

THE REUNION
by Lani Houck

In 1982, when I was 29 years old, I had my near-death experience. I was in a dentist's office, when I was administered the gas, nitrous oxide, as an anesthetic. I have rarely taken medicine or drugs, and perhaps this lack of use made me sensitive to them. For whatever reason my allergic reaction caused me to stop breathing. What I next remember is being up in the corner of the dentist's office, looking down at my poor dentist, who was quite frantic, and at my body, in which the eyes had rolled back into the head. My feelings were more of compassion for him than for my body. I knew as I looked at myself that I was "dead," but I felt no fear nor panic, because I felt great! Then, immediately, I was moving through a tunnel, being pulled quickly through it head first. The tunnel was very big, round, and had a kind of robin's egg blue color. And then, to my left I saw my mother.

My mother had died when I was 13 years old. When she died she was not whole, not healthy and not beautiful. But now, as we met in the tunnel, she was whole, she was healthy, she was vibrant and so beautiful. From the time she had died, for every week of my life I had thought, "If my mom were here I would tell her this," or "I wish I could ask her that. I wish she could know about my life." My logical consciousness says to me that I have many hours of things I could say to her. Floating in the tunnel I felt a sense of timelessness. There was no hurry. I knew we could take all the time we wanted to talk. But in fact we communicated only three things to each other. This happened telepathically.

I said to her, "I miss you." She said to me, "I know." She said that so profoundly, that it said everything. It was in the tone of her voice. Then I said, "I love you." Again she answered, with the same profundity, "I know." The last thing I said was, "I'm so tired." Again she answered, "I know." Looking back, I can see where saying, "I'm so tired" was an apt summary of my life. What we said was everything we needed to say. It was the way she said, "I know" that was the message within the message for me. What I knew from the way that she had said this was that she had always been with me, that she had known everything. With that, I didn't have to tell her the details of my life. In fact, they weren't important. So I could let go of her. Which now surprises me. But I let go of her and went on through this tunnel, which besides the blue was surrounded by other colors I haven't seen since. And miss. I heard music that I have actually found, and use in my healing and counseling work all the time. It was angelic sort of music that you couldn't hum or duplicate.

I came into the presence of a Light which was in front of me, but also came around my sides. To me that Light doesn't need a word. So if someone needs to call it Buddha, or Jesus or God, I would say "yes," but for me it was Love. I knew that I was forgiven for anything and everything. I was loved, and I knew that would never, ever change. "Bliss" is a word that doesn't even come close to describing that moment. So when I heard a communication to me that said, "You have to go back." I screamed, "NO!" right from the center of my being. Again the communication came to me saying, "You have work to do, you must go back." Again I yelled, "NO!" Then I felt myself being whooshed back into my body. There was a kind of churning, whirling sensation.

I noticed how heavy my body felt. The dentist was very upset and quickly got me out of his office. I left stunned and overwhelmed with a variety of emotions. I knew that what I had experienced was real, that I wasn't crazy. But I had heard or read nothing about the near-death experience, and I was totally overwhelmed. For the next few years I lived in confusion, alternating between feelings of sadness about my return to so called "life", and feelings of guilt that I hadn't wanted to return, return to a wonderful husband and my two year old baby. Anyone other than a near-death experiencer might think that by saying "No" about returning, I was saying no to my child, who is the joy of my life. But I couldn't and still can't imagine leaving the presence of that Love and Light. I have a lot of moments of wanting to go Home, and of feeling very, very lonely. But I continue on with whatever work it is I'm supposed to be doing.

When I came back, there was no one to talk to about my experience. My husband knew that I was different, however, because basically my life took a right angle after that. I had to leave the church I was involved with because attitudes of "I'm right and they're wrong" didn't make sense to me anymore. My overwhelming experience did not say to me that "There's only one way." My still-living memory of the Light, branded into me deeply, was that it didn't matter if you were an agnostic, a Buddhist, a Christian or whatever. The Light is there for all. Love is there for all who wish it. I add my impression, however, that all denominational/spiritual/religious ways can be Ways. I think they all lead to the same place.

I had been involved in a woman's league. I tried re-attending one of their meetings. What I encountered was chatter and gossip, which almost hurt, it seemed so irrelevant. I found myself staring. They, of course, noticed me and stared back. I need to be clear though that I truly take nothing away from those people. That way of life for them was, at that time, important for them. And since it provided them with meaning, I do respect it. It was I that didn't belong there anymore.

Another thing I experienced was that for a short time after my NDE I was able to walk down the street, look at someone, and know things about them. It was as though I could look inside them, feel their feelings, and know what was wrong with them. But this was too painful for me and I discontinued doing that. I found out that an old friend had ovarian cancer. A doctor said that she had only one week to live. I tried working with her and found that I could use my mind to send light into her through my hands. I began volunteering my time at hospices, working with dying patients. They seemed to be the only people who understood me, who saw and knew some of the things I'd seen. I was comfortable around them and they knew it. But I wouldn't talk about that. I would just Be there. Time after time, however, what happened was that close to the moment of death they would look at me and say "You know, don't you?" And at that point, once they had started asking me questions, I would start talking about it. They would say things like "My father came and visited me, but he's been dead for 20 years." And I would ask, "Yes, what did he say to you?" And they would tell me. They were surprised at my response, because the doctors, when they tried to share this with them, would say "It's just the medication. You're hallucinating." I knew that wasn't true.

Living in this dense world can be very painful and hard. But I believe now, because of my NDE, that all things are and can be forgiven. If we can bring forgiveness towards others and ourselves into our lives, I think much of that pain can be released. If we can love ourselves, I think we can bring some of that same Light into our lives. Despite the difficulty of living, I also believe that it is possible to find purpose and meaning in anything, that everything holds opportunity and calls for our awareness. That heightened awareness ultimately will lead us to learning and love in all things.