

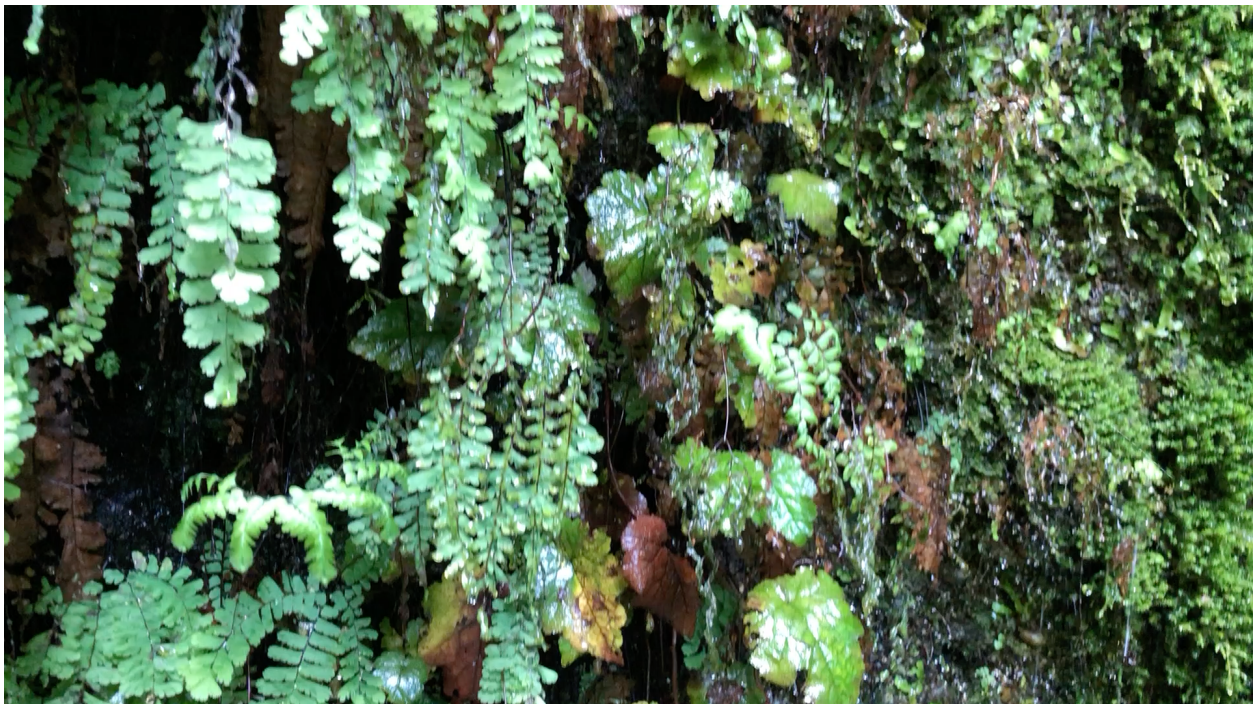
## Tears: A Farewell Reflection

*Sometimes I wonder . . . where do all the tears come from?*

*They seem to start with a slow drip from a bamboo tipping point fountain in a Japanese garden.*



*Then the flow quickens like the steady trickle of water down a rain forest cliff of ferns.*



*The next thing I know I am standing in a waterfall under a torrent of emotions that soak me to my skin.*



*This ocean of tears ebbs and flows—bringing both sadness and joy, emptiness and fullness, and unrest and peace to my heart and soul. Mostly, the tears seem to stem from the sure knowledge that I will miss all my family and friends—and that me being missed will bring sadness to all of you!*



It's been a little more than a year now since my cancer diagnosis, and I sense the time I have left is short. It is important to me to say farewell: to tell you all how much you mean to me and to express my gratitude for such a full and meaningful life.

First, I thank both my mom and dad for instilling in me a love of music. Even when there wasn't much money, my mom always found a way to pay for my brother and me to take accordion lessons! When I think of my mom, she is synonymous with love. Mom arrived in Texas in the early 1900s on one of the orphan trains and was adopted by a Czech family. In many ways, she didn't get the kind of loving childhood she wanted, which made it important to her to create a loving family for me and my brother, Norbert. Both my parents set good examples of the importance of hard work and community involvement—Norbert and I had paper routes and played our accordions for many civic, school, and church functions.

Another important influence in my early life, for which I am grateful, is the U. S. Navy. When I graduated from high school, I wasn't really ready for college and didn't have much money. So, I enlisted in the Navy, hoping to serve on a submarine. When I was growing up, my family was more work-focused than study-focused. I learned in the Navy that I did have academic aptitude and the perseverance to study hard—enough to be top of my class in electronics school. I did end up in the submarine service and was proud to serve my country on the USS Clamagore. By the time I finished my two years in the Navy, I was ready for college—just in time to benefit from the newly authorized GI Bill. It made me a believer in the power of well-administered government programs to equalize opportunity and change lives!

In 1975, I went to work on the Northwest Campus of Tarrant County College in Fort Worth, Texas, expecting to stay less than five years. In 2011, I retired some 36 years later. The most rewarding part of my job was helping students. One treasure I recently came across: a thank you note from a student who said I made it possible for her to stay in school by dismissing a parking ticket she could not afford to pay! It was my pleasure and privilege to hire personnel for media services and watch them grow and bloom—and become my friends. I treasure lifelong friendships with former colleagues from across the five campuses. Thanks, Sue Sanders, for all your phone calls during my illness! While I thrived in an environment that kept me on the cutting edge of technology and encouraged my creativity, part of the reason I enjoyed my remarkable career with TCC so much is that I am such a strong believer in the mission of community colleges.

Like so many others, I set my accordion aside as an adult. The simple serendipity of hearing a car radio advertisement for a local Dallas-Fort Worth accordion convention one year led me back to an instrument I loved. It was at that first convention that I met Paul Pasquali, founder of the Las Vegas International Accordion Convention and the maker of Concerto Accordions: exquisite acoustic instruments paired with the latest electronic sounds. I fell in love with the accordion all over again and have been playing ever since! Now I have accordion friends across the United States and all over the world. It was my pleasure to host the Hurst, Texas accordion club. It was through that Sunday afternoon club that I really got to know and appreciate the talents of Mike Borelli. All my accordion friends have made my life richer and filled my life with music. Steve Knapke, we made a great Oktoberfest team! Doris Osgood, you are a kind and generous soul—attending the Forest Grove accordion club made the transition to Oregon a little easier.

I am grateful to all who nurtured my faith journey. Jim Collie encouraged me to serve on the Grace Presbytery Justice for Women Committee, which paved the way for me to serve as Commissioner to General Assembly in 1993. I thank Michael Waschevski for opening my eyes to new ways of reading scripture; he introduced me to Marcus Borg's *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. It was our privilege to be members of Bethany More Light Presbyterian Church,

pastored by Todd Freeman; we were proud to be advocates for full inclusion of LGBT members. A high point of our faith journey was serving as local hosts for the More Light Presbyterian delegation at the 1999 General Assembly in Fort Worth. It was at that GA that we met the new MLP National Field Director, Michael Adee, who became a treasured friend. And I am especially grateful to our son Ken, pastor of Tualatin Presbyterian Church, who regularly helps me see scripture from a different perspective and points me to the thin places between this world and the next. I appreciate the welcome Jean and I received from TPC when we retired to Oregon. I give thanks for the community I developed with you through participation in Adult Edge and the Technology Committee. It was truly my pleasure to record sermons, special music, and especially baptisms. During this Covid season, the Morning Prayer group has been our anchor, keeping us tethered to our faith community.

The hardest thanks and farewell to write are to family and close friends. Tears are flowing freely as my wife Jean and I write this section. Jean and I first met and fell in love writing copy for church programs at Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in Bedford, Texas back in 1992. Thus, writing this thanks and farewell together creates a bookend to our relationship. Both Jean and I are incredibly thankful that our paths crossed on that church and society committee. Now we easily complete each other's sentences. For us, love has indeed been lovelier the second time around! And I received the extraordinary privilege of becoming a father at a late age to Jean's two sons, Rob and Ken. Although I wasn't around for first steps or baseball or piano recitals, I cherish my relationship with each of them. Marrying Jean in 1996 also introduced me to a whole extended family of Jean's mom, her brothers, and Cashdollar and Magee cousins. I learned to play pretty competitive versions of croquet and badminton and enjoyed many a wiener roast in the back yard of that little gray house in Pennsylvania! Not having children of my own, I didn't have much preparation for grandparenting. I am so proud of the unique and incredible individuals Ches, Ella, and Brynne are becoming. Grandchildren have brought flexibility and much joy to my life! And thanks to Melissa and her extended Evers clan who opened their homes and hearts to us!

It has been my pleasure and privilege to be a part of the lives of my three nieces and their families. I am so proud of Leslie, Stephanie, and Amber—and the remarkable women they have grown up to be. My brother Norbert died when my nieces were young so my connection to them took on added significance of being the Martin male in their lives.

We have had the good fortune of living in two wonderful neighborhoods: Brookside Drive in Texas and the Copper Creek neighborhood in Oregon. We remain ever grateful to Gerry and Carolyn Grieser who gifted us with a professional-quality video of our wedding ceremony. And thanks to our Copper Creek neighbors for gifts of food and flowers, emotional support, and practical help of every kind.

And how in the world does one thank and say farewell to the closest of friends? We left a circle of long-time friends in Texas when we retired to Oregon in 2012—Jim & Cherry, Carol & Randy, Fred & Tonia, Diane & Bill, and Craig & Barbara. Even though there is geographic distance between us, we easily pick up the thread of conversation any time we reconnect. I will miss all of you! Dick and Jeni, we have loved our conversations around the dinner table, trips to the Painted Hills and Mount Hood railroad, and especially our movie nights! And Bill James, I thank you for being my musical partner—the banjo and mandolin to my accordion. Between us, we could come up with every favorite song requested by the TPC Treasures. And who else could I count on to co-write lyrics for The Twelve Foods of Summer? Along our musical way, we became close friends—and I want you to know that it made these last twelve months more bearable to have you by my side!

And one last thank you to Jonathan and Susan, our teddy bear alter egos. They have been our faithful companions for almost 30 years and always know when we need a hug. I thank my lucky stars that both Jean and I have never gotten too old to frolic with our bears. In fact, we consider our playfulness with the bears one of our most redeeming qualities!



*So yes, the tears have flowed freely throughout this past year and especially during these last few months on hospice. And with the tears come deep emotions—grief and loss, but also joy and gratitude. Each time we open a card or receive a gift, tears flow. From heartfelt words of appreciation and poetry to beautiful images on cards and fabric, you have enriched our lives and wrapped us in love and support.*

*So, thank you colleagues, accordionists, church members, neighbors, family, and all who love us and call us friends!*

*In my vision of the afterlife, I experience contentment. Contentment for me is Jeannie by my side and music with no wrong notes and electronics that work flawlessly. So, while I am waiting for Jeannie, I will reconnect with my brother Norbert and practice up our accordion duo. So, don't be surprised if you hear a wisp of "Come Back to Sorrento" on the breeze or a hint of "Oh, Lady Be Good" in the night air. On that note, I say good-bye for a little while—I'll see you all on the other side!*

