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- Horses
- The Pickle Jar

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"It is better to light
the candle than to
curse the darkness."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

"Charting Your Own Course for the Holidays "

If you are grieving the loss of a loved one and will soon be facing the holidays, you may feel like you are on a journey without a map. But before we talk about a map for your upcoming holiday journey, please step back in time, back to 1803 for a historical journey down a river filled with hardships, the unknown, and adventure. So let's go "rolling, rolling, rolling down the river." Here's the story.

During the time of the journey that I want to tell you about, President Thomas Jefferson was the leader of our new nation. The United States had just made the Louisiana Purchase from the French, and President Thomas Jefferson became curious about exactly *what* the United States had just purchased. (The French did not even know *what* they had sold.)

At that time, the land and rivers to the west were uncharted, unmapped, unknown. So President Jefferson set aside money for an expedition to the new territory, hoping to find waterways or rivers that might connect the eastern United States with the West for the purpose of commerce and expansion.

Jefferson appointed Meriwether Lewis as the leader of the expedition, and Lewis chose William Clark as his co-leader for the epic Lewis and Clark journey to the Pacific Ocean. Lewis' first planning journal entry was August 31, 1803—yes, he planned for the trip, making plans to travel down the Missouri River.

Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery group left St. Charles, Missouri, in May, 1804, traveling westward on the Missouri River, "rolling down the river." They passed through Kansas City, Missouri, Omaha, Nebraska, on water, crossed the mountains of the Continental Divide on horseback, then followed smaller rivers and streams in canoes.

The trip was not easy, and they encountered rain, cold, lack of food, and hostile Indians. But they forged onward on the journey until the Pacific Ocean came into view on December 3, 1805. Clark wrote in his journal about the ocean, "Ocean in view! O! The Joy!"

They returned home to St. Louis on September 23, 1806, more than two years later. On the journey much knowledge was gained—knowledge of landscapes, rivers, native cultures,

zoology, and botany. New territory was mapped.

You may have heard the name of Sacagawea, the Shoshone Indian who was the wife of a French-Canadian fur trapper named Toussaint Charbonneau. Sacagawea became an interpreter and guide for a part of the Lewis and Clark expedition, carrying her infant son on the journey, a visible reassurance to the Indians they encountered that the expedition had come in peace. She also helped identify edible roots and plants, adding to the men's meager diet of meat.

But you may be wondering what the Lewis and Clark expedition has to do with your life, your journey. If you have lost a loved one to death, your loved one has already completed his/her own journey, reaching the final destination. Perhaps they, like Clark, said, "Oh, the shore is in view! Oh, the joy!" Yes, sheer joy for them. But what about the one left behind to grieve the loss?

I believe there are lessons we can learn from the Lewis and Clark Expedition. There may be no detailed road maps for grievers, only a few markers along the trail. The journey will probably have some mountains to climb and some rough waters to navigate.

The fear of the unknown may

Charting Your Own Course for the Holidays cont...

loom large, frightening and even hostile. You may feel unsure of how to interpret what is happening—all new territory. A strange landscape indeed with few “rivers” to connect your past life with your future. Yet, you must move on. You have a journey to make! You have been blessed with a life to complete, and you must find out what is out there.

With Thanksgiving and Christmas coming soon, you may have some difficult “terrain” to cross. Thanksgiving and Christmas without the one you loved--unknown and perhaps dreaded territory! Perhaps you need a co-leader or someone to help you on your way especially during the holidays. No one knows the territory better than a “Sacagawea” who has already traveled on the Path of Grief, a “Sacagawea” who can tell you a little about what you might expect on the Path ahead, someone who understands.

During the holidays, you may want to repeat the familiar family traditions of your past—the turkey, the dressing, the pie, for example, surrounded by all the children, grandchildren, or other family members. Or perhaps you want to spend your holidays quietly, maybe even in a new location. There are no rights or wrongs, just uncharted territory ahead of you! But you have choices.

Perhaps enlist friends or family in your Corps of Discovery group in planning your holidays. Give it some thought. Make a plan; consider writing it down. (Putting your thoughts on paper can be helpful in moving on in the right direction at any time after a loss.)

Our family chose Famous Dave’s Barbecue for the site of our first Christmas meal after my husband’s death, and we were not even barbecue lovers. Barbecue did not resemble a turkey in the least, but it was what our hearts were ready for—our choice!

Remember you are a unique person as a result of your genetics, your family of origin, your values, and experiences. What you need to make it through the holidays may not be the same as for anyone else.

After my husband’s death, a dear friend Deb encouraged me to call her, any time, day or night. I never awakened her at night, but I occasionally called and went by her house to talk when things were really rough. A sign of weakness to ask for help? Not at all. I believe it is a sign of wanting to heal, to move on, a sign of strength to ask for what you need.

After a loss, you probably have found yourself in unfamiliar surroundings, possibly facing with some rough waters. Or perhaps you have climbed some steep hills and gone into some deep valleys. But along your way you may have already found some new scenery, new experiences, new joys! You may have found that you are far stronger than you ever thought.

You are the leader of your own journey. Whatever it takes, take care of yourself. Maybe even treat yourself to something special. Determine to make it to the other side of the holidays with the least hurt to your heart possible. Even though you could not control the loss of your loved one, there are still some things that you *can* control! So make your own map; chart your own course! *You can do it just right for you for your holiday season!*

– Dawn Phelps, RN, LMSW

“The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

– Nelson Mandela



COOKBOOKS ARE STILL AVAILABLE! \$10 Each

Meadowlark Hospice Cookbooks are still available. If you have not picked up your copy you may do so at the Meadowlark Hospice Office and Cutting Edge and Massage in Clifton. Proceeds go toward serving patients with the inability to pay for hospice services.

Horses

There is a field, with two horses in it.

From a distance, each horse looks like any other horse. But if you stop your car, or are walking by, you will notice something quite amazing...

Looking into the eyes of one horse will disclose that he is blind. His owner has chosen not to have him put down, but has made a good home for him.

This alone is amazing.

If you stand nearby and listen, you will hear the sound of a bell.

Looking around for the source of the sound, you will see that it comes from the smaller horse in the field. Attached to the horse's halter is a small bell. It lets the blind friend know where the other horse is, so he can follow.

As you stand and watch these two friends, you'll see that the horse with the bell is always checking on the blind horse, and that the blind horse will listen for the bell and then slowly walk to where the other horse is, trusting that he will not be led astray.

When the horse with the bell returns to the shelter of the barn each evening, it stops occasionally and looks back, making sure that the blind friend isn't too far behind to hear the bell.

Like the owners of these two horses, We are not thrown away just because we are not perfect or because we have problems or challenges. Others are mysteriously brought into our lives to help us when we are in need.

Sometimes we are the blind horse being guided by the little ringing bell of those friends who are placed in our lives.

Other times we are the guide horse, helping others to find their way....

The Pickle Jar

The pickle jar as far back as I can remember sat on the floor beside the dresser in my parents' bedroom. When he got ready for bed, Dad would empty his pockets and toss his coins into the jar.

As a small boy I was always fascinated at the sounds the coins made as they were dropped into the jar. They landed with a merry jingle when the jar was almost empty. Then the tones gradually muted to a dull thud as the jar was filled.

I used to squat on the floor in front of the jar and admire the copper and silver circles that glinted like a pirate's treasure when the sun poured through the bedroom window. When the jar was filled, Dad would sit at the kitchen table and roll the coins before taking them to the bank.

Taking the coins to the bank was always a big production. Stacked neatly in a small cardboard box, the coins were placed between Dad and me on the seat of his old truck.

Each and every time, as we drove to the bank, Dad would look at me hopefully. 'Those coins are going to keep you out of the textile mill, son. You're going to do better than me. This old mill town's not going to hold you back.'

Also, each and every time, as he slid the box of rolled coins across the counter at the bank toward the cashier, he would grin proudly 'These are for my son's college fund. He'll never work at the mill all his life like me.'

We would always celebrate each deposit by stopping for an ice cream cone. I always got chocolate. Dad always got vanilla. When the clerk at the ice cream parlor handed Dad his change, he would show me the few coins nestled in his palm. 'When we get home, we'll start filling the jar again.' He always let me drop the first coins into the empty jar. As they rattled around with a brief, happy jingle, we grinned at each other. 'You'll get to college on pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters,' he said. 'But you'll get there. I'll see to that.'

The years passed, and I finished college and took a job in another town. Once, while visiting my parents, I used the phone in their bedroom, and noticed that the pickle jar was gone. It had served its purpose and had been removed.

The Pickle Jar cont...

A lump rose in my throat as I stared at the spot beside the dresser where the jar had always stood. My dad was a man of few words, and never lectured me on the values of determination, perseverance, and faith. The pickle jar had taught me all these virtues far more eloquently than the most flowery of words could have done. When I married, I told my wife Susan about the significant part the lowly pickle jar had played in my life as a boy. In my mind, it defined, more than anything else, how much my dad had loved me.

No matter how rough things got at home, Dad continued to doggedly drop his coins into the jar. Even the summer when Dad got laid off from the mill, and Mama had to serve dried beans several times a week, not a single dime was taken from the jar.

To the contrary, as Dad looked across the table at me, pouring catsup over my beans to make them more palatable, he became more determined than ever to make a way out for me. 'When you finish college, Son,' he told me, his eyes glistening, 'You'll never have to eat beans again - unless you want to.'

The first Christmas after our daughter Jessica was born, we spent the holiday with my parents. After dinner, Mom and Dad sat next to each other on the sofa, taking turns cuddling their first grandchild. Jessica began to whimper softly, and Susan took her from Dad's arms. 'She probably needs to be changed,' she said, carrying the baby into my parents' bedroom to diaper her. When Susan came back into the living room, there was a strange mist in her eyes.

She handed Jessica back to Dad before taking my hand and leading me into the room. 'Look,' she said softly, her eyes directing me to a spot on the floor beside the dresser. To my amazement, there, as if it had never been removed, stood the old pickle jar, the bottom already covered with coins. I walked over to the pickle jar, dug down into my pocket, and pulled out a fistful of coins. With a gamut of emotions choking me, I dropped the coins into the jar. I looked up and saw that Dad, carrying Jessica, had slipped quietly into the room. Our eyes locked, and I knew he was feeling the same emotions I felt. Neither one of us could speak.

This truly touched my heart. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life. for the better.

Calendar of Events

- Oct. 01:** 5:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- Meadowlark Hospice Office in Clay Center
08 5:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- Cloud County Health Center in Concordia
12 1:00 p.m. Concordia Volunteer Continuing Education
 3:00 p.m. Belleville and Republic Volunteer Continuing Education at Republic
15 5:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- Library in Belleville
19 Noon Clay Center Volunteer Continuing Education
20 9:30 a.m. Washington Volunteer Continuing Education
 Noon Marysville Volunteer Continuing Education
 2:00 p.m. Frankfort Volunteer Continuing Education
22 4:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- *Community Physicians Clinic* in Marysville
- Nov. 05** 5:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- Meadowlark Hospice Office in Clay Center
09 1:00 p.m. Concordia Volunteer Continuing Education
 3:00 p.m. Belleville and Republic Volunteer Continuing Education at Belleville
12 5:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- Cloud County Health Center in Concordia
16 Noon Clay Center Volunteer Continuing Education
17 9:30 a.m. Washington Volunteer Continuing Education
 Noon Marysville Volunteer Continuing Education
 2:00 p.m. Frankfort Volunteer Continuing Education
19 4:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- *Community Physicians Clinic* in Marysville
 5:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- Library in Belleville
- Dec. 03** 5:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- *Maury's Restaurant* in Clay Center
10 5:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- Cloud County Health Center in Concordia
17 4:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- *Community Physicians Clinic* in Marysville
 5:30 p.m. Bereavement Support Group- Library in Belleville
 There will be no December Volunteer In-Services due to the Tree of Light Ceremonies.

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.

Then someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!"

"Gone where?"

Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and she is just as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port.

Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!" there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: "Here she comes!"

And that is dying.

Henry Van Dyke (Taken from "Gone From My Sight")

Our thoughts are with the families of Meadowlark Hospice patients we have served.

Your memorial gifts honor your loved ones and help others



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"Leave nothing for
 tomorrow which can
 be done today."

-Abraham Lincoln

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Cloud County Health Center

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"The time is always
right to do what is
right."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

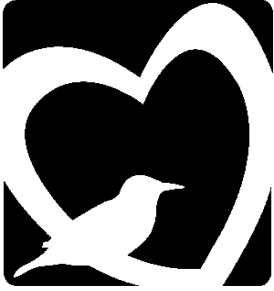
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