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December 2006

From All of Us at HHP:

Reflections and Blessings for the Holiday Season

Dear Sara,

In this season of abundance and good cheer, there are many people who are experiencing less joyful times. For those of you whose sadness or loss overshadows this holiday season, our thoughts and prayers are with you.

We wish our friends, families and loved ones of our Holistic Health Practice community and the special people in their lives, peace and comfort now and throughout the new year.

We share the words of Mary and Rob Salbego - friends of HHP who have an important message especially in these times.

Be safe, Be well and many blessings to you always.

From Kurt Hill:

Sometimes I think that this life is merely a periscope for the entirety of our being. Perhaps suffering is expiation for the transgressions in our lives. Yet, can't we learn more about who we are through some other means?

Have we the good sense to accept the gift of someone's experience that we can share in a vicarious manner?

I am rendered ineffable in the face of transformative experiences. I have learned to witness in awe. Thus, someone special who passed on wanted us to ponder this circumstance:

From Mary Salbego

Everyone,

As some of you probably know by now, Rob passed away Sunday afternoon (9/10/06) after his over 16 month battle with advanced testicular cancer.

In the end, Rob's fight with cancer was possibly complicated by pneumonia but the doctors are not sure whether it was pneumonia or just a rapidly accelerating mutating cancer. We had been scheduled to start more chemo last Tuesday, September 5. However, when Rob was admitted to the hospital that day he was severely anemic and had been in pain for much of Labor Day weekend due to the accelerating disease in his chest and abdomen. He also started having low grade fevers and difficulty breathing.

The doctors commenced treating him for pneumonia and the plan became to get Rob stronger and more stable in order to start chemo this week. However, the possible pneumonia and/or the rapidly advancing cancer proved to be just too much for his body.

The final stages of decline, fortunately for Rob and those of us that loved him always by his side, came rather quickly. Midday Sunday, I asked him if he was planning on hanging around and could I go home to check on our boys and have something to eat. He told me sure it was ok. After all he had made a deal with one of our oncologists that he would see him on Monday. Rob's sheer will was incredible and he was always true to his word.

After eating with the boys and taking an hour nap, the phone calls from the hospital started. First, more of the same but then he quickly became unstable. My older brother and aunt raced to get me back to the hospital. The close family that were with him tell me that his heart stopped and he stopped breathing before I arrived but everyone was shouting to him that he had to hold on and wait for me, that I was almost there. With the help of some medication, Rob's heart restarted and he began breathing again.

I am eternally grateful to him and to God that he was able to hold on until I arrived. He fought until his very last breath. I had to joke that I suppose it was a fitting close to our passionate love affair. He probably would harass me that he had been waiting for me for 15 years. (Unfortunately, as some of you know, I have a tendency to be chronically late.) It will be 15 years tomorrow since we first met.

Rob maintained his marvelous sense of humor, amazing sharpness of mind, fire, kindness and compassion until the very end. I am eternally grateful that our eyes met across a crowded bar 15 years ago and the wonderful life we shared since then, no matter the depth of my pain and sorrow at his loss.

He left me with the two most precious gifts in my life, our two boys, Andrew and Jack. He will live on through them and all of us whose lives he touched. Rob told me Saturday not to be sad and I will try to honor him and all that he taught me, all that we shared the last 16 months, the last 15 years. It will be very hard but if I do not live by what we have learned, part of his struggle will have been for nothing.

It is what we have learned; my faith in God, Jesus Christ and the goodness of humanity; and the support of family and friends that gives me the most comfort right now. In addition, I have to believe that something good has to come of his death which to me is just so wrong. While we may never truly understand God's plan and why Rob's battle had to end this way, I hope that we do someday. But mostly, I just hope and pray that the good does come. I also hope and pray that the Lord will see fitting to make me an instrument of that good and that Rob's tremendous legacy for good will inspire, in amazing ways, the large number of people whose lives he touched.

Rob wrote a final email to our friends and family one night after the cancer took a dramatic turn for the worse. However, at the time he could not bring himself to send it because he was still intent on beating it. It has been a journey and Rob wanted to share what he had learned. At one point in the last few weeks, he told one of his nurses that given the opportunity, he would not take his pre-cancer life over what his life had become over the course of his cancer journey. He just hoped the battle would still turn out in his favor.

Here is what he wrote:

Rob Salbego: September 8, 1965 to September 10, 2006

Everyone,

I want all of you to know how much I appreciate your support through this. I cannot express in words how much it has meant to Mary, Andrew, Jack and me. I would not have made it this far without you. While there are plenty of negative things to focus on when one encounters an enemy like cancer, I do want to share some of the positive things with you that I have learned through this journey.

* First, life is precious, savor it. While we all get caught up in our daily lives, think about what you would do if you only had a few months left. Would you work on one more deal, or spend that time with your family and friends. What do you want your spouse and children to remember?

* Second, enjoy the present. Don't labor over the past or worry about the future. You can't change the past nor can you control the future. My boys have been a tremendous help to me through this as they are always in the present. Think about how a 3 and 5 year old looks at life and how happy they are. They are always present.

* Third, spend more time with your kids, spouse, family and friends. Easier said than done given our lifestyles, and I certainly was not one to talk prior to my disease. Through this experience, while not the way I would have preferred, I have been there for and with Mary and the boys like I never would have. I have taken the boys to swim lessons during business hours, coached my son's T-ball team, taken Andrew to and from school, and have been around to just be there for, and just spent time with, the boys and Mary on a daily basis as much as possible given my treatments.

Given my so-called "important" schedule prior to being diagnosed, I would have never done these things. No amount of money, however, compares to having your child be excited that you are taking him to his swim lesson. Look back on your life and your closest relationships, what do you remember? Do more of those things.

* Fourth, I am one of 550,000 Americans that will die from cancer in 2006. Our government is doing little to find a cure. They have left it up to the "private" sector, i.e., the pharmaceutical companies. By the number of folks that we have met through this, it clearly is not working. More must be done to stop this suffering. As I am an example, it's not just "old" people who die from this disease.

* Finally, my spiritual growth through this has been amazing. While I don't consider myself a "born again" and never would wear my religious beliefs on my sleeve, my faith has provided me with a sense of calm and reassurance that things will be OK, whatever that means. Think about what you believe and trust it.

Thanks for being there for Mary, Andrew, Jack and me. Please stay in touch through email (best way to reach us) and please continue to be there for Mary and the boys should I lose this battle. I am counting on my close friends to continue to support her, Andrew and Jack. Please don't forget.

Thanks again for everything; not only what you have done for me over the past 16 months, but for your friendship and love that you have given me since we first met.

Love,
Rob

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