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1 ~

Prelude

I LOVE REVIEWING OTHER PEOPLE'S BOOKS. I love interviewing others on the radio about their work. I love transforming words into poetry. Yet this personal writing seems hard. For some reason when Ken said this book *had to be written*, it became a favor to him. Since his death, he has come through psychics to tell me *to finish this book about living as an artist*. I'm trying to find the heart in it; and I think because Ken has only been dead a year, perhaps *that* is the difficulty—reliving my life with him since he's in every line of every chapter but in no room of the house.

I knew Ken when I was 13 years of age and, now, this is the first time he's not in my life, center stage, visibly, or through letters and messages across the miles. Now, at this time in my life, I must be 12 years old trying to write a memoir. I'll write two pages a day and make the space for what there is to say. I believe that it's easier for me to love other people's lives than my own, to value what they say; to appreciate others' writings.

I've started asking Ken questions in my mind and getting answers. One could say these answers come from my "higher" self. We could say they are spirit guides. We could say they're my imagination. But the answers are essentially true—to make a catalogue of what I've done, where I've been in my career so our daughters, Cindy, Colleen, Shelley and Angel, will have a chronology. It's as simple as that—an index of when and where—not to attempt soul-searching. This feels good to me. Easy. I write this catalogue for them.

This isn't a book about the house and family. That will be another. This is the book Ken wanted me to write, documenting my poetry and plays, although small efforts in the world, they are mine.

My niece was speaking to a psychic last year after Ken died and the woman said, "Did your father have four children and fly airplanes?" Karen Bordon answered, "No that was my Uncle." *He said to tell her to finish the book...tell her to finish that book.*

Many are put off by the word "psychics." In these pages I mention some experiences, all positive and enlightening. My theory is that we continue to evolve as human beings, now long after monkey tails and maybe a sixth toe, and the physical will not change but the spiritual and mental will continue to expand into other dimensions. Reading the great French philosopher and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was my introduction to this idea of spiritual evolution. My thought is that some individuals (psychics) have advanced abilities (I'll call it an extra neuron) which everyone will own in the future.

And as for the following pages—I guess it's a good thing to list what I spent my time on and, as my daughters jokingly say, *now we'll know where you were*. These four beautiful women are, and always have been, the pillars of my life on which I'm stable, and where I feel comfort and secure. And if four legs of a chair hold steady, these four girls have done that for me. Cindy, Colleen, Shelley, Angel. They've done everything for me in love and watched my efforts in the world of writing, producing, and broadcasting, giving me free reign without guilt. That, I might have given to myself; but never ever was I made to feel that I should have done one thing rather than the other; and I can't remember a complaint. Ken was my hydraulic in life and in death. The girls still are. So I write what happened for them. Just a listing. The heart and soul of my work is not *about* them, but it is *for* them.

Memory is not chronological and so neither are the chapters in this memoir. I wish each chapter would be read like a discrete essay, for chronology is not the book's purpose. I cross back and forth across time to capture the past as it comes to me.

2 ~

Meeting Bryan Christopher

MY BOSS AT PBS, 1978, SAID A PSYCHIC WAS COMING TO TOWN. I blew her off because all I knew of psychics was that Hitler had one. I was Assistant Director for Children's Programming and Education for corporate PBS. I was in charge of the daytime schedule for the nation and I adored this job.

I had a secretary, expense account, designer suits, high heels and trips to New York. Who needed a psychic? I did. My marriage was off the tracks and Ken was going in one direction and I was going in another and the kids were acting as if everything was fine. Apparently one goes to a psychic only when she's at a crossroads and when therapy seems to lack answers. Bryan Christopher had never been to Washington, DC before and lived in California. He couldn't possibly know me or my family so what did I have to lose? I made a Saturday appointment in nearby Virginia.

Ushered into a studio room in a middle class neighborhood, no smoke, no mirrors; I saw two men and wondered which one was "the Seer." Bryan and his partner stood in the doorway. Then Bryan sat me opposite his chair. The first thing he said is, "You will never leave your husband. He's your commitment in this lifetime. For five years you've put your marriage on a shelf. It's time to take it down and brush it off." Then he said, "WAIT. Your mother is here." My mother had been dead 30 years and I had worshipped her but before I could adjust to the idea, he said "No. It's your grandmother. Your mother is much too timid."

OH MY this was true. This man was true. My grandmother was a monumental strength, had raised seven children while starting the first Italian restaurant in Trenton, NJ, and my mother could never show up this way. My mother was as pale and gentle as the summer wheat in Sicily. My tears started rushing because I was so grateful for this man's gifts. The generosity of the gift of sight. The veil was lifted. The magic we wished for in childhood and always secretly believed in... It was here. Magic was real. Bryan told me things I'd never said out loud. No one else could possibly know the facts about my life and my children's lives that he recounted.

I rushed home to Ken who was raking leaves in the front yard, and I said, "Stop everything and go immediately to see this man. He's only in town a couple of days." Ken put down the rake and that next hour he was sitting in the borrowed studio facing a man who would change his life forever and would remove the speed bump in the road that had slowed our lives together.

Ken later said the experience was so powerful that he couldn't catch his breath. Bryan told him to take up swimming again—Ken had just returned to the Masters Swimming Program, having been a college athlete. Bryan told him to sit in the car for 20 minutes before returning home. Ken said his heart was pounding so hard that it took all that time in the car to return to normal.

Of course I made appointments for the four children the next day. And I said, "If anything ever happens to me, go to this man. He'll guide you. He's someone you can trust forever."

I sat outside that studio room when my eldest daughter Cindy had her session. She was holding her two-year-old, Rachel, and Rachel was squealing. I rushed in with a paperweight that sprinkled snow when held upside down. Bryan smiled and said of me, "Her grandmother will always do this for her."

This incident was forgotten in the past 30 years; but this Christmas (2014) our first Christmas without Ken, Cindy gave Rachel a beautiful Christmas globe filled with snow. Neither of them held its memory. I just watched Rachel open the gift. And—even without Ken—I felt safe.

3 ~

In the End Is the Beginning

TODAY I OPENED A BROWN ENVELOPE HOLDING A PERMANENT PASS TO ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY WHERE I CAN VISIT KEN'S COLUMBARIUM. Although I know he's not in that steel and cement encasement, still the plastic announcement hurt, and left me dizzied.

It took nine months after Ken's death for Arlington to honor his burial with a full ceremony. In the meantime, Commander Chris DeMay, married to my good friend Lilah Al-Masri, had a ceremony at sea, three days after Ken's death, on January 18, 2013, flying the American flag aboard "USS John C. Stennis CVN-74," in Memoriam. The folded American flag was then sent to me. Chris did this for us.

There's no way I can encapsulate almost 60 years of marriage with a Naval aviator, race car driver, metal sculptor, legal adjudicator, real estate broker, artist, athlete; yet I've spent one year since his death trying to in a book of poems, *The Man Who Got Away*. So I'll just tell about meeting him as a crossing guard at Junior High School No. 3, where he later would say he joined the Navy because of the way I liked him in uniform. He was voted "the best dressed" in the 9th grade. I was in the 7th. It would be after his family went to Sweden and back again—his father was vice president of General Motors, overseas—when he would take me on our first date. I was 14. We went to the Strand Theater, not far from my house on Hermitage Avenue, across from the library I loved so much. I wore

a suit with a peplum jacket. I think it was green. The movie was “IVY” with Joan Fontaine.

I was so afraid of the body, and afraid its uncertainties would represent me, that I dared not swallow for two hours. This is not a metaphor. I did not swallow the saliva in my mouth for two hours, and the agony of it, the terror. What did all that anxiety portend? That there would be something about me unacceptable? That I was basically an animal with fluids in her mouth? A flat-chested person with spit in her mouth wearing a green peplum? Not the goddess that he thought I was when he took my hand? When the lights went on and we stood up, and the chairs squeaked, I swallowed. We didn't know then how to invent ourselves. Remember, at that time we didn't own TV sets which could tell us how to act, what we should look like, how to achieve fake safety in the artificial world.

For my 15th birthday Ken bought me a dozen red carnations with matching Revlon lipstick and nail polish. Oh he was smooth. And so we would go steady. It would be three months later that he would kiss me. I had to ask him to. Obviously our love would be most comfortable among our higher selves. But our love was here to stay.

Then he'd leave again in my senior year of high school to go to Australia with his parents. Then he would leave again to go to Lehigh University. Then he'd leave again to go into the Naval Cadet flying program. Then he would leave to be on nine carriers. And today I have a pass where I can visit him anytime I want. He always came home to me.



1952

There you sit in the open cockpit
I never saw such a smile
Goggles pushed up on your head
Shoulders harnessed with a parachute
To keep you safe
This would be before you were on nine carriers
Before exile to Viet Nam
Before your children surrounded you like stars
Waiting for your kiss
Before the Autumns of our lives
Before there would be no Autumns
Before I said don't fly away
Before you would become someone else
Then back again
Before there would be so much sun outside without you
Before the winds were light and variable
Before you'd sit on the front step every time
I went to the store waiting for my return
There you are sitting in a cockpit of an SNJ
Smiling at me for all eternity
In a moment that could not last
Cleared for flight
Everything in the whole blue world
Ahead of you.

The Man Who Got Away,
New Academia/Scarith Press, 2014