

# HEALING THOUGHTS



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JULY 2017

## HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!

Games, picnics, fireworks and family get-togethers come to mind when I think of Fourth of July traditions. Kick the can, kickball and baseball are some of my family's favorite Fourth of July games to play with each other. What are some of your family's favorite games to play together? Or, what traditions does your family have for celebrating the Fourth of July?

As I reflect back on what the Fourth of July means, and the reason for celebrating Independence Day, the thing that comes to mind is that this is the day the founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence for the United States to become its own country. In preparing for this month's blog, I learned a few new things through [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence\\_Day\\_\(United\\_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_Day_(United_States)).

"The second day of July 1776 will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more." A quote taken from a letter John Adams wrote to his wife.

July 2 was the day that the United States became independent from Great Britain; however, it took two days for the founding fathers to decide on the wording they wished to use for the Declaration of Independence as they were not sure if they liked the word Declaration.

How exciting to think that 241 years later we can continue to celebrate the way John Adams predicated! This Fourth of July make memories, enjoy your family and honor those who fought for our freedom!

Have a safe and fun Fourth of July!

Melissa Klebs, MS  
Bereavement Services Supervisor



# THE RIVER

## BY MARK OGDEN

I often get thoughts popping into my head about my wife. It's almost as if she were saying "remember when..." This used to throw me into such a place of despair and depression, but now it automatically brings a small smile to the corner of my lips and then a twinge of sadness but the smile will remain. I'm not saying I force this smile upon myself, it happens naturally now. Of course I still cry and even break down and crash sometimes, but now a smile is the first thing that appears.

This entire time of becoming and then walking as a widower is a time of self-awareness. Learning who I am in so many ways. Learning my strengths and my weaknesses. But it's also a time of learning how to cope and even how to survive. This isn't something that can be actively accomplished; a person can't make this happen. But, I think it does take an action to cause it to grow. I've needed to be alert to what was happening to me. I've always tried to process my feelings and understand them, and I believe that has been a help to me here.

I guess, it's like life in general. You have some control of your life, but at the same time there is so much where we have no control. Like canoeing down an unknown river. There are places of calm where we can maneuver around, explore and spend some time enjoying and even resting. But there are other places where the shore disappears and the walls of canyons loom over us and begin to come closer together. The water moves faster and we are not able to control our own movements any longer. Being out of control is a scary place to be. Being afraid of what's around the corner, not knowing what will happen to us when we broach that corner. And will we survive whatever is around that corner. You know that no one survives the river forever. And those of us who have been widowed have seen those who chose to travel this river together with us succumb to the waters and disappear. Someday, we know we will also.

At times I have fought this river, afraid of going further. Though I am able to fight the current enough to not go forward I have rarely had the strength to go back up the river to the places I have been at before. It takes so much strength to do so. But

with anguish and fear, self-determination and will, I can keep from going forward and having to deal with what happens to be ahead for me.

At other times, I have given myself over to the river, feeling no more strength to hold myself from the unknown or perceived scariness of what is ahead. At these times I have felt so overwhelmed and burdened that I was not even able to lift my head to see my surroundings. To notice the awesome power of the river or the contrasting beauty of the water and land. Many times losing track of those others that were with me in this journey. Maybe I would be aware of them calling to me, but even the strength to respond was not there.

But, even so, the water would keep moving me forward.

I have tried to keep my head up no matter where I have been on this river. As I said before I have always tried to process my feelings and understand them. I like pictures of nature and scenery, and what I have noticed about pictures of a river is the beauty of it in all its shapes and places. Whether it's a calm, wide river or a narrow craggy canyon or even a waterfall. The beauty can always make me stop and marvel. This river is not a place to enjoy, though at times it can be enjoyable. It's also not healthy to be afraid of this river, though it does often produce fear. There is no sense in getting angry at the river. The river just simply is a river. It doesn't conspire against us. There is no reasoning with it or trying to make it change its mind. It can only do what rivers do. That is to flow.

May we all find peace to perceive and marvel at the power and beauty of our surroundings, but if at the moment you are unable, then remember the river will carry you forward anyhow.

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# ANTIQUÉ MEMORIES

The Fourth of July was always my favorite holiday as a child. As I think back on past Fourth of July holidays, I can almost feel the warm summer sun on my face, smell the charcoal grills and hear the high school bands marching down the street. I can see excited children sitting on the curb during the parade waiting to gather the candy that has been thrown to them from the fire truck that is passing by. Thinking back, I can also remember seeing the same excitement on the faces of the grown-ups that were driving brightly colored antique cars in the parade. With large smiles, waving hands and the honking of their horns, these individuals displayed the pride they had in the cars that they were driving.

My great-grandfather was one of those grown-ups driving one of his four antique cars. He had a black 1923 Model T Ford, a dark green 1930 Model A Ford, a yellow 1957 Chevy and a rebuilt bright red MG. Love, sweat and tears went into those four cars and it showed. My great-grandfather died when I was 16. Some of my greatest memories were of times spent with him on Fourth of July holidays as a little girl. My brother, sister and I would ride in my great-grandfather's old cars in the Fourth of July parades in Knowles, Wisconsin. This was such a special time for me, riding in his brightly colored cars, living life in that moment.

Today, Fourth of July isn't what it used to be. Different memories have been formed and new traditions have been created. Yet, these changing times do not take away from the feelings that I get when I hear an old car's horn and see the bright antique cars slowly creeping by during a parade. In those moments, I am transported back to those feelings that I had as a little girl. I can feel the wind in my hair as I poked my head out of the backseat window, with my hand waving and the biggest smile on my face.

When it comes to the Fourth of July, many people spend the day or weekend prior camping, grilling out, going to a parade in their hometown or watching the fireworks at night. Regardless of the way in which you spend this holiday, the one common thread that usually runs through this holiday is family. It is no secret that holidays following the death of a loved one can be

challenging. Although you may be with the rest of your family, your special loved one is no longer in the crowd of people with whom you are celebrating. While difficult, the holiday can still bring happy memories that can be recreated or shared with the individuals that are around you. Consider incorporating the following thoughts into this Fourth of July, or think about the special things you want to remember about your loved one and the holidays that you used to share together.

## **1. Surround yourself with those you love.**

The ones that you love are those individuals that love you unconditionally. Allow them to be there for you during this difficult time. Be open to yourself and others, telling stories and saying your loved one's name.

## **2. Tell the truth about the emotions that you are feeling.**

Family members expect for the holidays to be difficult. If asked "how are you doing?" be honest and open about your feelings.

## **3. Take care of yourself.**

No one knows you better than you know yourself. If you need to step away for a while in order to take time for yourself, be open to that and feel your feelings freely.

## **4. Keep the special memories in the holiday.**

While your loved one may not be there physically, that does not take away from the special memories you used to share. Continue to incorporate those meaningful moments. As in my case when I see an antique car pass by, I smile and remember the times I shared with my great-grandfather.

*Wishing you peace and comfort through your journey,  
Megyn Wirkus, MST*

# SAVE THE DATES

*For more information or to register for any of these events, visit [agnesian.com/bereavement](http://agnesian.com/bereavement) or call (920) 907-3940.*

## **WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9**

### **EQUINE EXPERIENCE FOR GIRLS**

**Agnesian Bereavement Center**  
**1161 W. Johnson Street, Fond du Lac**

For girls entering grades eight to 12 for 2017-2018 school year who have experienced the death of a loved one. Bus will be leaving the Bereavement Center at 8:30 a.m. and will be arriving back to the Bereavement Center at 4:30 p.m. Transportation will occur from the Bereavement Center to Mahala's Hope in Eden.

We will be having two required meetings, one before the Equine Experience on August 3 and the other meeting will be on August 22.

Free of charge. Registration is required.  
Space is limited to eight girls.

## **WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23**

### **EQUINE EXPERIENCE FOR BOYS**

**Agnesian Bereavement Center**  
**1161 W. Johnson Street, Fond du Lac**

For boys entering grades eight to 12 for 2017-2018 school year who have experienced the death of a loved one. Bus will be leaving the Bereavement Center at 8:30 a.m. and will be arriving back to the Bereavement Center at 1:30 p.m. Transportation will occur from the Bereavement Center to Mahala's Hope in Eden.

We will be having two required meetings, one before the Equine Experience on August 15 and the other meeting will be on September 12.

Free of charge. Registration is required.  
Space is limited to four boys.

## **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 AT 5 P.M. TO SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 AT 10 A.M.**

### **JOURNEY OF THE HEART RETREAT WEEKEND**

**Cedar Valley Retreat Center - West Bend**

Journey of the Heart is a weekend of hope and healing for those who are grieving the loss of a spouse or partner. This weekend offers support to those who are beginning their journey of healing. This weekend offers helpful tips and tools for managing grief in day to day lives while they find support from others who are experiencing similar thoughts feelings and emotions.

Free of charge. Registration is required.

## **MONDAY SEPTEMBER 11, 6 TO 7:30 P.M.**

### **GRIEF RELIEF - CHILDREN GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS BEGIN**

**Agnesian Bereavement Center**  
**1161 W. Johnson Street, Fond du Lac**

Grief Relief is a program for grieving children and families who are grieving the death of a significant person in their lives. Grief Relief offers a safe and supportive environment of their peers to talk and share their stories while they learn healthy and safe ways to grieve. Grief Relief supports children ages four to 17 years old.

These services are free of charge. Registration is required.



JULY TO DECEMBER 2017

## BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUPS

Agnesian Bereavement Center is located at 1161 W. Johnson Street in Fond du Lac. Support is available during the grieving process to individuals and their families following the death of a significant person in their life.

*For more information on any of our Grief Support Groups listed, contact the Bereavement Center at (920) 907-3940 or e-mail us at [bereavement@agnesian.com](mailto:bereavement@agnesian.com).*

### GRIEF MATTERS MONTHLY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

**First & third Thursday of each month  
6 to 7:30 p.m.**

Agnesian Bereavement Center  
1161 W. Johnson Street, Fond du Lac

**Second Tuesday of each month • 1 to 2:30 p.m.**

Ripon Medical Center  
845 Parkside Street, Ripon

**Third Tuesday of each month • 1 to 2:30 p.m.**

Agnesian Bereavement Center  
1161 W. Johnson Street, Fond du Lac

**Fourth Tuesday of each month • 1 to 2:30 p.m.**

Waupun Memorial Hospital  
620 W. Brown Street, Waupun

### RESOLVE THROUGH SHARING®

*For those who have experienced a miscarriage,  
stillborn or infant death.*

**Third Monday of each month • 6 to 7:30 p.m.**

Agnesian Bereavement Center  
1161 W. Johnson Street, Fond du Lac

**Individual appointments available.**

*Please call to schedule an appointment at  
(920) 907-3940.*

### SPOUSE/PARTNER GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS

**First Wednesday of each month • 1 to 2:30 p.m.**

Agnesian Bereavement Center  
1161 W. Johnson Street, Fond du Lac

**Second & fourth Wednesday of each month  
6 to 7:30 p.m.**

Agnesian Bereavement Center  
1161 W. Johnson Street, Fond du Lac

**Third Wednesday of each month • 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

#### ***Learn & Lunch***

La Clare Farms Dining Room  
W2994 County HH • Malone

### GRIEF RELIEF

**Grief Relief Peer Support for grieving children and families**

For more information, call (920) 907-3940.

**Grief Relief in Schools**

For more information on Grief Relief support in area schools, call (920) 907-3940.

[agnesian.com/bereavement](http://agnesian.com/bereavement)

To support our mission of being good stewards with our resources, we will be offering the printed version of Healing Thoughts in an e-mail version. To make sure you receive your electronic Healing Thoughts newsletter, subscribe by visiting [agnesian.com/bereavement](http://agnesian.com/bereavement).

## MY ARMS ARE LONG

BY BARBARA RONNING

When the morning sun glows,  
trees stretch their arms gracefully;  
and they welcome fragile songbirds  
to build a nest on their heavy branches.  
Then, tall oak trees seem to say:  
“My Little friends,  
if your babies fall today,  
my crooked arms are long.”

While emerald leaves shimmer,  
God’s beautiful orchestra plays;  
and it calms my restless soul.  
Then, I lose the empty feeling;  
and I begin to live again.

When the sun goes down  
and my tired heart  
is heavy with worry,  
I thank God for this day;  
and He seems to say,  
“My dear child,  
when you cry at night,  
My arms are long.”

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