



Interfaith Inspirer

An Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth News Publication



Happy
FATHER'S DAY

Dad ... "I Love You"

by Annemarie Howse

My Dad was a shy man, a trait that my sister June and I adopted until we were adults and realized that being shy did not support the life we imagined for ourselves as strong women. This shyness that my Dad and I shared prevented me from getting to know him on a deep level. I don't ever recall having a meaningful conversation about feelings. However, in the 50s being the main breadwinner in the family was expected, and a role he took on with gusto. He built a 4-bedroom, 2-bath home on an acre of undeveloped land for us to grow up in. I'm told that he cut down many of the trees himself and plowed the land to make a lovely home for his family, with enough acreage for the children to play freely. He did most of the carpentry himself and engaged the help of my uncles who were bricklayers and electricians.

My Dad started dating my mother at a time when she was raising four children on her own without financial assistance from their father. Refusing to accept money from her "boyfriend" (my Dad) to help make ends meet, my mother told us the story about my father showing up at her door, not with flowers but a large trout for dinner. He loved fishing and this became a great source of substance for our family once they were married and had two additional children to feed. My Dad

raised all six of us children, never once referring to the four oldest as "stepchildren". We were all his children.

I was taught at a young age to always give my parents a hug and a kiss when departing with the words "I love you." On October 10, 1968, I kissed both my parents goodbye, told them I loved them, and was off to school. I was a sophomore in high school and my big sister June was a junior. Soon after the bell rang for first class, the principal, Sr. Kathryn Marie, came to my classroom and told me I was needed at home, and to take some books because I may not be returning for a few days. June had her own car, and we drove the 10-mile return home with circumspection of what the emergency might be. But, of course, intuitively, we knew. My father had a massive heart attack, and our mom needed us now more than ever. Although he would never be able to attend our father-daughter dance later that year, I am grateful that the last words spoken were, "I love you".

Dad

by Beth Wheland



From you I got —
a crooked smile, a traveling eye,
and a tendency to philosophize.

Because of you I knew—
that even if I blew that presentation
or failed to 'Wow' that crowd, the
world would keep spinning on her axis
and the earth would not open to swallow
me whole.

And—in any event, it would all be over in 18
hours.

Thanks to you I got to live—
Patience. Kindness. Wisdom. Love.

Happy Father's Day to a king among
fathers.

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The Dad I Can See Clearly Now

by Vicki Davinich

I try to make peace with a childhood of anxiety, fear, dread. My father was

unpredictable when he drank. My siblings and I learned to become scarce, slip out of the house, or take long walks when it became clear my dad was having one of his nights, especially if it was the night we brought home report cards. After a lifetime of therapy, sixteen years in Al-anon, and parenting my own child and stepdaughter, I have re-framed memories of my dad to see him as a spiritual being doing his best to cope with human fears. As immigrants, my dad's own father hit and yelled at him to make sure he fit into the new culture. My dad never learned to negotiate a discussion. Several years of WWII in the Philippines gave my father PTSD and he dissociated when he heard loud thunderstorms or a car backfire. He never watched July 4th fireworks with my mom and us kids and we never saw an air show.

Having five children exacerbated Dad's fragile coping skills. He could not tolerate anyone touching anything in his bathroom—towel, tweezers, hairbrush. He could not tolerate children's outbursts. He drank to calm his own panic attacks and anxiety and that also released his uncontrollable anger. I've worked to identify good memories about my father and have finally accepted that he was a very good provider. He made sure we had warm, clean clothes, kept food in the cupboards, helped us get to events, and schooling was a top priority; he paid for in-state college tuition. When my own panic attacks disabled me in my early 20s, my father paid for therapy and helped support me when I could not work.

I was able to experience joy in our relationship after I had a baby. My dad loved my son with a consuming good cheer I'd never witnessed. He'd hide cookie packages around his house with my son's name on them and bring carloads of food to pack my cupboards and refrigerator. He ended every visit enjoying a "sprinkly" donut with his grandson. Dad would call me and ask for the latest stories on my son's achievements—T-ball, summer camp, music concerts. My son only has good memories of his grandfather. I thank my dad for that.



Memories of My Father

by Dick Durham

My dad was not what you would call an especially attentive father. Like a lot of fathers back in the 1950s, the majority of the

parenting was left up to the mothers. In our family of five boys (we were all born three to four years apart), that included the disciplining. Dad pretty much felt that his role ended at bringing home the paycheck. He worked during my formative years as a shipping clerk at a small tool and die company located near our home. He was a good and decent man, just not very adept at being a parent.

One of my fondest and most amusing memories of him involved Tiger's radio broadcasts. He smoked back then (Lucky Strikes) and used to bet on the ballgames with the guys where he worked. He never bet excessively, one reason being that my mom managed the money. If it was a night game and the Tigers lost, he would go outside and light up a smoke. He had to go outside to smoke because my mother was asthmatic. At that time, there were no streetlights on our street, so it was pitch black at night. There was a small sidewalk running from our side door out to the driveway. Dad would pace back and forth on the sidewalk, talking to himself about the ineptness of the Tigers, which meant that he would pass by our living room window several times. When he would go past the window, all that you could see was this bright, disembodied reddish orange dot from his cigarette bobbing up and down as he muttered to himself.

He quit smoking a few years later, but by then, we had streetlights.

Father's Day Social
Sunday, June 15
after the service.
Hosted by the
Caring Committee.



Help us celebrate the fathers, grandfathers and father figures in our lives.

Gluten free and "healthy" selections will be available.

Father Stories continued on page 4



Ministerial Miscellany Our Precious Life

by Rev. Annie Kopko

I noticed a quote by Mary Oliver on the front page of our Interfaith newsletter recently:

"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" This quote is the last two lines from her poem, *The Summer Day*. It brings comfort to me to know that there is a part of me that identifies with the wildness in every one of us since I feel like I was raised in the woods by the divine spirits of God in the animals, trees, and flowers that surrounded me on the farm where I grew up. So much of my life these days seems so repetitive: doing the same things, eating the same breakfast, and also, unfortunately, maybe thinking the same thoughts. Yet I know there is still a child in me that loves to play, and maybe now that I am older, I am even somewhat more willing to express that part of myself because I care less about what anyone thinks of me than in my earlier days. I don't know why it seems to take a lifetime to let go of some kind of personal embarrassment.

Back to the poem and our precious lives, and finding joy in small moments, exploring the wonder and beauty of it all. Are we thinking about what really matters since it is easy enough to see how everything changes and eventually dies? The purple violets were particularly thick this year in the lawn; I took some time to lay down in them, even though I knew it would be hard to get up. The blossoms are all gone now. If they bloomed all summer, I would not have appreciated them nearly as much.

Let's not waste any time regretting what we have not done. We are all doing our best according to our own understanding and life lived so far. We can do what we want while harming none and make the most of what we have desire to do and to be. The Spirit of Love in our lives gives us permission to be as wild and free as we can and still do what needs to be done, each of us with our own sense of beauty and balance. Be happy, love everyone.

We are indeed Blessed as One.

Annie



Presence of Science of Mind at ICSG



by Janet Somalinog

You have probably been hearing a lot about Science of Mind

principles here at the Center and didn't even know it. Yes, the basic tenets of Science of Mind, formerly Religious Science, are found in all of the messages we are blessed to receive from our many diverse speakers. To me, that is what makes this philosophy, compiled by Ernest Holmes during the first half of the 20th century, so interesting. He did an amazing amount of research to recognize that the bottom-line messages in all the various world's religions align in several Universal Truths, such as:

- I. There is only One Source of Life that most of us use the word, God, to describe.
- II. And because of that, we are all unified in that One Life/One Mind.
- III. We are all endowed with the power to make things happen.
- IV. Life circumstances and conditions are made manifest by individual and collective beliefs.
- V. A major part of the work is to observe and study our 'thinking', inner and outer, in order to learn where our thoughts and beliefs have led us. (individual and collective)
- VI. With "NEW THOUGHT" we begin to see, experience, and manifest different outer expressions, experiences, and manifestations in our personal and collective world.
- VII. Forgiveness and gratitude for all conditions, people, and events are the basis of unconditional love.

This is a good place to stop. There are so many other commonalities throughout the world's religions that Ernest Holmes wrote about in his Science of Mind book. We have a shelf of Science of Mind materials in the Library.

This little essay is the beginning of a new column in The Interfaith Inspirer. Bonnie Dede, a few other Interfaithers, and I will be contributing to it. Please let us know if you have any questions or wish to learn about certain aspects of this philosophy. Namaste, Amen, And So It Is!



My Dad

by Marian Orihel

Christmas Eve, 1990, Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. We had just arrived at my mom's house. She was working. My dad came to see us. We talked for a while; he gave our twin girls gifts. and I gave him a VHS copy of one of his favorite movies, *Jeremiah Johnson*. He smiled. We made plans to see him a couple days later.

That was the last time I saw my dad. He died accidentally the day after Christmas, after hunting with friends. This was my first encounter with a close family member death, and it was traumatic. I was 35.

I had lost my dad. The dad who taught metal and wood shop. The dad who let me hang out and learn things in his basement shop while I would endlessly sand something he was making. The dad who watched *GunsSmoke* and *Combat* and read westerns and history. The dad who had been a golf coach for a while and loved Arnold Palmer. The dad who hunted and fished and taught me about baseball. The dad who was curious about learning and always tinkering with something new. I now have the butcher block table he made 45 years ago. Although females didn't hunt in his world, I wanted to. I often watched in fascination as he skinned the rabbits he hunted.

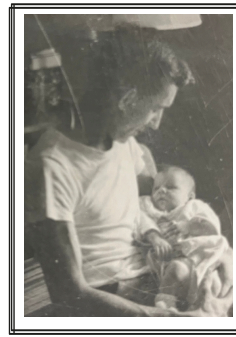
My dad wasn't the soft, nurturing type. When a quiet or romantic scene showed up on TV, he'd break the moment by sneaking up behind me, grabbing my arm and saying, "Oh isn't that nice?" He could be quick to anger and was sarcastic by nature. He had dozens of sayings that would pop up at any time. Some of them still slip out of my mouth!

My dad would tease people endlessly, including me, sometimes actually making me laugh. He rarely answered a question seriously. He would joke constantly, even to the point of annoying someone, which he seemed to enjoy!! And he never passed along a phone message when a boy called, declaring he wasn't my secretary—which drove me crazy!

But despite all that, I always felt safest around my dad and wanted to hang out near him. I watched him while he worked on the car, even

risking him yelling that I wasn't holding the trouble light in the right place or still enough. He passed on to me his love of reading, his unique sense of humor, and his enjoyment of the outdoors. I still watch old *GunsSmoke* episodes and the occasional war movie, especially if John Wayne is in it.

My dad was a character through and through, and he could be intensely irritating. And yet, he was my "person" growing up.



Marian and her Dad

He gave me just enough of what I needed to get through my difficult childhood, and for that I will be forever grateful.

Thanks, Dad. I still miss you every day. I think I will go watch *Jeremiah Johnson* this Father's Day.

Happy Birthday!

June 1 Staci Haarer
 June 3 Fred Sauer
 June 4 Marlana Studer
 June 4 Bob Songer
 June 5 Melanie Fuscaldo
 June 6 Dawn Swartz
 June 7 Denise Carbonell
 June 8 Ted Poprafsky
 June 9 Mary Sapienza
 June 10 Laurie Knerr
 June 10 Paul Jurgensen
 June 16 Lu Evergreen
 June 23 Max Jones
 June 24 Jean Balent
 June 24 Layla Anada
 June 24 Nooshin Sobhani
 June 24 Annie Kopko
 June 27 Sharon Hayward
 June 27 Heide Kaminski



Meet...**Gretchen Leonhardt**by **Norah Reilly**

On the 24th of July, Gretchen's family welcomed her into their Royal Oak, MI home where she spent a happy babyhood.

When she was 2 ½ years old, the family upped sticks and moved to Warren, MI where Gretchen lived for the next sixteen years as the fourth child in a family of seven. Her father died in 1974, leaving Gretchen's mother to raise the family by herself. In her late teens Gretchen took a job at a convenience store where many of her customers became more than familiar, genial faces. Two customers in particular, Linda and her older brother, Steve, became good friends with her. In 1983, Linda's mom asked Gretchen to accompany Linda while she drove the family car out to relatives living in Utah. Eagerly, Gretchen agreed, and the two young women made their way out to Salt Lake City in November of that year.

It was a few months later that Gretchen began the next chapter of her life in Utah. This included working at a wide variety of jobs which suited her questing spirit. She had always felt led by the universe to explore more and different types of work; when her interest in one job ebbed, she moved on. Of the many ways in which she earned her living over the years, perhaps her favorite job allowed her to indulge her love of reading. She began selling books with the dream of opening her own store, narrowly missing out when another potential lessee was given the lease instead.

After twenty years, she returned to Michigan, living in Rochester for four years and working at Comerica Bank. In 2008, Gretchen lost her job with Comerica and moved in with her mother so that she could get the in-district tuition rate for Macomb Community College, where she earned an associate's degree in legal assistance. She continued to stay with her mother so that her mom could live in her own home rather than go into an assisted living facility, and Gretchen remained there until her mother's passing in 2014. The following year, she moved to Ypsilanti and began attending service at the Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth.

During her mid- to late twenties, Gretchen began what she calls her "deep dive" into spirituality. Her journey saw her explore a wide range of sources which included near-death literature, and the "Seth" teachings channeled by Jane Roberts. While Gretchen does not follow a spiritual guru, she is in contact with Master Shen, a "helper" on the other side who assures her that the two have known each other through multiple lifetimes. This is one of the experiences that has strengthened her resolve to remain open to all spiritual truths, and she continues on that path here in the Interfaith community where she shares her beliefs with eloquence, humor, and grace. Her favorite part of the Sunday service is Open Mic when she is able to hear feedback from other community members as they share their thoughts.

Gretchen currently serves as our admin. assistant and she has been sorting through a vast assortment of materials, donated and otherwise, that have found their way into the upstairs storage area at the Center. Her ongoing efforts are beginning to restore order to what had become chaos upstairs. The creative icing on this cake is the campaign that she dreamed up, "Cash for Chaos." Periodically, Gretchen displays a variety of items from the storage area in the small meeting room off the social hall where community members have an opportunity to snag these treasures for a small donation to the Center. Gretchen's largely unseen efforts have given the Center some much-needed breathing room and provided some always appreciated funds. Thank you, Gretchen, for all you do!

Haiku from Dexterby **Holland Cooper, Barb Fisher
and Sandy Hill**

**Waking to gentle rain
Summer's first bloom
And I surrender**

Board of Trustees Retreat

by Rev. Delyth Balmer



*Lance Clark, Dawn Swartz, Marian Orihel, Peggy Lubahn
and Don Digirolamo*

The Annual Board Retreat, on Saturday, May 24, included members Lance Clark, Don Digirolamo, Peggy Lubahn, Marian Orihel, Dawn Swartz, (Cristo Bowers was unable to attend), and Revs. Delyth Balmer and Annie Kopko. Paul Jurgensen graciously offered his home for our gathering. We shared lots of good food, including vegan chili by Annie, cornbread by Peggy, and strawberry shortcake by Dawn; also an abundance of bagels, cookies, muffins, fresh fruit, and more to sustain us through the day!

Board retreats are about getting to know one another, team building, sharing unique perspectives, and finding common goals. We discussed the Board policies relating to the role of the Board as a whole and as individual Board members. Gathering community input to discern if we are meeting the mission and vision of ICSG, evaluating the executive team and the “work” of the Board are key. Here are comments gathered from a few of the exercises we did.

Name a positive childhood church experience.

(Those present reflected on their Evangelical, Methodist, Episcopalian, Catholic & Lutheran experiences.)

- LOVED the music and hymns played on a huge pipe organ, Midnight Mass, pipe organ prelude to service, beautiful stained-glass windows and singing in the choir.
- The Latin part of the service, not knowing what the words meant but enjoying the ambiance it provided. It was a good place to meditate and find peace not present in my family home.

- The message stimulated an alternative journey of seeking.
- The social time with other children, attending summer bible camp (in the city), and summer picnics with children’s games.

What do you appreciate about Interfaith?

- People with similar vibes, open minds. You can believe anything, no one will criticize you. Feeling understood and able to share experiences that sound “weird” in other places.
- Being around so many loving, open, thoughtful, deep-thinking people which also challenges me to be more accepting. The sense of community, it feels “easy” to be (t)here. Being greeted at the door with warmth and openness.
- I like the service. The library. Dave Bell.
- The opportunities to participate and encouragement of community involvement. It’s a place where I feel I am able to make a contribution.
- The open-minded/non-judgmental approach to spirituality (not religion). Laid back, nothing you must “do” to belong. It’s a ‘village’ of people that want to express their love. When you walk into the building you feel the love.
- It feels like home.

What are the ‘takeaways’ from today’s gathering?

- Gratitude and Growth.
- We’re doing well and there’s optimism for evermore potential.
- As Board members, it’s up to us to stay engaged with the membership (community) and to encourage and welcome feedback.
- Include children in the mission of Interfaith.
- Keep our eyes and hearts open to possible new places for our physical home (recognizing future needs/desires)

In a nutshell, the most common positive church memory was that of beautiful music, stained glass windows, and a sacred, peaceful sanctuary. Most were not inspired by the message, yet the message inspired future searching.

Appreciation was shared for the open, warm, loving atmosphere at ICSG and opportunities to participate, create, and contribute our unique perspectives and talents to the whole. To feel and be the Love!



Love in Action

by Bethany King

A couple of months ago, at a Sunday morning service, two guest speakers were giving a talk that turned and pulled a few knobs, levers, and

triggers for me. They discussed some traditional religious views that are not necessarily aligned with my views. As I looked around the room, I was pretty sure I was not the only person who felt that way. Others seemed to be a bit more fidgety than usual. I also noticed some closed their eyes in what I assumed was an attempt to transport themselves right out of the room.

After the talk, there was time left for questions and answers, and I thought, "Here we go, these guys are going to get some good feedback from this Interfaith crowd" and I looked forward to hearing the counterpoints and how they were presented. That is NOT what happened. Instead, I heard someone ask a curious question about the history of the speakers' religion. I heard someone else express where they found common ground with these young men and how the conversation could continue. All the responses were rooted in Love. There was no "othering"; there were just beautiful demonstrations of non-duality, non-judgment, unity, and grace! What an awesome

opportunity to sit in a room with like-hearted people and practice listening to and responding to those who didn't necessarily hold my same views. I'll admit when the speakers started their talk that day, I thought, "Oh geez, I'm glad this isn't the week that anyone I've invited took me up on attending an Interfaith service". But when I left, my heart was bursting at the seams, and I wished all the people I had ever invited had attended with me that day.

I thought of this day when I read Rev. Layla Ananda's piece in the Inspirer last month titled "Spirit in Action". Especially when she poses the question, "Can we open our hearts and expand our consciousness enough to make space for all forms of divine thought, feeling, and action? Can we share all of our spiritual work at the Center?" While I feel the Interfaith Center is a sparkling example of this already, I'm reminded that this does not happen or continue to happen without the diligence of constantly reexamining if and how we are meeting this shared mission and vision of the Center.

Everything that exists, exists and nothing is in opposition to the other. Some of us are learning to give, and others are learning to receive. Some of us may be learning to be less indignant in our social action; others may be learning to find our voice for equality and inclusion. It is not one or the other, it is all. I'm happy to report, this is alive and well here at Interfaith!

Tribute to our Interfaith Founders Rev. Dave and Judy Bell

On April 26, nearly one hundred people showed up to say good-bye and wish them well on their new adventure in Colorado. Here are just a few:



Rev. Annie Kopko, Rev. Delyth Balmer & Rev. Dave Bell



Dick Durham



Judy Bell & Tommie Parker



Marilyn Alf



Rev. Dave Bell, Judy Bell, Marice Clark & Lance Clark



Craig Harvey & Janet Somalinog



Don Digirolamo & Diane Gledhill



Connie Snow & Margie Hough



Rev. Dave Bell, Alaura Massaro & Judy Bell



Vicki Davinich & Rev. Lyriel Clair

June Special Events

Drum and Dance Jam with Curtis Glatter

Saturday, June 7 - 7:30-9:00 pm

Drummer and educator, Curtis Glatter has been drumming, recording and performing for over 30 years. Bring your own drum or use one provided by the Interfaith Center.

\$5 Suggested Donation



Community Sing with Matt Watroba

Wednesday, June 11 - 7:00-8:30 pm

"Many know Matt Watroba as the voice of folk music in Michigan for his work with WDET Detroit Public Radio. He is committed to inspire the world to sing--one town at a time."

Suggested donation is \$5-10 per person.



Cafe 704 Presents...



MARRY & THE HUZ" BAND - Mary and Eric Fithian,
Based in Ann Arbor, play a fun, eclectic mix of
"Songs you love, but...
...probably haven't heard in a while!"

There'll be shakers, tambourines, bongos and more
For folks to help keep the beat happenin'
Come on down and make some joyful noises!

Tickets: \$10.00

in person - pay at the door/via zoom - purchase online

<https://interfaithspirit.org/cafe-704-coffeehouse/>



Special Summer Solstice Jam with Lori Fithian and Others

Saturday, June 21 - 7:00-9:00 pm

It's Make Music Day!!

A worldwide celebration of music day.

This will be a regular drum circle date with added Summer Solstice song singing and playing! UN-plugged - and hopefully outside, in the parking lot!!

Donations are appreciated



We welcome ahlay blakely to the Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth as she makes a one day stop in Ann Arbor on her cross country tour. We hope you are able to join us!



~ Song Circle ~

Participatory Singing with ahlay blakely

Thursday, June 26 - 7:00-9:00 pm

Arrive and Settle In at 6:30 pm

Ticket sales handled through Healing at the Roots:

Sliding scale from **\$22-\$66***** (some pay what you can tickets available)

Children are welcome (for free)

For more information: <https://www.healingattheroots.com/>

To purchase tickets: <https://www.eventcreate.com/e/annarbor26>