

Silverglade

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Today, 5October2001, I bury the best friend I've ever had. Louise was convinced that death was just another one of life's great adventures ... the ultimate out-of-body experience. And so, I depict her final moments thusly ...

"She followed the same routine each day. Her livestock depended on that. Around 6 p.m. she would tie up her little dog, Yenta, on the porch. Then she would go up to the coop to check on her beloved chickens. She'd just gotten a new batch. As she turned to leave the chicken coop, she heard a familiar voice. This caused her to turn and look up. She saw the most wondrous sight she had ever seen and she knew it was her time. She fell to the ground over the threshold of the door and there she lay for her final sleep, under a blanket of stars. A friend came for coffee the next morning and found Louise. Her Spirit had left to continue its awesome

journey. Arm in arm with her loved ones she walked calmly into her future.”

Grief is a process whose ultimate goal is acceptance of life on life's terms. This is what Louise taught me. It is a process, not a destination.

Most people never get the opportunity to experience anyone like Louise. I was lucky. For twenty-six years, her love warmed and uplifted me. It still does and it always will.

I met Louise on a hot day in June 1975. She was stretched out on a blanket on the grass watching the kids in a three-legged race. It was the Salmon Arm West school's sports day. She shaded her eyes to look up at me as I was passing by. “You know,” she said with that unusual drawl of hers, “I was born a hundred years too late. There is a caravan heading west out of Colorado and I would dearly love to be a part of that.” Well, the writer in me was hooked. I was twenty-four years old and looking for some answers to life. My marriage was stalling, we were in counseling, my pill habit was taking hold of me, and I knew deep down that I was not living the life I was meant to live. I was scrambling to get some ‘spirit’ back into my life.

That September, I went once a week out to Silverglade for lessons in how to make mud pies. I had no idea what it took to make a piece of pottery. I learned and I found that I loved it. I was creating in a completely different way than I was used to. While we potted, we talked. We

exchanged ideas. We listened to Louise's stories, metaphors, and parables. We not only learned how to 'pug clay balls', we learned how to let the air out of ourselves, too.

When her soul mate, Sieg, passed over, Louise grieved but didn't lie down and moan about it. She volunteered at the Art Gallery in Salmon Arm. She bought an RV and went on trips with Mona – to Bella Coola, and Gordie – to Colorado. That they never made their destination, due to mechanical problems, was no matter. The trip was a great adventure, as told by Louise. She was lonesome for Sieg but realized that her life was going on and it was her responsibility to live it.

Louise often talked about time packages. Not everything lasts a lifetime so we need to appreciate these little interludes when someone or something is in our lives. Life lived at this level made more sense to me.

When she passed over, I came to the realization that we had never watched a TV program together, or played cards or any other game, or gone shopping, or even for a walk. We talked. We listened. We ate. We created. We cried, and oh my, how we laughed. It was a relationship based on 'being' together rather than on 'doing'. We enjoyed each other's company thoroughly. We never held back our feelings for each other. There are things that Louise told me that I have never shared with anyone else. We were friends.

It is so hard to fathom what life is all about. With Sieg and Louise's passing, Silverglade has had to be dismantled. Other people, though they

are wonderful, will be living in the old house and working in the pottery shop. Everything that Sieg and Louise worked so hard to build, is no more.

Or is it? What did they build? It was more than the pottery shop where you could go and create whatever you wanted at whatever skill-level you were at and receive praise and encouragement. It was more than the vista view of Mount Ida to the East, the Shuswap Lake to the North, and the rolling pastures of other farms to the west. It was way more than the fire that roared down the hills from the south—twice, once burning them out completely, and the second time, just threatening them. It was more than the house that was more like a museum with its paintings and pottery and artifacts and glass insulators and baskets from New Guinea and Afghans that Sieg crocheted and Louise sewed together. It was more than the thousands of cups of coffee that were served at the hand made dining room table. Sieg had made most of the furniture in the house. But, even at that, it was still more.

Silverglade was a beautiful setting created by wonderful people for the weary soul-travelers that came for nourishment of the Spirit. It was a place where you could heal from the wounds of the world. It was a place of peace and passion and patience and perseverance. Silverglade was a gift that was given from one heart to another.