

Union's principal war hero and the eccentricity that dogged Greeley throughout his life, it was a very respectable showing.

Yet, deeply grieved by the loss of his wife, shattered by this last in a chain of political defeats, harried by creditors, fearful of the Tribune's future, Horace Greeley went into a sanitarium with a breakdown that was more mental than physical. Before November had ended, he too was dead.

Horace Greeley would have been moved by his funeral and those it attracted - the president and chief justice of the United States, governors, senators, cabinet members, mayors. And scattered among the famous and powerful were representatives of the multitude of causes to which he had devoted his life - the vegetarians, the prohibitionists, the pacifists, the utopians, the spiritualists, the union activists, the homesteaders, the Grahamites, the anti-tobacco crusaders.

To catalogue his causes is to see how thinly he spread his energies, his resources and himself. It is also to wonder how much farther would have been his reach had he dismissed his yearning for public office and lessened his resolve to set the whole universe aright.

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BUDGET

February 28, 2000

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### The Last Prisoner

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the unconditional surrender of Germany was signed by a member of the German High Command.

In two and one half years of combat, beginning in North Africa and ending at the Elbe River, a United States infantry division, nick-named the Old Reliables, had suffered 22,202 casualties. The number of casualties they inflicted on the enemy could not be counted, but the Division had captured 130,000 prisoners, more than 50,000 of them in the last month of the European War. There were days in that last month when so many wanted to surrender that some had to be asked to come back the next morning.

The last organized resistance the Old Reliables met was during the reduction of the Harz Mountains pocket. To reach their objectives there, members of the Division's Raiders Regiment passed through one of the most notorious German labor camps, situated at Nordhausen. Mass graves, left uncovered, were filled with emaciated corpses, mostly naked, limbs askew. The emaciated living, clad in filthy garments, could hardly move; only their deep hollow eyes seemed to speak.

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, Adolf Hitler's last birthday, the Harz Mountains were completely encircled by British and American forces, and resistance there ended.

The next day the Old Reliables, Raiders Regiment included, were ordered to move eastward toward the Elbe River. G-2 Intelligence anticipated no further organized resistance, just mopping up and patrolling for stragglers. Everyone knew the end was near.

Sergeant X, a squad leader in Company "B" of the Raiders was very old. He was 31. He was also mean and tough. After enlisting in the peacetime army at age 18, the Army had become his home. He had been a squad leader in "B" Company since the breakthrough at St. Lo, nine months previously, and that was a very long time

for a front line infantryman to stay alive. He had seen men killed and wounded in the most gruesome ways imaginable during those nine months, men who had been his responsibility. At times a non-stoppable panorama ran through his mind: squad members decapitated by 88's, gutted by personnel mines, crushed by tanks, puddles of blood, exposed organs, severed limbs. "Ground war is always cruel beyond imagination," as Norman Mailer said. But the sergeant himself bore only a few scars from light shrapnel wounds, which had been treated by Company aid men.

His squad was now miserably understrength. Replacements had been arriving less and less frequently, with less and less training, so that it had become more and more of a challenge to shepherd the green troops safely through the final days of combat. About April 15<sup>th</sup> the most recent replacement had arrived, Private Rose, smooth skinned and baby faced, except for some pimples to proclaim his adolescence. Just a few months previously he had voluntarily enlisted in Mount Vernon, New York, on his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the same age at which the sergeant had joined up; but Rose was not at home in the Army. Awkward, skinny, minimum height, he seemed a lost cause. The only compensation for his hopeless military incompetence was the radiant smile with which he cheerfully tried to follow orders, orders which he was usually incapable of understanding. Sergeant X would roll his eyes and swear, as only he could swear. Yet the sergeant found himself vowing that, at this late date, the sad sack recruit, as well as the rest of the squad, absolutely must survive.

As the Raiders moved east in combat formation, no resistance was encountered.

It was a warm sunny afternoon as Company "B" passed along a slope through the edge of a carefully tended forest. Sergeant X's squad was on the point. Immediately behind was the Company Commander and his small party which included an artillery forward observer. The Company Commander, Lieutenant Rabenowitz, a grizzled veteran, age 25, had been assigned to the Raiders as a private first class before D-Day. Wounded three times, captured once, he had

always gotten back to the Raiders, usually by hitch-hiking from the hospital. At the Bulge he had led a few men to a vital road junction, which he held, finally all by himself with a .30 caliber air-cooled machine gun, long enough for the Division Headquarters to escape being trapped. For this spectacular feat he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, a battlefield commission, and command of Company "B".

The artillery observer, a Captain, had been an Old Reliable since the early days. But artillerymen view their carnage from a gentlemanly distance, except when they take their turn as a forward observer with the front line infantry. After a few days of that, if they survive, they go back to the safety of the rear, a different world.

The Company was proceeding through the woods, not entirely unwary, but with the feeling that the War was over. They had heard the Russians were in Berlin. Most of the prisoners now were children in Hitler Jugend uniform, and old men of the Volksturm.

To the left of the Company's sector of advance was a strip of green meadow, about 25 yards wide, sloping toward a small brook, on the other side of which was another gentle slope upward, planted with pines and spruces, not over eight feet high, apparently a nursery or preserve of some sort. This slope, beyond the brook, was the sector of Company "A", but no Company "A" personnel were yet visible. The slope appeared vacant; it could very well serve as a screen for a sniper. But not even Sergeant X was contemplating further conflict. They were now a troop of unkempt boy scouts on a nature hike.

Suddenly, from the left, came the unique sound of a burp gun. The C.O. Party dove to the ground, trying to bury themselves in the forest floor. Bullets zinged through the trees and ricocheted off stones with whining noises. A moment later rifle fire from the squad, aimed at nothing in particular, drowned out the burp gun.

"Cease fire! You jerks are firing into Able Company's sector!" Sergeant X bellowed. Indeed, Company "A" personnel could now be seen advancing.

At almost the same time the shout "Medic! Medic!" was heard, and a Company aid man, crouching, scurried forward.

As soon as the rifle fire stopped, a figure sprang out from behind one of the spruces on the opposite slope. Throwing his helmet and burp gun to the ground, the man shouted:

"Kamerad! Kamerad!" as he raised his arms high in the air.

The burp gun was an MP 44 machine pistol, something like an American tommy gun, but better engineered and more accurate. Magazine capacity was 30 rounds, cyclic rate of fire 800 rounds per minute. A few rounds at that speed sounds like a burp. Obviously the man had just fired his last rounds.

His fire had been accurate enough to kill one man and lightly wound two others of the squad. It was Private Rose who lay crumpled, his blood spurting out onto a little patch of wildflowers. Where his throat had been torn by several bullets there was a big crimson gap, so that his head hung at an odd angle, face to the ground.

"Kamerad!" repeated the German. "allein, allein," as he continued forward toward the half dozen Americans, rifles at the ready.

"Hold your fire, men. This one's mine." The sergeant spoke evenly, just loud enough for the squad to hear.

"Come here!" he commanded, and the German approached the sergeant, who noted the black shoulder straps and collar patches of the Waffen SS. It was a tall, blond, comparatively clean and neat, model "aryan" Nazi.

The SS man came closer, stood before the sergeant and saluted.

Between them, on the ground, lay an M-1 rifle, probably Private Rose's. In one lightening-like motion the sergeant grabbed the rifle by the barrel and swung it upward so that the butt struck the SS troopers jaw, a mighty blow. The German had flinched just enough to escape the full force, but he staggered and tried to raise his arms to shield his face. Then, using the butt as a rammer, the sergeant landed a quick blow in the solar plexus area. As the SS man sank, he rammed the rifle butt with all his strength into the man's face, smashing it like a piece of pottery. A few more blows and the twitching body lay quiet. The skull was broken open, and elements from inside oozed onto the ground. Finally the sergeant kicked the inert body with savage force, again and again and again.

"Never mind the medics," he muttered as he turned away. The sun, filtered by the trees, cast a mottled pattern on the mutilated body of the German soldier.

During the beating, which lasted only a few minutes, the squad members drew back and watched, without apparent emotion. The Artillery Captain had looked at Lieutenant Rabenowitz, who said, as if answering a question:

"It's best to let them be."

Theoretically, the Artillery Captain, as ranking officer at the scene, could have intervened. But perhaps the Captain felt no urge to intervene. Isn't it possible that during the cruelties of ground war, the brain becomes conditioned to accept violence without limit? In any event, while a human being was being beaten to death before his eyes, the Captain just stood by.

Fifty-five years, and much grander accounts of inhumanity, would consign "B" Company's last prisoner to oblivion, were it not for reverberations lurking within the fates of the participants.

Young Private Rose, a patriot, had enlisted voluntarily in order to involve himself in the struggle against evil. He did not give his life for his country; it was stolen from him, yet he had made a difference, however tiny.

The SS trooper was under oath to obey his Fuhrer and fight to the end. The single chevron with star on his sleeve denoted long time service, and service with the Allgemeine SS as well, which supplied concentration camp guards. He might then have been involved in war crimes, all the while convinced, no doubt, of his own rectitude. As he fired his last rounds at the enemy invading the Fatherland, it occurred to him that getting captured might beat getting shot.

Sergeant X made sergeant-major after the War. He disappeared on a reconnaissance mission in Korea: MIA, presumed dead.

Company Commander Rabenowitz, promoted to Captain, retired from the service as soon as possible, and took a job as Recreation Director of a small mid-western city. He drank a lot, got fat, became very jolly, and begot many children. One would never imagine that vengeance had once been his motivating force. He never talked about the War.

The Artillery Captain, no atheist, kept a promise made some time before, while looking up from a foxhole at a low flying Stuka, which had just released a 500 pound bomb, apparently headed for his shirt pocket:

"Dear God, if you'll get me out of this alive, I'll owe you one forever."

After the War he studied, and became a clergyman. When he heard a colleague state the obvious: "There is an objective wrongness to seeking to cause or increase the pain of another life," (1) a special interest awakened inside him. From then on, he stepped in, and dedicated himself to improving the lots of other individuals: family, friends and strangers; a way of life for which he was universally loved and admired.

No one ever said again: "The Captain just stood by."

(1) Why Christianity Must Change or Die, John Shelby Spong, Harper San Francisco, 1998. Page 161.

Louis M. Prince

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Not Until Everything's Perfect

The one time I met the Ashleys, I never imagined they would try to reverse the world and carry us back to Eden. They had just purchased the three story field stone house on the double lot catty-corner across our street. Tall, thin, late fifties, in matching khaki shorts, white socks and athletic shoes, they were inventorying their trees with the enthusiasm of beginning botany students on a wooded campus. Behind them, like a college dormitory, loomed the huge L shaped structure they would never inhabit.

He watched me approach with the slightly condescending smile of a man accustomed to being called "Sir" by third year old MBAs.

"When are you going to move in?" I asked, after the briefest introductions.

He lowered his clipboard, and she her illustrated arboreal guide, to stare at me. I had not thought it so difficult a question. Then Robert Ashley turned to his platinum haired wife, who smiled as pleasantly as if she were meeting a new masseur.

"Not until everything's perfect," she said firmly.



That was the first warm day in April, when the oaks were beginning to bug, and the bluebells along the curving drive still seemed too frail to pierce the cold earth. Several weeks later, a tree service arrived with trucks and cranes, and began a summer long clearing of underbrush and deadwood.

Another neighbor had not been as fortunate as the sellers of the Ashleys' house. Eager to retire to Florida, the owners of the adjoining property had their house on the market for over a year. Both lots were oversize, leaving enough space to subdivide and build another house between them.

In the fall a rumor began that the Ashleys had tried to buy the extra land from their absent neighbors, but had been rebuffed. Some said Robert Ashley wanted to build a pool at the edge of his forest; others said he wanted a buffer zone to preserve his privacy. Suddenly the "For Sale" sign came down across the street, and one sentence in the Sunday real estate section reported our neighbors had sold the entire property to an attorney as trustee for an undisclosed purchaser. Discrete inquiries at the club confirmed that the purchaser was Robert Ashley.

Now there were two empty houses across the street. Oddly, the Ashleys did not put their second house back on the market. When I asked one of our real estate people to check at the court house, she reported that the Ashleys had not subdivided their new property to add a portion to their original lot. Were they planning on keeping both parcels?

That first winter was exceptionally hard. Several of the Ashleys' freshly manicured trees cracked in an ice storm, calling out an emergency response team from the tree service. A large stone tumbled into the sidewalk from the retaining wall that framed their lot like the foundation of a temple. Blue service trucks from the gas company, the telephone company and interior contractors slid up and down the driveway, but the Ashleys did not move in.

In the spring the tree service returned to clear away the ravages of winter. Contractors arrived again

in force, some with exotic names and emblems stenciled on their vans, others in old trucks piled high with tools and ladders. A lawn service visited the grounds weekly to prune, fertilize and cut. Old shutters came down; new shutters went up; on the hottest days of summer, workers sweated on the searing tin roof. Chimneys were tuck pointed; the wooden columns on the huge front porch were temporarily replaced by jacks, while the originals were sanded, repainted and restored. Still the Ashleys did not move in.

The neighbor on the far side of the Ashleys was doing some renovation, too. Over lunch at the club he told me about a call from Robert Ashley's attorney.

"He said Mr. Ashley didn't like the addition and what we were doing with the gardens," Erickson fumed.

"What the hell business is it of Ashley's?" he had demanded.

"Mr. Ashley wants everything to be perfect," the lawyer replied.

Neither Erickson nor I had ever heard of such an encounter. No demand, no threat of legal action, just an expression that the Ericksons were not living up to the Ashleys' standards of perfection.

That was the second winter we had two empty houses across the street. One Sunday morning, the dog bounded into the bedroom and barked wildly at the window.

"See what he wants," my wife said, without opening her eyes.

I stood up and parted two levelors with my fingers. Beneath the Ashleys' leafless oaks were five butternut gray deer facing different directions, like a foraging party of Confederate cavalry. The leader, a five point buck, slowly turned his head past two does and two fawns, trying to fix the dog's yapping with his nose.

"What are you looking at?" Lillian demanded, turning toward me.

I wish now I had said, "Nothing, dear. It's just the newspaper." Lillian always pretended to be stronger than she was.

Instead I whispered, "Come here. Don't say anything."

Not quite believing I could recognize anything that might interest her, she got out of bed and came to the window. I think it was the first real excitement she had experienced in years.

"I don't see anything. Where?"

Just as the two black eyes fixed on us, she moved the levolors. With a toss of his head, the buck turned his marauders away, and they sauntered off after him through the trees.

"They must have come up from the river," she exclaimed.

In church that morning, the Old Testament lesson was about wild animals overrunning Israel during a time of desolation. Were the Ashleys' deer a portent of some disaster that would depopulate the city and leave its ruins to the ravages of nature? Lillian's interest deepened to the point of obsession. Why, she kept asking, would anyone buy two homes and leave them like doll houses across the street from us? As if to dispel her fears, however, the contractors and tree service and yard men returned the third summer in even greater force. The Ashleys, however, did not move in.

One evening that fall while she was out walking the dog, Lillian saw a black Jaguar in the driveway. Curious, she went up the long, dark driveway. Only the porch light and a light in the third story were on. Stepping back under the trees, she saw a man and a woman's silhouettes against the third floor blinds, and heard their angry voices.

Only three words were recognizable. Over and over again, the woman repeated: "The wall paper!"

Suddenly the upstairs light went out. Lillian ran down the driveway, pulling the terrified dog after her.

"What was it?" I demanded, as she stood weeping in the kitchen.

"The Ashleys were floating down the stairs after me," she sobbed.

"You've never met the Ashleys," I protested. "How could you recognize them?"

"It was the Ashleys," she insisted.

"But you were outside," I tried to reason with her. "You couldn't see the stairs."

"You never believe me," she cried, turning away. "I know what I saw."

That was when she stopped talking to me and started to spend most of her time alone. I had always known she was delicate, but never thought one unexpected touch could break her. It was several months before her friends stopped calling. One day in January, she left me a note that she was taking the dog to the veterinarian; she couldn't stand its whining anymore. When I called to bring him home, they said they had already disposed of the remains.

At the office, in the long, empty evenings at home, at church, when I awoke at night, I thought about the Ashleys. What, to them, was perfection? Wall paper? Landscaping? Duct work? Or was their vision like the ancient Hebrews, who believed that the Messiah would come if every Jew followed the Law for just one day? What did the Ashleys require of us?

The next spring, our neighbor up the street was suddenly transferred to Denver. They were so happy to get their asking price, they didn't tell us that the buyer was the Ashleys' attorney as trustee. The week they moved, Lillian had to go into the hospital. The doctors were hopeful; there were many treatment strategies; they were sure to find the right one for Lillian, with time.

Time brought the rumor that Erickson, whose addition had provoked Robert Ashley's wrath, was in financial trouble and would have to give up his house. For weeks I dreaded opening the Sunday paper to read the real estate transfers. At Thanksgiving, the rumor proved true: the Ashleys' attorney had acquired another home.

That is why I did not protest when the doctors suggested sending Lillian to an institution in the state capitol for long term care. Those sallow, green walled cubicles are no less conducive to recovery than a neighborhood of empty houses. I still drive up to see her - when the weather is good.

During those drives, I finally understood the Ashleys' concept of perfection: a world cleansed of all corrupt humanity, as it was before the creation of Adam and Eve. We could not be converted to the Ashleys' vision; Erickson had proved that. We had to be expelled from a garden as fragile as Eden that could only support two inhabitants.

Whether the Ashleys can create a world more perfectly than God, I do not know. The older couple down the street are talking about moving to a condominium; that will leave our house as the only inhabited dwelling to face the Ashleys'. It really doesn't make much sense to keep it without Lillian. I am almost comforted to know there will be no problem finding a buyer.

Frederick J. McGavran

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Here Comes One With a Bridegroom

Tonight I have a confession to make. As a parish priest I do not react with joy when my secretary rings

me on the intercom or knocks on my office door to announce, "Here comes one with a bridegroom." I know what awaits me. Outside my door will be a young woman - usually with her mother - armed with the latest edition of Modern Bride magazine, ready to tell me on what date I will perform the nuptial ceremony of her crafting. "Never mind the - what do you call it? - Book of Common Prayer," says the bride. "What do you mean we can't have a unity candle?" adds her mother. "Martha Stewart and Modern Bride say do it this way," they both say in unison. Thus begins a protracted period of tearful negotiations which often dissolve into all-out warfare over the photographer, the candles, the flowers, and the music. At my previous parish in suburban Detroit one future bride so terrorized the poor organist with her demands for tunes from Phantom of the Opera that he began to refer to this young woman - uncharitably, I might add - as "Bridezilla." It is no wonder that clergy secretly would prefer a good funeral to a wedding: no one in advance of his or her demise eagerly looks for the latest funeral ideas in a publication called Modern Corpse.

And so it was on a day in January of 1991 that my secretary rang my intercom to announce, "Here comes one with a bridegroom." She didn't actually say that, of course. It was more like, "There's a young woman here in the parish office who'd like to talk to you about a wedding." I braced myself for another round of man's inhumanity to man. Little did I know that I was about to witness the very opposite. The woman's name was Hillary. She was 23 years old, soft-spoken, blonde, and exceptionally pretty. She was an artist who worked as a receptionist at a museum. Her intended's name was Tim, a young man who had recently moved to Los Angeles, on the fast track with one of Detroit's "big three" auto makers. They had met at the museum just a few months earlier. After a few dates they had fallen in love, they became engaged that Christmas, and were hoping for a summer wedding. I spoke with Hillary about her need to join the church and start attending Sunday services. She and Tim would have to participate in the pre-marital program we had in place, necessitating Tim's frequent return from Los Angeles.

None of this was any problem, according to Hillary. She looked forward to getting started.

That initial meeting with Hillary was the last I saw of her for many weeks. One day in February she called to apologize for her absence. She'd been ill for a few weeks and hoped to be on her feet again soon. She looked forward to introducing me to Tim when he next came into town.

Easter Day fell at the end of March in 1991. Hillary had come to church a few times in the five or six weeks since we'd talked about her illness. In the rush of Holy Week leading up to Easter I received a phone call from Tim, whom I had not yet met. He explained that Hillary had been having some medical tests due to her inability to recover fully.

In addition, she was having pains in her abdomen and side, had lost her appetite, and was losing weight. "It looks like cancer," said Tim, grimly over the phone. "The pancreas and liver are involved," he added. Tim explained that the next step for Hillary would be surgery right after Easter. A team of doctors would attempt a potentially curative intervention called the Whipple procedure, in hopes that they could remove all of the cancer. On the day of the surgery I received another phone call at the church, this time from Hillary's mother. She informed me that Hillary was in recovery, and the family would appreciate my coming to the hospital as quickly as possible. When I arrived I found Hillary's parents, Tim, and his parents pacing the halls outside of Hillary's room, stunned. Upon meeting Hillary's mother I inquired as to how the surgery went. Her voice broke as she replied, "Hillary is going to die." Apparently the surgical team, upon seeing the extent of Hillary's cancer, had determined that the Whipple procedure was not possible. The only course of action would be an aggressive chemotherapy. Realistically, her prognosis was six months to a year left of life.

The supreme incongruity of what was transpiring was impossible for any of us to grasp. Here was Hillary, a beautiful, sweet, 23 year old woman who could fetch many an admiring glance merely by walking

down the street. Yet at the same time the desirable figure she cut was filled with a ravaging cancer, and apparently had been so for some time now. Within the space of a few short days her family had gone from planning her wedding to contemplating her near-certain death. The odds of her having this cancer of the pancreas and liver at all were so astronomically low that I wanted to rage like Job in the general direction of God. But somehow, arising out of the unimaginable pain of this situation, would come a two-year demonstration of one man's extraordinary humanity to the woman he loved. Tim would rise to heights of love and loyalty that would make most of us dizzy.

Soon after everyone knew the score concerning Hillary's diagnosis and prognosis, Hillary and her family quietly let Tim know that no one would think ill of him if he excused himself entirely from the situation. After all, he had only known Hillary for a few months at this point. He was now living and working in Los Angeles. He could move on and everyone would understand. Tim responded by saying that he would indeed be going back to Los Angeles, but only for as long as it took to arrange a transfer home to Michigan. He was able to orchestrate this move only by getting off the fast track and taking a lesser position than the one he had. When he returned to town his next order of business was to persuade Hillary that she should not move home out of state with her parents, but rather move in with him. Hillary's mother was initially aghast at the idea of her daughter's "shacking up" before marriage, but Tim was able to convince this proper lady that he aimed to make her his mother-in-law. Tim wanted to marry Hillary, and for as long as her life would endure he intended to have the life together that they had desired. So they rented a little house near Tim's hometown, bought a puppy and named her Sally, and proceeded to live as normal a life as possible. It was "carpe diem" all the way. Said Hillary, "it looks like I'm not going to make it to 40, but I'm not going to die today."

The original date for Tim and Hillary's wedding came and went. Remarkably, by the end of that summer of 1991, Hillary's condition was not as bad as her doctors had feared it would be. The chemotherapy



appeared to be slowing the progress of the cancer. Tim, Hillary, and I began to discuss again a possible wedding date. Finally we decided upon a day just after Christmas. Never will I forget the sight of Hillary coming down the aisle as Tim and I took our places at the altar of the church. She was adorned in a traditional white gown, complete with veil and train. Her father, a General in the United States Army, wore his dress blues with such dignity and class that the ornamental brass of the church looked drab in comparison. Still beautiful, but now noticeably thin, Hillary leaned heavily on her father's arm as she made her way towards Tim. When he reached out and took her hands in his, I knew that this was a day that flew in the face of death, and Tim had insisted upon it.

For much of 1992, against all odds Hillary continued to hold her own. This is not to say that the cancer wasn't progressing. It was, slowly but surely. Numerous hospital stays, painful procedures, and continued weight loss also marked Hillary's year. But merely the fact that she was still alive and mobile when December rolled around again was something of a miracle. Hillary and Tim were able to celebrate Christmas and their one-year wedding anniversary together.

Throughout that year I witnessed Tim standing by Hillary with a strength and devotion that defied human limitations. One simple scene for me told the whole story of what I knew to be Tim's steady devotion. It was now toward the end of 1992. The three of us had gone out to dinner. Tim and I ordered full meals; Hillary thought she would only be able to handle a small plate of vegetables. When the food came Hillary suddenly became so ill that we had to leave. In that moment I saw Tim turn to Hillary with such care on his face, and such concern in his voice, that one would have thought this was the first time Hillary had ever been sick. By now it had been nearly 18 months since Hillary's diagnosis, yet here was Tim still fully present, fully accessible to her in this seemingly inconsequential moment. To me it was a microcosm of their love.

With the dawn of 1993 Hillary's remarkable run at living with pancreatic and liver cancer began to draw to a rapid finish. The disease was now in her lungs, and the time would be short. In early March she lapsed into a coma and was hospitalized for the last time. Tim, with his and Hillary's parents, set up a quiet, tearful, determined bedside vigil which lasted from a Sunday evening to the early-dawn hours of Wednesday. On Tuesday evening I led the family in the brief service of last rites. With those prayers concluded, Tim reached over to Hillary and removed from her neck a fine gold cross necklace that he had given to her on their wedding day. This he gave to me.

Hillary's funeral was on Saturday. Over two years ago this young woman had first come to the church in anticipation of showing off her bridegroom to the world. On this day her bridegroom came to the church cradling a small urn in his arms containing Hillary's ashes. As I read the prayers of the committal service, Tim lifted the mortal remains of his bride into a niche in the columbarium wall. Then at last this young man who had been a tower of strength and devotion for all these months cried like a baby.

In the final analysis, what can be said of such a wondrous love that one human being offered to another? A few months after the funeral I marveled to Tim about this gift he had given to Hillary. His only comment was neither eloquent nor profound. With a shrug of the shoulders he said, "Sometimes you find yourself in a situation, and you know what the right thing is to do. Sometimes you just do what you have to do." Words to live by, indeed.

The Reverend J. Donald Waring

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