

"PATTY, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?"

by Patricia Higby

I was sexually abused by my father from the time I was 2 until I was 13. Worst of all, perhaps, were the things he would say to me, accompanying this, which I believed, damaging all future relations I would have. "No man will ever want you," he would say. "I'll ruin you." Years later, as an adult, I discovered I had breast cancer and a mastectomy was performed. Soon afterward, I married a good friend named Richard. Months later, on the same day, my new husband told me that marrying me had been a mistake, and my plastic surgeon said he would have to remove the second breast as a precautionary step. Believing that my father was right, that I would no longer be desirable to any man, I went into shock and have no conscious recollection of driving home, drinking Vodka, taking a months supply of tranquilizers, cutting my wrists and then accidentally shooting myself in the chest.

At Skagit Valley Hospital my first recollection is of one of the doctors yelling, "We've lost her!" Almost immediately I had a tremendous urge to get out of my body. I had read or heard nothing up to that time about out-of-body states, so I can't explain why I had this reaction. All I know is that it was very important to try to leave, and I fought to get out. It might be comparable to the feeling one has when one tries to get up, can't, then tries harder. And then I was out and astonished. I felt light. The pain was gone. I was not floating in the room, as many have described in NDEs, but was standing about five feet away from my body. I could see two doctors and a nurse, frantically trying to resuscitate me. When I saw my own body, I felt a tremendous sadness. It was as though here I'd fought so long, and ended up like this. But I was aware that I felt fine. So, being curious, I turned around and started walking.

I felt energized, wonderful, better than I've ever felt. There didn't seem to be a sense of time, and there was no sense of physical exertion as I moved along. After walking forty feet I found myself in the doorway of the waiting room, where Dick and my mother were arguing and blaming each other. Dick said, "All your daughter ever wanted from you was for you to love her and just be a mother." To which my mother answered, "Well, the problem with her marrying you is there's been one upset after another." Again I felt a deep sadness, because I didn't want them to argue.

Then I thought about Melissa, my youngest daughter. Was she okay? Instantly, I found myself in the living room of my pastor's house, observing her playing with the pastor's children. As I watched the scene I felt assured that Melissa would be fine. Then I thought about Mom and Dick again, and I found myself back in the waiting room doorway, watching them. Mom was saying, "Well, I know that my Patty wouldn't have done this to herself. She just wouldn't have done it." All of a sudden I looked over at them, felt a love for them, and thought, "They're going to be fine."

Then, I started being drawn upward, slowly rising to the ceiling. I felt a strong desire to move in that direction, toward what I don't know, but it was a desire that drew me. Beyond the ceiling I began to move faster, through what seemed like thin, white curtains. I found I could part these with my arms. I was moving faster and faster. Then, almost like blipping into a new realm, I was standing on the side of a paved road that ran from my right to my left. On the side of it was a border of pea gravel. Facing me in the road, with a grave expression on her face, and her arms folded, so that her whole mien was stern, was my great-grandmother, the person I loved most when I was growing up, my mentor and my friend. While I felt that she regarded me somewhat gravely, I could also feel love from her. I was overjoyed.

She had physically died when I was seventeen. So when I saw her, I started to bring her up to date on all the circumstances of my life. But the relationship that had been lived between me and my great-grandmother was such that even though I was describing my life as an adult, I felt like an animated kid talking to "Grams." "Patty, what have you done?" she would interrupt repeatedly, breaking into my monologue. I'd ignore her question, mainly because I had no conscious sense of what she was talking about, although in the far reaches of myself there was a sense of guilt. I continued to talk, trying to steer her to a warmer exchange between us. I was surprised to find that anything I mentioned she already knew. In fact, she knew everything about me. She didn't verbally tell me this. I just knew that she knew.

The environment we were in was somewhat overcast, dusk like, with a kind of violet, purplish color. I also had the impression that this place was somewhat like a void, with no sound, nothing. The exceptions to this were the brilliant butterflies that surrounded my great-grandmother, of every imaginable color. She loved butterflies.

As I talked with Grams, what I constantly found myself being drawn to was a doorway to the left of me in the road, within which was visible a light. There are no words to describe what that Light was like, what it felt like. I can only try to communicate that it promised unimaginable amounts of safety and love. To me, it was the light of God. Any material love from our earth realm couldn't approach that by comparison. Where we were, it was somewhat dark. But I knew that everything that was important was going on in that Light. And I wanted so badly to go through that doorway.

However, every time I'd move toward it, my great-grandmother was instantly in my way, preventing me. I never really saw her move. She would just be there. They're wily up there. I tried several tricks of maneuvering while talking with her. None of them worked. I'd put my arm around her waist, then try to turn around her. No go. I tried linking arm in arm with her. Didn't work. Then every now and then she would stop me and ask, "Patty, what have you done?"

My sense of time there was impossible to judge. But I know that I must have been with Grams for almost a day, since it was in the afternoon of the next day that I came back. About half-way through our time together, I not only realized that I would probably not get into the Light, but Grams was telling me that I would have to go back. I told her that I didn't want to, that there was too much hurt back there, that I felt good now, and I wanted to stay feeling good. Eventually though, she started to back me up to the gravel. Now I "knew" that if my feet touched the gravel, I was leaving. So I tried in every way I could to stay away from the edge. It was then that I heard the Lord's prayer coming up through the darkness beyond. And then my mother, angrily saying to God, "You ain't gettin' her, you hear me!", which she confirmed later to me she had said in a private moment after the pastor and Dick had left my room.

Then I was on the gravel, panic stricken. "No!" I yelled, and was absolutely crushed. But I couldn't stop her. I tried. We almost fought. Then I fell with such speed and force! The only way I can convey the pain of what I felt landing in my body, would be to compare it to falling from the Empire State Building and hitting the cement, fully conscious.

I sat up in my hospital bed with a start, causing my nurse to shriek. I was back and several miracles had happened. Even though it felt like every bone in my body was broken from the fall, I felt absolutely no pain from the gunshot wound, or the overdose. From that day to this, I've felt none. Dick was told by Dr. Torres that I almost certainly would not have use of my right arm. But I've never had any trouble with it. One of the consequences of my NDE is the loss of organizational skills I had. But at the same time I also find that the everyday things that seemed so important, that I used to allow to turn my life into a giant TO DO list, don't bother me anymore. They're no longer big issues. The most important change was that my mind was cleaned out, all the scars to my psych had been lifted. The self-hates, the self-disgust, even the immense hatred for my father, were gone. It was like being reborn, being given a second chance to live the kind of life I should have had. And I've tried to grow, everyday, with baby steps.

(Note: All remarks attributed to Dick and Pat's mother in the waiting room were confirmed by Dick in the course of preparing this newsletter.) Seattle IANDS © P.O. Box 84333 / Seattle, WA 98124