

One Blade of Grass

“Love begins with me”. How clearly this remains in my heart, and in my life experiences. And, every day we have the opportunity to ‘let Love begin anew’.

As a child, without ever having any awareness of the ‘repercussions’ of my actions, I became the “raison d’être” for my father. After fourteen apparently turbulent years of marriage, my parents decided that they had two choices: divorce, or have children; they chose the latter. They chose to commit to adding my older sister to the family; to removing alcohol from their lifestyle; and finally, to adding me. I do have early childhood memories of fights, slamming doors, shattering glass from broken cupboard doors... however, I also know that those events lessened, and finally discontinued when, without ever realizing it, I became my father’s best friend. **Love began through me.**

My father and I were truly inseparable. We played catch constantly in our yard. He bought me a beautiful ‘lefty mitt’ which I still treasure to this day. I often waited in the alley for him to arrive home from work... so we could get busy right away shooting baskets together. We gardened together, growing rosebushes, lilies, pansies, lilacs, and fruit trees. I became his home-repair project ‘buddy’. We placed squares of flooring tile on all the upstairs bedrooms, all the while listening to, and singing along to, music! We painted. We shared a lifelong joke: one day, my ‘authoritarian’ sister summoned my mother, father and me to the bathroom. She had put labels on the towel racks: mother, father, Joanie, Jeanie, and General. I looked up at my father and asked him quite seriously, “Who’s the general?” He smiled, hiding his laughter. However, we laughed about that for years. I never questioned any of this amazing bonding... I simply enjoyed being with my father. **Reciprocal love.**

During the summers of our youth, my sister and I used to walk to the public library in our neighborhood to check out the “summer reading” books required by the school we attended. Week after week, I would notice a crack in the sidewalk, which was obviously ‘raising up’ more and more each time we passed by. I was curious! Finally, one day, I got down on my hands and knees to see what had caused the cement to not only break open, but to also continue to rise up so noticeably. When I peered into the crack, I saw **one blade of grass, with the sun shining upon it.** One strong, healthy, green blade of grass. I was amazed. As I stood up, I said, **“If sun shining on one blade of grass can crack open a cement sidewalk, just think of what I can do with sun shining on me!”**

Had my ‘task’ already begun? I think so. Without any hesitation or ‘planning’, I had begun to love my father... thereby bringing him joy, laughter, a sense of purpose, an end to self-destructive behavior... He was a brilliant man. However, he never believed that since he berated himself for dropping out of high school. He began to read, to study metaphysics; he became a reader in church services. He gave inspirational ‘lectures’ to my mother, sister and me. And, when I took my first

teaching position in another state, he became *my* support person; he flew out to Denver for a week; stayed with me; walked with me; got new tires on my car! And, we even attended a football game at C.U. Boulder together! **Love began for my father with my loving him; love returned to me immediately, and again, years later as we shared that precious time together.**

Two years later, when I was 'back home' attending the University of Washington to earn my master's degree, my father and I took memorable walks together with our dog Brownie around a beautiful lake not too far from our house. We had such wonderful times together as we walked and talked. Our most memorable day by far was the day I took my father, dressed in his "Sunday best", onto campus to attend a class with me. He walked proudly beside me, his head held high, smiling as he said, "I'm going to college!"

As I reflect upon my life, I also remember standing under a tree in our yard on my tenth birthday, hands on hips, saying, "I've been on this planet ten years now, and what have I done to help anybody?!" Had I only realized then what I realized so many years later. By loving my father, being his 'sidekick', laughing with him, I truly had been 'helping someone believe in himself'. This was surely not a 'planned' intention... it truly was LOVE moving through me, the instrument, to bless both my father's life and mine. **Love begins with me.**

One blade of grass. It's quite amazing to come to the realization that my life purpose came into being the day I peered into that cracked cement. Throughout the times of self-doubt in my own life...when, after many years, I loved *myself* after having struggled with self-doubt after the loss of one of my children... I have always found strength in the realization that I am 'living my life purpose' by loving: my own children and grandchildren; the students I've supported throughout my teaching career; every beautiful being I have the gift of associating with at any time, in any place, even for a brief moment...and, the abundant gifts of nature which I am blessed to be immersed in. And, it is even more beautiful to realize that the intensity of my life purpose grows stronger as today, I support children in exploring their gifts and talents, in finding the beauty within themselves, in believing in, and loving, themselves. Such beautiful miracles continue...**yes, Love begins with me...**

If light shining upon one blade of grass can crack open a cement sidewalk, just imagine what light shining upon each of us can accomplish!!

LOVE BEGINS WITH ME, WITH YOU, WITH EVERY BELOVED INCARNATION ON OUR PLANET. LOVE BRINGS US INTO UNITY. LET'S CONTINUE TO "LET OUR LIGHT SHINE".

WITH LOVE & GRATITUDE,

Jana

