

Winging It with Dr. Cat



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Dr. Cat's motto:

"When in doubt, wing it!"

In This Issue:

1. **WHAT'S HOT?** Being able to walk, talk, tie my shoes, and do my work!
2. **MEWSINGS:** A Wild Woman Dies Well: My "Mother-in-Spirit" Shows the Way
3. **COMING ATTRACTIONS!** "Shadow and Light: Images of Change and Transformation for Women in Recovery"
4. **COOL NEWS:** A Woman's Place Is in Politics
5. **JUICY QUOTES & FUN FACTS:** Thoughts to make you go hmmm....

1. **WHAT'S HOT?**

BEING ABLE TO WALK, TALK, TIE MY SHOES, AND DO MY WORK!

May 2nd marked the anniversary of my near-fatal accident last year. A lot has changed for me since then (inside and out), and my gratitude for life has increased exponentially.

It hasn't been an easy year, and I hope to God nothing like that ever happens to me again. Even so, this past year has been one of my best years yet because I learned so much and grew so much—including the literal growth of additional bone density and muscle mass. *Woo hoo!*

In the months following the accident, it was downright miraculous to witness the wisdom of my body as it healed through many layers of physical and neurological trauma. When I think about how I had to relearn nearly everything I took for granted before the accident—and how I didn't know if I would ever recover enough to be able to write and do counseling again—well, all I can say is, it makes me kiss the ground!

If you missed the story and would like to read more about it, you can find "**Back from the Brink of Death**" at:

www.dr.cat.org/articles_interviews/html/BrinkofDeath.htm

2. **MEWSINGS**

A WILD WOMAN DIES WELL: Sally Giovine-Kerr: My "Mother-in-Spirit" Shows the Way

On Tuesday evening, April 11, 2006, at 9:45 p.m., Sally Giovine-Kerr took her last breath. Sally was the mother of my longtime partner, John Giovine, and she was also my friend. I called her my "mother-in-spirit" not only because she was John's mother, but also because she gave me unconditional maternal love in ways I'd never known before.

Sally had come back home on Friday April 7, following a brief hospitalization for evaluation (she had pulmonary fibrosis, along with other medical conditions). When she was discharged that Friday, Sally was aware—as were we—that she was coming home to die.

At that point, she was no longer eating or drinking, and she was supported only by oxygen and by occasional moisture to her lips. Once Sally was back home, she was under the care of wonderful hospice workers, who visited daily and offered advice as needed. With 24/7 support from family, friends, and neighbors, Sally surrendered to the "receiving" position with grace, allowing us to give to her, just as she had so generously given to us over the years. She was 82.

During the course of her last five days, people came and went at all hours to Dolphin House (the family compound) on Portage Bay in Seattle, which had its usual open door policy. Sally was known for her willingness to "be there" for people any hour of the day or night. With the exception of a few brief periods when we shooed people out so she could have a a break from visitors, Sally was available to everyone even during her dying process.

Sally was a big believer in inclusiveness. Family members and friends alike were welcome in her life no matter what was going on between them. For me personally, this was one of Sally's greatest gifts to me as my "mother in spirit." Even when we went toe-to-toe about something, and even if we were mad at each other over some silliness, I knew that Sally still loved me and that I was always welcome and accepted, no matter what. This kind of unconditional love was new for me in family life, and it was precious beyond compare.

During Sally's final days at home, there was music and storytelling, abundant affection, and plenty of food (hey, it was the Giovine-Kerr clan after all!). There was also a big homemade altar on the dinner table in the living room where Sally lay on her hospital bed. The altar was a group endeavor created and recreated each day by those who came to visit. There were beautiful bouquets of flowers, personal mementos and old photographs, a blank book so people could write stories about Sally, and a big, bosomy, golden goddess statue presiding over all....

To read the rest of the article, see a photo of Sally, and read John's wonderful obituary for his mother, please click on the link below:

<http://www.drcat.org/articles_interviews/html/SallyDeath.htm>

3. COMING ATTRACTIONS!

"SHADOW AND LIGHT: IMAGES OF CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION FOR WOMEN IN RECOVERY"

If all goes well, this month will bring you a second bonus issue of "*Winging It with Dr. Cat.*" It will feature a story about the culmination of a very personal project that has been in the works for more than 20 years.

The project involves 64 graphic images that were selected from 1300 daily drawings I did from 1983-1987, which was a period of extreme intensity, upheaval, and transformation for me. Over the years, many friends, clients, and colleagues have seen the drawings and encouraged me to publish them. I didn't really want to, because the images are so personal.

However, it's clear that the drawings touch people and are valuable to others in their own healing process, even if they don't know what the images are about for me. So I decided to let go of my shyness and move toward their publication.

Through a long process that lasted a few years, I reviewed the drawings many times and eventually selected 100 drawings that seem to be the most universally meaningful. Then I invited about 50 people to help me select the final 64 images, which I originally intended to publish as a deck.

During several meditations recently, I got the message that I should make these 64 images available to everyone as a "give-back" for the grace that allowed me to survive and transcend the past experiences that the images portray. The first step in honoring this directive will be to make the images available to the public online for free.

This step is exciting but also scary for me, because the images expose my soul. In addition, some of the images are graphically shocking and a few are violent in ways that might stimulate misunderstanding, ridicule, or attack by those who don't understand the value of truth-telling about pain.

In the end, I'm willing to surrender my privacy and risk public ridicule because, as Helen Keller said, "*Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.*"

Stay tuned for details in the next issue of "*Winging It with Dr. Cat.*"

4. COOL NEWS

A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN POLITICS

An article in **Ode Magazine** (December 2005) offered this story from Canada about women in politics:

"Despite its strong feminist values, Canada's left-leaning New Democratic Party has fielded surprisingly few women candidates for office. Several years ago, the party funded a study to find out why. It turned out that housework is the chief obstacle standing in the way of women entering public life, according to **WFP Update** (August 8, 2005), a report from New York state's Working Families Party.

"The study finds most male activists in the party are married and can depend on wives to take care of things at home, such as washing clothes, while they spend long hours campaigning. Female activists, on the other hand, tend to be single, or their husbands cannot be counted on to manage household affairs. So a 'laundry fund,' which allows female candidates to hire help for household chores, was created as part of a party campaign to encourage more women to run for office."

5. JUICY QUOTES & FUN FACTS

THOUGHTS TO MAKE YOU GO HMMM....

"We have art so that we may not die of reality." --**Friedrich Nietzsche**

"It may take a lifetime to learn how to make a relationship flourish, but that happens to be exactly how long we have."
--**Robert Taylor, in *Utne Reader's* "letters to the editor"**

"In terms of energy usage alone, (which is) a convenient measure of environmental impact, the average Ethiopian uses one-310th of what we use. So when an American couple stops at two kids, it's like an Ethiopian couple stopping at 620." --**Les Knight, founder, Voluntary Human Extinction Movement**

"Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." --**Albert Einstein**

"Hospital infections kill an estimated 103,000 people in the United States a year, as many as AIDS, breast cancer, and auto accidents combined." --**Betsy McCaughey, in the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* (6/7/05)**

"A man who is afraid will do anything." --**Nehru**

"Words without actions are the assassins of idealism." --**Herbert Hoover**

Postscripts from Dr. Cat

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