

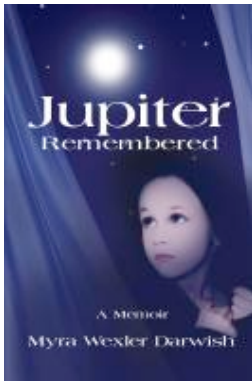
A young girl with dark hair is peeking out from behind blue curtains. She is looking upwards towards a bright, glowing star in a dark night sky filled with smaller stars. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the star above her.

Jupiter

Remembered

A Memoir

Myra Wexler Darwish



***Jupiter Remembered** is the memoir of a woman's journey toward understanding the meaning of her life. There is love and insight woven throughout its pages, which was gleaned from her spiritual nature, the Diaspora experiences of her family from Russia and Egypt, her practice in the healing arts, and her joy of teaching. Her discovery of astrology ten years ago has accompanied her on her quest, illuminating the way.*

Jupiter Remembered

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JUPITER REMEMBERED

A MEMOIR

MYRA WEXLER DARWISH

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The author wishes to note that any historical information recounted in *Jupiter Remembered* was the result of research and personal inquiry; every attempt has been made to maintain its accuracy. Additionally, no actual patient or student information was shared while describing the author's professional experiences; any slights of people, places, or organizations are unintentional. The author also notes that any healing activities she described within *Jupiter Remembered* were of a personal nature, and are neither intended to diagnose, treat, or prevent any condition or disease, nor substitute for consultation with a licensed healthcare practitioner.

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www.MyraWDarwish.com

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Dedication

To my family, you are, and always have been,
the Suns and Moons of my life.

Acknowledgements

My deepest thanks to my father, Joseph Wexler, who always had the answers to my abundant questions about history, religion, art, and anything else that crossed my mind on any particular day. It was his response to my embryonic intention that gave my life an unforgettable direction.

“I want to write a book someday, Dad,” I said, with all the seriousness that my twelve-year-old self could muster.

My father looked at me, not with surprise but with thoughtful consideration, and said, “You will know when it’s time, honey.”

This one simple statement proved to be a great gift, in the form of budding wings, which finally took flight fifty-seven years later. On that important morning, I learned that the sharing of a dream could be all the fertilizer needed for a seedling to grow and blossom. A dream is what nurtures our creativity, and ultimately our soul; it is then up to us to consciously make it a reality. Dad, I hope that somehow you will be able to know that you *really did do* your very best for me...no apologies ever needed!

I especially want to thank my husband, Maurice: your support has been exemplary. Thank you, my life companion, for the countless words of encouragement and technical expertise; you have been tirelessly respectful of my creative process. I truly appreciated your perspective and invaluable information on the Jewish Diaspora from Egypt, an event that fortuitously triggered our meeting. Thank you again, and know that our fifty-one years together have been nothing less than blessed.

There were so many wonderful friends that have offered me encouragement and strength in the formative years of my career. Thank you especially to one of them, Sondra Armon Brandt. It was not

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an accident that we became neighbors those many years ago in Bucks County. You recognized that I was better than I thought I was, and I am forever thankful to have had you in my life.

There were three readers who saw the nascent pages of this book: Sarah Sokoloski, my granddaughter; Ann Darwish, my daughter-in-law; and Helen Kreiser, my niece. Your critiques were welcomed and appreciated, and your feedback will always be part of the book's progress.

Every book deserves to have excellent beta readers; I was blessed to have the thoughtful and professional energy of three talented women, without whom my book's evolvment would never have flowered as it did. Huge thanks to Lydia Sokoloski, my daughter, dear friend, and fourth-grade teacher extraordinaire; your grasp of family history and your reading prowess were so valued, and your careful review helped me keep the book's integrity intact. Thank you to Betsy Mandell, my friend, and lover of all things about books. I can hear your words, "I know it will be good," still ringing in my ears; your confidence and suggestions were so prized. Thank you also to Debora Hall Bradley, my astrology colleague extraordinaire who loves to analyze and search the depths as I do. We were meant to meet that first night in Erin Sullivan's depth astrology course! I appreciate your knowledgeable and conscientious beta reading.

Every author needs a cheerleader; I was fortunate to have had two of them. Mai Hue, whose kind words at the beginning helped reinforce my belief that completing this book was possible, and Anne Allen, who shares my love of all things mystical, and who couldn't wait until the book was completed. Thank you both.

I would like to thank Dorothy Binder, who edited my book with respect for my endeavor, and the professionalism of someone who deeply cares about what they do in the world. There was synergy there from the beginning, and *Jupiter Remembered* is the better for it. I am truly grateful.

Myra Wexler Darwish

Lastly, and most lovingly, this one is for you, Mom...*You weren't just any mother!*

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Introduction

We enter the world connected to a family that is forever changed by our arrival. In the vast ocean of our collective stories, the wave I was touched by has made all the difference. All human connections I have discovered are the roads and the journeys of our lives, for we travel together for eternity via the invisible web of our hearts' memories.

A family can be likened to the cosmos—both have essential structures that can vary in stability, solidness, and size; destiny is derived from their diverse forms. It is love in the human family and gravity in the Universe that can bind form together; each one does so in its own unique way. Love is the gift and the challenge of our existence. In the bosom of a family, we can begin to learn about the true nature of our souls' purposes, if time is allowed for its emergence. Our lives are woven together by moments in time, the precious structure that undergirds our existence. Purpose can be discovered as we live fully in the moments of our lives—if not then, when?

Who else but my family could have taught me what life was truly about? Our relationship was as close as human relationships can be. Though I could never fully understand my parents' loving, yet sometimes predictably complicated, relationship, I realized that what they had together was theirs alone, a relationship that needed to be respected for its loving roots. In reality, who amongst us can ever know the nuances of a married couple's dynamics? My early years were an intense time of learning, and my parents were my most important teachers and models. A child like myself, sensitive to the core, soaked up the atmospherics of a home rather naturally. I grew to understand that there would always be a calm after the storm passed through, and the moments of love that we shared as a family were more than ample for me to nurture others along with myself.

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Love for me was feeling the tender yet firm clasp of my mother's hand on mine as we walked together to my grandmother's house on a snowy day. I loved the feeling of her body next to mine as we relaxed on the sofa together; there was strength and comfort there. My mother taught me to consider that I could be better than I thought I might be.

"You are not just a regular nurse, honey," she would say, which I interpreted as, "You have the capacity for advanced education." I loved her so much for thinking of me in that way, my mother, and my dearest friend.

My father's love wasn't tactile in nature; it was notably intellectual. I thrived in the educational environment that dominated our home, and that has remained a source of fond memory as well as strength throughout my life. His teachings touched my spirit. I learned one of life's most important lessons from my father: "You don't want to be like me," he would say, in a self-diminishing way. It always used to bother me to hear him talk like that, and though I wanted to hear him speak words of self-affirmation, I internalized his true meaning as, "I love you, and don't want you to suffer needlessly; find your own way." He allowed me to be myself. What more could one human do for another?

The Gods and Goddesses were alive in my parents: my father was a mixture of Hermes, the messenger/communicator; Neptune or Poseidon, whose realm was in the depth of the oceans; and Hephaestus, the wounded blacksmith who forged and shaped metal in his workshop. My mother was a combination of Demeter, the maternal archetype; Athena, the Goddess of wisdom; and Aphrodite, whose beauty was legend. It was my mother's beauty that attracted my father, and my father's mind that enticed my mother into their relationship of over forty years. I can still hear her saying to me, "I never met anyone with a mind like your father's."

It was the climate of freedom in our home that made it possible for me to express my most compelling belief, which was that I came from another world, the planet Jupiter. The mystery of my perceived origin has proven to be an important element in my life, leaving me open to question what life was truly all about. Mystery also has a practical purpose, and can open up new channels to long forgotten pathways. Countless times, I have asked myself whether my declaration about my origin was a metaphor for experiencing life with the feeling that I was different than others, the delusion of a bright seven-year-old, or whether it expressed my deepest truth, coming from some long-forgotten memory that suddenly found its way back into my mind and heart. Freedom of thought can make existence more complicated, but being able to experience my life as a mystery was a worthy tradeoff.

My sister and I intimately experienced the rhythms of our parent's relationship. We knew the waltzes, tangos, and ballets of their day-to-day lives, and we had each other to process what each type might be meaning. What mattered the most was that we co-created our own peaceful harbor, a space that was almost holy. It was our creativity that moved us forward into the world; no one could fathom the connection that we had, unless they understood the influence that only Neptune exerts. Neptune is about being totally immersed in the imagination of the moment, to be truly free to fly to places that were undiscovered, to know oneness; such was the power of our being together. My sister helped me get in touch with my strength.

"I am so proud of you," she would say, with her beautiful green eyes shining. "My sister, the associate professor." Being in her space, I knew that anything was possible. She was a radiant Piscean woman, whose Sun was in her first house; she was full of life and attracted others to her. I certainly was one of her many admirers.

My husband Maurice and I danced throughout our lives in untiring, purposeful steps; we moved often as one, yet held the integrity of our individuality. The ability to plan, organize, and create

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structure for our family was our natural gift; ours was the dance of Jupiter, Mercury and Saturn, the expansion of ideas and the discipline to carry them out. The timing of our meeting was perfect—ready to love and be loved by each other. At eight o'clock on that auspicious July morning, the Sun and Moon were in conjunction in the twelfth house—all that was, would never be the same; our lifelong relationship was seeded, and we would from that day forward become one. I have learned so much from my husband, but it was his belief in my abilities that always sustained me.

“I love your strength. I recognized it from the first day we met.” His words became an important part of the keystone of our relationship—looking into his kind, hazel-green eyes that reflected his love; I knew that together we could make anything happen. Such was the faith I have always had in our relationship. I—a woman who was raised to think freely—learned that living life within the structure of a trusting relationship is the exact opposite of a tether; it can be the golden wings that you have needed all along to become who you truly are.

Our children can only say for themselves what the experience of having us as parents was like; I do know that I couldn't imagine my life without them. My daughter has taught me how love can be expressed in a classroom of children while remaining a champion for high standards. My oldest son has displayed how dedication to his patients and a positive relationship can promote healing. My youngest son is a model for how to have a caring relationship in the realm of financial advisement. Each one has taken a unique path; I can only hope that I will be remembered as a mother whose love let them be who they were destined to be.

Love, it seems, is the major thread that weaves through the curriculum of life. Learning to love well is the first and most important lesson. To love well in a family is to respect our uniqueness as separate individuals, while maintaining a bond of togetherness. In a family, children are the treasure found from a map of your own

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making, love is the ink used for its drawing, and mutual efforts of relationship-building are what enhances its golden patina over the years. The heart is the perfect storage center for the map; where else but within its four inner chambers can one find the past, present, future, and love residing together? Loving well happens when the head, the heart, and the spirit meet for the first time; it is then that the map can miraculously be found.

Learning about life from my family has taken me on a journey of many miles, and I wouldn't have missed one pebble in the road. It was what I stumbled on that has made a difference in how I see the world now. I kept moving forward, sometimes changing direction and sometimes doubling back; eventually I got where I needed to go. I realized that there are basic human experiences that we all have in common. Who amongst us hasn't experienced a beginning and an ending, an expansion or a contraction, sadness and joy, or fear and anger? We all share a place on the same web of life, and knowing this is what allows us to be fully human.

I experience my existence as a flowing exchange of ideas and actions; the exchange takes place between my family, friends, and all the individuals that I have attracted into my life, and the choices I have made over the years. Again and again, I trusted that the results would work out exactly as they were meant to. Relationships buttressed my greatest learning spikes, teaching me valuable lessons about what life was all about. The great easel that I was using to paint my life was molded by my connections to other human beings. The paints were mixed by the many questions I had about who I really was: *What would it be like if I felt that I truly belonged. How is it that I tend to feel as if I were here on Earth observing what life is like from afar?*

It is in this moment of time, at sixty-nine years old, that I was ready to receive the answers to my questions: *You are perfect exactly the way you are. Your questions don't need a reply; they speak to your uniqueness, and stand on their own. You have been searching all your life for answers; it was this pursuit that prepared and strengthened*

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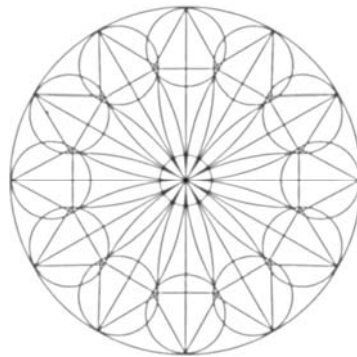
you to become who you are today, a person who fully embraces who she is. Your life and the many questions it has generated have been your journey, and you are now home, my child; you have found your way. I knew the words were true; I could feel my heart expand in my chest, as my tears freely flowed. The clarity that I had been yearning for all these years had materialized.

The integration of our life experiences is a gateway that leads to healthy aging, and ultimately to a peaceful death; I can think of no finer endeavor. I realized as I was writing my memoir that my family was no different than the stars in the cosmos—expanding ever outward from its multi-faceted center—evolving, learning, and vibrating to the music of the spheres. It is this dynamic connectivity that supports a deep and abiding responsibility to honor our own paths and the paths of all we meet along the roadways of our life.

While I was writing my “Reflections” at the end of each chapter, I experienced myself as being in a liminal place in time, as if I were gazing at a large body of still, crystalline-like water that brilliantly reflected the stars and heavenly bodies shining above. It was during those meditative moments that my life’s purpose became abundantly clear to me, and I finally knew—remembering was my purpose; it is what set me free to fully embrace the woman that I had become. MWD

“A loving nucleus can send ripples across the bridges of time and
bring healing to a family - such is the wisdom of the heart.”

...Myra Wexler Darwish



“A Loving Nucleus”

Designed by Maurice Z. Darwish

Chapter 1

The Window

(Philadelphia - 1943 to 1953)



It felt good feeling sad, as I pressed my head against the windowpane and watched the rain pouring down from the grey July sky; there was an exquisite timelessness in the experience. My tears came naturally, and their warm flow nurtured an intense harmony between a young girl of seven and the natural world. I was the wind, the rain, the storm, and the sky—and it was in that cosmic moment that my melancholy lifted and went away.

I found out at an early age that the most accessible support system known to man is Nature. Indeed, I had discovered quite naturally that flowers, trees, the warm breeze, and the Sun and Moon were what connect us to Spirit. Looking out the window was an important pastime for me, as I watched whatever life passed before me in the little alleyway of the apartment building below. The window opened to a view of old piles of wood with nails sticking out of them, a white fence that was barely able to keep its form, the backyards of neighbors across the way, and a wonderful old maple tree that had somehow survived years of neglect. I was never alone at the window, for I embraced the magic of the experience and kept it in a special place in my heart, where I could always revisit its profound peacefulness.

That day, the leaves were wildly moving about, as the wind touched their surfaces. How many times had I stood there before, in the dimly lit room where the curtains on the window were somewhat

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worn in places, waiting to be embraced by a force greater than myself? It didn't matter; letting go and just being still was all the soothing that I ever needed. I looked toward my sister's bed; she was sleeping like a four-year-old golden-haired angel. I always felt closer to her when I was in one of my reflective moments; we had a very deep bond, which remained even after her passing. I saw the raindrops becoming smaller and smaller, and at last the birds were chirping their delight as they knew the earthworms were soon to follow!

My family's apartment was in South Philadelphia, in an area that was old and poor, yet, according to a child's worldview, a fun place to grow up. I lived there with my sister Harriet, who was three years younger, my mother Eleanor, and my father Joseph. Our apartment was on the second floor of a three-story building. I remember hearing my grandmother once say, "This is not a proper place for children to be raised," and, although it honestly didn't seem that way to me at the time, eventually I would come to see that my grandmother was right. Years later I realized how vulnerable and non-traditional our living arrangements actually were; one could say that our apartment was a real-time example of our family's dynamics as they unfolded through the years. Two flights of dark, long, steep, and smoke-filled stairs led up to two separate apartments; ours was on the second floor; another set of stairs led to the third-floor apartment.

A door at the head of the first set of steps opened into the parlor, kitchen, and bathroom area, and to the right were two doors that opened into the bedrooms. Our apartment was actually divided into two different living spaces, along with three separate sets of locks. Thank goodness for the teacups in our bedroom, which served as a secondary bathroom at night when the door was locked! The access to the floor above us complicated the issue even more, as the occupants had to pass by our doors to get to the stairs that led to the third floor. When the doors were open they could see into our world. They were the most mixed-up living arrangements that you could imagine, but that was how it was.

There is more to tell, as if the strangeness of our living quarters wasn't enough; we lived above a small, old, and musty smelling orthodox synagogue, an experience that changed the entire religious dynamic of my life. On Friday evenings at sundown, the sisters were faithfully told by their parents, "It's Friday evening, girls. Try to be quiet;" or "Sha, the Zeda's are dovening." And so my sister Harriet and I would tiptoe about, and place our ears to the old linoleum floor so we could listen to the praying that went on. We frequently looked at each other in utter confusion, not only because we didn't understand the Hebrew that was being chanted, but also because we wondered whether we should. I can still recall the humming sound from the praying, as it rumbled through my bones.

How did this compare to the sound of the wind or the warmth of the Sun, which filled my heart with joy? In my world, the thread of vulnerability and non-conformity especially rang true regarding my being Jewish. I had a religious identity issue, which was totally understandable given my early connection with the wholeness of Nature. I remember asking my father Joseph, "Were we really Jewish, Dad?" Funny, I don't remember getting any clear or specific answers to my questions. I was never quite sure why I asked the question about belonging anyhow; I was completely satisfied being with my family. I do recall asking my mother what she believed, and she said, "The Ten Commandments take care of everything, honey, and if you follow them, you can't go wrong." Her words rang true, and I appreciated her guidance; she had a gift for presenting reality, which was so helpful to me. I did know in my heart that all my ancestral threads were Jewish, and belonging or not belonging to a synagogue as others in the extended family did, didn't change that fact that I was Jewish. In fact, my mother's great-grandfather was a rabbi. Listening to the praying, yet not being a part of the synagogue's membership made me acutely aware of our non-establishment status.

My family's cultural rather than formal religious practice was a comfortable fit; it gave us identity and self-determination, in an unstructured way. Our Jewishness was marked by an independence of

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thought along with a discerning respectfulness for the religious practices of others. Though my family ate and loved the traditional fare that most Eastern Europeans thrived on, we would often be treated with worldly delicacies that my father brought home from the Reading Terminal in downtown Philly when he had extra money to spend—or oftentimes when he didn't. I was exposed early on to the gourmet delights of other countries, particularly the breads, cheeses, jams, and salamis from many European countries. The appreciation of food can help us to understand the subtleties within different cultures: among the varieties of blue cheese, Roquefort, Stilton, and Gorgonzola have distinctions in their bite and smoothness, as surely as the French, British, and Italian nations do.

I discovered that I could really be complete by not being the same as everyone else. I knew that when I was with my family, I was whole; being formally religious wasn't an essential way of being for me. Religion's organized fold never captured my imagination or my heart; why would I want to limit myself to read from a prescribed book of prayer when I could be free to commune and create my own narratives? My parents themselves modeled moral and ethical behaviors, which was a source of great pride. Isn't that what the function of religion is all about? I was encouraged to respect and be open to all kinds of people that came into my life.

It was in the summertime that Mike, a wheelchair-bound young man with cerebral palsy, would come and visit the neighborhood children. He was a storyteller and had a heart-warming smile that went from ear to ear. It was his vulnerability that drew me to him, perhaps because I felt a certain kinship with him. This early memory of Mike nurtured my young feelings of compassion and respect—seeing him so helpless, and yet so able to make a difference in my life, left a lasting impression upon my psyche. He rose above his challenges, and to a young girl of seven was a great hero. I sat on the stoop of the clean and brushed white marble steps, listening to his tales; they took me far away from my surroundings, and all else ceased to be. It was during those moments that I found myself in the timelessness of a kairos

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experience, and I knew the bliss of being in the moment. I loved my mother for appreciating my fondness of him; she was able to understand his gifts as I did. I learned that there are some moments in our lives that become the seed thoughts that always stay with us. It was such a thought from those times that developed and stayed with me all the days of my life: *Love and kindness don't require a container to be made of silver or gold; the human heart doesn't have to see, it only has to listen and feel.*

Many times Harriet and I would sit on my little bed while we talked and shared our thoughts and feelings as loving sisters. It was within this rarified atmosphere that we co-created the bedrock of trust that lasted throughout our relationship of fifty-nine years. We two young girls—innocent, yes, but profoundly wise for our years—would chat for hours about life and our perceptions of it. The words, “I come from another place,” were stated to my sister one morning.

“From where, My?” she asked.

I said to her what I knew to be my deepest inner truth: “I come from Jupiter.”

The precious, highly intelligent little four-year-old child looked at me with an expression of complete trust radiating from her luminous green eyes and said, “I believe you.”

If my sister believed me, then it was true! This was a pivotal moment in my life, all realities emanated from my core belief, and yes, I believed that I was from another planet. I felt lighter after sharing my truth; it was a cathartic experience, as if I had come out of the closet. We never discussed this again during our childhood years; it wasn't until almost fifty years later that the subject, never forgotten, would come up again.

My sister's early maternal bonding experience was different from mine. I believe that there is truth to the saying that even though

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siblings may have the same parents, in reality every child's relationship with them is unique. In my case, being the first child had advantages; my mother was very healthy after I was born. She blossomed in motherhood, even though the times (1943) were very difficult. I heard many stories of what it was like being a war baby. I had a wooden carriage and my own set of food stamps; yet being the first grandchild on my mother's side of the family seemed to balance out the complexity of the times.

My sister's early experience was dramatically different. The actual birth experience was joyful, as my mother would speak about her *slippery* little girl, who was born in record time, likely making for an easier delivery. However, my mother became severely depressed shortly after my sister's birth, and probably had what we know now as a severe post-partum depression. My father had to take over the responsibilities of caring for my sister, and I recall many days when my mother had great difficulty getting out of bed to go out for walks with my father, as he wheeled the baby carriage. It took almost a year for my mother to fully emerge from her depression; such was its power to quiet her. The dynamic of our family was further changed by depression's grip; while it altered the bonding of mother with infant, it enhanced the bonding of father with daughter.

We lived at 432 Dickinson Street, which was 2,643 square feet in size and built in 1915. Some of the other houses on the block were built in 1879; I guess that made our building a newer one. This was not the historical part of the city, even though the red brick fronts and marble steps at the entrance to our building were similar to other nicer parts of the downtown Philadelphia area. Across the street were the dormitories for the residents who were training at Mt. Sinai Hospital, Daroff Division, whose entrance was around the corner on Fifth Street. Currently, the area is known as Queen Village/Pennsport.

On the path to our apartment was a single house, the only one of its kind on the block. The little house had a once-white picket fence, with flowering vines that clung to it and added to its unique character.

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The green of the vines and the small white blossoms were a stark contrast to the red brick of the houses; I enjoyed seeing them whenever I was on my way home, as they broke up the drabness of the view. The flowers beckoned to me; it was a relationship that enhanced my life in ways that the material world never could. Early on in my life, I learned to value Nature; a leaf, a flower, or a tree helped me to be plugged into a high-speed connection to something far greater than myself.

I am never alone, I thought to myself—how comforting to learn this at such a young age.

My dad was my hero, a man of intense intellectual capacity that was juxtaposed with the experiences of a traumatic early childhood. I always knew when my father was home, as smoke would waft down the steps and out the front door into the street; we were inundated with a nicotine haze from an early age. Smoking, drinking coffee, and reading books were my father's signature behaviors. At one point he was up to four packs of cigarettes a day. The amount of his smoking reflected the current level of stress that he was experiencing. Smoking was the only stress management tool available to him; unfortunately it was an addictive strategy that lasted till the day he passed. I would plead with him to stop smoking but learned very quickly how hopeless my actions were.

My sister and I became each other's support whenever the stress levels in our family became too high. In later years, we spoke openly about the fact that we don't know how we could have made it without the other. Along with the cigarette smoke, we were exposed to the residue of our father's lack of fulfillment; the experience was eruptive and scary at times.

Our shock absorber was the world of imagination and play. Together we would be born and re-born, travel to different countries, and engage in the street games that kids who grew up in the city reveled in. The games were numerous and part of the Philly street scene; there was jump rope, hopscotch, jacks, pick-up-sticks, and all

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kinds of ball games—I loved “mimsies/clapsies/roll your hands/do backsies, king a high/king a low/ touch your feet/touch your toes, and higher we go.” There was a lot of joy attached to growing up in Philadelphia; the streets were our playground, and I remember many more days of laughter than I do anything else. In the summer, neighbors would bring out their garden hoses to *cool* the children down. The water would sting when the nozzle was adjusted to its thinnest spray adjustment, but that was all part of the experience.

My sister was very creative and intelligent; at seven-years-old, she got into a painting project, choosing Dad’s books as the recipients of her labors. The eruption from my father was severe when he saw his beloved books wet and dripping from her efforts. He struck my sister with the power of someone greatly wronged. I remember my mother, my sister, and I huddling in our bedroom after he had stopped ranting; we were still shaking and cringing with fear. During this time of intense female solidarity, I held my mother and my sister in a non-childlike embrace. Strength surged through me, and I have often wondered where it came from. I said to my mother, “Leave him, we will be fine on our own.”

My mother looked at me with an expression of great surprise in her beautiful brown eyes—she recognized that although I was only ten years old, I was dead serious. Her facial expressions quickly shifted from surprise to surrender, and I knew that nothing was going to change other than my hope for a more peaceful life. Our family remained intact, which set the structure for fear and uncertainty to develop their taproots in its members.

I learned from that day forward that not all women are aware of their strength, or of the power they possess. Love blossoms in soil enriched with self-esteem, but even love that has great potential can diminish when a woman’s native gifts are not encouraged. Strangely, when I myself was a young mother I recall my father saying, “It is the woman’s self-esteem that drives the family.” In later years, I realized

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that sometimes the longest distance in the world is between the head and the heart.

My mother was beautiful; she was often compared to the actress Gene Tierney, who was born four years later in 1921. In her family of one older brother and two younger sisters, she was called the *Princess* and was known for her singing and dancing abilities. How fortunate we were to have had her for a mother. Many afternoons were spent in musical bliss, two happy little girls and their mother, smiling and swaying to the current rhythms of the day; we would take turns stepping on Mom's feet as she guided us around the parlor. One of our favorite numbers was the "Tennessee Waltz," sung by Patti Page. We also loved to sing "Mona Lisa," by Nat King Cole, whose warm, melodious voice filled the room like a soft, puffy cloud that wanted to spread itself into every corner. I remember playing the classics over and over again, stepping up to the record player with my stool. My parents had a wonderful collection of 78-rpm records, and my favorites were mostly those by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff. The beauty of those days was my discovery that music, when received with an open heart, can heal wounds that aren't even known to exist. It is sound that can connect us to Spirit and support the work of the soul.

The beauty of growing up in our neighborhood was that our grandparents, aunts, and great-grandmother lived only a five-minute walk away. My grandmother Sarah was the oldest of ten children, a leader in the family, strong and respected. Her hair was dark auburn, and her eyes were big and brown. I could easily see how my grandfather Morris fell in love with her. He was a quiet and gentle man, always generous to his grandchildren. It was Sarah, with her unique tailoring skills, who helped bring her entire family over to the United States from Bryansk in the Russian Pale. Her backyard was decorated with pickle barrels filled with cucumbers and tomatoes that were like green jewels floating in a sea of brine, waiting to be picked at just the right moment. There wasn't anything that she couldn't sew, cook, or bake well. Whatever my grandmother made, whether it was knishes, strudel, stuffed veal breast, brisket, or latkes, it was superb.

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My mother loved her dearly, and the respect that they had for each other found its way to the younger generation like a road that had no obstacles in its way. I learned that women were valued in our family; they were regarded as one of its greatest strengths. My mother was respected and loved, and that fact alone was a great source of significant satisfaction.

My grandmother Sarah passed when I was eight years old; she was a young woman of sixty-four years old. The news of her passing was my first recollection of grief's impact, as I saw my mother fall to the floor in disbelief. My mother was inconsolable, and her loss rippled through our family as a quiet wind penetrates the stillness of a forest, touching every leaf in its path. It took a long time for her to fully re-enter our lives; her vibrancy returned about six months later when she smiled at us with her large brown eyes and wanted to take her girls to a fun Saturday movie experience. I was so happy we had our mother back, and recognized how profound the loss of my grandmother was.

My father's parents also lived relatively nearby, but my early memories of them aren't as clear; I was ten years old when my relationship with my grandmother Edna blossomed. I remember her beautiful, warm smile, but her sky-blue eyes were her outstanding feature; her gaze was wise. The chicken soup she made for me when I visited on Friday evenings was delicious; I would sit in my grandparents' kitchen and feel like royalty. I loved my grandfather Louis; he was always well dressed and treated me with delicatessen goodies. We would walk to the store together and I felt pride.

Mom, Harriet, and I were collectively known as the *Wexler girls*. We would go on our weekly shopping trip to the Italian Market, where we would fill up on food supplies. We lived very close by, within easy walking distance: Fifth and Dickinson Streets was our main intersection, and the market was on Ninth Street and Washington Ave. As we approached the Italian Market, the sounds and smells shifted from the residential quietude of the little row houses to the

bustling, vibrant commercial ambiance of the marketplace. The first smell to hit my nostrils was always the live poultry that were kept in wooden cages, waiting for the next customer's dinner table. Poultry has a distinct odor, and there was plenty of it for sale along the street.

The sounds that could be heard were from the vendors calling out their prices for the customers. The streets were bustling with life! At Ninth and Washington Streets was P & F Giordano's, where we always stopped for produce. There were Fantes' kitchen supplies, Esposito's meats, Di Bruno's cheeses, Ralph's and Palumbo's restaurants. All were part of the magic of the Italian Market, with its little stalls lined up along the street, each one filled with fruits and vegetables, and each vendor offering the best deal. Summer in Philadelphia was a gustatory delight—peaches, apricots, nectarines, red plums, green plums, and grapes, all splendidly juicy and perfect. The summer beckoned us to buy the sweet watermelon that was cracked and ready to be eaten. The green beans made a perfect snap, and the cabbages had a perfectly sized head protected with dark green leaves, just right for the prakes (stuffed cabbage leaves) that Mom would be making for dinner.

Mom's little cart was soon filled with the fruits and vegetables of the summer season. It was, as I remember, a long walk home, one that seemed much longer than the trip we had embarked on earlier. The three of us pulled the cart, and before long we were approaching Eight Street, then Seventh, Sixth, and finally Fifth. We were home! The scent of smoke was the cue that Dad was home; he schlepped the cart up the long flight of stairs, which was a relief for Mom. We had some lemonade, and soon went outside to play in the summer's heat and sticky streets.

As a family of four, we typically didn't go places together; it was Mom, Harriet, and I who went first, with my Dad coming later. I grew up becoming comfortable with my father's choice not to leave together, and my mother's acceptance of his behavior; it was, after all, simply the way our family did things. With no car, we used public

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transportation, which for me was an adventure. The *Wexler girls* were very self-sufficient; we found our way very well, knowing that Dad would eventually meet up with us wherever we were. Dad required an inordinate amount of freedom, and Mom seemed to have resigned herself to his procrastination.

My early taproots were nurtured by a sense that women can make things happen on behalf of themselves, and that fathers, though loving, don't always accommodate themselves to the needs of their family. I always remember my father arriving several hours later, with a smile on his face, and my sister and I running out to meet him with open arms. He was a five-foot, five-inch man who was larger than life, and his daughters knew the special power that he wielded over them.

Thus, it was both joy and apprehension that marked the emotional overtones of my early childhood. Some days, it was more difficult to navigate between these two emotions than others, as we never knew when my father's mood would change. We were uneasy most days, never knowing if we would be greeted by a scowl or given gifts that were unaffordable. It was difficult to understand the actual cause of my father's erratic behaviors; suffice it to say it was a lot easier when we went our own way without him. I was very fearful of dogs and heights, which were the mediators of my internal angst. I kept hoping someone would be smart enough to figure out what the cause of my fears was, but this never happened. Looking back, it was an unrealistic expectation. I believe my fears served as a way to shift the discomfort that I often felt onto something else—fear has a way of commandeering creativity, allowing it to take on a life of its own.

Embedded in my experiences of early youth was a fearful recollection that gripped our family for many months. I overheard my mother talking to my grandmother about my father.

She said, "He can be deported, Mom. What will become of us?" The conversation was very intense, with undertones of my

grandmother's initial concern for my mother's marriage in the first place.

"What does deported mean, Mommy?" I asked.

"It means your father may have to leave the United States and go back to Russia, but we will fight this."

I was stunned and upset. "Live without my father at all," I said, in a trembling voice.

I do recall going with my mother to an attorney's office in downtown Philadelphia.

"My, wait for me on this bench. I'll be out to get you as soon as I am done," Mom told me in a firm voice. I looked at the dark, carved wooden office furniture, and was able to sense the severity of the situation that my family was now in; I was trembling with fear of the unknown, and asking myself: *How did this happen? What if my father had to leave the country?*

Mom came out of the office with their attorney, Arnold J. Silver, Esq., who seemed supportive of my family's plight. Family members helped contribute to the attorney's fee; such was the drama and intensity of this gripping time in our family's history.

When we arrived home, my mother went door-to-door around the neighborhood with a self-drafted petition in hand to obtain signatures attesting to my father's fine character. The plan was for her to get as many names as possible, and she did. My father wasn't able to serve in the military because of his unilateral deafness, but he did serve as an air raid warden, which attested to his loyalty to our country. He was seemingly caught as part of the *catch of the day* in a net strewn for nationalized citizens who were supposedly involved in un-American activities. Senator Joseph McCarthy's fear-mongering web had touched our lives and destabilized our family. It was, of

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course, proven that my father was never a member of the Communist party, and the outcome was excellent—no deportation. I sensed, however, that my father changed after the incident; he aged quickly and seemed dispirited, like a prizefighter who lasted twelve rounds yet wasn't judged to be the winner.

Shortly after our family's deportation ordeal, my father took me on a day trip to the Wissahickon Creek area of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park. I remember it as a spectacular day; the sun was bright, and the best part was that I had my father to myself for the entire day. My mother had outfitted me with a khaki-green bag pack and an aluminum canteen, so I was prepared. We hiked the trails, stopped by a stream to see spiders twirling on the top of the water, and then ate our lunches together from our brown bags. Up and down the trails we went, watching the sun streaming through the tree canopies; we were like two adventurers who were gathering information to share with their cohorts back at the base camp. The experience we had together at Wissahickon Creek enhanced our bond as father and daughter; I still draw from the beauty and simplicity of that day.

When I was around ten years old, my family moved to another area of the city known as West Philadelphia. Though my family rented the small porch-style home, which was 977 square feet in size, it was like a palace to me. The house had a porch where we could sit outside in all kinds of weather, and a little fenced-in garden out back decorated with blue and light purple morning glories. I remember running up the steps to see my room; the window had a view, and I knew I could easily make the transition.

Reflection on The Window

Our strange living quarters and non-traditional religious expression forged my character. I saw the world through the lens of an outsider, which remarkably expanded my view. Truly, there were no boundaries, and it would have been easy for me to drift away, yet that

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didn't happen. As I stood there, fully awake yet dreaming, unbeknownst to me the structure for my future had been formed; I have been traveling on its grid my entire life. To unite what is on the outside with our hearts is to begin to fully awaken.

I was born on April 25, 1943 late in the evening, in the quietness of the day's end. When I arrived, there were only forty-four minutes left until midnight. My blueprint for potential at the time of my birth was the Sun in Taurus at 5 degrees bridging two houses, the fourth of roots, and the fifth of self-expression. The Sun is masculine, and thus its energy thrusts outward. Taurean energy is determined, stable, patient, and earthy. The Moon was in Capricorn at 19 degrees in the first house of the Self. It is the coldest Moon, loving in a very organized and productive way, thriving in a structured environment. It is feminine and therefore receptive; the Capricorn Moon waits for love to come its way, and then offers loyalty as its reward.

Sagittarius was at the Eastern horizon, making Jupiter the ruler of my chart—the place where I believed I came from! At my birth on that Sunday evening in Philadelphia in 1943, my Taurus Sun/Capricorn Moon/Sagittarian Ascendant guides grandly started to accompany me. Standing at the window was a perfect metaphor for how I have lived my life. I was a peaceful embracer of the natural world, one who critically strategized in a trustful and optimistic way. I knew that I would be able to figure things out, and I always did.

*I trust that the mystery of my life's origin will reveal itself in the future; I choose to be open to the ebb and flow of my life as it evolves.
Patience is a staunch ally of mine.*

Chapter 13

The Teacher

(Huntsville, Alabama – 1991)



I was enjoying lunch with my boss in the cafeteria at Huntsville Hospital, when she dropped a bomb: “The doctors no longer want you to be in your position.”

“What!” I exclaimed incredulously.

She looked at me, trying unsuccessfully to explain my dismissal from the most horrendous position I had ever held—keeping a steady state in the midst of patient needs and departmental politicking. “They are saying that you are entitled to due process,” she said, in a clinically monotone voice.

I was shocked, and also angry with myself that I hadn’t seen it coming, even though this was an established, existing pattern in the system. I was being scapegoated, and I knew at an intellectual level that my dismissal served to relieve the tension within the department.

“Oh, they are not saying that you need to leave the department,” she continued.

“Then what?” I queried.

She explained that I would be allowed to stay until I found another position in the hospital or in an academic setting, as a prize for “not really being the problem” within the domain of the department. Now that *is* dysfunctional: stay and go!

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It was all too clear to me that I had fallen into a snare that was anything but supportive. I did know that I would prevail, but it was painful, nonetheless. Amazingly, the Chief Nursing Officer provided therapeutic assistance to her management staff, and I chose to go to several sessions with an excellent psych-mental health nurse practitioner. Such is the essential caring nature of the profession!

I strengthened myself as I grieved, which was a critical chunk of work to do. I realized that by offering to relieve the department's managerial need, I had co-created my own misery! I possessed the necessary qualifications and then some, but easily fell into the trap of lifting the burden off my boss's shoulders. *Who was I really saving?* I wondered. This question compounded my grief: *Why would I do this to myself?* The answer came to me with a bell-like resonance: *Because you are comfortable with the role. Because the workplace is a re-creation of your family of origin.*

And, and . . . I respectfully waited for the Universe to download more gems, which it did. *Placing yourself in the position of the department tension-breaker was less anxiety provoking than moving forward with your potential, and trusting that it would work out by itself.*

Oh, so I dis-empowered and sacrificed myself to make things go smoother for the department, I whispered. No wonder I was feeling so rotten—I was angry with myself! I learned in the midst of the important work I was doing that the department would have done just fine without my intervention. All that had been needed was for me to better ground myself in the reality of the department's dynamics, and let things take their course. The most profound lesson I learned, however, was that if I hadn't made the decision in the first place, I might not have found the path of my heart. I wondered, *Maybe decisions made in reality aren't always the ones that move you forward.* And I was, after all, in an altered state when I returned from that exceptional workshop in Atlanta, wasn't I?

The process that I used for healing was simple, yet intense. I created a space in our home where I used puppets and children's books to purposely spend time grieving. I knew that I needed to let go of the hurt I was feeling. I played a superb piece of soft music, the "Fairy Ring" by Mike Rowland, and visualized healing, rose-colored light gently flowing through my body, filling every part of my being. I used stuffed animals as extra tactile support; their softness felt like a caring embrace, and the puppets added a child-like quality to the process. I read the most tenderhearted books I could find: Oscar Wilde's writing met my needs the most with *The Selfish Giant* and *The Happy Prince*. I also loved reading Chris Van Allsburg's *The Polar Express*, especially the poignant words spoken by the little boy who was first to ring the bell on Santa's sleigh: "The bell still rings for me as it does for all those who believe," the little boy said. I knew that I still heard that bell— it represented the belief that I will always have in my own abilities; the bell will never stop ringing no matter what happens in my life.

Several months later, I found a part-time position in the hospital's Department of Education, which turned out to be the perfect choice. I grew there, and was gifted with the possibility of developing workshops to present to the community. I created titles that surprised even myself, such as: "How to Stay Upbeat When the Leaves are Falling Down." I invented the concept of "Play Pods" where participants would rotate around the room and experience a variety of stress management modalities. Puppets, books, and creating pictures while listening to soothing music were the "stations" that I created. I developed my interactional skills with the public, and really enjoyed being a part of the department's community offerings. I also became adept at coordinating and teaching CPR for the Northern Alabama region, and found that I could create a learning environment that supported this important endeavor.

An adjunct nursing faculty opportunity opened up at Calhoun Community College in Decatur, Alabama, in the Department of Health & Physical Education for the fall term, and I jumped at the opportunity

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to apply. Calhoun's reputation in the community was excellent, and I knew that I would be bringing a solid background to the table. I interviewed and was hired, which was a thrill for me. My shoulders broadened as part of an academic team, and I started to connect with a potential inside me that bubbled to the surface, that of the emergent teacher. I was now working between two different systems—the hospital and the college—a challenge, yes, an impossibility, no. My job at the college was clinical in nature, and I was assigned the geropsych experience at a nursing home in the Huntsville area as part of their overall psychiatric nursing experience. Every student was to have a two-day rotation with me, an emersion into the sub-specialty that I dearly loved. From the onset, I intended to make this an exceptional experience and chose to move my students past ageism and any resistance that working with the elderly might provoke. I knew my passion for the field would propel me past any obstacle that might come my way. That wouldn't be easy, but then again doing things the easy way wasn't in my nature.

I went on a pre-visit to the nursing home to establish my relationship with the Director of Nursing and the staff; I was warmly accepted. I felt it essential to bring the students into a positive learning environment—how could they learn if they didn't feel safe to explore the environs? We were offered a bright, sunny sitting room for our pre-conference, and a quiet room with a large oval table for our post. The home had colorful wallpaper and a welcoming ambiance, both of which set a positive tone.

The day finally came, and my first group of students arrived. It was critical for me to set them at ease, and to clarify what the expectations were.

“Welcome, we will be here from 8:00 to 3:00. I will always be available to you, and our post-conference will start at 1:30,” I heard myself saying. The students were sitting on the sofas and chairs that graced the bright sunroom; they were wearing street clothes so they would be better able to internalize what their role might be like in a

gero-psych setting. We made a circle that included everyone. Looking over the group, I made a mental note that all were nicely groomed, on time, and attentive. Initially I asked them what they personally hoped to achieve during this rotation, as well as what their experiences with the elderly were; this was my way of making contact with each one of them. In a clinical setting, it is imperative for the faculty to know their students.

My style of making assignments was that I would allow the student to “choose” their respective resident, based on a thorough orientation. I realized that this could raise the student’s anxiety level—they were used to a great deal of structure in the medical-surgical setting, which was entirely appropriate. In the psych setting, the use of self and a working knowledge of how to develop a therapeutic relationship are critical for the student’s success. The element of attraction that always exists can be helpful when it comes time for the student to do his/her assignment, as questions arise, such as: *How is it I chose Mr. C? What was I thinking/feeling at the time?* I have never had a student that didn’t rise to the occasion; awareness that they were the ones who made the decision empowered them.

Our post-conference was in a room with windows, where residents could see us but where our conversations were private. Creating an atmosphere of trust as we sat around the large, oval, wooden table was a critical element; how else could we have truly patient-centered, professional dialogue? The students shared their day’s experiences, and I worked with the responses to keep the discussion at a level where critical thinking was encouraged. Typically, I started with an open-ended question, such as: “What did you learn today that was unexpected?” or “What will you take with you?” I enjoyed listening to their responses; in fact, I recognized that for most students this was their first exposure into the world of a nursing home, which is, after all, an older adult’s last place of residence.

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“The residents seem to be having a good time,” a student stated and smiled knowingly.

“What specifically did you observe?” I challenged.

“They are singing hymns, and they seem to be enjoying each other’s company.”

“What other things did you observe?” I asked.

“I saw a man and woman sitting together on the sofa holding hands,” a student shared in a surprised inflection.

I jumped right in with “Do we remain sexual beings as we age?”

This was an important question for the students to grapple with—with a mean age of thirty-two they may never have thought about sexuality in the context of the aging process, unless they lived with grandparents. This was to be the rotation where all things related to the elderly would be discussed, and I knew that my time with them was precious. I wanted the students to internalize advocacy for the elderly in their future practices and say, “I hope that Mrs. Darwish would be proud of my intervention.” Indeed, I would be more than proud; I would be fulfilled.

As a community of students and their faculty, each Wednesday and Thursday we became familiar fixtures at the nursing home. I chose to have the students participate in the activities on the specialty Alzheimer’s Unit every rotation. I needed to carefully lay the groundwork for their success, so their anxiety wouldn’t impair the totality of this important experience. I divided the group in two, to minimize the environmental impact we might have. We entered together and immersed ourselves in what I considered to be the most critical part of their gero-psychiatric exposure. Statistically, the number of patients with the diagnosis was rising, and it was clear to

me that we needed to have registered nurses in the practice pipeline that understood how to provide and direct care for this population. Initially, the unit's atmosphere revealed itself with random, discordant vibes; this contrasted with a peaceful, melodic, flute-like resonance upon our exit. Such was the power of purposeful activities.

The students were delighted to be a part of a group activity in the activity room; it was there that the residents were re-connected to the familiarity of their younger years. Hair was brushed, fingernails were polished, and hands were gently massaged. Though the residents were unable to recognize *that old woman* in the mirror they were holding, they knew they were in a positive place and that made all the difference in the quality of their lives. Normalcy itself was restored, and feelings of esteem rose to the surface. This was the perfect integration—working with the symptoms of memory loss, while maintaining respect for the individual and the world they once intimately knew. I marveled at the expressions on the students' faces, as they saw what a difference a knowledgeable intervention within a caring structure could make. I hoped that they would forever remember its impact on human behavior, and their part in it.

In May of 1992, I offered to do a workshop for the nursing community at the college titled: "Caring for the Elderly: A Multidimensional Approach." I wanted to contribute to the profession, and we offered 3.5 contact hours. The content was a synthesis of the knowledge and experience I had garnered thus far; I offered the audience a physical, psychosocial, and spiritual approach to care, which was holistic in scope. As I was about to conclude my presentation, I heard a comment from the audience that greatly broadened my smile: "This was one of the best presentations on aging that I have ever heard!" I was grateful to read and hear the comments—positive action went a long way to settle any dusty residue that was left over from my challenges at the hospital. My life was moving in a different trajectory, and there was no way that I was going to get in its way.

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A full-time nursing faculty position opened up in the Department of Physical Education & Nursing, and I decided to apply. I was ready to take on the responsibility of being a full-time faculty member. I arrived at the interview with my hopes carried in my briefcase, trying not to appear too over-anxious, but hoping that the search committee would see my qualities. On a day in late spring, I was offered the position, which I accepted like a lovely bouquet of flowers—some in bloom, and others in bud with the promise of their beauty to come. I realized that when I left the hospital, I would be making a career change from service to education. Even though I had several years of adjunct teaching under my belt, the demands placed upon full-time faculty were at another level. I was soon to be a novice, and would go into the role with my eyes and my heart wide open.

The last months at the hospital were spent busying myself with the projects I was responsible for. The Department of Education was an excellent place to be spending my last days, and I would truly miss my colleagues. I frequently walked back and forth between the department and its bridge connection to the units of the hospital. There was a time when I felt truly connected to all that was happening there, but my perception and awareness—along with my healing processes—had changed all that. I had become a stronger person. Sometimes as I walked, I asked myself: *Does a hospital have a soul?* I heard myself wisely answer: *At one time, Myra, you wouldn't have thought about asking such a question; doing so now speaks volumes.*

The department was responsible for the annual health fair, and several of us took turns dressing up in a clown costume during the event. There I was, in a white and red polka-dotted clown's outfit, sporting a classic red bulb nose, handing out balloons on my last day. One could say it was a metaphor for my hidden talents, but another view could be: I was celebrating my moving on in a gesture of playfulness for the contributions that I made. It was a wonderful way to say goodbye to the many staff I had worked with over my nine-year stint; I had the privilege to get a hug from many of them.

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The fall semester began, and there I was—part of a team of well-respected faculty. We stood up on the stage to welcome the students, and mapped out what they could expect in the second year of their studies. Our team leader, a very competent educator, handed out our lecture assignments. I looked eagerly at what my responsibilities would be. I would be teaching some pediatric content, some medical-surgical, and some about the elderly and their organic disorders, with a focus on delirium and dementia. I was as real as I would ever be!

My week was structured around two clinical days, with the rest of my time on campus. We were living in Madison, Alabama, which worked out perfectly; I was halfway between Huntsville and Decatur, where the campus was located. My clinical spot remained the same, the nursing home where I had been the past two years; I was delighted to continue offering students the older adult portion of their psychiatric rotation. One of my major responsibilities was presenting content to the students, which they would later be tested on. This is where teaching resembled an art form. How does one skillfully disseminate content on a pediatric disorder, so that the students will have enough depth to answer the questions on the exam? It was a challenge, and I needed support.

I found the perfect support in the mentoring I received from Ellen Montgomery, a senior faculty member, who took me under her wing; I was eternally grateful. It was she, a psych-mental health faculty, who helped me be the best that I could be. Here I was, in the fifteenth year of my nursing practice, not new to the profession by any means, but very new to designing test questions and delivering quality lectures. We spent time together reviewing my questions, sharing her feedback, and gaining an understanding of departmental politics. I know that I might never have felt as strong without her support. When we came together as a full second-level team, I was much better prepared for the rigors of an academic environment.

I had many compassionate students in clinical, but there was one in particular that I will always remember. She had chosen a

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resident who rarely left her room, and had a particularly severe case of Parkinson's disorder. Her tremor embarrassed her, and thus she isolated herself. We were in the time of year known as "high cotton," when the crop was being harvested. Leaves were falling and trees were ablaze with color. On her second day of clinical, the student arrived with a beautiful basket full of soft cotton and colored leaves. I will always remember her words: "If she won't come out of her room to be a part of the community, I'll bring the world into her room. I hope it's alright that I brought them." Her words amazed her peers and her teacher. Those are the exceptional times in a teacher's life when you realize that your student has internalized your values.

To the amazement of the staff, the resident trusted the student enough to be a part of the group in the early afternoon; she sat by her door in her wheelchair, with the student next to her. I hope I praised that student enough to reinforce her excellent work—initiative and emotional intelligence is part of what leadership is all about.

Towards the end of the semester, the intensity on campus rose, and our department certainly made its contribution. The demands of the nursing program met the realities of the students' day-to-day lives, and it was imperative that all faculties were aware of the issues that prevailed.

"Would this student be able to make it?" one concerned faculty member questioned. "How many students are close to failing?" another asked. "What is happening in everyone's clinical rotations?" our team leader asked. Each of us gave a synopsis, establishing a snapshot of our students' progress, and assessing their potential to move forward into the winter semester.

The winter semester was launched in January; I had made it through my first semester intact. Lydia was pregnant with our first grandchild, and the joy of knowing that I would be a grandmother in early spring was like a warm glow that always accompanied me, no matter what the weather was like. The academic calendar was more

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real to me, and I was becoming more aware of its rhythms. I sensed the initial excitement and expectations of the new semester; this was followed by the day-to-day fulfillment of clinical responsibilities, student advisement, and lectures, and finally the intense realization that graduation was around the corner. Like watching a chrysalis turn into a butterfly, it was a deeply moving experience that speaks to the creative power of being an educator. Teaching is, in essence, a sacred profession that is part of the very pulse of life, and it deserves society's highest esteem.

Reflection on The Teacher

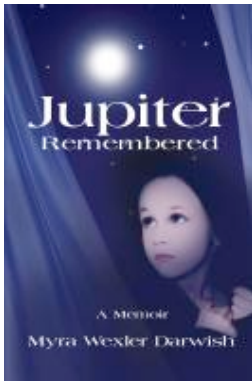
Teaching was pure for me, a déjà vu experience that fed my soul; I knew that I had come home to a place where I could contribute from my heart. Like the Velveteen Rabbit, who became real because of a little boy's love, I too became real—there I was in the tall grassy meadow, wondering how fortunate I was to have found my way—looking at my life as it was manifesting, and knowing that my heart was beating as if for the first time.

I discovered that the grieving of our losses was the healthiest of human activities; in its fullest expression, grief can become your most trusted friend, not something to be avoided. As we move from disbelief and anger toward finally accepting ourselves, we are strengthened by the sheer value of going through the experience and getting to its other side. I healed other losses at this time; my twelve-year-old self finally received the love and attention that she deserved. The tears that were shed on her behalf were welcomed, and the secret of her distress no longer had a place to hide. It didn't matter that it was thirty-six years later; eternity would have been just as welcome. I loved her dearly, just as I loved all the Myra's that were a precious part of my developing years. She, though, was perhaps the most loved; I had to make up for all the years that she was secret. We now share a camaraderie that many women experience when they deeply heal their wounds; they honor themselves.

Jupiter Remembered

Human emotions are the drivers in our lives, taking us on journeys that range from being on quiet boat rides to jet-propelled experiences. It is a worthy quest to learn how to work with our feelings so that love—the master—can then take its place at the captain's wheel and set us free.

I honor the anger, the fear, the love, and the sadness that I am capable of feeling; I am fully alive, knowing that on the other side of my emotions is a place of my co-creation that has waited patiently to be born.



***Jupiter Remembered** is the memoir of a woman's journey toward understanding the meaning of her life. There is love and insight woven throughout its pages, which was gleaned from her spiritual nature, the Diaspora experiences of her family from Russia and Egypt, her practice in the healing arts, and her joy of teaching. Her discovery of astrology ten years ago has accompanied her on her quest, illuminating the way.*

Jupiter Remembered

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