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## MAYBE 2015 WILL BE BETTER FOR YOU

By Harold Ivan Smith, griever

*Harold Ivan Smith is known as a wordsmith, a story teller. He also holds credentials as a renown speaker, clergy, and grief educator. Many of our readers have heard him speak in Wausau at our Spring Seminars in the past. We are honored to print Harold's recent account of a death that is very personal to him. He speaks as a griever—nothing more. He assures us that death affects even those who think they know the right things to say and have the gift of comforting the grieving soul. In this exclusive article, we invite you to grieve your loss and his.*

Art Linkletter captured a sizeable TV audience with a program entitled, "Kids Say the Darndest Things." The alteration of two words, adults instead of kids and a stronger word than darndest and you are close to reality griever's experience when would-be comforters speak.

Maybe a new cliché should be birthed, "Griever's Hear the Darndest Things!"

As I write this a new year is 52 hours away. Of course, people are saying, "Happy New Year!" to family, friends, even strangers. The words, however, resound differently in the hearts of the bereaving. I am bereaving. [Note: Bereaved means past tense because of its ed ending.] My heart is broken.

Christmas seemed to be going well. I was watching what I was eating, all my presents had been wrapped and most paid for! I was driving to Northern Indiana to spend the holidays with my adopted family. My cell phone rang, and since I was on a straight stretch of road with clear vision for a mile, I answered. The caller did not spare words. "Oh my god, no!" raced from my heart to my mouth. "Oh, god no!" Hours before my nephew's only grandson---an incredible 19 year-old Army paratrooper was home and riding his motorcycle to lead his parents to a restaurant for supper. In the words of the author of Rare Bird, "it went to shit in less than a few seconds."

A driver, in a truck, made a left turn and collided with Dakota's bike. His parents were the first on the scene. Dakota was not breathing as he lay on the cold asphalt. His mother knelt beside him and whispered, "Dakota, breathe!" He did. It would take seven hours before that soldier's heart stopped beating.

My nephew reported few details—only that Dakota was dead and that the driver had told police, "I didn't see him." I am a grief counselor.

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**NAN ZASTROW**

Co-Founder,  
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

We purposely followed the shiny, big, brown, new Ram Truck with all its expensive chrome and trimmings. We were on a mission to help someone avoid a motor vehicle fine. The license plate on the truck was already four months past expiration and that comes with a hefty fine if the driver is stopped by an officer. We wanted to tell the driver, who may have been unaware, so he could take action.

From experience, we knew the cost. Someone stopped us not too long ago to let us know our plates didn't have a valid sticker. Fortunately, we had paid for new plates, but never received the stickers. We had proof of payment, and the person who notified us gave us the opportunity to correct it. So we thought it would be nice to "pay it forward" in this instance.

The rugged Ram truck drove through a Walgreens parking lot, around a building (with restricted access) trying to avoid turning back...and we followed! Then, through a green light, down a side street and he disappeared temporarily. I think he thought we were stalking him! We followed his path as best we could. We were about to give up when we again spotted the vehicle parked in a Panera restaurant parking lot. My husband, Gary, got out of the car and went to the passenger window (the driver was gone), and told the young

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woman... "I just wanted to let you know that your license plates are expired so you don't get fined." The woman responded, "We know that. We really don't care. We are "big" people, and we can handle it."

Who would have guessed such a response? One never knows. When Gary told me what she said, I chuckled and remarked... "All you can do is try to help someone. Doesn't mean they are going to accept the invitation." It's something like grief. People can ride around in circles and know they need some kind of support or help, but aren't really willing to accept it—when offered. They trust that they can handle it all on their own.

Grief is a stubborn emotion. It will continue to plague you until you do something about it. The more you ignore it, the more it will demand your attention. Until you finally get caught. The price you may pay at that point is even greater emotional trauma, self-doubts, and loss of self-esteem.

Unresolved (prolonged or chronic) or delayed grief may create problems later. It's the penalty a bereaved person pays for putting aside their normal grieving process. It can interfere with everyday life responsibilities, relationships, and future happiness. Behavior is often altered and your social connections may notice the "difference" in the person who is grieving beyond normal grief. This can lead to depression, mental anguish, social withdrawal, and an inability to find joy in anything in life. You become a different person, but not in a positive way.

Sometimes giving in to your subconscious thoughts to learn, understand, and accept support during grief feels intimidating and very humbling. Each of us believes that we have the power within us to walk the path alone. We may think that grief will go away all by itself—without intervention. That can be true—depending upon the individual's ability and desire to do his or her grief work on his or her own time. True grief work is essential to heal. Also, not all grief bears the same intensity. Numerous factors contribute to the depth of grief...such as relationship, cause of death, faith factors, and many more. When the loss is not deemed as a significant figure in a person's life; traumatic; or does not affect day-to-day living; grief work may be simpler, less formal, and of shorter duration. Significant loss requires significant grief work. And most times it's helpful to learn from those who have gone before you.

Gary and I knew from our experience after the death of our son, Chad, that healing requires its own set of rules. We needed education in regards to what to expect. And our timeline would be unique to us as bereaved persons. We are grateful that we were willing to seek discover, and learn throughout our loss.

Today we continue to assist others through this arduous path of healing. We began facilitating our education and learning series in 1997 and continue with several sessions throughout the year because we believe in the value and

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I have written a dozen books, a hundred articles, and have lectured on grief all over the country. But that day this wordsmith had no words.

I think I now know what the first racked billiard ball feels when the cue ball smacks it! I am a celebrant for a large funeral home in Kansas City and conduct funerals and memorial services. But when I walked into that funeral parlor and paused at an open casket, the abstract cleared and the reality struck! Dakota was dead.

“This cannot be happening. . .” Of course it was happening, otherwise I would not be in Louisville, Kentucky. Dakota’s grandfather—Don, my nephew--reached out his hand and I pulled him into an embrace. We pounded each other’s back. That’s what men in my family do.

“I am so, so sorry” was my initial but pathetic offering of compassion. I switched into listening mode and stood offering hospitality to a grandfather’s lament. In many ways, my nephew was more than grandfather to Dakota. As a Civil War reenactor, his grandson had always been at his side.

Don, my nephew, gave me a synopsis of what had happened, what was known about the driver of the truck, and how Dakota died. In fact, four times that evening, he re-told this unthinkable story that had happened in a city where too many young men on motorcycles died this past summer. Others had stood in this funeral home trying to comfort shocked family members and feeling as helpless as I felt.

The next morning, as I sat in the chapel waiting for the service to begin, I prayed. “God help me or “God, help this person” whose name I did not know. I could not think of one helpful thing to say, so I kept to my line, polishing it like a piece of wood, “I am so, so sorry.”

I am also clergy. So, I am expected to have some response to people who declare that God “sure wasn’t acting like God” when he “let” this young man die or “took” this young man. As I looked down the main hallway of the funeral home, and then in the double parlor where Dakota lay in his dress uniform, his gun just a few feet away in one direction, and the boots and helmet he had been wearing hours before, a few feet away in the other direction.

As I stood at the casket, I so appreciated that my nephew kept patting his grandson’s lifeless hand. I appreciated his pointing to the many awards, commendations and certificates on easels around the room. How, I wondered, had any young man accumulated so many honors by age 19.

Confession time I realized that I am not as “open-minded” as I have pretended to be. Dakota’s parents are bikers. The first bikers I have personally known. The bikers bothered me. There was more leather in that funeral home than in some cattle feeding lots. I judged these grief-stricken children of God. Why, I asked, had they not dressed better or groomed themselves to come to a visitation? Why didn’t they take off the leather hats and “do-rags?” Many of these bikers had known Dakota as a toddler, as a child, as an adolescent, and as a soldier. Some of them had seen far more of him than I, as an uncle, living 500 miles away, had.

I learned a new sound. These bikers hugged and pounded the back of each other’s leather vests. I will not forget that sound but I cannot describe it. Nor will I forget bikers wiping away tears, or leaning forward, and women stroking their backs in attempts to comfort. I learned about The Patriot Guard, bikers who had come to escort the funeral procession to the cemetery.

I watched a half-dozen grief-stricken school friends of Dakota make their way to a podium--with a poor sound system--and try to put their thoughts into words. Dakota was a helper, I learned. Dakota knew how to make people laugh on a bad day. Dakota “was there” when you needed him. The last place these young adults imagined being two days after Christmas was in a funeral home chapel saying goodbye to a peer.

The Westboro Baptist Church, who I have followed and written about for 20 years, had announced on their website that Dakota was in hell and that they were coming to celebrate that another soldier had fallen! The Patriot Guard would not stand for that. Nor would the bikers. Word was sent to the Westport Baptist Church: you may come to Louisville, but not all of you will go home to Kansas in a church van! I learned these bikers meant business. I prayed intently, “Oh God, do not let Westboro show up!” Of course that meant, the misguided “prophets” would torment some other grieving family instead.

I learned that grief is draining. I told grieverers that in my groups at St. Luke’s Hospital. Apparently, I expected that because of my training and experience,

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exhaustion did not apply to me. I dropped into my hotel bed exhausted and may have been asleep before the room went dark. I slept without dreams or intrusion; meanwhile, other family members and a few bikers were wide awake during that night.

Rituals completed, with bad weather threatening, I left Louisville intending to drive a couple hundred miles that night. I made it 108 miles when a hotel sign looked inviting. Again, I slept. The next day, I took my time driving back to Kansas City where friends were anxious to hear details of this Christmas nightmare. Mile after mile, I slowly replayed what I had felt, seen, and experienced.

I stopped at a Barnes and Noble bookstore to buy a copy of *Rare Bird* an incredible mother's memoir about the drowning death of her young son. You can relate to how cashiers make conversation after Christmas: "How was your Christmas?" When I answered, "A nightmare!" the sales clerk responded, "What happened?" I gave her the Reader's Digest version. As she noticed customers waiting in line, she handed me my book and said, "Maybe 2015 will be better for you." Any other time I would have answered, "I hope so."

If there is a Hall of Fame for Worst Things Said to Grievors, the cashier's seven words would not be prominent. But they still brushed the raw edge of my heart. Let me dissect these seven well-meant words: "Maybe 2015 will be better for you."

Maybe? Well, maybe things will be worse, given the health of some of my family. Most positive thinking comforters would be more direct: "2015 will be better for you." And some would tag on, "Your best

year ever." Better? How will the worlds of all the grievors who packed that funeral home be "better" without Dakota? Those young eulogizers promised, "I will never forget him." For some of them, 2015 will start with a huge dose of reality: I am not immortal. For many bikers, a new year will start with the reality that a careless or distracted driver could turn in front of them or someone they love in 2015.

I learned something about the strength of the human spirit. I was there when Dakota's mother, being led by four women, began the walk to the front of the chapel, where her son's body lay before large stained glass window depicting Jesus, "the Good Shepherd." Where was "the good shepherd" at 4:30 pm on December 22? Did he spare some other mother's son?

I learned that wailing can come from some place deep in a mother's body. I watched her body bend backwards as if to expel her lament to the tall ceiling in the chapel. Not once, not twice, but at least a dozen times. The appointed hour came.

Dakota's commanding executive officer stepped forward to begin the service. After a few minutes, Dakota's mother walked to the microphone—which she did not need. She told us that she had not prepared remarks. Instead, she spoke from some deep laceration in her heart: "How in the hell can my son be dead because a driver was distracted?" She didn't give us time to think. "For God's sake, people, put down the cell phones! Pay attention!" She added a few more sentences but I was reeling. I thought: How many times have I been "distracted" not texting or chatting on the phone, but

by what some call "the monkey mind." How many times have I waved to a pedestrian, "Sorry, I didn't see you?" How many times might I have been like the driver of that truck that ended Dakota's promising military career. I am sure that if he could he would rewrite that those last seconds before he turned. My distracted moments have not turned out badly so far. Yet, I don't know what this loss will be like for the driver's soul. A lot of people now know his name because of the media coverage.

So, I have learned that I can honor Specialist Dakota James Grider by remembering to be fully present when I sit behind the wheel of my PT Cruiser or a rental car. One hour before writing this, pulling out of a parking garage, I missed a pedestrian walking down a dark street. I mouthed sorry and he nodded. The other pertinent detail that I should share is that my nephew's wife, Barbara—Dakota's grandmother—died eight months earlier of a heart attack. Thus my nephew has been double-whammied. And the people who did not know what to say to him in those sad days do not know what to say now. And some of them will, in fact, say "the damnest things" to him. My prayer is that his uncle will not be one of them.

Sometimes it's hard to improve on listening—listening all the way to the end of the sentence. I listened to my youngest nephew, who notified me of the death, cry as he pleaded, "How much more can my brother take?"

Today, I cannot imagine how "2015 can be better." Maybe it will. But what I know is that it will take the rest of my life to try to make sense of Dakota's death. It is not

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## MAYBE 2015 WILL BE BETTER FOR YOU

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just that a bright patriotic soldier died but that his death drives home a troubling point: Life can change in a moment.

I want to be a better grief counselor. I want to be more vulnerable. I will not say, "I know what you are going through." Instead, I will say, "I, too, have experienced a recent loss." And "I, too, cannot make

sense of it." And, "I, too, am wondering about why God let this happen." And I will pray, "God, make me more tolerant of people who appear to be unlike me."

How can I improve on "Maybe 2015 will be better for you?" I have a whole year to think and meditate before 2016's New Year. And it just may be you, a grieving

reader, who can help me. Perhaps a reader who has experienced a string of New Year's without a son or daughter, spouse, parent, grandchild can offer me words. And maybe you can offer a prayer that God will be kind to Dakota's grandfather, and his parents, and his aunt, and to Harley-riding bikers. I doubt they will attend grief support groups. But they will grieve!

### *How to Connect with Wings:*

- Email: [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com)
- Postal: P.O. Box 1051, Wausau, WI 54401
- Phone: 715.845.4159
- Follow the EVENTS calendar posted at the website [wingsgrief.org](http://wingsgrief.org)
- Subscribe to the free online ELetter sent quarterly.
- Order a Free copy of Grief Digest at [www.centeringcorp.com](http://www.centeringcorp.com)
- Visit Wings on Facebook



### *Wings Grief Tip:*

#### *Inspiration from your loved one who died*

Bringing in a New Year is not about forgetting your loved one who died either in the past year or years earlier. The rituals are over; and it's time to begin or continue the healing. What you want to leave behind is the sad memories of sickness, disease, disability, or tragedy and build the new year with testimonies of a person's life that mattered. This is best accomplished by finding a cause; fulfilling a loved one's dream; or being inspired by who he or she was.

What is it about your loved one that inspires you the most? Was it a positive attitude, solid work ethics, healthy living, a contagious smile, family descendants, lofty dreams, courage, technical skills, a sense of adventure, patriotism, or a desire to learn. The list of possibilities is endless! Though you won't have his/her presence in your life every day, he or she can always be a part of who you become! You can make the legacy live on! Happy New Year!

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the peace that it can give people as they grieve. We believe that understanding your loss gives you permission to grieve as well as to move forward with living.

Like the occupants in that big Ram truck with an attitude...you have a choice. You

can choose to take the necessary steps to live in peace and harmony, or you can pay the penalty on another day when it catches up with you. My Mom always said, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

*Getting Back to Life After Loss, Part I*  
*Our first education/support series for 2015 begins March 3 through April 7th for six consecutive Tuesdays evenings at 6:30 in Wausau, WI. For more information, visit our website or call 715-845-4159.*

# MEXICAN FISHERMAN MEETS HARVARD MBA WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN LIFE?

## *An Inspirational Story*

A vacationing American businessman standing on the pier of a quaint coastal fishing village in southern Mexico watched as a small boat with just one young Mexican fisherman pulled into the dock. Inside the small boat were several large yellow fin tuna. Enjoying the warmth of the early afternoon sun, the American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish.

“How long did it take you to catch them?” the American casually asked.

“Oh, a few hours,” the Mexican fisherman replied.

“Why don’t you stay out longer and catch more fish?” the American businessman then asked.

The Mexican warmly replied, “With this I have more than enough to meet my family’s needs.”

The businessman then became serious, “But what do you do with the rest of your time?”

Responding with a smile, the Mexican fisherman answered, “I sleep late, play with my children, watch ball games, and take siesta with my wife. Sometimes in the evenings I take a stroll into the village to see my friends, play the guitar, sing a few songs...”

The American businessman impatiently interrupted, “Look, I have an MBA from Harvard, and I can help you to be more profitable. You can start by fishing

several hours longer every day. You can then sell the extra fish you catch. With the extra money, you can buy a bigger boat. With the additional income that larger boat will bring, before long you can buy a second boat, then a third one, and so on, until you have an entire fleet of fishing boats.”

Proud of his own sharp thinking, he excitedly elaborated a grand scheme which could bring even bigger profits, “Then, instead of selling your catch to



a middleman you’ll be able to sell your fish directly to the processor, or even open your own cannery. Eventually, you could control the product, processing and distribution. You could leave this tiny coastal village and move to Mexico City, or possibly even Los Angeles or New York City, where you could even further expand your enterprise.”

Having never thought of such things, the Mexican fisherman asked, “But how long will all this take?”

After a rapid mental calculation, the Harvard MBA pronounced, “Probably about 15-20 years, maybe less if you work really hard.”

“And then what, señor?” asked the fisherman.

“Why, that’s the best part!” answered the businessman with a laugh. “When the time is right, you would sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions.”

“Millions? Really? What would I do with it all?” asked the young fisherman in disbelief.

The businessman boasted, “Then you could happily retire with all the money you’ve made. You could move to a quaint coastal fishing village where you could sleep late, play with your grandchildren, watch ball games, and take siesta with your wife. You could stroll

to the village in the evenings where you could play the guitar and sing with your friends all you want.”

**The moral of the story is: Know what really matters in life, and you may find that it is already much closer than you think.**

**Shared from:**

[weboflove.org/051230whatmattersinlife](http://weboflove.org/051230whatmattersinlife)



Today America is “plugged in” and openly share their emotions, pictures, and personal thoughts with almost anyone and everyone. Social media involves: Facebook, Google, Twitter, Linked in, YouTube, chat rooms and more. It is not uncommon to use social media:

- To announce the death of a loved one
- To create continuous comments and feedback about the person’s life or death
- To have memorial websites
- Leave online obituaries

Remember, once you submit your thoughts and feelings to any of these social media sites, your words cannot be retrieved and may come back to haunt you rather than heal you. Use true discretion before telling the world.

### *Would you like to share your story or poem?*

If you would like to submit a short story, poem, or article, we welcome it. The material does not need to be original, but if it isn't, please include the author or credits that can be printed along with the material. We are looking for articles that inspire the bereaved, teach, and offer hope which is the focus of our ministry of Wings-a Grief Education Ministry. Poems or material may be submitted In memory of your special loved one.

# My Creed for Grief

- by Nan Zastrow

*My heart aches with intense emotion,  
Allow me the dignity of grieving in my own way.  
Though my grief may be swift or lengthy,  
Give me time to accept that God has called him home.  
I must find comfort with my loss, on my own.*

*When others leave me to my sorrow,  
Be there for me. Don't set limits on my grief.  
My profound pain must heal at my pace.  
What is right for you, may take longer for me.  
Respect this difference and give me space.*

*Let me speak his name. Tell his story.  
Though my reflections are suspended in time  
They are the healing balm for my pain.  
I have reserved a special place in my heart  
To lock in the cherished memories of his spirit.*

*Understand my sudden wash of tears,  
They are the raindrops of life's adversity  
And they create a rainbow of promise within me.  
I must remind myself of God's assurance  
That at our journeys end, we will meet again.*

*Above all, be patient as I mend.  
Each celebration reminds me of other times.  
I may need four season or more, before I find peace.  
Each day brings me closer to triumph over death.  
Please let me grieve in my way.*

*When inner acceptance comes, then I will know  
That I conquered! There is victory over the grave.  
No one can take away my treasured memories,  
Or my cherished keepsakes of the living soul  
Who once was a part of me. . . and still lives within me.*

# Reader Feedback

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

DEATH OFTEN RESULTS IN UNFULFILLED DREAMS. PLANS DISSOLVE AND ARE FORGOTTEN. SOMETIMES, HOWEVER, THE BEREAVED FAMILY AND FRIENDS PICK UP THE PIECES AND FINISH SOMETHING THAT WAS STARTED AND COMPLETE THE DREAM.

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My son, Darren had several things on his bucket list. After he taught in China, he wanted to teach in Turkey, Iraq, and India. Then he was going to return to SDSU to get a double Master's Degree - one in Special Education and the other in Sociology. Sadly, those things are things I couldn't complete for him. But I have reached out to make a difference in this world as he would have, now having sent 6,800 CARE packages to our troops and continuing to do so.  
*Maxine, North Hollywood, California*

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My son Jon was an avid fan of the show Man vs. Food and made a list of places he wanted to visit and attempt the same food challenges that Adam Richman did. I have begun traveling since his death and when I am out of town, I look up restaurants that were filmed by the show and go there to eat (I do not participate in the food challenge though). Jon also bought a 1985 Ford Ranger and had plans to restore it, my husband has been slowly working on it and one day I hope that I will be able to drive it.  
*Tara, Antigo, WI*

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My youngest sister Michelle died suddenly and unexpectedly in September. She wanted to see the ocean and mountains before she died. (She had had heart problems since she was 27). Her husband regrets that he had not been able to fulfill this wish.  
*Cindy, Stevens Point/Wausau, WI*

My husband, Harvey, wanted to be a farmer. It broke his heart that he had to give up farming because of his health. After dairy farming, he tried beef farming. Something he always wanted to do. He did everything he wanted to do, including gardening. He died thinking he was a farmer in his mind, so I think he completed his bucket list.  
*Marianne, Merrill, WI*

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I think my daughter, Pam, had a hunch her life would be cut short and found ways to do things she really wanted to do. She visited her beloved Disneyland (most fun place on earth, to her) with her family several times, plus trips to a warm sunny beach, another of her favorites. Plus simple family things, like strawberry picking and apple orchard visits. She believed in living in the present, like I said, we think she knew it would be so important for her children, to have these precious memories. Pam was an elementary teacher and an excellent one. She loved her students and they loved her, education was so important to her. She was proud of the "job" she was doing, with her students. When other parts of her life would be disappointing, she would comment on how proud she was to make a difference in many of her student's lives. We are honored to carry this forward, with scholarships offered in her name.  
*Jim and Gale, Schofield, WI*

In his later years, one of my dad's biggest concerns seemed to be about what would happen to this house once he was gone. He'd talk about how it would go out of the family, and always add well I know Nancy will never live there. At the time I could not comfort him about this either, because I did not foresee us moving again. But right around the time he passed, life changed completely for us and moving to the house he built became a very real possibility after all. I always hope somehow he's knows that the house he loved so much did not leave the family. Indeed, it was Nancy who moved here, and more importantly that she LOVES it everyday.  
*Nancy, WI*

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Our son, Chad, had the opportunity to travel—something we never did when he was younger. Between his time in the National Guards, his High Adventure Trip with the Boy Scouts, and his trip to California with a neighbor trucker, he saw more of the United States than we had. After his death, we decided to travel a little to places we always wanted to take him to. One of our first trips was to the Statute of Liberty and Ellis Island. Standing there in awe, I knew he was with us. I felt his presence and vicariously fulfilled his and our dream.  
*Nan & Gary, Wausau, WI*

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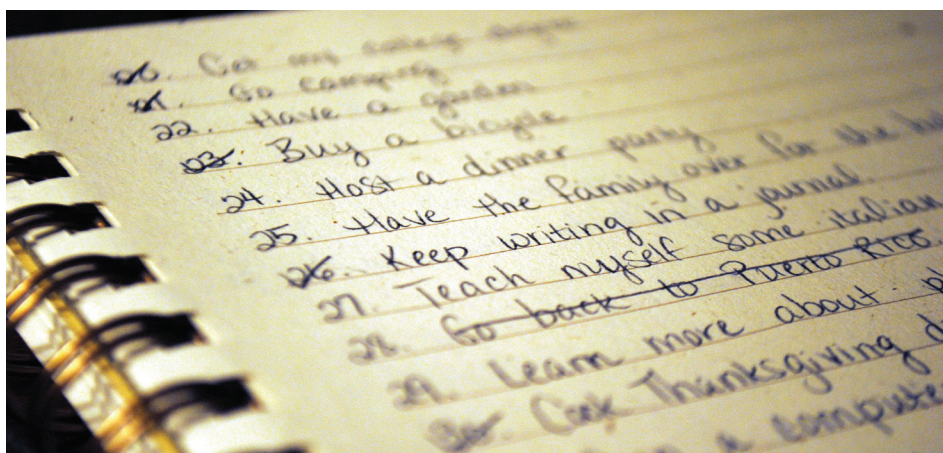
## WHAT DO YOU THINK...

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When I was in 6th grade, my 19-year-old brother died from injuries sustained in a car crash. I don't really remember his talking about specific dreams or plans. He had many great qualities, including a beautiful tenor singing voice. Today, I sing in my church choir, and I sing whenever I can, because he can't.

*Margie, Marathon City, WI*

My husband had an unfinished dream. He was a wood carver and was very good. One year when we lived out east we went to the National Wood carvers competition. He was very impressed with all the carvings. From that point forward he worked at becoming a carver of that caliber. Each Christmas he carved Santa's as Christmas presents. He continued to work on bird carvings which was a category at the competition. He came up with a design. He was fortunate to get black walnut from a tree that had to come down at my cousin's in Omro. He had the tree cut to his specifications. The wood needed to dry and was placed in the rafters in the garage. He continued to carve whenever he had time. Time was the thing he didn't have with his job. He knew retirement was necessary to have the needed time. He was turning 65 his next birthday in February. The September prior to that he was diagnosed with cancer. He died 12 days after his 65th birthday. The Santa's for that last Christmas were started and never finished. His entry for the competition never happened. Unfortunately this was not something I could do for him. Now 10 years later his carving room in the basement remains as he left it with hopes that an artistic cousin he was teaching to carve will someday



find the time to finish some of his unfinished projects. The competition entry will always remain a dream.

*Sandy, Birnamwood, WI*

I have lived in Australia from Aug 2009 until present, this is the second time my husband and I have lived in Australia. My dad always wanted to visit me in Australia and see what our lives are like. This is Christmas my mom decided to take that chance and come over to Australia to see where we live, how we live and complete my dad's dream. She brought her "Ed Bear" with her and so my dad's dream is complete. (Ed Bear is a bear made out of a shirt that my dad wore quite often - Mom puts some cologne on the bear and she has her memories of dad right there).

*Kim, Uralla, Australia*

One of my husband's dreams was to see the Colorado Rockies during the winter. Lee and I hiked there many times during the summer and fall and he always expressed his desire to see the mountains covered with snow. In March 2010, two months after Lee's sudden death, a girlfriend and I took a trip to Arizona. We flew right over the Continental Divide and had a beautiful view of the mountains, though mine was blurred by tears as I thought of Lee's unfulfilled wish. Next winter, I thought, I will take a trip to Colorado. The following March I was able to join a group of women on a ski trip. The skiing was amazing, especially the day after 10 inches of powdery snow dumped on the area. I thought of Lee all week and, of course, wished he could be with me. Each time I wanted him to see the gorgeous snow covered trees and mountain vistas, I remembered that he is seeing sights far more glorious, things I can't even imagine. That thought brought more joy than the beauty around me.

*Deb, Baldwin, WI*

## FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE: What do you think?

*When grief hits, we are often surprised by whom it is that is there to support us. Sometimes it's a family member, neighbor, or friend. And sometimes it is someone you least expect who steps out of the shadows and manages to connect with you and your pain. Share a few words with us about that special person who helped you most.*

*We'd love to hear from you for our Spring ELetter. Please include name/city/state. (We will only print your first name). Send your response to [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com). Please limit your feedback to about 250-300 words.*

## HEALING GRIEF 2015 EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### GETTING BACK TO LIFE AFTER LOSS – PART I

A six-week series: education and support for grief, loss and transition. After protest, comes the reality that the death of your loved one has transformed your life, often unexpectedly. Nothing can prepare us for the surprises of grief and the emotions that affect us mentally, socially, and spiritually. When you understand why you grieve the way you do, you will be more capable of healing and living with your loss. Don't let grief control your life. Our group is not about changing you, but rather offering you a space for healing and understanding where change can take place.

**2015 Spring Series Dates:**

Tuesdays: March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 and April 7

**2015 Fall Series Dates:**

Tuesdays, September 8, 15, 22, 29 and October 6, 13

**Facilitators:** Nan & Gary Zastrow since 1997

**Time:** 6:30-8:00 p.m. No charge.

**Place:** Conference Room A-1 Quality Services, Aspirus Hospital

### 18th ANNUAL UNDERSTANDING GRIEF SPRING CONFERENCE

**Bob Baugher, Ph.D** – We welcome back a previous presenter by popular request. Dr. Baugher will present new topics and information for the bereaved and caregivers. Look for details early in 2015

**Thursday, April 23, 2015 | 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. | Don't Worry, Be Happy?**

A workshop on healthy and unhealthy grief and healthy and unhealthy worrying

**Friday, April 24, 2015 | 9:00 a.m. - Noon | Traumatic Death: A World Turned Upside Down**

**Location:** Holiday Inn & Suites – at Cedar Creek, Mosinee, WI *Professional CEUS available at both seminars*

### FINDING THE OTHER SIDE OF SADNESS – PART 2

This four-week series is a follow-up to Part I and designed for those who have done some of the work of grief and are ready to move forward. Learn how to make life good again when grief seems difficult to heal. The secret is not about escaping the sorrow of grief but it's about finding the way to accept life's challenges and prepare your mind for healing. In this series, participants will learn strategies for transforming by participating in activities that encourage grief work, building a new identity, and making positive choices for healing.

Meets Tuesdays: May 19, 26 and June 2, 9, 2015

**Facilitators:** Nan & Gary Zastrow **Call:** 715-845-4159

**Time:** 6:30-8:30 p.m. No charge. Group size is limited. Pre-registration recommended.

**Place:** Conference Room A-1 Quality Services, Aspirus Hospital

### 19th ANNUAL HOLIDAY REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM

*When the Holidays Hurt – for the Bereaved*

Each year, a theme-based program is presented with fresh ideas and personal insight about coping with grief during the holidays. When someone loved dies, the holidays can be a source of anxiety and added grief. Join us for this inspirational program that helps families cope by giving them options and suggestions for managing their traditions and emotions. Discover ideas for ritual, celebration, and remembrance.

Meets Tuesdays: Sunday, December 6, 2015

**Facilitators:** Nan & Gary Zastrow

**Location:** Holiday Inn & Suites – at Cedar Creek, Mosinee, WI

For information about any of these programs, contact Nan or Gary Zastrow at 715-845-4159, Wings—a Grief Education Ministry or visit our website [www.wingsgrief.org](http://www.wingsgrief.org) or email at [nanwings1@gmail.com](mailto:nanwings1@gmail.com).  
Subscribe to Wings and receive updates and announcements by email.