

6 November 1979

Dear Harold and Lil:

Thanks for yours of the 1st. It came the next day, believe it or not. Enclosed is a one-page instruction for converting old newsprint into fireplace logs. I've made a carbon for Dave which I'll send along since he's got even more of a heating problem than you. Now that I think about it, I don't see why these paper logs couldn't be used in a wood stove if they were stacked right. Certainly they should burn well if combined with ordinary firewood.

Since you seem interested, I'm also enclosing some of the things I've written for Hospice of Marin, mostly as part of volunteer work. The blue sheet is a rewrite of a talk I gave before the HOM Board of Directors annual meeting about 18 months ago. John Burton was present and put in it in the Congressional Record, a copy of which I may have sent you at the time. If so, excuse the duplication. Anyway, HOM uses it as part of their background material furnished to doctors and nurses from all over the country who attend the intensive five-day live-in training seminars to learn about hospice care and operation. The vast majority of the 200-some hospices now functioning or organizing throughout the country are staffed at least in part by graduates of these seminars. I've been among other survivors several times who are used to describe what hospice care means at the receiving end. These seminars are held about every six weeks -- eight times a year, to be precise, and this educational program has had a great deal to do with the rapid spread of the movement.

Every year HOM gets out an enormous mailing to raise funds -- probably around 7,000 addresses by now all over the country -- which includes a covering letter. Last year the letter was done by the chairman of the HOM board, a one-time Rhodes scholar who is now a banker. This year they asked me to do it, and is enclosed. This is NOT rpt NOT a solicitation, merely an example of the sort of thing I work at.

The last enclosure is a newsletter we just got out for the survivor crowd and ~~we~~ will go to the by now two or three hundred cancer victim family survivors who have gone through the HOM experience. HOM treats the patient AND the family as one unit, and bereavement care is pursued as intensively after the death as patient care was before it -- IF the survivors want it. Some don't, but most do and the recoveries that take place have to be seen to be believed in many cases. This newsletter represents a decision to get to work and enlist the bereaved themselves in helping each other, not relying just on the HOM staff.

Beginning in November, 1977, the HOM staff held a monthly get together in the evening for survivors. I didn't want to go, but ~~was~~ did, and was glad I did. So I've been in the present program from its beginning, and have noticed from almost the first meeting that there was as much to be learned from other survivors as from the staff in many ways. Another guy and I shortly after that discussed it and ended up by suggesting that survivors somehow be used to help each other. The staff said they'd been thinking about it and working on it, and would keep it in mind. He's British, a veteran of three years imprisonment in Burma during World War II, and lost his wife about the same time Jenifer died. He travels a lot, and since has dropped out of the program, but our suggestion has been taken seriously and the new program outlined in the newsletter is partly the result.

That it has taken more than a year to get going is not surprising. Hospice itself is such a new thing, the whole movement is growing so fast, and it's all so intricate that the staff properly takes one step at a time before going on to the next. Besides, I suspect they were waiting for enough of us to mature enough to be able to handle some of the situations that are likely to develop. There'll be a training course, naturally. For instance, what do you do if a newly widowed person calls you ~~xxx~~ at 3 a.m. and talks about suicide. You've got to know what to say and what not to say if you're going to avoid making a bad situation worse.

All along, I have singled out individuals who seemed to be hurting more than most and tried to help them. The first was a woman from Boston whose very fine husband had died a couple of months before Jenifer. She's doing fine now, but she sure was a sad case when I met her, worse off even than I. It goes without saying that she helped me just as much as I did her. Today she's busy, does a lot of traveling, and has a good grip on herself.

In the meantime, a widow whose husband had died six months before Jenifer took me in tow and, with her family, (one daughter is married), did a lot to get me going again. She's the Dee Robinson mentioned in the newsletter, and in December she'll be married to Ken Fahy, a fine guy whose wife died a little over a year ago. He was really shattered, and I zeroed in on him to the extent possible and may have helped him a bit. I've tried helping other widowers, but it's hard to tell what you're accomplishing. Men hide their feelings more than women, usually, and seem to recover more quickly in most cases. As I've mentioned before, it's harder for women anyway because they have fewer options in working their way out of grief and depression.

Getting mixed up with other survivors this way is highly therapeutic. In the newsletter you'll see discussed a steering committee, one member of which is a youngish guy, perhaps 35, who lost his wife and was left with two small children. When I first met him he was hostile, touchy, and highly wrought up. Since Doc Lamers persuaded him to serve on the steering committee he's settled down and is now much calmer and more positive in his attitudes. He has some excellent ideas. So do all of them. I could go on and on. Lamers keeps saying they're learning from us, and to a certain extent it's certainly true. Meanwhile, all of us, without exception, learn from the staff's expert knowledge, from each other, and from meeting challenges.

Sorry to hear about Oreste Pena. Does it strike you that his flip-out follows a pattern that may be fairly common among people who got drawn into the post-assassination muddle? The pressures and insecurity such people experience must be truly extraordinary and difficult to deal with.

Some time when Jim Lesar and his wife pass through here en route to Singapore, I hope he'll find time to give me a ring. I'd love to take them to lunch or whatever and perhaps show them something of SF if there's time. From both you and the Wrones, he seems like a long-standing acquaintance.

Glad to hear you're getting your woodpile in hand, and that you're both doing so well. Keep it up, take it easy, and keep me posted.

Best,



jdw