



HOSPICE WITH HEART NEWSLETTER

January 2007

AN UNEXPECTED LETTER

By LeAnn R. Ralph

It was a couple of weeks after Christmas, and I was standing by my mailbox in the vestibule of the apartment building where I lived in Lexington, Kentucky, holding a letter I had just received. The handwriting was not familiar and neither was the return address, although it was postmarked Seattle, Washington, the same place where Hannah Paulson used to live.

Many years ago when I was a little girl growing up on our dairy farm in west central Wisconsin, the Paulsons had lived next door to us. The two farms were the only residences located on our mile-long stretch of isolated country road, and during the summer, I journeyed down the hill a couple of times a week to visit Hannah. With her hair arranged in waves swept back from her forehead and kindly blue eyes twinkling from behind wire-rimmed spectacles, she wore cotton shirtwaist dresses in the summer and a blue and white or pink and white checkered apron.

Going to see Hannah was the highlight of my summer vacations. There was just something about Mrs. Paulson that drew me to her like the bees that were drawn to the wild roses growing around her big, old-fashioned farmhouse. I never considered that it

might be rather unusual for me to enjoy visiting our elderly neighbor, even though there were no other neighbors with children for me to play with, and no other children in my family (my brother is twenty-one years older than me and my sister is nineteen years older.)

During the summer, Hannah and I would cut and arrange flowers because Mrs. Paulson loved to have flowers in her house. At other times I would find her working on a project, like cleaning out the old chicken coop, or painting the barn, or weeding her garden. No matter what Hannah was doing, she always let me “help.”

On days when it was too hot to be outside, we sat in Mrs. Paulson’s kitchen and ate homemade oatmeal cookies. Hannah would ask me

about the books I was reading (I loved to read), and she would tell me about the books she had liked to read when she was a little girl.

Hannah and her husband, Bill had lived in Seattle before they bought the farm next to ours. The farm had belonged to a relative of theirs, and they had wanted to live in the country again. At one time, they had owned a farm in South Dakota. Hannah had been a kindergarten teacher when they lived in Washington, although she was retired by the time they were our neighbors. As the Paulsons grew older and the farm became too much for them to take care of, they decided to move back to the west coast and settled in Oregon. And yet, as I

contemplated the letter I had just received at my apartment in Lexington, I couldn’t figure out who would be writing to me from Seattle. Especially since I knew it wasn’t Hannah.

I took the letter upstairs to the apartment to read it. I sat down at the kitchen table, and inside the envelope was a single

sheet of note paper covered with elegant, spidery handwriting. I glanced at the name on the bottom but didn’t recognize it, then I went back to the top and began to read—

“Thank you for all of your kind words to my sister, Hannah Paulson. I don’t know who you are, but you must have had a special, wonderful relationship with her. Unfortunately, Hannah died the day before your letter arrived...”

I sat there for a few moments, stunned. Hannah was dead? And she hadn’t read my letter?

You see, for some inexplicable reason, a few weeks before Christmas I was over-

come by the strongest feeling that I ought to write to our former neighbor and thank her for being so kind to me when I was a little girl. Although—the longer I considered the idea—the more ridiculous it seemed to write to someone I hadn’t seen in about fifteen years just to say thank you for being nice to me when I was a kid. So, I kept telling myself I didn’t have to do it right now—that I could always do it “tomorrow.”

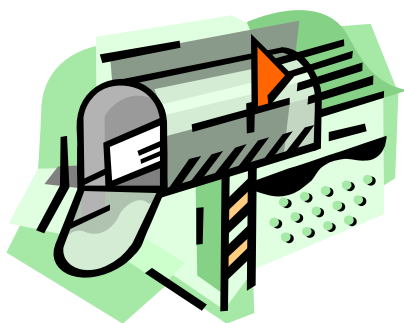
I knew my mother still occasionally exchanged letters with Hannah, and when I finally concluded the nagging feeling was not going to go away, I called my mother in Wisconsin, got Hannah’s address, wrote a letter and sent it in a Christmas card. After I mailed the envelope, I felt a certain sense of satisfaction, as if I had finally paid off an old debt.

Except that now Hannah was dead. And she hadn’t read my letter.

As soon as the shock wore off a little bit, I called my mother. And when I told her that Hannah had died, we both began to cry. “All those years when I could have written, but I didn’t,” I said in a choked voice. “And now she’ll never know—” I heard mom heave a deep sigh. “Oh, sweetheart, of course Hannah knew. Besides, she enjoyed your visits as much as you enjoyed going to see her. Nothing my mother said made me feel any better. If only I had written a week earlier. Or even just a day...”

Twenty years later, I still can’t help wishing that Hannah had been able to read my letter. She was one of the best friends I’ve ever had, but I never told her what her kindness meant to a lonely girl who had no one to play with.

Then again, maybe that was Hannah’s greatest gift to me. Through my procrastination in writing one simple letter, I learned that I should never put off until tomorrow telling my dearest friends and loved ones how I feel about them. No one knows, after all, when there might not be any more tomorrows.



I couldn't figure out who would be writing to me from Seattle



Remember Your Loved One with a Memory Cookbook

By Harriet Hodgson

After the death of a loved one, some families make quilts from their loved one's clothes. Other families compile memory books. I did something different for my family: I made a memory cookbook. After my mother-in-law died my sister-in-law and I looked through her old recipe box. Actually, there were four boxes, and the recipes inside were grouped loosely into categories. There were handwritten recipes, lots of newspaper and magazine clippings, and many duplicates. We threw out the duplicate recipes and saved family favorite recipes that grandchildren and great-grandchildren would enjoy. Reading the recipes brought back memories of family picnics, holiday dinners, and snacks Nana prepared for her three growing boys. I typed the recipes (one per page) and compiled them in a three-ring notebook. The title of the book: "Favorite Recipes From Nana's Recipe Boxes." For the cover I used holiday stationery with a candy cane border. Each cover had a photo of Nana on it. To protect the recipes from splatters and drips I put them in plastic notebook sleeves. There were only 25 recipes so I didn't index them. However, I did write a short introduction and it contained a story that is still clear in my mind. Nana served Sunday dinner at 1 p.m. After one dinner she announced that supper would be cake and ice cream. I laughed because I thought Nana was kidding. But Nana, the only person I have ever known who would eat cold butter rolled in sugar, had a sweet tooth, and supper was just as advertised. We had huge bowls of French Vanilla ice cream and hefty slices of yellow cake with Penuche frosting. What a memory! Because the cookbook was a glimpse of family history, I typed the recipes as Nana wrote them, including abbreviations such as "refrig" for refrigerator, and references to family members and friends. I grouped the pages into sets, put the pages in the notebooks, and tucked rubber spatulas inside. Then I wrapped the books in holiday paper and ribbon, and tied measuring spoons to each one. So much love had gone into the cookbooks that I could hardly wait to give them to family members on Christmas morning. A few fancy gifts were exchanged, but my homemade gifts were the hit of the day. Family members told Nana stories as they paged through their cookbooks. If you are looking for a meaningful way to remember a loved one, think about compiling a memory cookbook. Your cookbook will spark stories about the meals you have shared, and link the older generation

with the younger. I didn't have time to put more photos in the books, but a photo on each page would make the cookbook extra special. Now you are probably wondering about the recipes. My favorite recipe is the one for fudge. Though I don't make fudge, I love the ending. Here is the recipe, just as Nana wrote it so many years ago.

NANA'S FUDGE 1920

2 c. sugar	1T. butter
3/4 c. milk	1 t. (teaspoon) vanilla
2 sq. chocolate	nuts
1/2 t. salt	

Mix and cook all ingredients except vanilla & nuts. When it boils up once, lower the heat to a slow boil. After 5 min. begin testing for the soft ball stage (1/2 tsp. fudge in a saucer of ice water.) When you can pick up a soft ball in 3 fingers, it's ready. Cook it 1 minute more. Remove from stove and cool completely before stirring. Add vanilla and nuts and beat until it looks like it's glass and begins to set. Pour into a small square cake pan.

If you are looking for a meaningful way to remember a loved one, think about compiling a memory cookbook.

Cut when hard. (If it gets too hard add a few drops of cream at the end of beating.) Cut, enjoy. Save some for mother and dad. Be a good scout and clean up the kitchen afterwards.

Harriet Hodgson has been a nonfiction writer for 28 years and is a member of the Association of Health Care Journalists and the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC). To learn more about her work go to <http://www.harriethodgson.com>.

Are You Ready to Volunteer?

We are currently taking applications for anyone in the community who would like to become a Hospice with Heart Volunteer.

We will be holding a Volunteer Training Class on Saturday, February 17, 2007. If you or someone you know would be interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact Janet Hartman, our Volunteer Coordinator.



Volunteers are angels in disguise

Being a hospice volunteer is rewarding whether you are doing clerical work, running errands, helping plan an event or visiting with a patient. Whatever contribution you can make is always greatly appreciated.

We look forward to hearing from you. Remember, any amount of time you can spare to be a volunteer will be a rewarding experience. We all have a special talent to share—why not with Hospice with Heart.

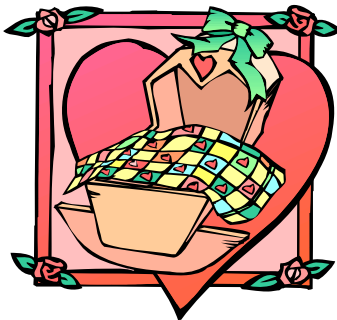
THANKS!



Quilt Raffle Winner

We would like to congratulate Robin Malone. Robin was the lucky winner of the beautiful quilt we had raffled off on December 15, 2006.

We would like to thank everyone who bought a chance to win. With your help we had raised almost \$500.00 to go toward the building of our Hospice House.



Please look for other fundraisers down the road to help fund our Hospice House and help build community awareness to better understand the need of a Hospice House in our community and the quality service provided in such a facility .

If you have any questions regarding this project, please do not hesitate to contact our office. Again, THANK YOU!

GOD SAW YOU...

By Adam Males

God saw you getting tired,
When a cure was not to be.
So he wrapped his arms around you,
And whispered, "Come to Me."
You didn't deserve what you went through,
So He gave you rest.
God's garden must be beautiful,
He only takes the best.
And when I saw you sleeping,
So peaceful and free from pain
I could not wish you back
To suffer that again.

Hospice with Heart Board Members

- ♥ Rick Cochran ♥ John Edwards ♥ Matthew Fryzek, M.D. ♥
- ♥ Janet Hartman ♥ Patrick Henry ♥
- ♥ Dawn Stane, RN ♥

We All Need Reminders by Frank Fast, Chaplain

Have you ever written something to remember on the palm of your hand in order to make sure that you won't forget? I have. As we are on our journey of grief, we often need reminders of the support we need.

It may appear that our family and friends are sympathetic to our feelings yet at times they may not fully understand because they are submerged in their own grief. The loss that you have may also be perceived as a threat to their own immortality. It may be that they are too involved in their own lives and problems, or perhaps they have simply never experienced a deep loss themselves.

So if family and friends fail, where do you look for the emotional support we so badly need. In Isaiah 49 we find the prophet reassuring the children of Israel that God had not forgotten them. As a matter of fact, in verse 16 it says that God has written their

names in the palm of his hand. He promises that he will never forget them.

Dear God—
So often I have failed to call on you in my need. You are at the top of my support list. I know that your sustaining love is always there for me. I've written you name in my palm too.

Amen



He promises that he will never forget them...



hospicewithheart.org



300 West Broadway, Suite 114
Council Bluffs, IA 51503

Phone: 712-325-6802
Fax: 712-322-2671

Email: hospice@hospicewithheart.org

We are beginning plans for our Annual Memorial Service

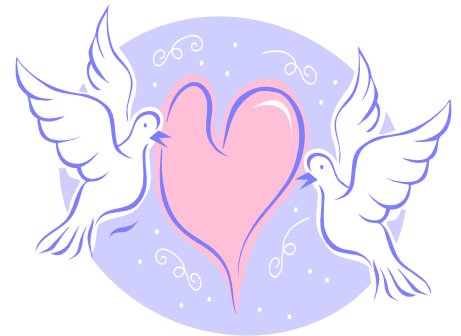
Plans are underway for our Second Annual Hospice with Heart Memorial Service. Our tentative date will be Sunday, May 6, 2007. We have not selected our location as of yet but we are just getting started. We will be honoring all of our patients who passed away in 2006.

We are planning on making a video presentation with pictures of our family's loved ones set to music. We have sent out letters to the immediate family members to provide pictures for this video. Anyone having a picture or pictures of any individual who was on service with us in 2006, please contact our office at (712) 325-6802; you can also email us at hospice@hospicewithheart.org. We would like pictures of our patients with other family members, holidays, special events or even a "special photo" that means so much to you every time you look at it.

It is going to be a very special memorial service. We enjoyed each and every one of our patients and became close with families. We want this to be something everyone will remember as time goes by.

If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact our office. This invitation goes out to not only family members but also the friends of those who have passed away.

Look for additional information down the road, we will keep you informed.



Remember me...

May 2007						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		