SEASONS HOSPICE FOUNDATION®

for Every Season



Sunshine, Pastures, and Memories: Bob Cody's Wish

By Jeff Drobish

As a cool breeze stirred the air on an autumn Saturday this past October, Bob Cody felt at peace.

He sat surrounded by the lush countryside of rural Oregon, far away from the dull hum of the city and a bed he knew too well. Nearby, Bob could see an ancient barn, a grazing horse, and a ceramic bathtub brimming with herbs. The stillness was broken only by birdsongs and a pair of dogs racing after each other. Bob turned to his nurse, Kate Shaver, and said, "I wish I could die right now." Kate, who was also the Team Director at Seasons' Portland office, was touched. She had grown to know Bob as a generally reserved and stoic man. She knew his display of feeling today was special.

Bob was suffering from congestive heart failure (CHF) as well as aspiration pneumonia. His wish to die in this location, in peace, was not made idly or offhandedly. As with many hospice patients at Seasons, Bob knew his death was near, though not how near. That imminence had added a sense of urgency to the mission to bring him to this place.

Later, Kate recalled how the trip had come to be. Bob, who had been a Seasons hospice patient for some time, had begun to talk about his uncle's farm during her visits to Bob's home. For Bob, the farm was a central feature in some of his warmest childhood memories. Now, some 60 years after his last visit, all Bob wanted was to see it again. Making that happen would not be a small undertaking. The farm was outside of Corvallis, Oregon, which was at least two hours

(continued on pg. 2)

small things that matter most

(continued from pg. 1)



away from Bob's Portland home, and for a man in Bob's condition the ride would be tricky (and expensive). But when Bob said it would be his "life's regret" if he passed without going, and that he was determined to go even if he "died on the way," the Seasons team knew what to do.

They contacted the Seasons Hospice Foundation to ask for help. (The Seasons Hospice Foundation is a non-profit organization that funds wish-fulfillment experiences and other special acts of kindness for hospice patients and their families.) To their delight, the request was approved on the spot. Then they got in touch with Bob's two daughters to see when they would be available to join. The next day (Saturday) would work, they said. Great! The pieces were falling into place. The Seasons team contacted a local ambulance company, Metro West, to arrange ambulance service. When the company learned what the service request was for, they refused to be paid for their services. Metro West donated a van (with oxygen) and a driver/EMT for the entire day, free of charge. "Take your time," they urged. Knowing the nature of Bob's journey, Metro West also supplied the only van in its fleet with all-around windows. Everything was now ready to make Bob's wish come true.





The next day, abuzz with excitement, Bob and his daughters joined Kate and the Metro West technician to embark on their quest. Spirits were high as they zipped down I-5 toward their destination. But as the interstate gave way to local highways, then surface streets, and then unpainted country roads in the rural surrounds of Corvallis, Kate couldn't help but become a bit nervous. You see, Bob did not actually know the farm's address. He thought he knew the name of a street or two, but really, the party had nothing more to go on than the strength of Bob's memory and recognition as they drove.

As the group pushed deeper and deeper into the pine forest, Bob struggled to orient himself to his surroundings. Complicating matters, Bob had been suffering from acute hypoxia of late, which Kate knew would not have done his 60-year-old memories any favors. Mile after mile, and turn after turn, Bob failed to lock onto anything familiar. At one point, he even asked if the group could return to Corvallis to retrace their steps out into the country. The prospect of success began to dim.

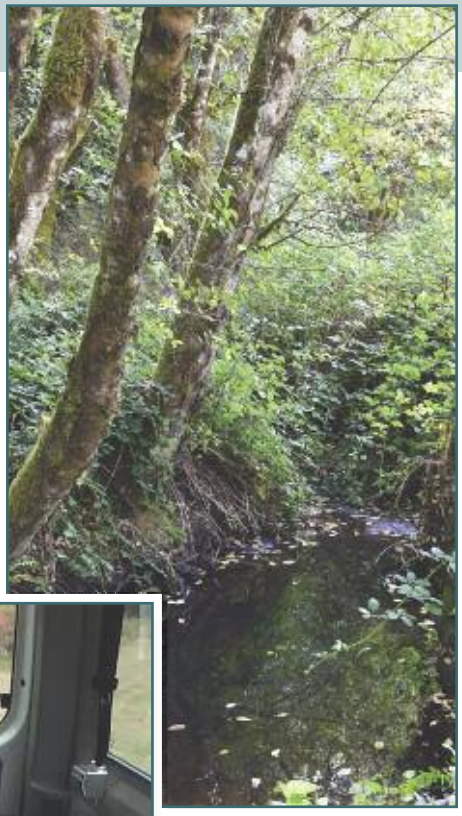
At one point, on a hunch, Bob directed the van down a gravel road. As the buckles and fastenings in the van clattered and squeaked, Bob's face still failed to register any signs of recognition. Kate eyed the remaining oxygen tanks with concern, for how long could she permit the search to continue before turning back? In an emergency, of course, she could contact the local fire department to request an oxygen resupply, but then they would have to… "This could be it!" Bob exclaimed suddenly. His eyes had brightened, and he was visibly excited. To Kate, nothing looked remarkable. They hadn't seen a house in some time. They were quite literally in the middle of nowhere. "Here," Bob said confidently, "if this is it, then there will be a house right around this corner." And sure enough, as they rounded the bend a house appeared – the first they had seen in some time – just as Bob predicted. "And I bet you there's a creek behind that house." Kate, craning her neck, could see that, yes, there was indeed a creek behind that house. Bob seemed convinced. This was the one.

The van pulled into the property's gravel driveway and crunched to a halt. A sturdy, middle-aged man in a

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"We just asked, and in a matter of an hour, we had everything coordinated."

– Kate Shaver
Team Director, Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care, Portland Office



plain white t-shirt and jeans approached. As Kate hopped out to speak with him, she worried about what he might say. What if, after all of their effort and anticipation, he turned them away? With relief, Kate quickly learned she had nothing to fear. "Actually," she recalled later, "he seemed really tickled by the fact that a dying man wanted to come see his farm." They were invited warmly to come, stay, explore, and even take pictures.



And so, there it was: Bob's dying wish had come true.

In his weary state, Bob had decided to stay in the van, but from the clearing in which they were parked he was able to see the property quite well. And Kate pulled the doors open so that Bob could feel the air and smell the earth.

Bob chatted with the owner, reminisced, and told stories. He explained how his uncle had timbered the farm to pay its property taxes. With his hands spread wide, he spoke of the beaver hides he used to claim from the creek down the hill, and how he split the proceeds with his uncle once they were pelted and sold. He recalled, with amusement, the time his uncle shot at the neighbor's goats because they had wandered too close to Bob's little sister. With each telling, Bob glowed. All around, the place seemed to fill him with life and memory.

As the day wore on, it became time to go. Farewells were exchanged, Bob was tucked in for the return journey, and the van rattled and wound its way back down toward the interstate. As the hours-long trip back to Portland wore on, Bob's body began to show signs of the toll the day's adventure had taken. But once he was safely at home in his own bed, Bob perked up and spoke fondly of the memories he had just made and rekindled.

Three days later, Bob suffered a stroke. He passed the day after that. Had the trip been scheduled only a few days later (which had, in fact, been considered), it would have been too late.

Looking back on the outing, Kate marveled at how quickly and easily the trip had been prepared. "We just asked," Kate recalled, "and in a matter of an hour we had everything coordinated." Finding the farm was a little tough, she admitted, but the search itself became a fun part of the adventure. Unquestionably, it was worth it. Even if the farm had eluded them, just delivering Bob from his bed to the countryside of his boyhood would have been rewarding enough. Of course, with the help of the Seasons Hospice Foundation and Seasons staff, Bob fared much better than that. Reflecting on what it had all meant, Kate's voice dropped to a whisper. "He was so happy," she said.



Thoughtful Gifts for the Bereaved

By Luisa Kcomt, LMSW



It's been several weeks since the funeral was over and everyone has returned home to resume their busy lives. The phone has stopped ringing. The sympathy cards have stopped arriving in the mailbox. The inbox is no longer inundated with emails offering words of condolences. To the bereaved, this silence can feel deafening at times. Many bereaved feel lost and forgotten as they learn to manage on their own. Extended family, friends, and community members want to show support but are not sure how. Below are some suggestions to demonstrate love and caring to let the bereaved know that they are not alone in their journey.

Loss of appetite is a common symptom of grief. Not knowing how to cook nutritious meals, the lack of interest in cooking, or the loneliness of dining alone can all be contributing factors. Consequently, many bereaved individuals experience weight loss after the death of their loved one. Offering homemade prepared meals can be a thoughtful gift for the bereaved. Even better yet, creating occasions to cook or eat together can help to reduce the social isolation that the bereaved often encounter.

"Grieving is hard work. It is healthy to take a break from the work of grieving by having some fun occasionally."

At times, the physical challenges of going grocery shopping can be a burden for some bereaved, especially during bad weather. Offering transportation to go grocery shopping with the bereaved can be a thoughtful gesture. Lifting bags of groceries into the car or the home seem less arduous when a helping hand is available. In some communities, online shopping for groceries or having groceries delivered may be an additional resource.

Bereaved individuals who were the primary caregivers for their deceased loved one have often neglected their own health because they were too busy caring for their loved one's needs. It is not uncommon for bereaved individuals to suffer from physical illness during the first year after their loved one's death. Provide a gentle reminder for the bereaved to receive an annual physical exam from their physician. Offer to accompany them to the doctor's appointment if possible. This supportive companionship can help to decrease the stress of a doctor's visit.

Bereaved who are parents of small children are trying to raise a family while also coping with their own grief reaction. Depending on the circumstances, the bereaved may also be involved in managing the deceased person's estate or organizing their possessions. Offering the gift of time by babysitting the children can be a relief for the bereaved. This can provide them with the time and space to take care of business or to process their grief emotions.

Grieving is hard work. It is healthy to take a break from the work of grieving by having some fun occasionally. Inviting the bereaved to a social outing can be a good form of distraction. Some bereaved may not feel ready to do this yet; they may feel guilty about having fun or perhaps they are afraid that their raw emotions will cause embarrassment if the tears flow unexpectedly. If so, be patient. Find other opportunities to invite them again in the future.

Experiencing the "firsts" after a loved one's death can be difficult: the first birthday without the loved one, the first Thanksgiving, the first anniversary of the death, etc. Here, a thoughtful gesture letting the bereaved know that you are thinking of them during this occasion can be helpful, whether you send a card, some cheerful flowers, or donating to a charity in memory of their loved one. Knowing that they are not alone is a gift in itself.

Your thoughtfulness, presence, and compassion are priceless. Allowing them to express their grief emotions and listening without judgement can be a very healing experience for the bereaved. The mere act of offering lets the bereaved know that you are supportive of them and that they are not alone in their grief journey.

Art Therapy & Camp Kangaroo

By Lee Cohen,
REACE, Art Therapy Intern

Working with bereaved children and adolescents takes a combination of empathy, compassion, and an attunement for facilitating healthy processing in a safe place. The creative arts therapies allow every cultural background and age to contain the emotions and express what may otherwise be difficult to put into words. The experience of losing a loved one is a painful but critical time of rebuilding and reordering of one's world and, for some people, it may take a long time to rebuild as each person experiences grief differently.

Camp Kangaroo is a children's bereavement camp whose program utilizes psychotherapy and the creative arts to encourage experiences, choices, and synthesis of expression while moving towards resolution and holistic rebirth. It generally takes longer for children than adults to exhibit the symptoms of mourning which lends to the general, but incorrect, assumption that children do not really need any intervention. Children require the same opportunities to vent and work through their feelings that adults require. However, intervention for children is even more critical because this period will shape their lives for many years to come. Camp Kangaroo offers exactly such opportunities.

This year, Camp Kangaroo in Miami had the opportunity to offer art therapy as a therapeutic modality. In the most general terms, Art Therapy allows for the expression and communication of feelings, thoughts, and experiences where the creative process is utilized as a means to transform pain and conflict while fostering self-awareness and growth. The person, process, and product are equal in the art experience.



This mural was a joint project created by 37 children who attended Camp Kangaroo at Shake-A-Leg in Miami, Florida.

At Camp Kangaroo, the unique experiences of each child were integrated into music, journaling, and art in which they were encouraged to freely write, perform, or draw the experiences most important and relevant to them. To integrate these modalities into an art therapy "product" arising out of the process, the art therapists provided a table covered with butcher paper for the children to sketch one's ideas and images using a variety of drawing materials. Once these ideas were given form at this stage, they were subsequently sent to a large prepared canvas to collectively choose where each image should go on the "community" canvas. All the children's ideas were synthesized into one larger art form with the support and assistance of the art therapists. By allowing this synthesis, the children were able to experience increasing ownership of the "mural" created by their individual perceptions and expressions. It also provided a sense of community and oneness.

Grieving family members can collaborate to create a large format drawing or painting, like the one created by the campers at Camp Kangaroo. This activity will enable family members to experience that same oneness or the sensation of being in the "same boat" while moving through their grief to hope and healing. Here are some helpful suggestions for those who wish to create their own collaborative artwork as a coping method for grief and loss:

- Have a wide range of materials available, including white sheets of drawing paper or watercolor paper (large enough for everyone's ideas and images), scissors, various drawing and painting materials such as watercolor paint, oil pastels, soft pastels, crayons, colored pencils, paint brushes, water, magazines for collaging.
- Provide time for each family member to express a memory or emotion they are currently experiencing (writing and drawing may be used) and allow ample time for sharing.
- Encourage collaboration and integration of **everyone's** artwork and ideas, especially where they will be placed on the paper or canvas used for the piece. Sharing of emotions and memories **are encouraged** while the piece is being created.
- Find a special place to display the piece once completed where everyone can visit and talk about the piece. **Art is for looking, enjoying, and reflecting.**
- **There is no right or wrong in creating art.**



Helping Others Through SEASONS HOSPICE FOUNDATION

A gift to Seasons Hospice Foundation marks the love and joy that someone brought to our lives, while also helping other patients and their families.

You can be confident that your generous gift is used to enrich lives. Your gift stays close to home and makes a difference to the patients and families in the communities where your honoree was cared for by Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care.

To honor your loved one by making a gift or to learn more about the Seasons Hospice Foundation, please visit **seasonsfoundation.org** or call **847-692-1000**.

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If our mailing records need to be updated, or if you would like to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact Seasons Hospice Foundation at 847-692-1000, ext. 4.

Did You Know?

Seasons Hospice Foundation strives to make an impact by touching the lives of the people in the communities that we serve. During 2016:

- We fulfilled 181 final wishes.
- We served 291 children and teens through our bereavement camp programs in 8 locations around the country.



- We provided exceptional internship experiences for 78 students throughout our clinical sites.

Thank you for your continued support and generosity which helps us to fulfill our mission.

Gisèle D. Crowe
Executive Director, Seasons Hospice Foundation

SUPPORT

Seasons Hospice & Palliative Care
20 Burlington Mall Rd., Ste. 450
Burlington, Mass. 01803

617-454-0200
Toll free: 866-670-9449

Seasons Hospice Groups

All who have experienced the death of a loved one and are in need of a compassionate, safe place to express their grief are invited to join us for the following programs:

Life After Loss Bereavement Support Groups

- **3rd Tuesday of every month**, 6 p.m.
  Village at Willow Crossing, 25 Cobb St., Mansfield
- **Drop-in - 2nd & 4th Wednesdays of every month**, 6-7:30 p.m.
  211 Centre St. (office next to house), Milton

  Facilitated by Seasons Hospice Social Worker
  Co-sponsored by Trustees of Milton Cemetery

Bereavement Support Group

- **Drop-in - 3rd Monday of every month *but can change*** *(please call to confirm)*
  Burlington Council on Aging, 61 Center St., Burlington

Using Mindfulness to Care for Our Grief

Grieving brings physical, mental and emotional manifestations of pain that can be hard to navigate. But there is much we can do to heal and derive meaning from the journey. The practice of Mindfulness facilitates a moment-to-moment encounter with our experience. It is the practice of paying attention with a nonjudgmental attitude and offers a practical path to well-being for the grieving person.

This workshop will introduce basic principles and practices of Mindfulness as a pathway through grief.

Saturdays, April 1, May 6 & June 3, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

20 Burlington Mall Rd., Suite 450, Burlington

Registration required.

Please call Josie Galyon, Bereavement Specialist, at 617-454-0200 to register or request more information.