

# A LIGHT IN THE MIST

THE JOURNAL OF HOPE

A HEALING ENVIRONMENTS PUBLICATION  
VOLUME FIVE, NUMBER THREE, 2000

## Art and Healing



Inside you there's an artist you  
don't know about...Say yes  
quickly, if you know, if  
you've known it from before the  
beginning of the universe.

*Rumi*

Kate met Francis (then a beautiful and vibrant young man), twenty years ago in Paris. Her former husband, Paul, was working with his father, Jacques, at the French Ministry of Justice. Jacques wrote Paul the letter below shortly after Francis' death. Francis taught us all how to die with grace and courage.

Francis est malade et jetté dans son sommeil; il a supporté ces deux ans et demi de lutte, et particulièrement les dernières semaines, les plus éprouvantes, avec un magnifique courage. Une dernière chose lui tenait très à cœur, et il a réussi à la mener à bien de façon magnifique: son concert qui était... programmé depuis longtemps pour le 24 juin. C'était le premier d'un orchestre du barreau des avocats de Paris que Francis avait créé et dont il dirigeait les répétitions avec une grande sollicitude. Dans les derniers temps, il ne pouvait plus rester longtemps debout, et on lui avait confectionné une chaise haute, pour qu'il puisse de temps en temps s'y appuyer. Mais la maladie s'aggravait, nous craignions fort qu'il n'ait plus la force de venir au palais diriger son orchestre. Or, par un vrai miracle, non seulement cela a été possible, mais ce concert a été une grande joie pour lui. Grâce à son énergie, et aussi bien sûr avec l'aide de son docteur et ami (un fidèle de l'ensemble vocal) qui lui a donné les doses de morphine et de cortisone nécessaires, il a affronté sans mal les longs couloirs et les escaliers menant à la bibliothèque des avocats, et nous l'avons vu diriger l'orchestre avec une maîtrise et une allégresse qui nous a transportés. Nous retrouvions le Francis de toujours, au point que l'après nous retournait... Et après le concert, dans une attitude recueillie, puis enthousiaste, nous avons vu Francis ravi de retrouver parents et amis, parmi les plus chers, partager avec lui, les musiciens l'entourant pour lui offrir des chaises, et parlant (de sa voix murmurante) d'ébonclance avec les uns et les autres jusqu'à une heure tardive, sans apparence de fatigue. Nous l'avons enterré hier au cimetière d'Aulnay - Bondy, proche de sa maison, et tous les témoignages d'amitié et d'admiration nous ont été chers au cœur.

Francis died on Tuesday, the 11th of July in his sleep; he had endured these two and a half years of battle—and particularly the last weeks, the most trying—with a magnificent courage. One last thing he held very close to his heart, and he succeeded in realizing it in a magnificent fashion: a concert which had been arranged a long time ago for the 24th of June. It was the first of an orchestra of lawyers from the Paris Bar Association, which Francis had created and whose rehearsals Francis directed with great care. Lately he could no longer stay standing for very long, and they had to construct a high chair, so that he could support himself with it from time to time. But, with the illness getting worse, we were very afraid he would no longer have the strength on the day of the concert to come to the palace to direct his orchestra. Well, by a true miracle, not only was that possible, but this concert was a great joy for him. Thanks to his energy and also of course with the help of his doctor and friend (a faithful member of the chorus) who gave him the necessary doses of morphine and cortisone, he confronted without difficulty the long corridors and stairs leading to the library, and we saw him direct the orchestra with a mastery and joy which transported us. We rediscovered the Francis of always, to the point that hope returned. And after the concert, in a contemplative mood and then enthusiastic, we saw Francis delighted to join relatives and friends, among the most dear, toasting him, surrounded by musicians offering him recordings, and holding forth (in his whispering voice) with this one and that one until a late hour, without any appearance of fatigue.

We buried him yesterday in the cemetery of Aulnay-Bondy, near his home, and all the tributes of friendship and admiration were very dear to our hearts.

## Inevitable Grace

Nowhere has the gift of creativity been more evident in my life than in the publication of *A Light in the Mist*. When we first conceived of the idea five years ago, our goal was to reach out across the country in caring and compassion. The process has been a healing one in our personal lives as well. Through crisis after crisis, the production of the newsletter has offered us a soothing rhythm, a grounding force and a beacon of light. From conception to final press check, each issue is an exercise in faith and process.

I once heard Shakti Gawain say that for some of us work is a spiritual practice. *A Light in the Mist* is that from start to finish. We half jokingly speak of our editorial committee in the sky. But seriously, the feeling of our being guided is very real. From the moment we select a theme, everything falls miraculously into place. A beautiful dance occurs, with each of us and serendipity playing our parts.

I'll never forget the time we needed a quote explaining Buddha's concept of compassionate friendship. I stood in our library before our case of spiritual books and asked the universe to supply what was needed for the benefit of our readers. I was led directly to a book I had never read—*Inevitable Grace* by Piero Ferrucci—and opened to page 149:

*Just as with her own life  
a mother shields from hurt  
her own, her only, child,  
let all-embracing thoughts  
for all that lives be thine,  
—an all embracing love  
for all the universe  
in all its heights and depths  
and breadth, unstinted love,  
unmarred by hate within,  
not rousing enmity.  
So, as you stand or walk,  
or sit or lie, reflect  
with all your might on this;  
—'tis deemed a state divine.*

Buddha in the *Sutta-Nipata*

For another issue, Sam, our graphic designer had just selected bare branches as our visual background when a beautiful poem arrived from one of our readers entitled "Between the Branches."

What is it, I wonder, about the creative process that is so healing? There is an element of surrender, until we reach that state of flow that is deliciously transcendent. Even working out the inevitable bugs and the tedium of seemingly endless editing is healing. Like a sculptor's working and reworking a stone. The process takes on a life of its own and that process transports one above the stress of personal concerns. Each issue is like a birth brought full-term to the glow of completion, and then the rhythm begins again. **KS**

## Dream Into Action

The journey into creativity is a religious experience for me. The moment that separate pieces come together to form one larger expressive piece is magical. The process restores and strengthens my belief in a greater sense of purpose. I try to start all projects with an understanding of whom I am serving. By placing the project on a higher level, I can focus my own creativity into a selfless act—one in which I am merely contributing my voice and thoughts.

There are times when I am in such a good place that anything seems possible. The natural colors of this world inspire me, the mundane and simple can become the backbone of a design project. The materials that I need are everywhere—textiles from different cultures, architectural pieces (such as a door), an antique cabinet, a paint color. A conversation can evolve into a deeper understanding of the project and why it so badly needs to happen.

When I am in a good place, it is easy and effortless. Sometimes that "Dark Night of the Soul" feeling comes forth in me and this creative process is itself a dark, restless place. The images and flow suddenly are absent. I take this as a sign to find or create my own personal sanctuary. This place can be many things—a room in my home, a church, or a park. Sometimes I will take a pad of paper and just sit in the hospital waiting room—envisioning what might make the space more healing. Just getting out of the dark space and into a more inspiring place opens my heart to the creative process.

Faith in the process is where my mission stems from. A belief that we can all share and inspire in simply being who we are. Compassionate action in the form of design is where I feel the most energy. The concept of adding a sense of dignity and respect to a space, with the belief that it will address hidden fear and despair, and hopefully

replace it with love and caring is where my creative self prospers.

If you have a sense or feeling of what your personal mission is—please take a chance to write it down, think about it, start to make something happen. Once you open this channel in yourself—you might be surprised by how much hidden energy is stored within. Create for yourself or with others—this life we are leading is an opportunity to express ourselves.

There was a tour of Healing Environment that came through a few years ago. It consisted of a group of women joined in friendship—each with their own unique background and experiences. I shared with them our model of what a healing environment could be. The idea is to share the different rooms that Kate and I created with the hope that inspiration and transformation can occur for the participants.

One result of that tour: Louise, one of the participants, re-examined her home and decided her sacred space should be a terracotta painted room that she could sit and meditate in. She talked it over with her husband (I think) and cleaned out their formal living room—which they seldom used—and painted the walls terracotta.

I love this story because Louise allowed her love of travel—of Italy, and especially the color she most connected with it—to fill a space in her home. Better yet, she used a room that was hardly used. She shed a whole layer of what she should do for what she needed to do. Love that.

An addendum to Louise's story: She also created a women's retreat house on the San Francisco Peninsula. She and her husband took a second home that they shared and renovated it to be a sanctuary for women who needed a place to find peace. She filled it with heartfelt poetry and books, comfortable places to rest. Ahhhh, sounds pretty good right now.

Is there some way for you to connect to that place in yourself? **TTP**

There is a vitality, a life-force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action. And because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium...The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how valuable, nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.

Martha Graham



## Please Join Me...

*I must write it all out, at any cost. Writing is thinking. It is more than living, for it is being conscious of living.*

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Some of you may remember from earlier issues of *A Light in the Mist* my various attempts to sustain a writing practice: Julia Cameron's *Morning Pages* (not too many mornings), Ira Progoff's *Intensive Journal* (not too intensively). Because I suspect that many of our readers may share my desire to secure a space in my life for reflective writing, I would like to invite you to join me in this pursuit. Using *A Year in the Life: Journaling for Self-Discovery* by Sheila Bender as our guide for this "writing circle," my hope is that interested readers will make a commitment with me to keep a journal in the coming months, letting me know periodically, if you wish, about your progress along the way. Although it is not essential to purchase Bender's book, her weekly writing prompts and topics seem a promising way to sustain a writing life, and I highly recommend the gentle structure her book provides. I look forward to writing with you.

Doree Allen  
Healing Environments  
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Palo Alto, CA 94301

*A Year in the Life: Journaling for Self-Discovery* by Sheila Bender, Walking Stick Press, 2000.

## A Reason to Write

I am a writer, and the reason I write is God. Yet I have spent dozens of hours at my notebook over the past few weeks trying to write about the healing effects of writing without mentioning "the God element." My inner critics feasted on this idea. "God!?" they groaned, their voices thick with sarcasm and disdain. "You can't talk about God in an article about writing—everyone will think you're some sort of religious freak. And forget about anyone actually reading it. Nobody'll listen to you when you start getting spiritual."

But despite these nagging thoughts, I know that I cannot write about my experiences as a writer without mentioning God because God is the essence of my writing and of who I am. It is through writing that I gain insight into my truth. When I write, I ask God my questions and receive clear, wise, and loving answers. The greatest gift of the page is comfort—comfort in knowing that I am loved, and that God is always with me.

I have loved writing since I was five years old. After writing my first story in kindergarten about my cat walking along a fence to my grandma's house, I decided that I wanted to write for the rest of my life. When grownups asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up, I always knew in the back of my mind that I wanted to be, and always would be, a writer. Not that I always told them this. I've said that I wanted to be a teacher, a principal, an astronaut, a journalist, a full-time mom, a minister, a college professor, a web page designer...and yet in the back of my mind, in the center of my soul, I have always resonated highest with writing.

For me, writing is more than just a career. It is a lifestyle and a method of healing. Though I have tried therapy, self-pity, the shoulders of friends, television, and loud music, I have found that writing is the greatest salve for my soul. Through writing, I connect with that part of me that is loving, knowing, and full of divine wisdom. It is the part of me that knows the answers to my most mind-boggling questions and can put at ease my most gut-wrenching fears. On the page I pour out my heart—a cliché, yes, but also a powerful image of thoughts, words, and feelings, flowing from my soul into the page in streams and torrents of ink.

Earlier this summer, while cleaning out my room, I collected all of my notebooks and stacked them together on a shelf marked "ME." This shelf is heavy with books that were once blank and that now bulge with the weight of my writings and imaginings. There is the row of soft, spiral-bound notebooks that hold my morning pages. Each morning, before I tiptoe to the bathroom, I drag myself to the desk. My eyes blurry with sleep, I put my hand to the page, and, with sweeping, scribbly strokes, I record my first thoughts of the day. Three pages a day, no matter what. A practice that I picked up while reading *The Artist's Way* (a splendid book by Julia Cameron), morning pages are not so much about writing as they are about clearing my head of worries and preoccupations. In them I do not think of grammar or composition, quite a feat for an English major! Instead I let my thoughts flow and wander, and listen to what God and I have to share with one another.

Beside my morning journals rests an assortment of hardbound notebooks, each home to hundreds of poems, stories, and personal narratives. Here I have strived for years to keep God from popping up in my "real" writing, only to realize that avoiding such splendor and joy is detrimental to my soul. Instead, I invite this blissful essence into my work, that its glory and beauty touch the lives of those who read the words.

Yet writing is not all beauty and joy and light. While I celebrate my abundance on the page, so too do I record my agony, confusion, and despair. When my breath is shortened by heartache, when I feel as though my happiness is crumbling, never to be fully resurrected, I take refuge in my notebook, letting stinging tears and

soothing words fall upon the page.

With each word, poem, page written, I feel my frustration and anger subsiding until only the soft voice remains. It is a voice, a presence, more peaceful and loving than any other I have known. As I pelt the page with questions—*Why is this happening to me? How can I see the good here? When will I heal?*—the voice responds, quietly, softly, full of grace.

*Be still, it whispers. Go within and know that you are enough. You have enough. You do enough. Whatever problems you face, know that the divine solution is already present in your life. Let go of these fears that cloud your happiness—your soul soars with joy as you let go of fear and open your heart to love. I am with you. Always. In all ways.*

And so I close my notebook, once again refreshed and renewed by the Godliness of the page. Writing is one way to this peace, and there are many others: art, music, performance, dance, thought, speech, silence, love. In all ways, when we open our hearts to love, we shall find the answers that we seek—already present, already known, in our souls.

Jennifer Hennings

*Jennifer is a Sophomore English major at Stanford University and the author of a children's book, The Penny Doll.*

## Why am I a writer?

Because my hand is gifted with  
The power of word, and God  
whispers stories in my ear.  
Eager to hear the next chapter,  
I write. I listen carefully, I look  
at everything, I dissect my  
thoughts. I dedicate myself  
to life, to people, to tale. I  
am born in words and know  
my home on the page.  
God is my goal—I want to  
meet God in my journal,  
and I am creative for  
that reason. I love my  
pen, ink excites me, and I  
am worth 70 dollar pens.  
Someday I will always want another  
notebook. I'd rather write my  
own book than buy someone else's,  
and I love to read. Bookstores  
delight me and my soul loves to  
talk. Dream on through the  
Night, for my spirit is endless  
and so are my stories, so I am  
a writer.

Jennifer Hennings

## A Fertile Silence

I spend my days solving problems. I work as an administrator in higher education, where I answer questions from students, faculty, and parents, attend meetings, monitor budgets, help enforce policy, and generally handle whatever crises a day might bring. I start each day hoping to cross items off of my to-do list, but often find when I leave the office at night that the list has grown instead of shrunk.

At times this list seems to follow me around. At nights and on the weekends, I find my mind spinning like a Maytag over tasks both finished and unfinished, worrying about whether I made the right decision, whether I'll be able to meet a particular deadline, whether office politics might influence a particular situation, whether I'll be able to keep those above me satisfied with my performance. Lately I wake up in the middle of the night unable to get back to sleep because of this constant mind chatter.

What lies behind this persistent mental noise is fear. I grew up in the rural Midwest, in a family where I experienced a great deal of abuse. My father was a schoolteacher, and during the summers we lived and worked on a 320-acre farm. I began driving tractor solo when I was in second grade, and as I grew older learned to operate other machinery, such as the two-ton grain trucks and the big red combine we used to harvest the grain.

There's a lot that can go wrong on a farm—tractors can get stuck, combines can get plugged up if you try to take in too much grain at once, machinery can break down. I experienced all of these things as a child operating this equipment, and learned to fear the consequences. Whenever things didn't go well, whenever I experienced some kind of problem, my father would erupt in anger. I learned to fear his outbursts, and the constant screaming that accompanied them. Why, he would ask, had I done such a thing? Was I an idiot? How could someone who did so well in school be so stupid?

From my father's bouts of rage, I learned that if I wasn't perfect—if I made mistakes—that the consequences would be awful. Perfection was impossible, of course—even my father could not avoid problems with the machinery—but I knew that if I could just achieve it I would be able to make the screaming stop.

It is those feelings of fear and worthlessness, and the need to be perfect, that keep my mind spinning today. I understand intellectually, of course, that I have value even if I don't solve every work-related problem and completely please every higher-up at my job. But still the mental static keeps playing in my head—and no matter how hard I try I can't turn it off.

I suspect that most of us have to con-

tend, at one time or another, with our own minds, with the kind of mental noise we accumulate over a lifetime, and which shows up in our work and in our intimate relationships. Julia Cameron, author of *The Artist's Way*, labels this part of our mind the "Logic Brain." It is, she says, our survival brain—it is comfortable with the familiar, and fears everything that's new and different. The Logic Brain "likes things to be neat little soldiers marching in a straight line." It solves problems in a rational, ordered kind of way. Cameron prescribes a regimen of journaling—she calls it "the Daily Pages"—as a way of clearing the mind, of freeing ourselves to think creatively instead of remaining trapped in logical, safe patterns of thinking.

My own Logic Brain is what keeps me stuck in the perfectionism I learned as a child, and keeps me awake at night worrying about my job. I cannot willingly turn it off—using the tools of logic to calm a mind stuck in a pattern of excessive rationality is an exercise in fruitlessness (although it hasn't stopped me from trying!) The only way I have found to stop my mental pacing—or at least to balance it—is to avoid problem solving, to try to tap into a more creative side of myself.

There are undoubtedly limitless ways to do this. For me, what works best is something called Centering Prayer, which is based on the idea that God speaks to us most profoundly—and most intimately—in silence, and that it is by emptying the mind—by emptying ourselves—that we can best connect with the Divine. To do Centering Prayer, you sit silently twice each day for 20 minutes. When you notice that the mind is becoming active, you say a sacred word as a way of seeking to return to silence. Centering Prayer is rooted in the tradition of Christian mystics—particularly a group known as the Desert Father and Mother—but bears similarities to meditative traditions of other religions, particularly Buddhism.

Not that Centering Prayer shuts my mind down—my brain can race just as fast when I sit down in silence as it does at any other time of the day. Many times I will end the 20 minutes realizing that my mind has been spinning the whole time. Somehow, though, the practice of trying to be in touch with God opens me up. Even when my mind keeps moving, the mere act of trying to listen to God somehow seems to anchor me down in small ways. I feel a bit calmer, more grounded.

Centering Prayer seems to leave me more open to my creative side (which Cameron calls the "Artist Brain"). I also try to connect with this part of myself by practicing being creative—for me, writing poetry has felt the most natural way to do this. John Fox, the poetry therapist and author of *Poetic Medicine*, puts it this way: "Poems speak to us when nothing else will. Poetry helps us to feel our lives rather than be numb." I believe that Fox's idea can apply to almost any creative activity—whether singing, writ-

ing, acting, moving, or whatever. In my experience it is only by tapping into this creative side that I can turn my mind off, that I can truly begin to experience healing for the childhood pains I carry with me.

In my case, poetry allows me to feel rather than simply to spin my mental machinery. The process of writing poems frees me up somehow, puts me in touch with deep emotions that my mind can't seem to reach. Sometimes when I write about my experiences as a child I get in touch with a deep kind of pain that my usual mental activity only seems to mask. I can, sometimes, get stuck in this pain for a while. In the end, though, I need to feel it—in fact it is only by accessing and confronting this pain that I can move through it and heal it.

In the end, writing poetry seems to free something up, to put me in contact with something Larger, something spiritual. I've read that Jungians call the place we reach when we are being truly creative and open The Self. For me it is a way of connecting with God. I believe that it is this connection which allows me to heal—it takes me outside my own mind and allows me to connect with something greater than myself. For me, a creative practice is really a spiritual practice and, ultimately, a healing practice.

John Larson

A self is made, not given. It is a creative and active process of attending a life that must be heard, shaped, seen, said aloud into the world, finally enacted and woven into the lives of others. Then a life attended is not an act of narcissism or disregard for others; on the contrary, it is searching through the treasures and debris of ordinary existence for the clear points of intensity that do not erode, do not separate us, that are most intensely our own, yet other people's too. The best lives and stories are made up of minute particulars that somehow are also universal and of use to others as well as oneself.

Barbara Myerhoff

What is the source of our first suffering?

It lies in the fact that we hesitated to speak.

It was born in the moment  
When we accumulated silent  
things within us.

Gaston Bachelard

## A Way Out

I am sinking into that quicksand we call depression. As the light diminishes, I reach for my pencil. The sharp, pointed lead barely touches the clean, white paper.

8

A mark appears.

As if by magic and without effort a drawing begins to take its form.

9

I am alone and without purpose. There is no plan, it's simply something I do and have been doing for as long as I can recall.

10

When I begin, a drop-down menu of starting points appear in my mind. Let's see, there are A. Curly-Q's.

11

B. Structural patterns.

12

C. Face profiles.

13

D. Handwriting.

14

E. People.

15

These are the starting points, but there is no way that I can predict what they will become.

16

Now, it's important to realize that there are no material motives here, no possibilities of fame or fees of any kind. This is purely a personal thing.

17

The drawing is now finished and it was nice to get away from my problems and concerns for a little while. ■

## Writing Away Your Pain

Q: I have rheumatoid arthritis that's been getting worse over the years, and my son keeps telling me that writing about it may relieve the pain. I'm open to healing alternatives but this sounds a bit far-fetched. What's your opinion?

A: The idea of writing about your pain as a form of therapy isn't as "far-fetched" as it may seem. Quite a few studies have shown that writing about traumatic experiences actually improves immune function among healthy people, and the most recent one, done at North Dakota State University and published in last month's *Journal of the American Medical Association*, found that people with asthma or rheumatoid arthritis who wrote about stress in their lives found that their symptoms were reduced. In an editorial accompanying the *JAMA* report, Stanford University's David Spiegel, M.D., a leading researcher of mind-body interactions, applauded the study as a welcome addition to growing evidence that stress management through writing can make medical treatment more effective.

This latest study involved 112 patients with either asthma or rheumatoid arthritis. Researchers assigned the patients to write about either the most stressful event in their lives or emotionally neutral topics, described either as "confessional writing" or "expressive writing." After four months, the researchers found that the patients who wrote about stressful subjects were significantly better. The asthma patients showed improved lung function, and on average, the severity of the disease among those with rheumatoid arthritis patients was reduced by 28 percent. Overall, 47 percent of patients who wrote about traumatic events had clinically relevant improvements compared to only 24.3 of the patients in the control group who wrote about neutral subjects.

If you're interested in trying therapeutic writing for yourself, you can learn how (you do need some guidance) from one of several books on the subject including *Writing as a Way of Healing* by Louise DeSalvo (Harper San Francisco, 1999), a Hunter College professor; *Letters Home* by North Carolina psychologist Terry Vance (Random House, 1998), and *Journal to the Self* by Denver therapist Kathleen Adams (Warner Books, 1989). Or you can find out about journal-writing workshops

and classes through Kathleen Adams' *Center for Journal Therapy* or *Dialogue House Associates* in New York, established by psychologist Ira Progoff.

Dr. Andrew Weil

Taken from *Ask Dr. Weil* at [drweil.com](http://drweil.com) August 23, 2000. Originally published May 13, 1999.

All suffering is bearable if it is seen as part of a story.

Isak Dinesen

## Art Heals

To explore the connection between the arts and healing further, we recommend that you visit the Arts and Healing

Network at [www.artheals.org](http://www.artheals.org) for a comprehensive and inspiring perspective on the subject. To give you a sense of the Network's mission, we've printed below a sampling of what you'll find when you visit the website.

*The Arts and Healing Network honors and supports the emergence of healing artists and recognizes them as essential catalysts for positive change.*

Marion Weber, Founder

*The portal of healing and creativity always takes us into the realm of the spirit.* Angeles Arrien, Anthropologist and Author of *The Four-Fold Way*

*At the deepest level, the creative process and the healing process arise from a single source. When you are an artist, you are a healer; a wordless trust of the same mystery is the foundation of your work and its integrity.* Rachel Naomi Remen M.D. Family Medicine, UCSF School of Medicine

The Arts and Healing Network is dedicated to celebrating the connection between arts and healing. Our focus is this web site which serves as an international resource for anyone interested in the healing potential of art, especially environmentalists, social activists, artists, art professionals, health care practitioners, and those challenged by illness. Our hope is that the information presented at the web site will educate and inspire.

Marion Weber, Founder  
Sandra Hobson, Consultant  
Mary Daniel Hobson, Web Site Manager  
Michael Costumus, Web Site Designer  
[www.artheals.org](http://www.artheals.org)



## In Lieu of Flowers

Nancy Cobb knows what we know—that by telling one's story one may not only offer healing to others but experience it oneself.

Nancy's compelling stories of her parents' struggles with Alzheimer's and her friends' heroic encounters with cancer give us strength for the journey. I who can rarely focus sufficiently to read a book cover to cover, devoured it in two sittings.

We are as moved by the woman who wanted to chronicle her struggle with cancer in a documentary, as by the artist whose family enacted a final ritual in her honor. And we are intrigued by the mysterious accounts of strangers who puzzle the possibility of messages from the other side.

We come away feeling as though we have had a long conversation with a good friend—refreshed and ready to deal with the challenge of life and death. **KS**



## Dance On A Moonbeam: A Collection of Songs and Poems

It has arrived! Bill Crofut's long-awaited CD which we previewed in our Vol. 4 No. 3 issue. An accomplished folk singer, Bill spent the last six months of his life recording this beautiful offering for the benefit of children's charities. Highly literate and energetic, it reflects Bill's collaborative genius in bringing together such talents as Julianne Baird, Benjamin Luxon, Dawn Upshaw, Frederica Von Stade, Meryl Streep, the Chorus Angelicus and the London Symphony Orchestra. It may be purchased by going to [www.danceonamoonbeam.org](http://www.danceonamoonbeam.org) or calling 1-800-833-8668. You may also mail an order with name, address, phone, credit card information, quantity etc. to: Dance on a Moonbeam, c/o WC, 100 Newfield Ave, Edison, NJ 08837. The price is \$15.95 per CD plus shipping and handling. May we all be inspired to leave the world such a legacy! **KS**



## All About The Melody

I must admit that I spend a bit more of my discretionary income on CDs than is probably wise. However, few earthly goods give me more pure pleasure than the sounds of Stephane Grapelli's jazz violin, a Celtic ballad, or Blossom Dearie's rendition of *Someone's Been Sending Me Flowers*. My recent favorite, *The Melody at Night With You* by Keith Jarrett, is, coincidentally, a perfect selection for this issue of *A Light in the Mist*. In its simple, evocative renderings of such standards as "I Loves You Porgy," the CD is somewhat of a musical departure for Jarrett, who is known for his consummate jazz improvisation and personal intensity. Recorded as a Christmas present for his wife, the CD is particularly interesting to me in this context because it was recorded in his home studio during a period when Jarrett was suffering from a tenacious case of chronic fatigue syndrome, from which he is still recuperating. Although Jarrett does not regard the making of the recording as therapeutic, per se, he does acknowledge that the whole process was quite transformative. In an interview with Josef Woodard in the May issue of *Jazziz*, Jarrett remembers: "I had the need to play, but I had an inability to be my old self. I had to reinvent how to play and get at least what I was used to getting from playing, and then I discovered that I was actually getting more from less. In theory, I always knew that could be true, that it could be all about the melody." And, for me, Jarrett's melodies in their spare lyricism are more than enough. **DA**



## The Muse's Bookshelf

*Finding What you Didn't Lose: Expressing Your Truth and Creativity Through Poem-Making* by John Fox. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995.

*Writing for Your Life: A Guide and Companion to the Inner Worlds* by Deena Metzger. HarperCollins Publisher, 1992.

*A Year in the Life: Journaling for Self-Discovery* by Sheila Bender. Walking Stick Press, 2000.

*Life, Paint and Passion: Reclaiming the Magic of Spontaneous Expression* by Michell Cassou and Stewart Cubley. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995.

*Trust the Process: An Artist's Guide to Letting Go* by Shaun McNiff. Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1998.

*A Creative Companion: How to Free the Creative Spirit and Inspiration Sandwich* by SARK. Celestial Arts, 1991.

*The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* by Julia Cameron. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992.

There are notes and then there are feelings, and you try to imbue the notes with feelings. That's the whole idea. I would hope. Otherwise it's just notes.

Keith Jarrett

## Audio and Video Cassette

*The Visionary Artist* by Alex Grey. Pinesprings Publishing (audio tape).

*The Creative Connection: Self-Expression as a Path to Personal Empowerment* (29 min.). Available through Natalie Rogers, <http://members.aol.com/exartspc/index.html> (video).

Ring the bells that still can ring.  
Forget your perfect offering.  
There is a crack in everything.  
That's how the light gets in.

Leonard Cohen

Journal

Language has always been my sanctuary; I suppose that is the real reason I chose to pursue a doctorate in English Literature. But beyond the words themselves—beyond the poem, the memoir, the prayer—it is the act of telling that most compels me in this regard: the creative impetus to make what is internal and private, external and universal; an impetus that crosses genres and media. This issue of *A Light in the Mist* is dedicated to the healing that lies at the heart of the creative act in all of its many forms. In a recent essay, the writer Carole Maso poses this challenge: “to turn the world, and the working of the world, into song.” With some poetic license, we extend a similar invitation to you: to turn your life and the material of your daily experience into *song*, no matter what its cadence, color or contour may ultimately be.

Joy and blessings,



TOGETHER  
WE  
WILL  
COMFORT  
THE  
SUFFERING

#### OUR MISSION

Our mission is to aid the current movement toward holistic medicine—toward treating the whole patient (mind, body, spirit) and encouraging hospitals, hospices and individuals to nourish patients, families and caregivers with healing environments. What is a healing environment? We believe a healing environment is one that offers sustenance to the soul and gives meaning to experience. It is one that enables those who are suffering to transcend their pain by connecting to the universal through the transformative power of beauty and art, and that gives comfort through this connection.

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