern

Introduction: *This story was told to me by Jack Adler, and supplemented by articles written by his filmmaker son, Eli Adler.*

Skokie, Illinois, was a peaceful, quiet community in the early 1970s, home to me and over 7000 other survivors of the Nazi death camps. Like many others, after settling in this Chicago suburb, my past was something I rarely discussed. It was too painful to recall the horrors I had endured in the concentration camps. But that changed in the Spring of 1976, when a small group of confrontational Neo-Nazis, led by the white supremacist leader, Frank Collin, decided to promote their anti-Semitic agenda in our town. As the leader of the National Socialist Party of America, he announced the party's intention to march through Skokie, Illinois, where one in ten residents was a Holocaust survivor, wearing Nazi uniforms and displaying swastikas. On behalf of the NSPA, the ACLU challenged the injunction issued by the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois that prohibited these marchers at the proposed Skokie rally, arguing that the injunction violated the First Amendment rights of the marchers to express themselves.

Initially, the Jewish community and its leaders encouraged the townspeople to ignore them because, after all, *This is America, where free speech is a Constitutional right.* "Pull down your window shades. Ignore them and they will go away," advised the rabbis and civic leaders. But the provocateurs not only continued but became more venomous. It was then that the citizens of Skokie, Jews and non-Jews alike, united under the slogan, "Not here, not now, never again." Religious leaders of all faiths, the town's Catholic Mayor, the Village Board, veterans of

World War II and many other Skokie citizens stood up to the threat.

The battle of Skokie became one of history's greatest tests of First Amendment rights, with fierce national debates about freedom of speech. The American Civil Liberties Union defended Collin's right to free speech. Ironically both this Neo-Nazi leader and David Goldberger, the lead attorney for this case, were Jewish. The story of how this group was forced from Skokie is fodder for the history books. But this is where my story really begins, the story of how I was transformed from stoic to activist.

I was not alone in feeling both incensed by the provocation, but also aroused to confront my private demons. In an ironic twist of fate, Collin and his followers had provoked me to the point of opening long festering wounds, born in silence for over thirty years, and I began to tell my painful stories. This was not just a catharsis for my private pain, but for the discovery of a meaningful purpose to my life.

Born in Pabianice, Poland in 1929, I was forced into the Polish ghetto of Lodz with my parents and three siblings. On May 16, 1942, when the Lodz ghetto was closed, my family members were all imprisoned at the death camps of Auschwitz and Dachau. I am the lone survivor of our family of six. My mother, father, brother and two sisters all perished at the hands of the Nazis. I remember the heartbreak I felt while watching helplessly as my youngest sister, Peska twisted to see me, her blonde hair falling over her face, her beautiful, full eyes consumed by fear. We locked eyes one last time. And then the woman behind her pushed, my sister turned forward and the line moved on to the gas chambers.

In 1945, the year I was liberated from Dachau, I was sixteen years old, but could barely stand. Weighing a mere sixty-five pounds, I was hospitalized for three months. To this day, I still consider it a miracle that I survived. I had

witnessed first hand the insatiable appetite for brutality that one human being can bestow on another. How could I ever cleanse those wounds, move forward, use my experiences as a vehicle for speaking out against hatred?



Jack as a young man

My transformation didn't start until after Skokie, as I slowly began dragging myself out of those simmering flames. It was a painful journey - first by speaking more openly with my family about the atrocities I had witnessed and endured. Then, my son Eli and I together took a trip to Poland, where we visited some of the ghosts of my past: the ghetto, the camps, the cemeteries. As I spoke about some of the most horrendous details of my youth, I always returned to the same question - Why? I could find no rationale, no meaningful explanation for the existence of these atrocities. But I did find a meaningful new purpose for my life.

Humankind. I grappled with the word. What separated the monsters of Skokie, the monsters of Hitler's Neo-Nazi regime, from humanity? It seemed nothing more complex than the Golden Rule. *Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.* From early history to this very day, this belief has permeated most religions, from

modern day Judeo-Christian traditions to Confucianism (551–479 BC), Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and more. Yet how often it is violated.

What could I do, one survivor of the worst defilement of the golden rule, to promote kindness and foster understanding of the word *humanity*? I wrote a young adult novel, *Y: A Holocaust Narrative*, my very personal and honest portrayal of compelling recollections and events from my childhood and beyond.

Then I began to deliver my message to groups - in schools, churches and synagogues, libraries and civic centers. I have spoken to over one and one half million people. I talk about hatred, racism, bigotry, and misused religious beliefs, all precursors to the Holocaust. I address my audiences directly, challenging them to analyze their own beliefs, to help liberate them from their own hidden yokes of bigotry and hatred. I share my story, no longer as a personal catharsis, but as a springboard to an appreciation of words such as *compassion*, *tolerance* and *mutual respect*.

Yes, It sounds so simple, living lives of compassion, living the golden rule. My filmmaker son Eli Adler is now helping to bring my message forward in a documentary titled *Surviving Skokie*. Through interviews and archival films, we will reveal how the Jews of Skokie responded to the threats, and transformed their lives by recalling their pasts to help them deal with their futures....how the legal system ironically supported the rights of the Neo-Nazis, and how a man like Frank Collin, a Jew himself, could turn into such a heinous character. It is a personal story about the heroes and the thousands of others in the Skokie community—Jews, Catholics and Protestants, civic leaders and veterans of World War II, young and old—who rose up against the voices and gestures of hate. It is about the transformation of the survivors, who opened their eyes and hearts to tell the truth about what had happened to them

thirty years earlier. And, finally, it is a story about a father and son, and how, thanks to a ragtag band of hate mongers and their misguided leader, they both rediscovered their pasts . . . and claimed their futures.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jack Adler was born in Pabianice, Poland in 1929. After losing his entire family in the Holocaust, (a word translated from the Greek *holókaustos*: *hólos*, "whole" and *kaustós*, "burnt"), he came to America in 1946 to begin a new life. He learned English, graduated from high school and college and served in the U.S. Army during the Korean Conflict. Jack married, raised two children and embarked on a successful career in the insurance and real estate industry. In 1990, he began educating middle school, high school and college students about the Holocaust. His speaking engagements also included church and civic groups as well as the military. He has spoken all over the world, delivering his message of tolerance and the need for mutual respect. To date, he has reached more than a million and a half people with his lectures.

Jack is also the co-author of a book that was published in 2012. *Y: A Holocaust Narrative* is now required reading in several Denver area high schools. He currently resides in Denver, CO with his lifetime partner, Judy Segal.

Next January, on the 70th anniversary of its liberation, the Shoah invited Jack to go to Auschwitz/ Birkenau as one of their special guests. He plans to attend with his son and grandson - three generations that thrived despite the evil intents of the Holocaust.

[Friend Jack on Facebook](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/jacksurvivor>



Jack Adler

FROM DUNGEON TO DIGNITY

by Ray Tapia

with Lois W. Stern

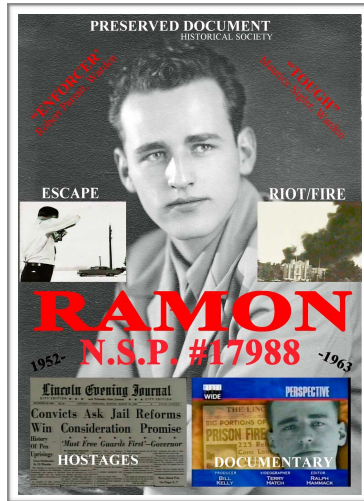
Introduction

When Ray Tapia first told me his personal story, I was captivated. When he then supplemented what he'd shared with a spiral bound book filled with articles, news clippings and photographs he'd compiled over the years, I knew it was a life changing Tale that needed to be told.

Here is Ray's story

If you had met me when I was a teenager, you probably would have predicted that my life was doomed. At seventeen, I was serving time in the Colorado State reformatory for armed robbery. Although paroled after eight months, I was hardly reformed. Lawlessness was now my way of life. By nineteen I was again locked up, but this time in the Nebraska Penitentiary. It was a dreaded place. The warden was a political appointee who ruled by brute force and encouraged his goon squad of guards to behave similarly.

I was one of the most rebellious prisoners, plotting sit downs strikes, escapes and riots. With each infraction my original seven year sentence was extended, being thrown in the hole so many times I lost count. This cell was underground, with nothing more than a cement bowl embedded in the floor and a water spigot a couple of feet above. The guards would enter twice a day, carrying a ration of three slices of bread, supplemented by a pan of food every third day. I once survived on those rations for a stretch of forty-five consecutive days.



Ray Tapia 1952

Life seemed hopeless. I began to fear that I might spend my last days in prison and be buried in their hillside cemetery. So why not continue to incite riots and stage escapes? One day we controlling convicts came up with the idea to set the Penitentiary on fire. It quickly raged out of control. When the Nebraska Fire Department refused to enter, the National Guard was called in.

And that's when my life began to change. Enter Maurice Sigler, a man who had already reformed Angola Prison, the largest maximum security prison in the United States. Oh, yes, he was used to tough characters and knew how to be tough in return. But as the Nebraska Penitentiary's new warden, he observed some of the problems on his very first day. 'No one spoke to the prisoners. There was no animation in the place.' But Sigler knew that being locked in the hole did one of two things to a man. It could turn him vicious or kill his spirit completely.

Sigler had a different approach. Although he recognized that people were sent to prison *as punishment* for their crimes, he didn't believe they should be sent there

for punishment. He wasn't naive enough to believe every prisoner could be reformed, but he firmly believed that some prisoners could be rehabilitated and returned to society. Rather than act with brutality, he set out to reform as many prisoners as possible by having them use their time for self-improvement.

The first change I noticed was that Maurice Sigler would walk unguarded in the yard and stop and talk with prisoners. He soon was able to identify the three worst trouble makers. One of them was me. I had been in the hole for the better part of four years and Sigler asked me why. 'I helped burn down the penitentiary,' I answered. Sigler told me he already knew all about my part in the riot and just wanted to see if I'd tell him the truth. Then he walked off.

Two months later Sigler called me and two of my buddies to his office. When he invited us in, we sat in fancy leather chairs as he spoke in a friendly, matter-of-fact tone. 'I'm starting to change things in here, starting right now. I want the three of you to spread the topics of our conversation to others. I want to create an Inmate Council whose members will meet with me once a month. The members will be elected by the inmates themselves. The Council will recommend changes, direct the sports programs, and oversee all the recreational activities.'

Did we hear correctly? Was this new warden asking us, three hardened convicts, to help him get this program off the ground? But Sigler's parting words showed us who was boss. 'You might think you run this pen but let me tell you right now. I control this pen, not you. I am going to be the tough guy, not you. If I hear one word that there is going to be a protest, rebellion, or any other such thing, my officers have been instructed to pick up the three of you and throw away the key.' With those parting words, he stood up, shook our hands, thanked us and said, 'We must work together.'

We left his office in a state of near shock. Here was a warden asking for *our* help, wanting to interact with the convicts. The Inmate Council took shape and gradually the atmosphere within our prison walls changed. Paths of communication began to open and spread. We all felt a subtle but real improvement in morale.

Sigler had other changes in mind. He took down the screen separating visitors from prisoners, to make visits more rewarding for the inmates and their families. He started a school and encouraged every prisoner to attend classes. At first these were correspondence classes, but later he hired a principal and teachers to create a school within the prison walls. Younger inmates were encouraged to attend full half day sessions until they earned their GED certificates. The rest of us were encouraged to attend evening classes. Sigler even established a pre-release program, teaching practical skills such as how to balance a checkbook, avoid debt, prepare for an interview, etc.

I took to the challenge and received credits in thirteen high school correspondence courses, then went on to earn certificates in electronics, surveying, composition, grammar, philosophy, algebra and public speaking. The instructors used the same textbooks and course outlines in our prison classes as in the local community colleges. I became active in their Pioneer Gavel Club, a subsidiary of Toastmasters International. Elected the first president, I was voted best speaker during a four way competition involving two Toastmasters International visitors from outside the prison, me and one other inmate. "Released from prison at age thirty-one, I managed to land a job with a commercial laundry serving hospitals, hotels and other large scale companies. After being promoted to supervisor trainee, I became certified as an Institutional Laundry Manager. There were a few scrapes with the law until I settled down, but then I met Nida, one of their young employees and fell in love. For the first time in my life, I

prayed, asking God to 'work things out so I could marry the most beautiful woman this side of Pecos'. My prayers were answered. We married, raised four children, and have been blessed with ten grandchildren.



Nida and Ray Tapia

But thoughts of Maurice Sigler, the man who helped me turn my life around, rarely left my mind. In 2001, Nida and I drove from our home in Colorado to Lakeland Florida for a visit. This was my chance to thank him in person for all he had done for me. We greeted each other with warm embraces and reminisced about old times like a pair of long separated fraternity brothers. Finally, I was able to tell him how much my freedom and my life meant to me, thanks in large measure to him, the warden who turned my life from dungeon to dignity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Although *From Dungeon to Dignity* is Ray's autobiography, we thought there was a bit more of interest to relate here. Ray compiled an eight-one page spiral bound book titled: *Ramon #17988*, a copy of which resides in the Nebraska State Historical Society. The Addendum to this book contains a number of full color photographs as well as a letter from warden Maurice Sigler, verifying the facts within *Ramon #17988*. Mr. Sigler ended with the words:

“Mr. Tapia, in my mind is a prime example of what a person in prison can do to bring about his rehabilitation if he has self-determination and is given the encouragement needed and the tools with which to work. More than thirty years of a successful marriage, that produced four children, now married, gainfully employed and living near the parental home, is the main factor that brought about Mr. Tapia's complete rehabilitation and happy retirement.”

In June 2001, Ray and his wife, Nida took a motor trip, first to tour the environs of the Nebraska Prison and then to Lakeland Fl. where they visited with Maurice Sigler. This trip was filmed by Nebraska's Net News Channel.

[Click to view a video intro to Ray's story](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqobl9twlck?list=uuvnfj858g93zy9x3wdg9bw/)
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqobl9twlck?
list=uuvnfj858g93zy9x3wdg9bw/](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqobl9twlck?list=uuvnfj858g93zy9x3wdg9bw/)

Attention Documentary and movie producers:
Can't you just envision Ray's story on the big screen?



Ramon Tapia

Reviews

Dr. Bernie Siegel

Author of *A Book of Miracles* and
365 Prescriptions For The Soul

Animals are teachers and healers because they are complete while we have much to learn. . . . People often don't wake up until a disaster occurs which reminds them of their mortality. Lois' collection of stories about compassionate people and animals can help us all to learn more about life and make our existence more meaningful.

Gail Sobotkin

Freelance writer, published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Find Your Inner Strength*, *Delaware Beach Life*, *American Journal of Nursing*, *Delmarva Quarterly*, and *Mysterious & Miraculous Books I & II*.

True Stories of Inspiration, Compassion & Love

I have read each story and can honestly say I don't have a favorite! Each and every story touched my heart deeply.

If you ever wondered what it would be like to live in a world where people and animals are treated with compassion, kindness and love, where the human spirit rises up again and again to meet seemingly impossible challenges, where faith triumphs over despair, where young children and abused animals teach adult humans life lessons, where the homeless are treated with respect and compassion, you must read *Tales2inspire ~ The Ruby Collection*, an amazing anthology of 14 true stories that will inspire you to live your own life with an open heart---despite, or perhaps because of, whatever difficulties you may face. Compassion is a gift that keeps on giving; it changes the giver, recipient, and all those who witness the compassionate act. It makes the world a better, kinder

place and when delivered with love, has the power to transform the globe one person, one animal at a time.

The Ruby Collection makes a great gift for children and adults. Treat yourself to a copy and buy one for your friends, colleagues and relatives. Ask them to read the book then pass it on to an institution such as a library, hospital or school so that the stories will be spread far and wide, planting seeds of inspiration, compassion and love.

Shauna L Bowling

Freelance Writer/Copy Editor

Inspiring!

Tales2Inspire ~ The Ruby Collection is a book of inspiration and uplifts the reader with each story. From human/animal spiritual connections to human/human connections, these true stories of courage, love, and strength are proof that good exists in the world. We can and do overcome the odds each and every day. If you have any doubts about the power of love, read this book. All it takes is one person to reach out to make positive changes in someone's life.

I highly recommend this book to readers of all ages. It just may change your life!

Vicki Warner

Author Adult Educator, Grief And Loss group facilitator

Tales That Inspire

My title tells it like it is; 14 hand picked authors lead you through their challenging journeys as they discover what works in special relationships. Opportunity knocks, and these writers all answer with creative, inspirational enthusiasm.

I was originally most interested in this collection of tales because I wanted to read one story in particular by Maria Jordan. She has previously described some of her

experiences as a psychiatric nurse. Her tale, "When Compassion Replaces Fear" is one of those special accounts, and it does not disappoint.

This time she gives us a motivational tale of purposefully reaching out to a decidedly resistant and psychotic woman. You feel her emotions, see her practical and respectful approach and hear her decision to go with music as a the backdrop to treatment! I won't say more, because it would just be mean to talk about the surprising end to this tale.

But I found I could not read only one story. It's hard not to want more of a really good thing. So I read them all, and was enthralled.

Be sure to have some time at your disposal when you read this collection of tales. They are so absorbing, interesting and inspiring, you won't want to put the book down. But when you do, you will feel a glow of vicarious delight. This kind of inspiration will make you look at relationships in a new and different way.

J. Smithem

Jacksonville, FL.

Feeling renewed and inspired

The stories in "The Ruby Collection, Gifts of Compassion" will leave you feeling renewed and inspired! Each story will lift your heart and help you remember that caring, compassionate, dedicated people are all around us every day. Even seemingly ordinary people do amazing things! The well-written, short stories are easy to read and enjoy at your leisure. I hope you find the stories as poignant and uplifting as I did!

Sue Camp

Director CDK (clothing) Sales Ltd.

An awesome and addictive read

The Ruby Collection is heart wrenchingly remarkable, thought provoking and humbling, yet at the same time truly uplifting, inspirational, and overwhelmingly positive; complete proof that with real love and an indomitable spirit, anything is possible.

An awesome and addictive read!

A Letter to My Readers

Dear Reader,

Did you know that the ruby is the gemstone symbolizing friendship and love? It is also said that the ruby opens the heart and promotes love relationships. What a fitting symbol for the cover of this book.

I wonder, how many of the stories in this collection have filled you with these emotions? To be quite honest, I received so many great stories for this *Gift of Compassion* category that I was faced with a problem. I couldn't publish all of them and had to abide by the contest rules. Once again, I let the author/judges decide. You might notice that I sneak a couple of my own stories into each *Tales2Inspire* collection, but they too are critiqued anonymously by three other writers. I like to play fair.

As both an author and the creator of this contest, I long for feedback. So please tell me what you liked, what you loved, and even those stories that didn't touch you (and why). I want to hear from you and value your opinions.

Finally, I need to ask a favor of you. Reviews can be tough to come by these days. You, the reader, now has the power as never before to make or break a book. So if you can, I would be so appreciative if you would take the time to write a review and post it on Amazon (and any other cool places you can think of!)

[Click here for the link to my Amazon page.](https://www.amazon.com/Tales2Inspire-Ruby-Collection-Gifts-Compassion-ebook/dp/B00Q7H4ZTM/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1468098768&sr=1-4&keywords=Tales2Inspire+Collection#customerReviews)

https://www.amazon.com/Tales2Inspire-Ruby-Collection-Gifts-Compassion-ebook/dp/B00Q7H4ZTM/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1468098768&sr=1-4&keywords=Tales2Inspire+Collection#customerReviews

And I thank you!



For those of you who ask, *How do I post a review on Amazon?* see my foolproof directions below.

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* Right under that title, look for the row of gold stars with the blue words showing the number of customer reviews. Click on it.

* Scroll down and click on the button that says CREATE YOUR OWN REVIEW to add your inspiring words.

Thank you ever so much.

About *Tales2Inspire*

My innate curiosity about potentially fascinating human interest stories was the spark that ignited this *Tales2Inspire*[™] project, but it was my feeling of frustration with the current state of traditional publishing that made those sparks blaze. The catch twenty-two today is that many truly talented writers never are given a chance, simply because they do not have a proven track record. So I began to create an alternate path for these authors, seeking ways to help strengthen their opportunities for discovery and name recognition.

Tales2Inspire was a kernel of an idea that I started in 2012, which has grown to proportions even I didn't dare to envision. It delivers exactly what it promises as both an *Authors Helping Authors* project and a contest. Winners get their stories published in print, e-book, and possible audio formats, with their names, headshot photos, and mini-autobiographies included. Their photos also appear on the back cover as contributing authors.

Authors whose stories are accepted for publication get some significant platform building boosts through the social media, others through affordable promotional options which include features such as our media partnership program.

[Learn more](#)

http://tales2inspire.com/?page_id=2437

[Visit our YouTube Channel](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/winningtales>

Commonly Asked Questions

How did *Tales2Inspire* begin?

Despite having published two books about aesthetics (beauty of the face and body), I have forever been drawn to inner beauty stories - stories that touch the heart, mind and soul. I began writing inspiring stories about people and events that touched me, and eventually started inviting others to share their inspiring stories.

What is *Tales2Inspire*?

Tales2Inspire began as an *Authors Helping Authors* project as well as a contest. It is FREE to enter and provides winners and selected finalists with some exciting platform building opportunities. I am continually working to add more value for my winners, to help them on their individual paths to discovery.

How does it work?

Authors who participate in this project carefully craft their stories prior to submission. I personally review each story as it is received, and give its author basic feedback before the judging phase begins.

Stories accepted into this competition are then judged by a jury of three peers, using a click, click, click automated form. Each judge also offers a brief critique to include at least one suggestion for improving the story - unless of course they gave it a perfect score. If there is basic consistency in the three judges' scores, which happens most of the time, I total them, divide by three and assign Winner, Finalist and Honorable Mention awards based on those score averages. When an occasional wide discrepancy occurs among the three judges' scores, I call upon members of my critique group for further evaluation.

But it doesn't end there. Unlike most every other contest, even after the awards are announced, I will continue to work with the author of a 'tale' which shows unique promise. I do not charge for any of these services because I am committed to the ideal of Authors Helping Authors. In return, each author gives me first rights to publication of their 'tale', by signing and returning a release form along with their submission.

Why *Tales2Inspire*?

It is no secret that many talented writers and seasoned authors alike remain undiscovered. *Tales2Inspire*[™] provides the best-of-the-best with an opportunity to get one compelling story published, and start them on the road to several strong branding and platform building opportunities.

[Visit the Tales2Inspire website](http://www.tales2inspire.com)
www.tales2inspire.com

to learn details such as themes, how to submit a story, the way winning stories are chosen, how winning authors are promoted, and affordable promotional options to move winning authors into the spotlight.

Let me end by wishing each of my *Tales2Inspire*[™] authors and aspiring authors success as they move forward in their writing careers. Know that I'll be standing behind you as part of your personal cheering squad!

Staying in Touch

I love hearing from my readers, and when you reach out, I promise to get back to you. Here are some ways to keep in touch.

Please try one or more of them.

Start a conversation with the authors of any of your favorite inspiring stories on the

[Tales2Inspire website](http://tales2inspire.com/?page_id=2709) blog
http://tales2inspire.com/?page_id=2709

FRIEND ME ON FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/loiswster

LIKE ME ON MY FACEBOOK AUTHOR PAGE

www.facebook.com/tales2inspire/beauty

TWEET ME ON TWITTER

www.twitter.com/myfabbeautyblog

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Susan C. Haley
haley_susan@ymail.com

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Rod DiGruttolo
rodshs62@hotmail.com

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covers for these books
www.somicsdesigns.com
805-451-8794

To all my *Tales2Inspire* authors and aspiring authors,
I wish you continued success as you move forward in your
writing careers. Know that I'll be standing behind each of
you, as part of your personal cheering squad!

he *Tales2Inspire* books

*Tales2Inspire ~ The Emerald Collection -
Beyond Coincidence stories*

*Tales2Inspire ~ The Topaz Collection -
Awakenings & Aha Moments*

*Tales2Inspire ~ The Sapphire Collection
Stories that Echo In the Mind*

*Tales2Inspire ~ The Ruby Collection
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