



## **A Widow's Thoughts and Advice**

### **An Uplifting Series of Articles for Widows and Other Grieving Hearts**

by Barbara Brabec

Three months a widow, author Barbara Brabec began a ten-year series of articles in which she shared her widowhood journey and advice while reporting on conversations with other widows and their mutual strategies for dealing with grief and loss and moving on. If you are a widow, or expect to be one soon, you'll find this writing a comfort to your soul.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

**HARRY BRABEC** died February 5, 2005. Barbara published a brief story of his life on her website a week later, working on the computer for days while her two sisters attended to things in the house. "I needed something to do," she said, "and I wanted to honor Harry's memory by writing about his life." Those original web pages have now been turned into a PDF document titled "Remembering Harry Brabec." What follows is the compilation of writing Barbara began on her website three months later.



The Thoughts and Advice of a New Widow

## The Survivor's Life Jacket

First in a Series of Articles for Widows and Others Who Have Lost, or May Be about to Lose, Someone They Love

April 2005



<- Harry Brabec at age 55—Barbara's favorite picture

**IT HAS BEEN ALMOST THREE MONTHS** since Harry died, and I'm only just beginning to feel as though I can get back to my writing and other professional responsibilities, including the book project that has been waiting for me since January.

Because so many of my readers and website visitors have sent sympathetic cards and emails in the past weeks, I felt I needed to assure everyone that I'm okay. I appreciate your concern very much, and I thank everyone who prayed for me or Harry during our dark days. (I know this made a difference, because God blessed us with an extra good week after I brought Harry home on Hospice.) Now I feel especially blessed to have so many friends, both on the Web and in my community, not to mention two great sisters who have been a lifeline for me since Harry died.

Harry was physically disabled for the past two years and quite ill throughout 2004, so I had a lot of time to prepare myself for what I knew was coming. Because he was ten years older than I, I always knew I'd have to finish my life alone, but I also knew I'd be okay because I've always been very independent. I think I'm moving through the grieving phase more quickly than most widows because I literally have so much to do, not to mention a strong sense of purpose. In an old magazine article by Ardis Whitman titled "Secrets of Survivors," she noted that people who survive the trials of life are those who begin learning to do so long before crises appear, adding, "The survivor's life jacket is made of the imperishable things with which he surrounds himself: books, music, spiritual faith, purpose, a dream."

"Hope for the moment. There are times when it is hard to believe in the future, when we are temporarily just not brave enough. When this happens, concentrate on the present. Cultivate *le petit bonheur* (the little happiness) until courage returns. Look forward to the beauty of the next moment, the next hour, the promise of a good meal, sleep, a book, a movie, the likelihood that tonight the stars will shine and tomorrow the sun will shine. Sink roots into the present until the strength grows to think about tomorrow."

- Ardis Whitman in *Resources to Last a Lifetime* (1963)

**HARRY LEFT ME A BOUNTIFUL LEGACY** of love, wonderful memories of our interesting and exciting life together, and a house full of beautiful art, crafts, and mementoes, much of it related to his work as a crafts show producer. I am also comforted by all the books and music he acquired for us. He left me with thousands of LPs, CDs, and audio music tapes, so I won't ever run out of music. But I now have a new challenge: Before I begin to get rid of his huge collection of LPs, I'd like to convert some of them to CDs, and I've been researching the best way to do this job.

As a professional musician, Harry made several recordings with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, plus a couple of classic percussion albums back in the 50s, so it's uplifting to be able to listen to this music and know which instruments he was playing in them. I also have tapes of several concerts he played with a local concert band, so I will always be able to hear him drumming his heart out. Music was his life, and now his music is helping to sustain me.

Part of my healing this month came in the form of a luncheon I had in April for some of Harry's old music friends in the area. Prior to the luncheon, I turned Harry's office into a museum of sorts, so his friends and relatives (and I, of course) could see his whole life with new perspective. For the luncheon, I ordered a photo cake from Jewel and made centerpieces of some of his small percussion instruments. In the background, I played tapes of Harry's playing and asked his friends to share "Harry stories" with me.



Celebrating Harry's life like this seemed like the one last thing I could do for him, and for me it was like adding two exclamation points to the end of his life, something he often did at the end of his sentences. After lunch, I let Harry entertain everyone by playing an audio tape of him speaking, which I had dubbed from a collection of tapes I found in his office of him talking to different people at different times of his life. Of course, it included some classic Harry Brabec humor that everyone loved. And this brings me to a word of advice for those of you who soon anticipate the loss of a loved one.

## Preserving a Loved One's Voice

**IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE IT ALREADY**, get a tape recorder (or, better yet, video recorder) and record the voice of your loved one talking about things he or she cares about—their memories, their feelings about family, friends, their favorite stories, whatever. I cannot tell you all how *much* I needed to hear Harry's voice after he was gone. Although I had done a special taping with my mother a year or so before she died, I neglected to do this with Harry, probably because I was so consumed with the responsibilities I had as both breadwinner and caregiver during our last few years together.

Fortunately, I found a few audio tapes in Harry's office. One was a two-hour tape he'd made for me on one of his trips to Europe when he was producing the International Crafts Exposition in the late seventies; another was a tape made for a friend as he drove a U-Haul truck from Florida to Missouri on one of our many moves. (It was loaded with lots of Harry's quips and plays on words and other humor, and I'm so grateful that his friend returned this tape with his own message on the other side.) I also have a radio interview Harry once did for WMAQ when he was Principal Percussionist with the Chicago Symphony, plus a tape he did for a cousin that

recalled many childhood memories (things I never heard until the cousin gave me a copy of that tape after Harry died). All this is to say that I am fortunate to have this much of Harry that I can cling to so I'll never forget his melodious voice and the way he delivered humorous quips. But perhaps you don't have this kind of treasure yet, and I tell you true—you *will yearn for it later if you don't take steps now to tape your loved one's voice.*

## Support from Other Widows

**THE LAST THING** I would ever feel the need to do is join a widow's support group, but talking to other widows one at a time has been helpful to me, and to them, too, I know. One of my oldest friends lost her husband a couple of months before I lost mine, and as we continue to compare notes about our feelings and what we're doing to reorganize our homes and personal lives, we are finding that we have been doing much the same things. Getting rid of "stuff" is high on every widow's list, it seems.

For example, one day last month, I hauled out nine 30-pound plastic bags to the street for garbage pickup, plus sixteen shopping bags full of paper from the eight filing drawers in Harry's office. He was a terrible pack rat who seems to have kept every piece of paper he ever got over the past 44 years (much like me, actually). It broke my heart to throw out all the file folders of articles he had clipped and saved on dozens of topics dear to his heart—places he wanted to go to throughout the U.S. and Europe, people he found interesting, restaurants he wanted to try, books he wanted to read, music he wanted to acquire, folders full of quotes he liked (which I'm saving). But most of the paper was stuff only he had an interest in, and since he died I have felt obsessed about getting rid of everything that is not necessary in my life now. I don't know if it's losing Harry that has done this, or if I am simply more aware of my own mortality and the need to downsize my life.

## Moving On

**CURRENTLY, EVERYONE IS ADVISING ME** that I need to "move on," and although I am making both short- and long-term plans for a life of my own as a single woman, I also know I'm never going to "get over" Harry. He was a presence no one could ever ignore, and his absence in my life after so many years together has left an enormous hole I'll never be able to fill, in spite of having many friends, a hundred interests, and much work I look forward to doing for the rest of my life. As I said to another widow recently, when you lose your soul mate and best friend, it's as if a giant sinkhole has suddenly opened up in your life. You can never expect to fill that hole, but you hope in time to learn how to walk around it.

There's a big hole in my heart, as well, but I am slowly beginning to stuff that hole with all the happy memories of my life with Harry, and there are certainly thousands of them. (*Funny how easily you forget all the bad times when a loved one is gone.*) I've spent many hours going through our photo albums and scrapbooks (both his and mine), and every picture or page brings back new memories and things I'd forgotten in the rush of daily living. I've also salved my wounds by rereading letters Harry sent me on the few occasions when we had to be separated, as well as letters to friends that I had typed for him over the past several years. Those letters revealed a rich legacy of Harry's special memories about drummers and other musicians he had worked with through the years, as well as his experiences with various orchestras, orchestra leaders and conductors, plus his feelings about performing and having to lay down his sticks when he got too old to perform. It was a pleasure to share them with his music friends.

**"When I get too old to drum, I'll still have you to marimba," Harry wrote to one mallet player, adding, "I know . . . it's an old joke, but then I'm an old man."**

**MY MOST IMPORTANT NEED** has been to have something alive in the house—and also something to talk to so I don't get in the habit of talking to myself all day long—so I got a cat (a long-haired orange tabby) from the Humane Society last week. When Harry was in the hospital for the last time and knew his end was near, he was talking about things I needed to do for him, and then he paused and said, ". . . and you'd better get a cat," which made me cry, of course, because he knew I'd given up cats for him all those years I wanted one so badly.

I've named her Charlee (feminine for Charley, a nickname Harry once gave me as a joke). She's clearly delighted with her new home, and I'm delighted with the love she's showering on me every day. Now if I can just figure out how to get my work done when she wants to curl up on my desk under the warm lamp and lie on my papers. (She is currently fascinated by the moving cursor and the changing images on my computer screen as I move around the Web.)



When I finish my book project, my immediate plans will then be to have both of my knee joints replaced since I am greatly handicapped by my inability to walk more than half a block without caving in. I realize that walking is one of the most healthful things I can do for myself, and the older I get with no one to take care of me, the more important it will be for me to stay in good physical shape. In the future, I plan to keep writing, publishing on the Web, and going wherever God leads me. I am confident that He still has work for me to do, and I'll be waiting for new windows or doors to open in the months ahead.

I leave you with this wonderful verse from Max Lucado, sent by a dear friend this week:

**“There are things only you can do, and YOU are alive to do them. In the great orchestra we call Life, you have an instrument and a song, and you owe it to God to play them both sublimely.”**

### **Amazing Feedback to the First Article**

This first article in this series touched the hearts of many readers. I greatly appreciated these special supportive comments at that time and even more so now that I'm updating this series of articles in 2019.

● "Barbara, that was one of the most moving pieces of writing I've read in a long, long time. I'm so sorry to hear about Harry—I could tell from your past emails what your relationship was like. He would no doubt be proud of what you are doing now. The pain will begin to recede but the fond memories will only strengthen. So many widows, and widowers for that matter, seem to struggle so hard to get their lives back in order and some never do. Though I am sure you have been pained and feel the struggle too, you have (in characteristic Barbara Brabec fashion), taken hold of this challenge and are dealing with it rather than letting it deal with you". - Gil Gordon, GilGordon.com

● "I have just read your tribute to Harry. I love your writing. It's authentic, real, touching, conversational, and heartfelt. What an incredible blessing that the Lord took Harry home so peacefully. I loved what your sister said about his heart 'going from prestissimo to a peaceful adagio ending.' I, too, am married to a musician, and many of the things you said about Harry

reminded me of my Brian. God wires musicians with special gifts and I think also gives them a special outlook on life. It's obvious that Harry was one of God's special ones and that his life blessed so many people." - Ruth Gordon Howard, RuthGordonHoward.com and ButterflySong.com (*Brian's site*)

● "Great to hear from you in such a cheerful tone. But don't shortcut the grieving process. Just let it happen. There will be moments of happiness and sudden surprises of sadness triggered by whatever. This will go on for a long time. It is part of the healing. Let it happen in due course. As a dear friend of mine said to me recently, 'God doesn't waste anything'— a great thought to meditate on." - Bob Cline

● "Please keep sharing your life and your feelings with us. You may not realize it, but to those of us who read your words, you have given each of us a wonderful gift. I still have my husband, but I have had some very close calls in the past few years, starting with his bypass surgery and other serious complications in the following years. I never realized how much he meant to me until I almost lost him. And reading your words brought it all back to me. I am not a writer, but I kept a journal during that period of my life when life seemed out of control, and there are many tears on those pages, both literally and figuratively. Somehow, with prayer (and "Letting God"), and that journal, I made it through those very painful days. I strongly encourage those around me going through difficult periods in their lives to WRITE! It is very therapeutic, more than we can ever know at the time. Please keep writing." - Sue Pike Sawyer, a former Hospice nurse

● "What a beautiful Bulletin! I was hoping you would send one out soon, and it was all I have come to expect from you and your wonderful writing. You sound so 'together.' I know there will continue to be moments of such sorrow and loss, but you have done incredibly well, Barbara. And what is more, you are helping all of Harry's friends to come to terms with their loss." - Ruth Edwards

● "Your latest report is amazing. As I read through it, the tears just cascaded softly down my face, not in sadness but because your words touched my heart. Your tribute to Harry is beautiful. I am so glad that you are up to writing again. Although I have not suffered the loss of a mate, I have lost many family members. I do believe that we never 'get over' our losses but instead learn how to live with them." - Faith Varrone

● "The way you're using your writing at this time is wonderful. It's helping me in ways you (of course) have no way of knowing. And I can tell it's helping you." - Patricia Banker, SaintsPreserved.com

● "I didn't know Harry personally, but I felt as though I knew him through you, and I sense how much you miss him. While your writing may be providing an outlet for your feelings, just as importantly, you're providing incredible information and support for others and I'm sure that's why you are sharing it. None of us can know what this is like until we go through it ourselves, but I can feel the importance of your words and I admire the wonderful way you express them. I'm sure that Harry is saying 'Atta Girl!'" - Cindy Groom Harry

● "Your article was very helpful to me. I didn't lose a husband but have lost both parents, so your advice is also good for that. Thanks for writing and God Bless you." - Linda Dallas

● "Just read your beautiful article. What a wonderful way to remember Harry. Your comment about the big hole in our heart and how you are stuffing it full of all the happy memories is priceless. Every hurting person should have this quote in front of them at all times. On May 5th, it will be eleven years since my Ken left for Heaven, and every day I still talk to him and often, about him, to others. Our loved ones live on in our hearts as well as in eternity. Thank you for reminding your readers to get their voices on tape. We have a video made about a

year before Ken died, along with a delightful tape recording of the surprise roast for his 50th birthday. (He had survived a major heart attack on his 49th birthday and we were so grateful.) His laughter throughout the tape is such a heart warmer. The video was made by a couple of friends while on a trip. After he died, the first thing I bought was a camcorder so I could get everyone else in my family on tape. Little did I realize how timely that was! Now, thanks to your reminder, I'm going to get them updated onto a CD." - Joanne Hill, author of *Rainbow Remedies for Life's Stormy Times*

● "You're a true inspiration to everyone and you definitely sent a lot of good ideas about preserving memories of your loved ones. Thanks so much for the idea about taping conversations—we always think of doing that for older folks, but it should be done for everyone we love." - Tari Hann

● "Although both my husband and I are only in our early 50s, I treasure your encouraging words about planning ahead for when one of us will be alone." - Sandy Dell

● "I'm writing this with tears flowing down my cheeks. Thank you for your last two very personal reflections on the life of your husband. They have been very touching. My husband and I serve in Afghanistan. We started a craft exporting business for widows a year ago. I have used your book and e-mail newsletters as we have begun building the foundation for the ladies' livelihood. If you feel led, please know that you have an open invitation to come over here and advise us during this beginning stage. We wouldn't be able to pay as we are all volunteers, but it would definitely be a trip of a lifetime! My mother recently came on her own (she is in her late 50s) and we have a widow in her 70s coming from our organization next month. We will be thinking of you during this time of transition, with prayers." Brian and Cameron

● "I love it . . . I just love it!!! It is so interesting to read your articles . . . like a GOOD book that you cannot put down. Harry was a one-of-a-kind kinda guy! Not many of those around anymore." - Pam Ash

**“THE SEASONS TURN** and time takes its toll. Nothing is ever the same as it was; nothing will ever be the same as it is.” – Author unknown

**“LOVE IS ETERNAL;** it transcends even death. Although the person died, the love did not. Nothing can take away the love that you shared, ever. And nothing can take away the love that you continue to feel.” – Ashley Davis Prend, author of *Transcending Loss*

**“NO ONE WANTS GRIEF.** Yet when it comes, it is too costly to be wasted. Sorrow must be put to good use. That's true whether we are mourning the loss of a loved one, a loss of health, or any other tragic reversal. If the energy of mourning can be translated into some positive change, there can be a feeling that the suffering or loss was not in vain.” – from RBC Ministries Discovery Series booklet, *Where Can We Find Comfort?*

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The Thoughts and Advice of a New Widow

## The Grieving Process

Second in a Series of Articles for Widows and Others Who Have Lost, or May Be about to Lose, Someone They Love

June 2005

*“Of course I have to write now because writing is what I do, what I have always done. It's important to my mental well being, and I also believe that God is teaching me much in this experience and that later I will be able to offer comfort to others who will have to face the same thing I'm facing now, but perhaps without the kind of support I'm getting from countless friends and acquaintances.”*

— from Barbara's newsletter in January 2005, shortly before Harry died

**AFTER HARRY DIED**, I received several notes of condolence from other widows. In talking with them on the phone or by email, I learned that we were all handling grief differently, each in our own individual way. If you are currently grieving the loss of your spouse or know someone who is, perhaps this personal experience report will offer encouragement, hope, and new perspective. Other grieving hearts will also find helpful guidance in this report.

The message I received from Jan, a new widow with three children still at home, was especially touching:

“It's been over five months since Phil passed away,” she wrote. “My life with three kids is busy as ever, and I'm finally beginning to work at my weaving and spinning again, but the grief and guilt still hit hard nearly every day. How can I be happy, or excited about something, when he is gone and never coming back? I still cry nearly every day. Such a huge part of my life is gone. As you said, no one to talk to, hug, share with, and it hits you over and over that it will be that way the rest of your life.”

To Jan and other widows who feel the same way, I would say this: *It's a mistake to think your life as you know it now is always going to be just as it is at the moment.* Although some of us will surely end up alone for the rest of our lives, there are worse things than living alone. More important, however, is that we should not presume to know the mind of God or his plans for the rest of our lives merely because we don't have a clue about this ourselves. Although most new widows (including myself) cannot imagine life with another man, I have two good friends, both of whom were married for a long time and who felt the same way when they lost their spouses. But God sent new mates to both of them a couple of years later, and they found themselves in love all over again. Both told me they could not explain the intense feelings of love they felt for their new husbands, who were totally different from their first husbands, but who were perfectly suited to them nonetheless. In short, *never underestimate the heart's capacity for love!* As Pascal once said, “The heart has its reasons which reason knows not of.”

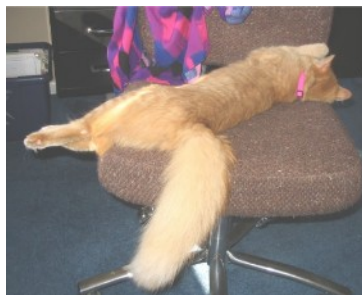


At a time when I was exhausted from taking care of Harry, one of these new widows described her feelings like this:

"All you and I can see now is a long dreary road stretching before us, with sameness of hardship and grief. The fallacy of that is that there are some 'turnoffs' that God may have us take. And we can't see around those bends. There may be joy and brightness and relief there. I can't say that my heart embraces this idea right now, but it is a glimmer for my mind to consider. I am doing okay, not weeping and sad around others, inflicting gloom on them. But I feel I'll never be HAPPY again. I'll find things to do and try to line up with God's plan for the rest of my life, but the joy is gone. It may be that it never returns, and if so, the Lord knows that I will still function and cling to him."

Obviously, my friend's joy has returned and she is once again married to a wonderful man and happy beyond belief. So we must remember always to have faith in God, and know that He has not forgotten us. We must remain open to the possibilities that lie ahead, and in the meantime, laugh whenever we can and do things that give us joy.

**I TOOK MY OWN ADVICE** by adopting a cat, something I had wanted to do for years, but something Harry didn't want me to do at that time. Yet when his end was near, Harry said I should get a cat when he was gone because he wanted me to be happy in spite of him not being there with me. That's what love is all about. We must remember that our husbands are still with us in spirit, and they want us to be happy again, and so does God. As my friends keep telling me—and I'm still forcing myself to remember—we must not feel guilty now or in the future when life gives us a reason to laugh and be joyful again.



*ABOVE: Charlee is having fun with the blinds in my office, which fascinated her for some time. LEFT: When she wasn't exploring every inch of the house, my fluffy-tailed office helper liked to zonk out in this office chair in the afternoon.*

## **Trying Not to Remember Because It Hurts Too Much?**

**IN MY FIRST WIDOW'S REPORT**, I spoke about how important it was for me to hear Harry's voice after he was gone and to gather all his favorite things in the room that used to be his office. But not all widows respond to loss the way I have done. Some have told me they could not bear to touch their husband's clothes or other possessions for as long as a year afterwards. Others have indicated they could not listen to audio tapes or view videotapes of their husband because they just "weren't ready yet." One woman who always played the piano for her husband couldn't bring herself to play for a year after he died.

Clearly, widows grieve in different ways, and when we find ourselves in a position to counsel a widow in the future—or anyone who has suffered the loss of a loved one—we must remember that what works for one grieving heart may not work for another. And it's not just widows who

have a problem here. A woman who lost her mother a year ago told me she couldn't bear to think of her mom because it hurt too much. "When I think of the good times I cry," she wrote. "So I don't think of the good times because it is very difficult for me."

I can certainly understand this woman's feelings. However, I believe she and many widows are making a big mistake in trying to avoid thinking about their lost loved one just because it hurts to do so. I'm no psychologist, but decades of just plain living have taught me that we can never solve an emotional problem or escape its consequences by running away from it. *You have to meet it head-on and deal with it or it will haunt you for the rest of your life.*

### Crying is Part of Healing

"The shortest verse in the New Testament is 'Jesus wept.' So did Abraham, so did Moses, so did David, so did Mohammed, so did Buddha, and so does everyone who ever loved someone and had that loved one taken away from them. Those who bottle the grief up inside are doomed to have the grief burst out another way. Tears of grief are nature's way of reducing the tension caused by a loss. If we don't use the natural way, we may have to deal with the unnatural, which can be ominous indeed."

– from *How to Cope with being Widowed*, by William J. Diehm

### The Healing Power of Tears

**IN THE FIRST MONTH** after Harry died, I went through our entire photo collection and pulled out the most memory-packed photos I could find of both him alone and the two of us together —ones where we were obviously happy, arms around one another, in different places at different times of life. Yes, it did hurt to remember, and I cried puddles of tears as I framed these pictures and the many small personal items of Harry's in a glass-encased "memory box." (*For a larger picture and how I made it, see ["My Memory Box of Life with Harry."](#)*)



I hung this memory box in my bedroom on the wall above Harry's chest of drawers (and his urn) where I could look at it whenever I needed to feel his presence in my life. And a funny thing happened as a result.

Each day as I studied the contents of this box and recalled new memories associated with each photo or nostalgic item in it, I cried again, sometimes a little, sometimes a lot. It wasn't long, however, before I began to ask myself if I was crying for all that I'd lost forever, *or shedding tears of gratitude for having had a good marriage and the love of such a dear man for so many years.* All this is to say that *it's a mistake to avoid remembering the good*

*times because it hurts to do so, for these are the very memories you can stuff into that big hole in your heart.* The fuller it gets, the less you will cry. Above all, don't try to "be brave" by holding back tears when you're hurting so much inside.

Crying is a healthy thing to do because each tear you shed will bring some of your grief to the outside where you can better deal with it. According to the Bible, your tears are so precious to God that He saves them in a bottle:

**“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.” (Psalm 56:8 NLT).**

## **Laughing Pain Away**



**I KEPT REMEMBERING SOMETHING** Harry always said, that "We two are ONE." Not just two people whose lives had intersected, but literally ONE in spirit. Thus, even though Harry is gone, his spirit still lives in my heart. In many ways, he has never left me, and never will. I can now look at my treasured memory box without shedding a tear. In fact, as I show it to friends, I often recall a funny "Harry story" that makes us laugh. And that's just the way Harry would have wanted it because one of his main goals in life was to make others laugh.

For example, the picture at left brings to mind a funny "Harry story" from 1976. While on a business trip abroad, Harry and I toured a magnificent palace outside the city of Warsaw. To protect the beautiful marble and inlaid floors, all of us in the tour group were required to put scuffs on over our shoes, which made walking hazardous because the floors were as slick as ice. Although most of us were fearful of falling and were

shuffling along stiff-legged, Harry quickly developed his own method of maneuvering. He was leading the group as we started down one particularly long hall. Donning a big grin, he placed his hands behind his back in Hans Brinker fashion and merrily began to "skate" to a rhythm that was unmistakably that of the "Skater's Waltz."

No one needed an interpreter to understand his message, and within moments the whole tour group was laughing and much more relaxed. I was the only one in the group who knew that Harry's back pain that day was intense. But as he did throughout his many pain-filled years of life, Harry never let pain keep him from laughing or trying to brighten someone else's day—most particularly mine.

## **Are You Laughing When Others Think You Should Be Crying?**

**SOME WIDOWS MAY BE SURPRISED** to learn that they can actually be happy without their spouse, but probably not without some feelings of guilt. I've been keeping journals all my life, so it was only natural for me to begin writing letters to Harry when I could no longer speak to him in person. Perhaps the following comments from one of those letters about a month after he died will be helpful to those of you who are feeling guilty when you find yourself laughing at a time when others might expect to see you crying:

“Dear Harry: In remembering the happy three weeks I spent with my sisters after you died, I get guilty feelings all over again about how joyful I could be immediately following your death. I guess it's because, as your caregiver, I had to suppress so much joy for so long that it took your death to finally release it. Please forgive me for all the laughter I released right after you died.

It wasn't that I was happy about you being gone, of course, but I was relieved that my severe stress from taking care of you was finally over, and grateful that your pain had finally come to an end after so many years of suffering. I was also happy to be in the company of two sisters I loved, who were doing everything possible to give me reasons to laugh.

“By nature, I've always been a happy person, so it only seemed natural to laugh even when a part of my heart was breaking. But I did have guilty feelings when I found that I could actually feel happy without you, and I'm still experiencing those feelings. In thinking about this, however, isn't it natural that I would keep on laughing after you were gone because you and I literally laughed together for nearly 44 years, and laughter isn't something you can turn off like a spigot. *We either have the capability of finding the joy in our life and laughing throughout it, or we don't.* Thanks to my years with you, my 'funny bone' was finely honed, and in giving me the gift of laughter throughout our married life, you enabled me to continue on without you, still able to see the funny side of life.”

As I reported to my subscribers the week before Harry died, his sense of humor was still intact at the end, but now it was sharply ironic rather than funny. In the face of death, it was hard to find anything to laugh about, but we kept trying. At that time, I could relate to something Linda Ellerbee said after winning her battle with breast cancer:

*“I have always felt that laughter in the face of reality is probably the finest sound there is and will last until the day when the game is called on account of darkness. In this world, a good time to laugh is any time you can.”*

## The Gift of Laughter

**HARRY WOULD BE AMUSED** to know that he is still giving me the gift of laughter when I least expect it. I laugh whenever I play one of his big band albums and see a title on the jacket that amused him, too, such as “Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, But Nobody Wants to Die” (Les Brown); and “I'm Looking for a Guy Who Plays Alto & Baritone, Doubles on Clarinet, and Wears a Size 37 Suit” (my favorite Ozzie Nelson tune). I laughed the day I found an old cassette tape that included one of Harry's favorite songs, “I'm Washing Harry Down the Sink.” And I must have laughed for five minutes the day I found another tape without a case, neatly wrapped in paper and labeled, “Barb Snoring.” That Harry had taped it in the first place to prove I had a snoring problem was funny in itself, but the fact that he had *saved* this tape for years (as evidence?) just cracked me up.

I also got a lovely bunch of chuckles the day I received a special gift from Doug MacLeod, a drummer friend of Harry's who had played alongside him in all the Windjammers' circus meets through the years. They had corresponded for more than twenty years, and Doug not only saved all of Harry's little handwritten postcards and typed messages, but gave them back to me. These were letters I'd never read, and they were stuffed with information about jobs Harry had played, music he appreciated, people he had met, and, of course, little bits of humor. After years of wondering what Harry was pecking away at on his little electric portable typewriter in his office, I finally saw how much the fun he was having at the time.

I feel sorry for people who communicate now only by phone or email because real letters and postcards like Harry's are becoming extinct. If you are not already doing this, you should be printing out all those great emails you are sending to family and friends (your virtual diary), as

well as all the messages you're receiving from people you love or care about. Put each year's collection in a folder or notebook so you can read it again later. (You'll be astonished at how many details you will have forgotten in the meantime.)  
I love what Oscar Wilde once said:

**“I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read on the train.”**

**NOTE:** When I was sharing my widow's advice in this series of articles in 2005–2006, I had no idea that in 2010 I would answer the call of my heart to write a book about my life with Harry titled [\*The Drummer Drives! Everybody Else Rides.\*](#) His letters, my lifetime collection of his humor, and much more was included in that writing, along with a closing chapter, “A Widow's Ponderings and Regrets,” that might be considered a lengthy P.S. to this widow's report.

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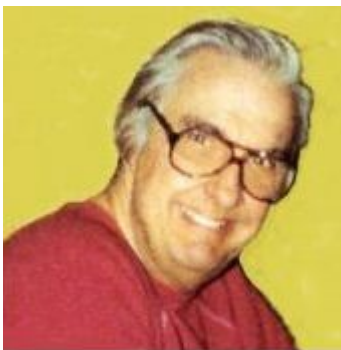
The Thoughts and Advice of a New Widow

## **One Year Into the Journey**

Third in a Series of Articles for Widows and Others Who Have Lost, or May Be about to Lose, Someone They Love

**February 2006**

**“I know not how, but as I count the beads of former years, old laughter catches in my throat with the very feel of tears.” – Robert Louis Stevenson**



**FEBRUARY 3 MARKED** the first anniversary of my husband's death and the end of my first year as a widow. I've come a long way in my journey since my last report (July 2005), and I've finally reached a point where I'm beginning to feel "normal" again and ready to meet the new life and business challenges that lie ahead. Although I did some business writing, editing, and consulting last year, I had no real heart for this work or any idea of just how difficult it would be for me to get myself back into what I consider "normal work mode." This was surprising to me because my work has always been so important to me and the thing I've always used as an escape mechanism in difficult times. But after Harry died, it was as if none of what I used to do was important any longer.

In discussing this with Darlene, a widowed business friend, she said she knew exactly how I felt:

"After my husband Bob died, I had a horrible time trying to concentrate on anything or get motivated to do anything beyond going through Bob's things. One eventually gets beyond that obsession, but it takes a while and it's certainly not easy. Everything to do with 'work' seemed to be so meaningless to me. I found everything and everyone kept moving right along like nothing had ever happened, while my world had come to a crashing halt. After I first came back to work, I had to absolutely force myself to stay at the office and to try to concentrate. Some days just the act of getting out of bed and into the office was all I could manage and I had to consider it a successful day. Slowly, I got some of my focus back but it took a quite a while. One thing I have learned from the experience is that what I had previously considered important, work-wise, wasn't."

## Shifting Priorities

**I RELATED STRONGLY TO** Darlene's final comment in the above message: "After you lose your spouse," she added, "your priorities shift, and, in the long run, I don't think that's a bad thing."

My priorities certainly shifted after Harry died. I recall the day one of his friends remarked that I seemed to be in a "Harry frenzy," and I guess I was. For several months I literally felt obsessed by the need to bring together all of his voice tapes, his professional recordings, his letters, scrapbooks, photographs, and personal possessions. Then I spent countless hours going through his thousands of LPs, CDs, tapes, and books, pondering what I was going to do with all these things that had been so important to him, but not nearly as important to me. I see now that I was not only making work for myself to avoid my real work, but also trying to hang on to my husband the only way I knew how at the time. My "frenzy" gradually evolved into a kind of quiet determination to do everything I could to honor and memorialize Harry's life and accomplishments and, by the end of 2005, I finally felt I had accomplished that personal goal.

My last big "Harry Project," which took three months to finish, was the dubbing of over a hundred CDs of several of his voice tapes and professional recordings that I gave to family and friends for Christmas. I wanted the people who loved Harry most to have a special keepsake to remind them of his exceptional musical ability, but in doing this work, I found I was also giving myself a very special Christmas gift.



I gained new graphic arts and computer skills as I learned how to burn all those CDs and then design jacket covers and CD labels. As I scanned favorite photos of Harry for jacket covers and labels, and dug through his letters and scrapbooks for information I could use in writing album inserts, I naturally shed some tears as I dredged up more memories of the past. But I also felt an enormous peace while doing this work and often felt that Harry was there in spirit, urging me on. All in all, this was a very healing time for me.

## Crossing the Creek

**THE HEALING PROCESS** takes its own time, and the grieving journey is different for everyone, both in intensity and duration. If you or someone you know is trying to accept the inevitability of losing someone they love, I would recommend they read *Crossing the Creek*, by Michael Holmes. (Visit [CrossingtheCreek.com](http://CrossingtheCreek.com) to download a copy.)

“There is no time limit on grief . . . Strictly speaking, one never ‘gets over’ a serious loss. One learns to cope, one learns to integrate that loss into a larger meaning, but one does not forget.” – Michael Holmes, RN, author of *Crossing the Creek*

Although this was a very hard piece of writing to get through, I found it to be an incredible emotional help to me. What it did was enable me to fully understand what Harry was experiencing physically as he lay dying, and what I needed to do (or not do) in response; also what he may have been feeling when he could not express those feelings verbally. This document also prepared me emotionally to accept the inevitability of his death, to know exactly when it was likely to come, and to understand the grieving process that lay ahead of me. A couple of sentences at the end of this document may have been what prompted me to begin work on Harry's web pages only four days after his death:

**“As we move through feelings of isolation, we can expect to feel a need to reconnect with other humans. A time-honored way of accomplishing this is to share our story.”**

Another helpful article said that one of the best ways to ease an aching heart is to commemorate the memory of a loved one. I now believe that my intense focus on documenting and celebrating Harry's life and accomplishments immediately after his death and throughout my first year without him made a great difference in my ability to be content, even joyful, as I began to move forward in life as a widow. This alone, however, would not have done the trick. For me, it was also my strong faith in God, an acceptance of His plan for both my life and Harry's, as well as the emotional support I received from my personal and business network of friends. I will forever be grateful to everyone who ever sent me a sympathetic note of consolation or a word of encouragement during Harry's long illness, and especially after his death.

## **Hard Moments**

**I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG** it takes to get past the point where you cry at the drop of a hat, but I'm not there yet. As all who have lost loved ones know, grief sneaks up on little cat feet when you least expect it, and the tears can come suddenly, without warning. I still cry when a comment in a movie or the words in a song trigger a nostalgic memory of Harry and I together. I also cried the day I stopped at a Hallmark store to buy a wedding card for my niece. Reading all those verses about the joy of being married and how important it was to "treasure the moment" brought painful tears of remembrance and loss.

Even something as mundane as food can bring tears if you happen to have been married to a man like Harry who loved good food as much as he loved good music. For months after he was gone, I had a hard time just shopping for groceries, because everywhere I looked I saw food items that I had always kept in stock just for Harry . . . like Oreo cookies, his favorite candy bars, corned beef hash, or the Peppermint and Gingerbread ice cream that he looked forward to every year at Christmas. For awhile, just looking at these items on a shelf brought tears. Even now, when I buy something for myself that Harry really loved, eating it alone makes me sad.

One of my hardest moments came last fall when I finally decided to refile all the recipe cards I had temporarily tucked in the front of my long recipe card drawer. Through the years, I had tucked hundreds of Harry's favorite recipes here, and when I looked at those unfiled cards that day I suddenly realized they were all the dishes I had made for Harry at the end of his life.

Although I couldn't bring myself to throw the recipes away, I doubt I'll ever fix most of them again because there's no one around to appreciate them the way he did. (See "What's For Dinner" at end of this article.)

The paperwork related to a loved one's death automatically sets a widow up for some hard moments. Cappy had been a widow for only a month when she found my website and began an email exchange with me:

*"How lovely it's been this evening taking a break from my work and finding your most comforting website about this new word in my vocabulary—widow. I did a bit of research, typing in 'widows moving on.' Wanted something positive, and I found you! How brave and generous of you, Barbara, to share your wisdom and experience as a new widow yourself. It's obvious you and your dear Harry had a lovely life together. My heart goes out to you."— Cappy in Arizona*

I could feel her pain as she later shared one of her hardest moments with me:

*"The reality of my husband's death really hit home the day I went to the bank to make a deposit and take care of the travelers checks Jim had tucked away in his sock drawer," she wrote. "To redeem them, all I had to do was bring them to the bank with his death certificate. All went well until it came time to sign them. No problem with that until I also had to write 'Deceased' on the top of each check. That tugged at my heart with a heaviness that came over me dramatically—writing that word also brought the reality even closer."*

Cappy's story reminded me of the day I had to fill out a new beneficiary form for my IRA to remove Harry's name. The form I got said to check one of two boxes: married or unmarried. I called the company and said I was a widow and neither box seemed appropriate to me. "But if you're a widow, then you're unmarried," the woman said sympathetically. "But I don't feel unmarried," I said as my voice broke into a sob. In fact, I don't think I'll ever feel unmarried. I think now that I didn't marry Harry "till death do us part," but for life—*my life*.

What I'm feeling mostly now, a year into my journey, is a terrible yearning to go back in time and once again experience the feeling of being held and kissed and loved by the only man who ever knew my heart. It's still hard for me to be around other loving couples, especially when they are hugging or kissing one another. It's not envy, exactly, but certainly an emotional pain I will have to deal with for a long time, and I'm sure other widows understand exactly how I feel. I might add that I've suddenly gained new perspective on how sad and empty life must seem to those men and women who have never had a lasting love of their own.

Darlene shared part of an encouraging email a friend had sent to her near the first anniversary of her husband's death, saying how much it had helped her and how her friend had totally captured what the healing process involves:

*"If people haven't experienced this, they don't get it. Sometimes you feel so calm and together, and then other days you feel consumed by sadness, like you're never going to get a handle on these feelings. You have to live with that emptiness every day, while it seems like other people are going along as if nothing has happened, but your world just fell apart. They'll say, 'Oh yes, but it's been a year now. Time heals.' Well, time softens things. But at the moment you're feeling that pain, it's real pain, and it really hurts, no matter how much time has gone by. Pain doesn't go by a stopwatch. And it's painful and hard work trying to staple and scotch tape your life back together."*



## Other Reader Mail

*"The article about laughter during times of intense grief especially hit home. When my father died we 'kids' were all together again after several years apart, and it just happened that he was buried on my 30th birthday. The stories and jokes were sad and worn, but those family stories helped us get through that terrible day and made our partings the next morning bearable. That was possibly the best birthday party I've ever had." - Kym in California*

*"I'm so glad to know that you will be blazing a trail for those of us who will follow you in widowhood. Your website has been a special place I go periodically for nourishment. I so admire your outreach both in matters of business and your personal journey; thank you for sharing so freely. Please know that there are many of us out in 'space' who are cheering you on and who are eager to hear of your progress. Thanks for your courage and your readiness to share. You are a light in a dark world. God bless you!" - Janet Garman*

## What's For Dinner?

**HOW HARRY LOVED TO EAT!** "What's for dinner?" he'd asked every day at lunch time. He always wanted to know in advance what he was having for dinner so he could get his taste buds set for what was to come. And heaven help me if I dared to change the menu after I'd announced it!

"How about some beef and tomato gravy with bread dumplings?" I might suggest. No matter what I offered, he was happy with it and might smack his lips and say, "Sounds good . . . but could you throw in some chocolate pudding for dessert?"

I loved to cook for Harry because he was such an appreciative eater, but there is no joy in cooking for myself now. It's merely something I do to avoid having to eat processed foods all the time.

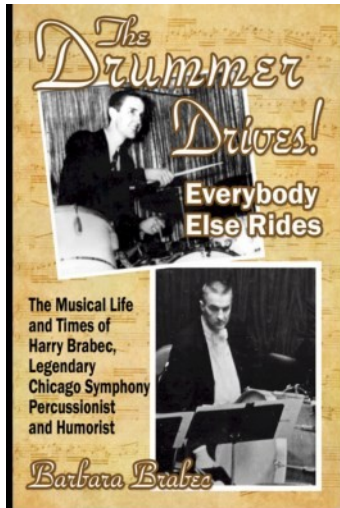
**Note:** It took only a few months for me to realize I didn't want to eat microwave dinners all the time, and one day I found myself thinking that if Harry was worth cooking for, then I was also worth cooking for. And from that day forward, I began to cook things for myself that I'd always loved.

In year two of my widow's walk, I suddenly realized that cooking had once again become a joyful experience, something to look forward to after a hard day's work in my office, and I soon began to invite friends for lunch or dinner, cooking everything "from scratch" as I'd always done for Harry (not only healthier, but much tastier).

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## May, 2010: Five years into the Journey

**April 30, 2010 MARKED THE END** of the most intense period of my writing life, one that had begun six months earlier when my muse suddenly struck and I wrote the first words of my first memoir, and I considered it the most important book I would ever write.



I'd been a professional business writer since 1979 with several trade books published between then and 2006, but this was a whole new ball game for me because I was planning to write, edit, typeset, and publish this book independently for sale on Amazon and other online bookstores. Little did I know when I began this writing in November 2009, shortly before my fifth anniversary as a widow, that the writing and self-publication of it would change my life.

In researching and writing this book, I learned many new things about Harry that not only made me laugh, but were so uplifting that I found myself falling in love with him all over again. Later that year, I opened the DrummerDrives.com website to promote the book, but closed it four years later because I could no longer justify the time needed to keep this nostalgic endeavor going when it wasn't helping my book sales. The site, which one reviewer said was "The chronicle of an entire musical age," featured many historical music photos and

stories that could not be included in the book, along with several articles by other musicians who knew or worked with Harry and told me stories about him I'd never heard before. Some of that content has been republished on my website.

[Click here](#) for complete information about *The Drummer Drives! Everybody Else Rides: The Musical Life and Times of Harry Brabec, Legendary Chicago Symphony Percussionist and Humorist*. Available in on Amazon and by special order through brick-and-mortar bookstores.

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## 2012-2013: Eight Years and Counting . . .

**IN 2012, I PUBLISHED** Kindle and Nook editions of my memoir and began to work on some eBooks the next year. One of them was [A Few Choice Words](#), which was about some of my travel adventures with Harry when he was producing the International Crafts Exposition for Busch Gardens. This work involved four life-changing six-week trips abroad for Harry and two for me.

As for the Czech recipes that Harry loved so much that I figured I'd never make again, I was soon making some of them for Kirk Svihla, a dear young man of Czech descent that God put in my life a couple of years after Harry died when I was looking for some help with my yard. We had no idea then what a blessing we would be to one another. Kirk soon became like a son to me as we both worked together to completely landscape my front and back yards and create several perennial gardens. We've both been blessed by our meaningful conversations about life, theology, and our shared Christian faith.

I was amazed to learn that Kirk loved all the same music and foods Harry loved and that he was a good cook himself. As time passed, we began to occasionally cook a meal together, and for a couple of years when he had time, we spent a day baking Christmas cookies. One year—I forget which—Kirk helped me can some tomatoes and peaches, just as Harry used to do before he got too ill.

All this is to say to you new widows out there, never doubt for a moment that God not only has a plan for the rest of your life, but many surprises as well. Since I lost Harry, He has put several amazing men and women in my life.

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**The Thoughts of a Widow  
Now Ten Years Into Her Journey**

**Out with the Old, In with the New**

Continuing the series begun in 2005

**February 2015**

**THE WIDOW'S JOURNEY** is long and varied, with many surprising twists and turns as the years pass. In looking back at how dramatically my life has changed as a widow and reflecting on all the interesting things I've done, the places I've been, and the many new friendships I've formed in the past few years, I have to admit that none of these things could have happened if Harry was still with me. *(You'd have to read my memoir about life with Harry to understand how dramatically different my life is today as a single woman than it was as Harry's wife.)*

If the marriage and the man was a good one, the widow's heart will always yearn for the soul mate who loved her more than anyone else in the world. But reality eventually sets in and she either stagnates in a pool of pity or begins to see and grasp the new life that lies ahead of her as a single woman. In my case, after a while I felt as though I was the same Barbara who'd come to Chicago at eighteen to make a life for herself before she met her knight in shining armor—a woman with ambition and new goals and dreams.

Still needing income to supplement my Social Security but tired of the kind of work I was doing in 2005, I began to reinvent myself by building a new and more satisfying business for myself as an editor, self-publisher, and author's consultant on the Web. The new people I met along the way and the new skills I developed changed my life in wonderful and positive ways. (See ["Be a Fearless Dreamer and Reinvent Yourself at Any Age!"](#) on my website.)

The memory of Harry will always resound in my heart, but now the tearful yearnings I used to have for him have gradually and gently been replaced with a kind of peaceful contentment and joy I never imagined I could have without him. Of course my deep Christian faith accounts for much of that contentment and joy, and I thank God every day for the wonderful life I've had and especially for all the blessings He has bestowed on me as a widow. (My website has a new ["Christian Encouragement"](#) articles category you might want to check out.) It's really true what the Bible says about God taking care of widows and orphans:

**"Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy" (Psalm 68:5 NLT).**

**Another Turning Point**

**I TOOK ANOTHER BIG STEP** in my widow's journey in the summer of 2014, and therein lies a story about the importance of finally letting go of all the things that were important to your spouse, but no longer necessary in your life.

After Harry died, I had quickly turned his office into a museum of everything he loved—and yes, a sort of shrine as well—and I proudly showed that room to his old music friends when I hosted a "Remembering Harry" party shortly after his death. This was the place where he worked to help me run our home-business, where he corresponded with friends, made all his

phone calls, worked on his scrapbooks and files, and spent hours listening to his thousands of LP records and dubbing countless cassette tapes to exchange with his music buddies. For a long time—much too long—I used that room only to wrap packages for the post office. Mostly when I entered that room, I was simply being reminded of all that I'd lost and was still trying to hang onto.

One day that summer when I entered "Harry's Office," I stopped and first the first time really stared at all of his wall art and thought, "I'm sick and tired of those circus posters and this whole room!"

Suddenly and quite unexpectedly, I'd found myself at a turning point in my widow's journey where my heart told me it was long past time to let go of the room that Harry had claimed as his own for nearly twenty years, time for a final goodbye. As soon as I made that mental adjustment, I got very excited about my "new room project" and didn't want to do anything else but start taking everything out of the room to make way for what I wanted in it. Before long I found myself sketching a new room layout, picking paint colors, and creating a work plan for what I needed to do to make the room mine.



At left you can see one corner of that room as it was before I began to tear it apart. Everything in the room reminded me of who Harry was and what he loved, and for a long time just walking into his old office gave me comfort. As the years passed, however, I was rarely in that room and everything in it was just gathering dust because I was too busy to even think about what to do about it.

Now I wanted to create an oasis of sorts (*see one corner below*) where I could set up my portable sewing machine permanently after decades of having to store it in a closet.

An old desk downstairs would make a fine sewing machine table, I thought. I could paint it and the old black bookcase Harry had in his office beneath a board that served as a desktop to hold his record player, dubbing equipment, and scrapbooks. I decided to keep one of his makeshift tables as my new hobby and crafts table where I could work on one project or another without having to put things away every day. He'd always had a board across his five filing cabinets that made a solid desktop, so I decided to keep three of those cabinets and had the board cut to fit, thus continuing to serve as a desk for wrapping Amazon Marketplace packages.

*The photo wall at right still documents Harry's professional life. I reframed many of the photos he'd once hung and added others to the collection. They remain a treasure to me.*



Most of all, I wanted a corner under the window (*to the right of the wall pictured above*) where I could focus on the blessings of my life, have a little table for Bible study and journaling, and draw nearer to God through daily prayer. (*I had no sooner set up my "Prayer Corner" than my cat, Charlee, claimed my comfortable chair for her morning nap.*)

## Out with the Old, In with the New!

**BIT BY BIT I BEGAN** to tear that room apart, taking everything out of it so it could be painted and new windows could be installed. Putting it back together again—using old furniture and other things in the house in a new way, moving art from other rooms into this one and figuring out a different way to use and decorate the built-in bookcase boxes—was the most creative project I've done in years. Just walking into that room now lifts my spirits because its bright interior is filled with a nostalgic collection of my favorite things, including art, needlework, photos, and handmade treasures.

Two months later after everything was in place, I created a PDF photo story of how I'd transformed the room, first showing how it looked as Harry's Office and then showing the amazing transformation to a place I could now call my own. When I sent the picture story to my sisters and a few friends, one of them said it looked like a "Room of Contentment," which I decided was the perfect name for it. Another friend delighted me when she sent this response:

*"I've never seen anything like it. It's as though you designed a huge jigsaw puzzle from materials on hand, and then made a picture out of it. I think I understand why you found this project hugely satisfying ... It was more than 'fixing up a room.' You made a place for everything and put everything in its place, integrating and combining disparate pieces of your past and your present. Most of us try to work this out in our head; you took the virtual construct out of your head and made a room out of it. So I guess that makes it a piece of installation art."*

To mark this period of my life, one of my dearest friends sent me the "Contentment" scrollwork shown at right after I told her about my new room project and the name I'd given it. It not only reflected my feelings as a widow ten years into my journey, but my life as a whole.

I had the perfect place for this perfect gift—on the stand at the end of the hallway that leads to my office, bedroom, and my new room at left. Every day as I walk here, I have a visual reminder of the many blessings in my life that have given me the great gift of contentment.



**“. . . I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength”  
(Philippians 4-11, 13 NLT).**

### **Below, some "contentment quotes" to think about:**

- "Mourning is the constant reawakening that things are now different." – Stephanie Ericsson
- "Our inner happiness depends not on what we experience but on the degree of our gratitude to God, whatever the experience." – Albert Schweitzer

Below, two quotes from Sarah Ban Breathnach, author of *Simple Abundance* and many other best-selling books:

- "Whatever we are waiting for—peace of mind, contentment, grace, the inner awareness of simple abundance—it will surely come to us, but only when we are ready to receive it with an open and grateful heart."
- "Expect to have hope rekindled. Expect your prayers to be answered in wondrous ways. The dry seasons in life do not last. The spring rains will come again."

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### **Your feedback to this writing is invited.**

**IF YOU'D LIKE TO** comment on this writing or share your own widow's journey with me, I would love to hear from you. [Email me here](#). If you'd like to talk with me, include your phone number and time zone so I can call you. Remember that this document may be freely shared with others as an email attachment. *THANK YOU!*



**BARBARA LAUNCHED** BarbaraBrabec.com in 2000 and quickly began to populate it with home-business articles and resources. Over the years she added hundreds of articles on several other topics related in one way or another to the larger topic of LIFE.

Now, LIFE itself is Barbara's focus. Unlike her original website, her new domain launched in 2021 features only her own writing—new content and an archive of timeless and relevant articles in fourteen life-related categories, all updated and reformatted for republication on the all-new "[Barbara Brabec's World.](#)" It reflects

Barbara's current writing interests, latest books, and professional services.

Visit the [ARTICLES Table of Contents](#) to see article categories of possible interest to you and join her mailing list to receive her email *Brabec Bulletin* posts.

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