

Celebrating 25 Years!

By Amity Pierce Buxton, Founder



Amity Pierce Buxton

It was in 1991 that PFLAG's Task Force for Straight Spouses of Gay Men was turned over to me. I went to work with a Board of Directors, Staff, and volunteers from diverse communities, outside organizations like PFLAG and Gay Fathers Coalition International. Over the next 25 years, we expanded the existing cluster of under ten support group facilitators and contacts. Our primary mission was to help Straight Spouses and their families deal constructively when they learned a spouse was not straight in what was a presumably heterosexual marriage. We've established a worldwide network of communication, education, support, and advocacy.

We also reached out to the larger community, especially professionals, about disclosure-in-marriage. We brought attention to the underlying societal factors that influence LGBT persons to marry straight women and men in the first place. We tapped into newly emerging technology that enabled wider communication. We established a high-profile website; a peer-to-peer support group model, expanded support methods, a social media presence and highly regarded research and a popular blog, forum and publications.

The Straight Spouse Network is now a well known and respected organization worldwide. We respond to every individual who seeks our help and give them the empathy and support they need to heal and move forward after personal trauma. Thanks to all of you who helped make these 25 years so productive and effective.

Here's a New Year's toast to a future when there may no longer be a need for our work. ♦

The Straight Spouse Network Official Newsletter

Relevant information and insights for Straight Spouses, their families, Support Group Facilitators, Support Contacts, Group Participants and Straight Spouse Network supporters. Our goal is to promote understanding and recognition of the Straight Spouse Experience and the important work our organization provides for those affected by it worldwide.

GOODBYE 2016

We hope you enjoy this final issue of News&Notes for 2016. In the coming year we will continue to feature significant subjects that have an impact on Straight Spouses, their extended families and the whole of Society. Our last issue featured an article on Mixed Orientation Marriage. This issue is featuring an article exploring the Transgender phenomenon and the effects and challenges of Straight Spouses married to transgender persons.

All Straight Spouses suffer from a profound sense of loss, almost identical to loss we feel when a loved one dies. The effects of having lived with a closeted person are much the same for all of us. But when a spouse reveals they are bisexual or gay or lesbian, they will still visually exist as the same person they have always been. The transgender person, however, literally transforms into a completely different individual. The person they once were disappears.

As the intensity and challenges of the transgender experience become the center of attention, the Straight Spouse becomes the person most misunderstood and emotionally abandoned. Fate is not kind to these women who give their all and most often, are alone in the end. The article is a glimpse into the world of women who discover their husbands are transgender. Of course men, too, discover that their wives are transgender, but this article is based on the stories which were sent to me. They were all from women.

I welcome all feedback on this article and all others. ♦

LindaE@straightspouse.org

STATE OF THE NETWORK

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Do you really never 'get over it'?

Thank you for sending SSN's News and Notes. (Volume 1, issue 3 - End of Summer 2016). Terrific wisdom and experience offered here. Here's a heartfelt thanks to Contributors who shared their light. Yet reading these pages sent me to tears.

As I continued to read News&Notes, I could feel anger rise. Raw, tight, right in my throat. And here I thought I was beyond that by now. Clearly, I'm still dealing emotionally, spiritually, and physically. It's been 4 years since my husband's disclosure "There was no good thing living with me" after forty years of marriage.

I'm still figuring out who am I now - apart from a lifetime partner whom I'm still legally married to. In our case, he continues to cling to his closet, and his confusion. Or as I call it, his 'disorientation'. . . My term based on the fact he spends much emotional energy 'dissing' himself from himself, comfortable in his denial. Not comfortable at all with his own behaviors. His natural inclinations and sexual preferences make a functional marriage unbearable. Confusion is our cornerstone, not clarity. He's told me I'm the one that's 'screwing it [marriage] up', by wanting a different life. The cost of remaining is finally too high. I live with shame. Not only is there shame that my husband doesn't prefer me sexually. It's shame of not being loved for being me. My value to him is in being a 'place holder', so no one will know he's sexually other-oriented because he has a wife. There's a killer indifference that slays this woman's self-worth. Emotional Contagion explained what took me decades to discover. Our kids and extended family members saw me through his eyes, devalued, 'less than', somehow not worthy... in events that should have been alarming to anyone that valued family, loyalty and honesty. It's a lethal attitude he models, and it does seem to be contagious.

Every day is a gift. Not everything was awful or a lie in past years of my life. Though sometimes it can feel that way! I'm resetting my life compass to redefine my true north. It's taking work. I have to figure out where I am before I can figure out which way is forward.

I much appreciate SSN's affirming help along the way.

- Diana R., Seattle WA

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SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

This newsletter goes out to thousands of people worldwide. It's also posted on several Facebook groups and is available to thousands of people who visit our website. That means this publication has unequaled, expansive exposure. We welcome well-written, original articles, relevant news issues, upcoming events, personal stories, photos, poetry and art pertaining to the Straight Spouse Experience. All submissions will be screened for approval and professionally edited, then sent to you for your approval. Send submissions for consideration, as pdfs or word documents to our Executive Director, Daphne Callen at SSNDaphneChicago@gmail.com

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HELLO 2017

GEARING UP FOR A CHALLENGE

The United States Supreme Court has ruled in favor of same sex marriage nationwide. In some states, conversion therapy has been banned. Some major companies are showing support and compassion for persons of all orientations. In the future, we hope to see continued protection of LGBT rights. If LGBT rights legislation were somehow repealed, more Straight Spouses may be created.

What we can do to protect those rights, is tell our stories about what the Straight Spouse Experience really is. We understand how the lack of equal rights has adversely affected us and will affect every person on this planet. We also know that, statistically, a great number of people from all walks of life, will be reaching out to the Straight Spouse Network for support in the future when their LGBT spouses come out.

The Straight Spouse Network feels obligated to reach out to the general public and let them know who we are and why supporting other Straight Spouses is so important. We are trying to create a new public awareness plan for 2017. We're hoping that you will become a part of the teams we'll need to help us be successful in that effort. Stay tuned; we'll be calling for participants!

- Linda Ehle-Callens
Straight Spouse Network Staff



TRIAGE

TRIALS & TRIUMPHS

In November 2016, Triage received more calls and emails from Straights Spouses seeking support than ever before. There were about 200 in all. Then, on December 6th, as we started the last month of this year, Triage was suddenly deluged with 25 calls in a 24 hour period. Another record. The reason for this explosion was an advice column in Cosmopolitan magazine, penned by Logan Hill, published on November 30th. He received a letter seeking advice from a young woman who discovered her boyfriend's questionable activities on Instagram, where you can snap a photo with your mobile phone, then choose a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever. Then she found more messages on his Craigslist where he was talking about sex with a guy, and then she found the lewd photos. Some younger people have been covertly using Snapchat; an app that allows users to capture and send photos and short videos, but on this one, they self-destruct after a certain amount of time; mere seconds. People like this app because it's less permanent and more private than other apps or Facebook. However, the messages can be "saved".

It's no surprise that these apps are being used for "sexting"; if you've been living under a rock, that means taking naked or sexually suggestive pictures of oneself and sending them to someone else. And they don't quickly disappear; with screen capture, the pictures can end up being circulated on the Internet. In any case, we have a double whammy here. The apps closeted people use while cheating on their straight mate, and a national magazine columnist telling one young woman to look to the Straight Spouse Network to help her define what it all means and get support. One letter, a ton of pleas for help.

We would be triumphant in learning that a need for the Straight Spouse Network was obsolete...

In the past few years we've witnessed long strides in society's acceptance of LGBT people. We assumed that all these leaps forward would result in fewer closeted gay/straight relationships. And hopefully, fewer people needing our help. Yes, we would be triumphant in learning that a need for the Straight Spouse Network was obsolete. Unfortunately, this event is most likely indicative of how the near future is going to play out for Triage and the Straight Spouse Network. And pleas for help from a larger number of younger Straight Spouses who enter into conceivably doomed relationships. In essence, the high tech age has put us in reverse. Looks like we're going to be around for a while. And Triage is ready to handle the load.

- The Straight Spouse Network Staff

Another YOU

Married to a Transgender Person

A Series of Revelations

“Sandy” climbed the stairs to the attic with the box of Halloween decorations. She put it back in its usual place on the shelf. As she took down the Christmas box, she noticed the lid on the old trunk in the corner was ajar. She bent down to close it and saw some things she didn’t recognize. With a strange feeling in the pit of her stomach, she lifted the lid and saw several items; underwear, some dresses and some high heels. She pulled out a long, black dress. Size 14; not her size. She’d never seen it before. She laid it on the floor and fished out a pair of beige lace panties. They were hers; they’d been missing for weeks. They were soiled... “Max” appeared behind her. “What the hell are you doing?” he demanded. That’s when she just knew. And Max slowly began to tell her everything....

That’s one story. There are many more like it. A wife will discover her husband is dressing in ladies clothing. It’s confusing and shocking. The husband may come up with awkward excuses, trying to minimize the significance of his compulsion, or to quell the shock. But the truth always emerges, many times very slowly. “2013 - He had been changing his looks for months. He was growing his hair, got braces, got a nose job and was completely hairless...He was tanning once a week. He was wearing skinny jeans and tight T-shirts and he was claiming it was simply a midlife crisis... he kept sneaking off into corners whispering with a bisexual friend of mine. The next day, he told me he was gay... A couple of months later he revealed that he was a cross dresser. A few months after that he revealed that he identified as a female but would never be willing to lose his genitalia. In January 2016 he told me he was looking into sexual reassignment surgery.”

A Transgender person goes through many stages when deciding to let the real person inside of them finally emerge. From dressing in women’s clothing, to the decision of taking hormones, going to therapy, and all the steps toward a possible transition, a wife helplessly watches as the man she loves slowly disappears. *“Mostly she likes to grow her hair long and wear make up in public, then on occasion dress up at home. Currently, she just wants to express herself as a feminine guy, and NOT transition, but she has considered hormones. She’s still deciding exactly how far she wants to go.”*

Many wives of Transgender persons talk about how dependent their spouse is on them. Quite often, their spouses want to be more like girlfriends... *“For the first 2 years after he came out to me, he chose to privately express himself. He began to buy female clothing and undergarments. He began to grow his hair out and he began shaving off all of his body hair. He began to sneak clothing in his bag to work....he would change at work in order to pretend to be a female.”* ... *“I noticed that he constantly wanted to role play as a woman in the bedroom...I finally said, ‘If you want to wear my clothes, I’d rather you do it when I’m home and know about it, than come home one day and be surprised.’ The look on his face told me everything.... so I dressed him up. He’s more into make up than clothes, but that’s how my knowledge of it came around.”*

“She wants to be invited to everything like she was before, which is silly because she is no longer my significant other....She is unclear about what I DO and DO NOT want to hear regarding her transition... Also, she is struggling to realize she can no longer exercise her White Male Privilege... she has to be respectful and considerate of others. She very often is only focused on her journey and her challenges and what she needs – which, at the risk of being insulting – is a very male mind set.”

Sometimes the transgender spouse will even convince their wife to go shopping with them for women’s clothing. They’ll ask for make up and hair advice. At first, wives may go along with this, at least temporarily, reluctantly, because they truly care for their

Another YOU

spouse and want them to feel supported in their self-discovery. They really don't know what they are truly facing. *"I tried to be supportive. I went to transgender group events, marital counselling, and individual counselling. I took him clothing shopping and helped him learn make-up and hair techniques. I thought with enough exposure I would be able to be okay with the man I married choosing to live his life as a female. I was not."*

A wife's support during the coming out process is a loving and noble thing to do, but it can ultimately take a psychological toll. The wife's needs and emotional health are often not a consideration. They are expected to make the transgender person's experience more important than their own. *"I feel like spouses of the transgender persons (or gays) get overlooked. I found that people were so ready to throw a parade for my husband finally living HER truth that they literally forgot to have one second of compassion for the fact that my life was turned upside down. It is so easy to now understand the pain the transgender person endures when they are not living authentically, that there is so little if any thought given to the pain the spouse experiences when he/she is offered the revelation."*

From a Transitioned spouse, *"I told her it was time she addressed me by my new female name and used female pronouns. If she couldn't, we could no longer be friends. She said I was mean. I said...it is hurtful when you call me by my dead name."*

The Medical Condition

There have been eras in history where transgender people were maligned, considered insane and even imprisoned, punished, experimented on, tortured. In this more informed and accepting society, we know that transgender persons are recognized as having a medical condition, not a mental illness. Most people know from an early age they are 'different'. But all their lives, they are up against the ugly echoes of past ideals, uninformed parents, and rigid religious beliefs. Denying, or suppressing the need to express one's transgender identity, can however, lead to depression, serious personality disorders and even psychosis. So, it is difficult not to feel empathy for the plight of transgender persons. One can only imagine how confusing it must be for a child to feel trapped in the wrong body. *"I knew at age five I was different and identified as a girl. I prayed every night to wake up as a girl with a closet of dresses... I hated being a boy and doing boy things. By age 10, I was dressing*

in my mother's clothes and putting on makeup and intentionally allowing her to find me dressed. I would tell her, I am a girl... After five times or so they took me to a psychiatric center....my parents told me I would be committed if I did not stop dressing and insisting I was a girl. I was terrified."

If He Knew, Why Did He Marry Me?

Should the choice to marry simply be to see if it can fix something inside? Yes, being transgender is complicated, to put it lightly. But, like other non-strights who marry, many times the main consideration seems to be about their own agendas, not the straight spouse's feelings. Maybe some do love the straight spouses they marry. But is it really love if someone is harboring deception from the beginning? Many straight spouses don't think twice; when they find out their husband has been dressing in women's clothing, they are out of there without a moment's hesitation. But others, even though hurt and confused, stay and truly want to help their spouse. It comes down to the individual capacity to endure an ultimately difficult situation.

We live in a society that is designed for partners. Everyone is a little nervous when it comes to the prospect of actually "tying the knot". As future Straight Spouses, a whole lot of us had subliminal pre-wedding jitters. But, how did someone who knew they were transgender justify their marriage proposal? *"I posed this question to my ex-spouse on numerous occasions, 'How did you not know you felt this way when we got married?' I asked this question because I would never have married him, nor would I have chosen to have children with him if I had known he wanted to live his life this way. His response was, 'I have felt this way since I was 8 years old. I attempted to lead a hetero-normative life because I felt, with the right tools, I would be able to make peace with my biological gender. Unfortunately, I can no longer live this lie to myself.'"*

Telling The Family

Adults have a hard enough time with the Transgender revelation, but the shock factor may be far too overwhelming for younger children. Older teenagers may be able to understand the reality, but even for adult children, it is very difficult to grasp and accept the idea of a father morphing into a woman. The whole concept is inconceivable. *"My ex-spouse has not seen the children in over a year. He does call at least once a week... His voice is different...and the children are confused as to why their father's deep voice is becoming higher pitched."*

Another YOU

Therapy is key to both the Straight Spouse and their children of all ages in coping with realities that seem so unreal. Fortunately, the issue has had a good amount of public exposure, so adult extended-family members are probably fairly informed. Shock is still to be expected, but hopefully understanding and acceptance are as well. But for children, it is an extremely delicate process and lifelong challenge. One Straight Spouse said, *“(we have) No children. THANK GAWD!!”* Another said, *“We have not ... discussed this with ... or in front of our children. Family and close friends have been extremely supportive by not disclosing this information to our children. I will continue to wait until he is ready to reveal this information to our children.”*

This puts a new twist to the old idea that it's better to stay together “for the sake of the children.” Staying together can create an uncomfortable, even toxic atmosphere, even when both parents are straight. So the challenge of keeping a family intact when one parent is transitioning is a daunting prospect.

Stay or Go

A transgender person who has transitioned, or a transsexual, is in all aspects, a woman. That woman can be attracted to men, or to women, or be bisexual. This “fluidity” adds another layer to a straight spouse's decision process. Many transitioned women who are lesbian want to stay with their wives. This usually doesn't work for obvious reasons. Some couples do stay together, but as in all mixed-orientation marriages, a whole new concept of marriage and rules has to be created. The majority of transgender/straight couple marriages do not survive.

“We chose to part as I did not want to live with and remain married to a woman. We are now divorced.”

“My advice is: If you have any doubt as to whether you can accept your spouse as they transition, ANY doubt, then you need to separate immediately.”

“Initially we chose to stay together. However, things got really stressful for both of us, especially since I'm very religious and highly emotional. I was struggling how to accept her, and if it was morally okay to do so. Currently, we are separated, but trying to see if we can work things out.”

“We are legally separated. We have investments to protect and insurance. She would love nothing more than for us to live together and be in an indefinable kind of relationship but I don't want that.”

Advice from the Straight Spouses

“I would suggest trying a couple of different counselors. ... And, I think it is good, if you can afford it, for each person to have their own separate counselor, plus a marriage counselor. We tried both of us using the same lady, and ... Either she wasn't the right counselor, or I needed my own. I felt like we focused too much on his transgender, and not about my own feelings.”

“Do not personalize this. It's not about you. You are good and fine and you didn't do anything to bring this upon yourself... Do not let ANYONE convince you ‘You HAD to have known...’ That is simply their fear showing. There is no reason to be embarrassed. We all feel it at first. I remember feeling ... I wasn't lovable...not a real woman. But I spent a great deal of time with some male friends ... and realized that simply was my ego lying to me. When I let go of the idea that if I were different my life would be better, the embarrassment fell away. I was left with a blank chalkboard and a curiosity about what would be written up there next; all the while knowing I could also wipe that new written thing away with a swipe if I wanted to. My future and my outlook are mine to define and that is not embarrassing.”

“Let go of anger. Fighting so hard for the life you lost...is going to exhaust you ... All you have is now, this moment. Don't hold onto something that will ruin your moment. Let go of the old dream and allow yourself to dream a new one.”

Share Your Experience

Don't segregate yourselves. The Straight Spouse Network support groups are for all Straight Spouses. Support groups include Straight Spouses of gay men, bisexual men and bisexual women, husbands of lesbians, spouses of pansexuals who are into all sorts of sexual explorations, and a great number of people married to transgender persons. We strive to support, heal and enlighten one another, as group facilitators and group members alike. We're here to educate one another and ultimately Society on the whole.

“The network and groups have allowed me to meet other individuals with similar feelings of loss. I found the message boards and in person meet up to be helpful. I have made peace with my ex-husband's transitioning and I thank Straight Spouse Network for aiding me in my journey to acceptance.” ♦

– by Linda Ehle-Callens

Many thanks to and all the women who contributed to this article; especially Arianna, Chelsey, Rae, Alex and Wendy.

Making Spirits Bright

by Janet McMonagle

During the holidays, many straight spouses try to follow their old family traditions while coping with the discovery their gay spouse isn't straight. Should you tell your extended family? Should you invite your gay ex-spouse, and if they have one, their partner? Is it appropriate to exclude them from traditional celebrations at the in-laws? Should families spend the holidays with or without children? How can you make Christmas a magical time for younger kids?

It can be painful or uncomfortable when a couple is divorcing, and the LGBT spouse is still in the closet. Family members may blame the straight spouse for the end of the marriage, while the straight spouse may be sworn to secrecy. When a spouse has come out, family celebrations can also be a minefield of other people's reactions and vocal opinions. When children are present, this can cause lasting consequences.

You must decide what is comfortable for you, and stick to it. This is a transition in your and your family's life. If you are going to a family celebration with relatives, tell them ahead of time you do not want to discuss your marriage, especially in front of the children. If someone crosses that line, do not be afraid to make your feelings known.

If you have been excluded from a traditional gathering you normally would be attending, make your own celebration. Use the day to do something you enjoy, or that you used to enjoy before you were married. Just don't abuse the booze. If you have the means and have always wanted to take a trip or a small vacation, now may be the perfect time to do it. Volunteering is a great thing to do, also. It keeps you busy and puts new meaning into the holiday.

If your spouse is still in the closet, holiday gatherings are not the time to out them. On the other hand, a spouse coming out during birthday parties, anniversaries, and holidays is a bad idea. You wouldn't want anyone else's holiday to become the anniversary of finding out something they would rather not know, or don't want to believe.

If this is your first holiday since discovery or disclosure, including the gay spouse's new partner in traditional family gatherings might be overwhelming for you. Most heterosexuals are not expected to accommodate the "other man" or the "other woman" so soon, and you should not feel obligated to include your X's new partner, either. Don't feel bad about declining gracefully, or setting the boundary with your gay or ex-spouse that the new partner is not included at your table this year. But, never say never!

You can gracefully accommodate a new situation. Your absence will not ruin everyone else's good time. And if you are a guest, your presence should not be blamed if other guests are uncomfortable.

Again, if you have children, use the time to create new traditions. Create a new memory your family will cherish for years to come. One father had always wanted to go to a tree farm to cut down a fresh Christmas tree, but his wife was not interested because the children were small. When they separated, the children were old enough to enjoy the outing, and a new tradition was born.

For one mother, holidays were divided between two households by court order. Christmas Eve was usually a time when she would chauffeur the children to church services. In their new tradition, they added dinner, listening to Christmas music, and watching videos they all enjoyed while opening one present. In the following years, when the children had grown into teenagers, each year they introduced new favorite videos, tracked Santa on the internet, and it became an even greater family experience.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, when your life changes forever, new traditions will ultimately be more fulfilling than trying to recreate the past. Most of all, remember to do something that makes you happy!

– Janet McMonagle

Straight Spouse Network Communications Director



MOTHER *of the* BRIDE

by Karol H.

HIDDEN IDENTITY

I'm jealous of other Straight Spouses. This is an odd emotion for me. I'm a mature woman, I'm content, happy in my own skin, proud of my roots and professional accomplishments. But I'm envious of other Straight Spouses whose Xs simply told the truth about being gay. My X remains in his closet, living a double life.

HIDDEN AGENDA

In 2009, my husband made the odd suggestion that I should buy him out of our house and that he would just walk away. I was suspicious, so I investigated and found explicit evidence that he is gay, and I realized he had been devising an exit plan almost our entire married life. Before I filed for the divorce, I told my adult son and daughter about their father. They both asked me NOT to tell him that they knew he is gay. Reluctantly, I honored their request. After I filed, I told my soon-to-be X I knew he was gay. I had read the Straight Spouse article *Pretzel Logic* online. The article described how a closeted gay spouse will twist the truth to make it look like the Straight Spouse is to blame for the marriage's problems. So I was prepared for him to deny the truth, which he did vehemently.

PRELUDE TO A WEDDING

In August 2016, I sent a message to my X through my attorney, asking that he and his family approach our daughter's upcoming wedding with the sole purpose of making it a special occasion for her. His family has a history of causing dramatic disruptions. Of the more than 130 guests who attended, I estimate fewer than 10, know why I got divorced; . I'm sure most of the guests know that our son is gay.

THE EVENT

On a sunny afternoon, I arrived on the small island where the wedding was taking place. That night at the cocktail

reception, both my X's family, true to form, caused a small disruption. But on Saturday morning, my daughter looked beautiful in her wedding dress; my gift to her. The wedding was lovely and went off without a hitch. Afterward, the bridegroom's mother whispered to me that she was impressed at how graciously I was handling myself with the X's family. Having been divorced herself, she understood the challenge. I greatly appreciated her kind words. The reception was wonderful. At the end of the night, I learned that my X had told my guests that the divorce was my idea; not his. They didn't let on they knew the truth.

FINALLY

I was so relieved that there wasn't any real disruption to my gorgeous daughter's wedding. She still had that happy glow as she drove me to the airport on Sunday afternoon. I was a good role model for my kids. They know I will be gracious and always tell them the truth. My son feels badly that his father refuses to be honest and talk about being gay, but my daughter will not discuss anything about her father with me. She is steadfastly in denial. She refuses to believe what is true. Nevertheless, I love both of my adult children who still agonize over this divorce.

VERITAS VOS LIBERABIT

I wrote that Latin phrase on every alimony check my X sent. I'm still waiting to be among the Straight Spouses who have open, honest communication with their Xs. I'm thankful for the Straight Spouse Network's support, for my friends and my son, whom I can trust with this truth. I am sincerely sad for my X, who is still obviously too afraid to come out of his closet. I used to have such fun dancing with him, but I never heard him sing. ♦

*Edited by Linda Ehle-Callens
and Peggy Montgomery*

STRAIGHT STORIES

Derry Stauffer

MAN OF MANY WORDS

Patent Agent/Entrepreneur/Writer/Engineer/Poet, Straight Spouse

Betty and I were high school sweethearts. We married in 1970. We were very much in love and we stayed married for almost 30 years. We had problems with intimacy, but compromised because everything else was so good. But in January 2000, Betty fell in love with a woman. We began a very intense period of prayer. Betty realized that God wanted her to be true to herself. I gradually accepted that but I was devastated. She moved away to follow her new love. I was still so deeply in love that I literally had to climb out of love. Our 30 year marriage ended, I was starting a second career, our youngest child graduated from college and left with her Mom. I turned 50, our second grandson was born, and oh yeah... my cat died. But SSN was an incredible help to me, so much that, 16 years later, I still go to meetings to give back by helping others. I started a journal and I found solace in writing these poems, which are dated in progression. Here is part one of this three part series.



Calling You Home

Derry Stauffer • February 17, 2000

Come home to me.
Come to me, in the simple faith,
the certain knowledge,
that I am your home wherever we are.
Home, a place of warmth and shelter.
Home, a touchstone of familiarity
in a world of shifting sands.
Home, a place of sustenance.
Home, a place to talk and laugh, to cry and love.
Home, a place for sharing gifts not give and take.
Home, a place where souls can lie down together
and rest or play or grow.
Home, a place for sharing hurts,
for sharing burdens, a place for healing.



Yes, I'm "calling you home,"
but not to stay, for
Home is also a place of beginnings,
and a place of returning.
Like home plate,
it is a place we do our best to run from,
only to turn and then do our best to return to.
I am calling you home, even as you leave.
I will always call you home
because I always want you to know
where "home" is.
I am the light at the dock on a moonless night.
I am home, and I am "calling you home,"
and, I am calling you "home"...

Prayer In Time Of Need

Derry Stauffer • March 4, 2000

Lord, I pray for Faith
if not knowledge;
I pray for Trust
if not understanding;
I pray for Hope
if not certainty.
All that is truly certain,
the only knowledge
that I can understand,

is that you love me more deeply,
perfectly, than any human love.
And that love gives me
Faith and Trust and Hope.
Lord, I pray for more than knowledge -
I need to feel your love for me.
I pray for the Peace That Passes Understanding,
the fruit of Faith, Hope, Trust
and Love.



I Am With You Always

Derry Stauffer • March 14, 2000

Lord, you are here with me.
In my deepest pain, you are here.
Though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of Death, you are here.
In the face of my enemies, you are here.

You soothe me beyond
my knowing of need.
My cup runneth over.
Your anointing oil
quiets the creaking pain
in the deepest inner workings
of my heart,
and in those rusty frozen places
that have been so long neglected
that I don't even know of them.

You know,
and my cup runneth over.
You are here.
Like a soothing balm,
you cool the raw burning of my soul.
My cup runneth over,
and your anointing oil stills
the boiling waters of my emotion.

You lead me to still waters,
beside green pastures,
and I shall live in this house
of the Lord, all my days....
You are here and you will always
be here.