

Passages

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BUCKET LISTS: How to Live Playfully and Joyfully

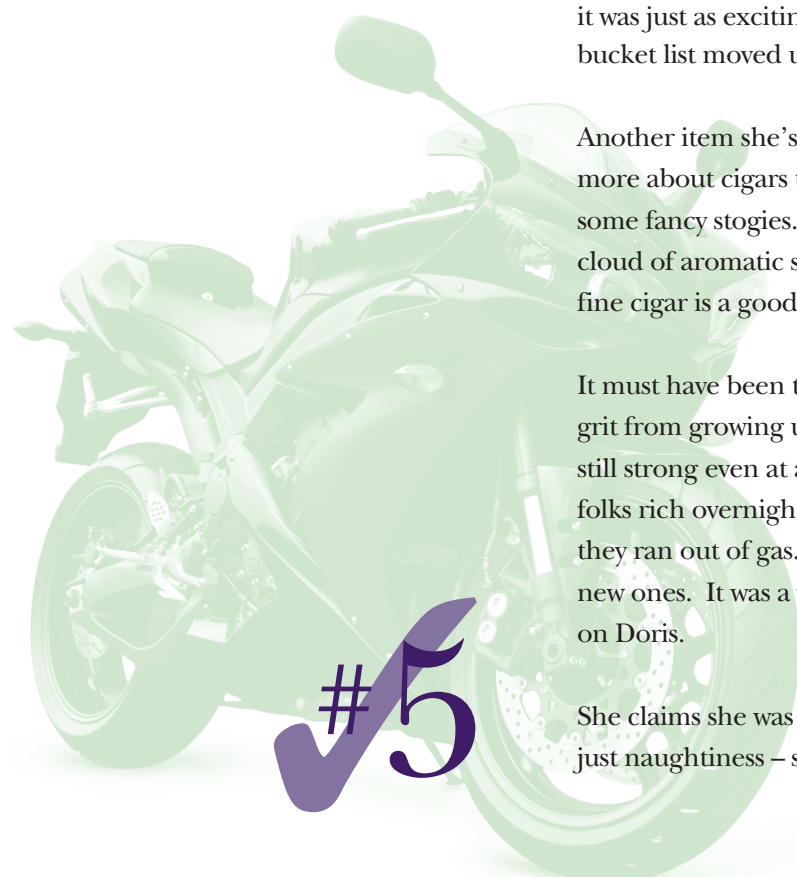
Doris Wickersham has a bucket list. She also has multiple myeloma, but that's not going to keep her from enjoying every moment of life.

Last fall, she rode a motorcycle, #5 on her bucket list, after a neighbor in her apartment complex cruised by on his Harley. When he found out about her list, he handed her his helmet and said, "Hop on back." They took a fifteen minute ride around the neighborhood and it was just as exciting as she thought it would be. Every item on Doris' bucket list moved up one.

Another item she's checked off her list was to visit a cigar bar. It was more about cigars than the bar, so a good friend introduced her to some fancy stogies. The two of them are now known to relax in a cloud of aromatic smoke. At her age and state of health, Doris feels a fine cigar is a good thing, maybe even medicinal.

It must have been the high, dry country of the Texas panhandle, the grit from growing up in Borger, Texas, that gave Doris her high spirit, still strong even at age 87. She remembers the oil boom that made folks rich overnight. They all bought Cadillacs and drove them till they ran out of gas. Then, they would leave them empty and go buy new ones. It was a wild time and some of that must have rubbed off on Doris.

She claims she was always getting in trouble, not serious misbehavior, just naughtiness – staying out too late, driving too fast, having a mind



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BUCKET LISTS:

How to Live Playfully and Joyfully

of her own and probably voicing it. She remembers her mother's admonishment, "What will people think?" It was the reminder to set the example for her four younger brothers and baby sister.

Doris broke away a bit by going to business school in Oklahoma City, but she went back to Borger and worked as a legal secretary. That's when she met George Wickersham, an engineer in the commercial construction business. They married, and in 1947 as newlyweds, moved to Tulsa on a job. They loved the lush green of eastern Oklahoma so after that first job ended, they stayed and hoped to start a family. After a time, they decided to adopt - two boys and a girl.

Even though there were no bucket lists at this stage in Doris' life, there were still dreams. One happened in 1975 when she and George and the three kids moved to ten acres of woods outside of Coweta. It seemed a long way from the dusty plains of Borger.

Four years later, tragedy struck. At age 56, George died suddenly. Their youngest, Rob, was seventeen. Doris found solace in the woods. She poured herself into the work of clearing the land. She did it herself with a chainsaw and a lot of pure determination. It caused her friends to remark, "Doris does what most people would hire a bulldozer to do."

When she became a grandmother at 64 years, Doris put down the chainsaw. She began entertaining her grandsons in those woods and some of that Borger, Texas girl reappeared. She and the boys would have adventures. She remembers one time, when the boys were five and eight, she took them on safari, packing a lunch for a day in the woods, taking along a BB gun to hunt. "I didn't know I could still have so much fun!"

Twelve years ago, Doris gave up country living for the security of a tight-knit apartment complex in Tulsa. She and a close group of friends are luncheon regulars at Crawlappy's. And, she gets back to those eastern Oklahoma woods when she visits the wrap-around porch of son Rob's house in Coweta.

It was there last October that Doris held her "living funeral," an idea that Rob put on her bucket list. Doris thinks they must have been talking funeral arrangements when she expressed her wish to be there, at her funeral.

"I wanted to see all the people that are so special to me. And," she adds with a twinkle, "I wanted to hear what they had to say about me. People have living wills; I want a living funeral." And, so she did. Her two surviving brothers came from Texas, her sister from Florida, her son and grandson from Houston, her daughter, the grandsons and many of her friends from Tulsa – it was a great celebration. And, another item was checked off her bucket list.

Doris admits that her bucket list is getting shorter and she's finding fewer items to add. "I've been absolutely lucky my whole life," Doris proclaims. "Everything has just fallen into place. I seem to make the right moves at the right times, so in spite of the sadness in my life and now this illness, I've had a pleasant journey and now a soft landing."

Her Hospice of Green Country staff want to keep adding items to Doris' bucket list, outrageous activities to strive for, even though Doris has less energy for the outrageous – perhaps to see her next birthday in September or to be at the Thanksgiving gathering of her family.



BEAR HUGS

Sometimes Make It Bearable

"I didn't know such sad work could be so rewarding."

Hospice of Green Country (HGC) gives a Bereavement Bear to any children in the homes or families of our patients after the patient dies.

It is a 15-inch, ever-so soft, plush teddy bear that comes dressed in an HGC tee-shirt and decked out in accessories made from the favorite clothing of the patient. So, if grandpa loved to fish, the bear might come toting a fishing pole or wearing a patterned vest of fish. Or, if mom loved hats, the bear might come wearing a hat made from mom's best nightgown or favorite shirt.

The bereavement bears began with a grant from the Tulsa Foundation who loves and helps children. The bears' clothing is the work of two highly talented HGC volunteers who take turns making the accessories. Judy Kelley and Sandi Garrett are given a patient's article of clothing and some patient background – a favorite color, a particular hobby or interest, something to help these ladies accessorize the bear. The rest is magical.

This unbearable story began when Deborah Roth, age 55, came to Tulsa on a Sunday with her brother-in-law, Tim, to find a cure for her brain tumor, first diagnosed in 1986, but now eminently terminal. It was her last-ditch hope that a local homeopathic treatment center would save her life.

Her two little girls, ages 7 and 10, whom she and her husband had adopted from China, were already living in the home of the Ohio family who had been named guardians, dear friends from Deborah's church. Her husband, Bob, had died two years earlier, suddenly and unexpectedly, from cancer caused by elevated radon levels in their basement where he had a home office.



Her treatment on Monday did not go well. Deborah crashed and by Wednesday Tim had her in a Tulsa hospital. It was not good. Desperate for help, Tim found HGC on his computer and connected with Linn, the social worker, and Tracy, the RN/case manager. The HGC care team went into high gear. They found Deborah a room at "Frankly Home," a local home, outfitted to take three to four patients, though usually not as critical as Deborah. It is run by Robin, who has a big heart and specializes in personal loving care – the kind of care HGC recommends for all its patients.

Deborah died that next Sunday. Linn helped Tim with the arrangements to get Deborah's ashes back to Ohio. And, she told him about the Bereavement Bears, so, one of the last things Tim did in Tulsa was to choose two of Deborah's favorite nightgowns for the bears for Deborah's little girls.

These very special bears were finished by our volunteer, Sandi, decked out in bows, lace, and vests reminiscent of Deborah. They were packed off to their new homes in Ohio to sit on the beds of two little girls who have a small part of their mom to love and hug each night. It's an HGC bear of a story we wanted to share with you.

2,500 'Likes' By the 25th Anniversary!

HGC starts Silver Anniversary Facebook Campaign

Hospice of Green Country will be celebrating its Silver Anniversary in September 2012 – 25 years of providing quality, compassionate end-of-life care without regard to an individual's ability to pay.

In September 1987, HGC put its first patient on service. In 1987 there was only one other hospice in Tulsa. Today there are almost 60, 92% of which are for-profit. Because of this crowded field, it becomes most important to explore all means of getting the word out, in being the default hospice on everyone's lips. And so, HGC is starting a Silver Anniversary Campaign on Facebook.

Our campaign: To have 2,500 people 'Like' our Hospice of Green Country Facebook page by the end of September 2012. That's right – next year. It's still a stretch goal, so we're going to take it in stages. The first stage ends this July 4th – we'll be celebrating 500 new 'Likes' with sparklers & home-made ice cream.

Here's what you do: Become a member of Facebook, if you are not already one. It's a great way to keep track of extended family and friends and you can keep your information tightly secured through your security settings. Once on Facebook, search for Hospice of Green Country and click 'Like' on our page. From there, look for the 'Share' button (usually on the lower left-hand side of the page) and share us with your friends by posting to your profile. One by one ... HGC is going viral! One by one ... 2,500 by our 25th.



Boo-Boo and Cookie bring Peace and Comfort to Lela's Final Days

The Hospice of Green Country staff first met Boo-Boo and Cookie when Lela Crutchfield's husband was a patient several years ago. When Lela came on service in September 2010, the dogs were still a major presence in the home. They were definitely family members.

On a daily basis, Lela told HGC how much her dogs meant to her. "They are my life, I love having them here with me, they keep me company and they make me feel better."

Lela had difficulty keeping up with her bills, so HGC enlisted its Pet Peace of Mind program (PPOM) to help Lela pay for pet food, grooming and vet bills. And, as her health declined and it was harder for her daughter, Jan Ward, to take care of both Lela and her dogs, the PPOM volunteers stepped in. A PPOM volunteer drove all the way from Tulsa to Claremore to pick up the dogs and take them to the vet. And, volunteers helped the dogs keep their occasional grooming appointments.

When Lela eventually moved to a twenty-four hour care facility, our PPOM volunteers made sure that the dogs were fostered in loving homes and that they made frequent visits to see their "mom." Lela could be having a really difficult day, but the minute Boo-Boo and Cookie walked in, she would light up and delight in the sight of her babies.

The dedication of our PPOM volunteers gave Mrs. Crutchfield much needed peace of mind. Jan stated, "Mom had such 'quality' at the end of her life because of Pet Peace of Mind; she knew her dogs were well cared for and it was one less thing she had to worry about during this traumatic time in her life."

Amy Pulliam serves as the Volunteer and Pet Peace of Mind Coordinator for Hospice of Green Country

"My family and I are so grateful for everything the PPOM program did for mom and her dogs. I just don't think we could have done all this without the help of HGC and their volunteers."



Lela Crutchfield and her babies, Cookie (left) and Boo-Boo (right)

BEING WITH DYING

"We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us to see their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our silence."

– William Butler Yeats

In our fast paced lives it is difficult to simply "be." We are constantly setting goals, planning, working, going, and striving. It is almost impossible for us to define what it means to "be," much less make "being" a reality in our lives. Learning to "be," to be quiet, to be still, and to experience peacefulness within ourselves are necessary components to emotional and spiritual health.

"Being" is also a vital quality when caring for dying people. We, as hospice workers as well as caregivers, families, and friends of the dying, need skills that equip and prepare us to support the dying. Our initial questions may be, "What will I say? What will I do? What if I upset them?" Assisting people with the transition during the dying process has more to do with presence and "being with" than with saying and doing the right things or giving the correct advice.

Experts in end-of-life care offer the following concepts that are helpful for "being" with those who are dying.¹ They help us focus on our shared humanity with the dying person rather than struggle with finding the correct words to say or perfect action to take.

NOT KNOWING Not knowing is a state of mind where we are not attached or insistent upon ideas about ourselves or others, about processes for doing things, or about solutions or outcomes. Not knowing is a surrender of control over events that allows us to be in touch with our internal wisdom and truth. Traditional care models are based on scientific data and expertise. Not knowing is just the opposite. Not knowing allows us to create space for new awareness and possibilities to emerge.

BEING A SILENT WITNESS Being a silent witness involves simply being present with things the way they are, showing respect for another person without judgment. It honors the experiences of the other person. Being a witness has a quality of staying with someone in

the present moment, being still and open to the dying person without trying to control what is happening.

MINDFULNESS Mindfulness involves bringing attention to what is happening in the present moment in the body, mind, and spirit. When we are mindful, we learn to develop greater concentration and less reactivity in order to calm and stabilize our mind and to detach from outcomes. We become more sensitive to what is happening with the dying person and our inner response without trying to change things.

Another way of viewing "being with" the dying is to be a healing presence. "Healing presence is the condition of being consciously and compassionately in the present moment with another, believing in and affirming their potential for wholeness, wherever they are in life."² This action may take the form of listening, real listening with focus and attention, so that the other person feels affirmed and validated.

Sitting in silence with another is very comforting and supportive. In silence you can go deeply into the moment together, without expectation or discomfort. "Your most powerful message has nothing to do with words. It's your ability and willingness to listen to someone who needs to be heard. And if our words come from that still place inside, they will be the right words. When you speak from the heart, you speak from a place of compassion."¹

Being with the dying requires willingness to become still, release control and expectations, stay in the present moment, and actively focus on the other person. With commitment and practice, we can learn to "be with" another on his or her sacred journey. And when we do, we may have the privilege of bearing witness to an incredible life.

The Rev. Cindy Ritter serves as Chaplain with Hospice of Green Country

¹Rushton, C; Roshi, J; and Dossey, B. (2007). "Being with dying: Contemplative practices for compassionate end-of-life care." *American Nurse Today*, Volume 2, Issue 9.

²Miller, J. (2003). "The Art of Listening in a Healing Way." Willowgreen.

It's Never Too Soon...It's Always Time

Though most of us don't want to talk about death or the possibility of becoming incapacitated, at least one of the two is inevitable.

Experts agree that the time to discuss your views about end-of-life care and your final wishes is before a life-threatening illness or a crisis hits. This planning ahead greatly reduces the stress of making decisions about end-of-life care under duress. By preparing in advance, you can let your loved ones know now – when you are still able to effectively communicate – of your preferences for matters such as treatment during a terminal illness, estate planning, funeral arrangements, and other final wishes.

Research indicates that Americans are more likely to talk to their children about safe sex and drugs than to talk to their terminally ill parents about end-of-life care options and preferences. Despite the conversations we have regarding major life events such as the birth of our children, weddings, college, our careers, and retirement, rarely, if ever, do we have conversations about how we want to live in the final phase of our lives, or how we'd like to see our final affairs carried out.

When we die, surviving family members have to make a lot of quick decisions, often difficult ones – and always during a time when they are suffering a deep personal loss. Communicating your final wishes to your loved ones is the greatest gift you could ever give them.

A few simple steps, such as completing an Advance Directive, preparing a Last Will or Trust, or pre-planning your funeral arrangements can ensure your end-of-life wishes are known and followed.

Make a commitment to place your affairs in order. We call it Peace of Mind – want some?

Hospice of Green Country offers the Peace of Mind Project, a seminar series featuring local experts in the fields of geriatric care, long-term care, hospice services, estate planning, and funeral and cremation pre-planning. It addresses the many tasks and decisions which would otherwise burden our loved ones later. For more information, call 918-747-2273 or email cgaut@hospiceofgreencountry.org.

Rev. Chaz Gaut serves Hospice of Green Country as Team Leader of Community Relations and Grief & Bereavement and Educational Lecturer

ILLUMINATE!



◀ Tamra Moore RN, Executive Director; Pam Kieslich, HGC Facilities Manager; and Marie McKee, HGC Director of Finance, await the presentation of the Illuminate! Award from the Tula Area United Way at its annual Campaign luncheon.

▶ The award is given for the best campaign from a partner agency, a campaign that uses the United Way's recommended Steps to a Successful Campaign. The steps worked! HGC had a 66% increase in its United Way campaign over the previous year.



From the Board President

In this issue's lead article, Doris Wickersham has a bucket list. Hospice of Green Country has a version of a bucket list. It's the Strategic Plan with its goals and objectives for the year, although there is not the same sense of urgency as a patient's bucket list.

Re-energizing our volunteer department was on our bucket list, and under the guidance of Amy Pulliam, the volunteer coordinator who celebrated her first year of service in March, it is exuding energy and purpose. Our 80 volunteers put in 4,105 volunteer hours, drove 27,089 miles delivering meds or visiting patients, and saved our agency \$92,614 this last year.

I'm pleased to report – and this is a big item on HGC's bucket list – that we ended 2010 in the black by about \$78,000. That's due to the efforts of the entire staff to keep costs down without jeopardizing the quality of care, while the fundraising department worked to bring donations up. In general,

agency expenses were under-budget by over \$100,000 and fundraising exceeded its goal by almost \$26,000.

Another huge bucket list item was to have 100% participation by the Board of Directors in HGC's annual fundraising drive. They did it!

Most of all, I want to say thanks to all of the Hospice of Green Country volunteers and staff members. Each of you performs your respective jobs with great distinction, passion and energy. You enable Hospice of Green Country to maintain a high level of credibility with our patients, donors and within the community at large. I receive much inspiration and fulfillment just being associated with you. It is a privilege to work with such dedicated people providing much needed services in our community. Again, thank you for all you do.

HAL SALISBURY

President of the Board of Directors

From the Executive Director

Many in our society are hesitant to talk about end-of-life wishes and often do so only when thrown into a situation that demands it. Hospice of Green Country staff and volunteers help patients and families with these end-of-life decisions and, just as importantly, we focus on life goals and dreams. When possible, we help patients live life through a "bucket list" mentality and facilitate achieving the things left in their bucket.

Hospice of Green Country has its own bucket list for 2011, each item adding to the fulfillment of our mission of providing compassionate, quality end-of-life care – regardless of ability to pay. The performance improvement projects for 2011 are underway, driven by suggestions from our patients, families and referring physicians. The Peace of Mind Project, offered in collaboration with other area

businesses, continues to educate the community on the importance of planning our journey, especially the end of the journey. And finally, growing the number of patients and families we care for is an important goal for our year.

In the movie *The Bucket List*, Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman show us through laughter and tears how achieving life goals make for a richer life. I hope you have your bucket list and are enriching your life by working on it daily.

If someone you love is facing their end-of-life journey, encourage them to call us. The HGC staff and volunteers are committed to giving the gift of comfort, peace and dignity.

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Hospice of Green Country is the area's only United Way supported hospice and, as a community-based, multi-cultural, multi-faith agency, is dedicated to providing compassionate and quality end-of-life care to patients and families – regardless of ability to pay – since 1987.

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