

A Person-Centered Life – and Death

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Abstract

A reflection on the life and death of psychologist Armin Klein is written by Dr. Grace Harlow Klein. A statement of experience from several of his clients who helped in his care at the end of his life is included. One of his clients wrote extensively of her experience, “In Therapy with Armin.”

Keywords: Aging, end of life decisions, love, Person-centered life, death

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For Armin who led the way
And for
Mary who walked with me

I don't remember when it became clear to me that Armin was going to die. I remember sitting in the library with him one day. He was in his favorite therapy chair – a big comfortable leather chair. I pulled the hassock up and sat down in front of him. I said, “Armin, there are three things vying to take your life – the prostate cancer, the dementia, and the Parkinson's. I don't know which is going to win.”

“Thank you for telling me,” he said.

The Person-Centered Journal, Vol. 19, No. 1-2, 2012

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There was another time when we must have been close to the subject of his dying, while we were in bed, when he said, "I don't want to leave you; maybe we can just go together." I felt how deeply he was regretting leaving me, but I said to him, "I am nine years younger than you, Armin, and I am not done." We did not discuss his dying again. Now that he is gone I have regretted that I didn't talk further with him. I now imagine he knew how hard it would be for me without him – sensitive, intuitive, caring person that he was. And he was right.

While I have seen in various places that Armin talked about his fear of dying, there was no evidence of that in his daily life. And not once did he complain or bemoan, why me.

There was one other time that we talked about his dying. Before we met he had loved to hike in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and had told his children he wanted his ashes scattered there. A year or more before he died, while he was still quite able to speak, I asked him what he wanted me to do. He said that he wanted me to take some of his ashes to the cemetery where his parents were buried in Sharon, Massachusetts and scatter them on their graves. But the remainder he wanted me to keep until the end of my life and wherever I went, he wanted to go with me. I agreed. I was a little disconcerted in that I had already written in my poetry that I would like to go back to the family cemetery of my childhood. And Armin has no ties to Kansas! But I knew I would honor his request. My son, Thomas, found the cemetery in Sharon, located the specific graves, and sent a map that stayed in the drawer for some time. I was prepared.

I also went to the Jewish mortuary in Rochester to learn how things are done in the Jewish tradition. I had called and said, "My husband is culturally Jewish and wants to be cremated. Can you help me?" The mortician said yes and I made an appointment. He was very kind and helpful. At times I felt angry with Armin that I was left to figure out what being culturally Jewish meant in this context, but I finally made my own decisions based on what Armin and I liked, beautiful flowers, for example. But I did plan to honor the tradition of having the service as soon as possible after his death.

Armin died as he had lived – with deep openness, empathy and joy in connecting. All he needed was to know that I was there – to be able to see me and hold on to me when he was anxious.

I lived that with him – to his last breath and I want to share with you our journey.

Background

My father's last illness and death in 1992 raised awareness for me of informed consent and created rage about his medical care. Although he had had Alzheimer's disease for ten years, with the help of my mother, he was still able to function and be out in the community admiring babies, greeting familiar people. On the day he awakened at 6am with pain in his abdomen he said, "Yes," when my mother asked if he wanted her to take him to the hospital. By noon he was in surgery for what was diagnosed as a ruptured ulcer. While they warned her he might not live, though almost 84, he was in good physical health and they proceeded. Not once did anyone say what the impact of surgery, anesthesia and hospitalization might be on his compromised mental state from Alzheimer's disease.

I did not learn about any of this until 4pm.

He died six weeks later, in a nursing home, never recovering from the impact of the surgery. Nor did the surgery solve the problem – and indeed eventually caused his death. Though I was able to say good-bye when I left him the last time and know that he knew me, I was deeply troubled.

I wrote of this experience and presented it in an ethics workshop where I had been invited to speak, "What Have We Done to Him?" (G. Klein 2010, p. 8-11). Because of his Alzheimer's it was too late for him to have signed Health Care Proxy or Advanced Directive forms by the time they appeared in the culture. But each of us in his family knew that he would not have wanted what happened to him. I still have visions of him which reflect the violation I felt for him. But, I was comforted that we had taken steps to ensure that he would not be returned to the hospital and be allowed to die peacefully. My mother and other family members were with him, my railroad engineer father, when he died, the train

whistle blowing at the end. I gave the eulogy to remember him in appreciation for all that he had meant to me.

Just over five years later, my mother became ill a month after her 80th birthday when all of her extended family had gathered to celebrate with her. A laparoscopy revealed that she had widespread untreatable cancer. She died twenty-two days later in my sister's home where she had gone to visit. For those twenty-two days we cared for her, in shock that our healthy, vibrant mother was dying. While my family benefitted from the care of hospice nurses and the expertise of my daughter who is a nurse-midwife, I found myself resenting the intrusion – despite the fact that I had always valued hospice for its end of life care. I again gave the eulogy, calling on Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1992), *Living until We Say Good-Bye*. A month later I was again on a panel, this time addressing, “After the Supreme Court Decision on Physician Assisted Suicide: Where Do We Go from Here?” And I wrote as The Dean's Message for the college newsletter, “Empowerment,” about the need for all of us to be responsible for the decisions we need to make about care at the end of our lives and to involve our families in those discussions. So it is clear that these have been important issues for me for a long time.

I realized in that experience with my mother that I saw death as a family matter – despite my long career as a nurse and presence with others in the dying process. It was also a time for me of deep reconnecting with my mother – the last chance to heal something we had both lived with since I was very young.

These experiences and that of the death of my five year old sister when I was fourteen became the focus for my book of poetry and art, *A Bridge of Returning* (G. Klein 2010). They also laid a foundation for my values with Armin when confronted with his chronic illnesses.

Armin and Grace – The Grace-Armin Approach

Armin and I met on the first morning of the First International Forum for the Person-Centered Approach in Qaxtepec, Mexico in June, 1982. The Forum was organized by Alberto Segrera to bring people from all over the world who were involved in the

Person-Centered Approach of Carl Rogers. The purpose was to share their expertise with people in Mexico who would otherwise never have the opportunity to interact with the Person-Centered ideas and people Alberto had met. There were several panels of people who had helped him develop the invitation lists for the conference. It was also the first person-centered conference in which the presentation of papers was a major focus.

Armin and I had traveled different pathways in arriving at that conference. Armin had taken a class from Carl at Harvard Summer School just as he was graduating from Princeton in 1948. An interaction with Carl at the end of that course had a life-changing impact on Armin. Confronted with his father's wish for him to become a physician and his own interest in psychology, Carl said to him, "But, Armin, what do you want for yourself?" No one had ever asked that of him (A. Klein, 2000). Shortly thereafter Armin entered Teachers' College, Columbia University to earn a PhD in psychology. Through the efforts of his mentor, Nicholas Hobbs, Armin did his internship with Carl at the Counseling Center in Chicago. When Armin was twenty-two years old and on his way to Chicago, he met Nat Raskin. Nat and Armin became lifelong colleagues and friends and Carl became his lifelong mentor and friend. And along the way he met Gerald Bauman who became his best friend. Thirty-two years later he went to Qaxtepec. He was 54 years old.

I had learned about the Person-Centered Approach through Carl's writings in my PhD program in Human Development. In the courses on Self Processes in Human Development I had posed deep questions about self and relationships from my own life struggles. Carl's writings gave me a voice and foundation for articulating my own experiences which I could use to answer my questions. Opportunities followed to attend conferences in La Jolla through the Human Dimensions in Medical Education Program where I first met Carl and later in Gay Swenson's workshops, "Living Now," as well as others. I was 45 years old when I arrived in Qaxtepec. Both of us were single but in relationships we were not happy in.

At the breakfast table that morning I introduced myself to Armin who was sitting two seats to my left. The discussion that ensued was about working in institutions. Armin told of his current

experience evaluating a mental health center, to which I responded thoughtfully. It was only later I learned the real story for Armin – that he had sat at the table because his old professor was there – but stayed because of his interest in me! (And that he really did not like institutions!). At the end of that first day standing in line for the cafeteria, I found Armin behind me and he asked me to have dinner with him and with Nat and Nina Raskin. We had already met Carol Wolter-Gustafson and Jean Clark from England.

We spent the week together. One day, walking, Carl approached us and said, “Oh Armin, Oh Grace, I wanted the two of you to meet, but I can see I am too late!” It would feel like a blessing to us later. Though it was not clear between us, by the end of the conference we had each made decisions that we wanted to be together. It just took a little time to work it out!

I moved to Armin’s home in Rochester, New York, with my 16 year-old daughter in January, 1983, continuing to commute to my job in Toledo, Ohio. We were married August 20, 1983 in the backyard of Armin’s old house with a lovely concert by Vivian and Don Weilerstein. You will see them and music appearing at special moments along the way! What brought us together was both attraction and shared values from the person-centered approach. But more importantly, we had each been searching for something not quite known but driving us toward it. Armin wrote a poem for me just two months after we met.

Tenderness

What is this deep and overwhelming tenderness?

I thought it our creation

Or your gift to me – starved as I was.

But that would make us precious – or me unworthy.

I sense our tenderness is a vast, echoing cathedral,

A place of reverence – opening.

A place we two stubborn, determined explorers

Have sought forever,

Driven by unconscious visions

And encouraged by but partial successes,

A place we were unable to enter Alone.
Now with you, I am awe-struck
As we walk together in this new world.
Everything is here, even more memories.
Our tenderness is a hallowed place,
With a presence that transforms my life.

Original version
(A. Klein 1982)

I have the poem still. I asked him to include it in what he said to me for our wedding.

Recently I found in his desk a letter I had written to him that same fall. I was sharing with him how we could be together. He was the poetic one; I the one who made things happen!

When we met again in Toronto, he had made a sign – The Grace-Armin approach. And later his car tag, ARM GR – joined!

We were both frightened – having been hurt before – but we forged ahead. Our love grew- and our commitment- as we came to know each other's stories – the histories of our lives and our struggles. I found a poem recently which Armin had written, "Pain," beginning "Dearly Beloved, thank you for asking me to tell you about my pain." And ended, "What remains and stands out even more brilliantly is the deep, beautiful, and powerful unconditionality of your love." It was written in 2001 (A. Klein, unpublished). In sharing our story on our twenty-fifth anniversary, I wrote, "We found our dreams in each other." (G. Klein, 2009, 2C).

My daughter, Cindy, at 16, came with me to live in Rochester. Armin's daughter, Meg, was living with Armin after college and his son John had been there and cycled back before leaving to finish college. Our two older children, Lisa and Shakati Singh, were already in their own lives. All too soon they were all gone.

Armin and I spent the years as a family of two, living with our dogs in his old house. We began to restore the kitchen just before we were married. Many other projects followed in our old house which is an expensive mistress! Our carpenter friend, Gerry

Sharp, did all of the renovations and is permanently painted in the wall mural in the dining room by Bill Middleton, architect, painter, friend. There is Armin at the piano, Gerry, Bill the painter and Grace painting the sun! The house has provided many stories for our life together.

Armin's clients came to his home as soon as he moved in – thirty five years ago. When I came I was always the phantom wife, leaving flowers, when I left for my work out-of-town. But 15 Arnold Park became our home and a place of healing and the gathering place for our family – an added sixth young adult, Thomas, and eventually our nine grandchildren who lived from coast to coast: New York, New Hampshire, Virginia, Missouri, Oregon and California. The dining room table is the scene of many gatherings of family and friends.

We made adventures too. We traveled to many of the Forums, reuniting with old friends. We went to Provence and had wonderful times alone and with our friends, Bill and Lois. We went to Florence where Armin saw Michelangelo's David. I thought he would die fulfilled on the spot! We went to an outdoor opera in Italy near the home of Puccini and saw La Turandot, a magnificent way to see and hear opera. And we heard carpenters working on a house, filling the valley with opera music, near the house we rented in Italy.

We had our struggles with each other but we could always talk. And we had a trio with Jerry Bauman, Armin and me to talk about our lives. For many years Jerry came two or three times a year – the guest room was “his room” when he was there - and we had waffles with fresh fruit and maple syrup on Sunday mornings before he left for home. It was a richly shared time as Armin and Jerry continued to be best friends and closer brothers than either of them had shared with their biological brothers. Their annual trips to Warm Springs were another shared experience, often with Nat Raskin, where Armin often shared his poetry. Recently, Jerry gave me the descriptive phrase of “serious talk” about those times we shared. I have found it very helpful.

We organized workshops with other person-centered people to come together to talk about our lives – and grow. It was a very rich life – and we shared it with others in meetings, “Living in Person-Centered Relationships,” which always became mutually

sharing dialogues. We felt connected to a world larger than our own and we made and kept deep friendships with people as we continued to attend the Forums all over the world.

In 1997 I came home to stay. I am grateful for the fourteen years we had together, given what began to happen shortly after when Armin was first diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Armin continued to write poetry and share it in meetings and with clients. With the help of a friend, we made it into a book, *Songs of Living* (A. Klein, 2008). He continued to write and intended his new songs to be *Songs of Loving*. I am appreciating so much more the power of written words as I go back and see the things Armin had to say about his life. It is comforting to me in his absence. In another vein, he had always wanted to play the piano and began to take lessons from our friend, Vivian Weilerstein. He found a beautiful piano which we have all enjoyed for years. One of the first and biggest losses for Armin was his ability to play the piano as he had memorized everything, not knowing how to easily read the music. He discovered wine from Provence through Kermit Lynch in Berkeley when we went to Chez Panisse for dinner on an annual visit to his son, Shakati Singh. For many years he made friends with the salesmen there and had wine shipped to our home, to be stored in the basement vault which was his wine cellar. We even visited two of our favorite wineries in Provence on one of our travels there. Everywhere, we had adventures, made friends and each of us became more open, less shy and more comfortable with ourselves.

Medical History

By the time we had seen four neurologists for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's I had figured out that there were no more treatments to be had. The prostate cancer was treated; recurred, treated another way; recurred, and finally kept at bay with hormone treatments. There was much fear and many losses during those years, but we got what was available, grieved, raged and returned to living.

The Beginning of the End

In May, 2008, I planned an 80th birthday celebration for Armin, honoring his 58 years as a psychotherapist in the person-centered tradition. Our friends, Vivian and Don Weilerstein, and their daughter, Alisa, who is Armin's god-daughter, played a beautiful concert for him in a lovely old concert hall of the Eastman School of Music. The night before our family and friends gathered for dinner to recognize and celebrate Armin's life. Many spoke of what he had meant to them. I was satisfied when Armin said, "I know my life has been worthwhile and that I am loved." I wanted him to know what he had meant to so many people while he could still hear and appreciate their love. The photographs and DVD we made from the occasion are priceless gifts of memory. A book is in process.

The last trip we made to France was in 2009. We rented a house in Provence alone for the first week. The second week our friend, Bill, joined us and the third week we went to visit Julius Huisinga at his summer home in France for an artist's workshop.

I took a wheelchair for helping Armin with the travel. He didn't like it, but consented. He was still able to walk short distances. We had a marvelous time. We spent a few days in Paris with Bill at the end. In the Louvre we turned a corner and were admitted inside the roped off area with Armin in the wheelchair. We were right in front of the Mona Lisa!

Our bedroom and bath were being renovated while we were away with Bill, the architect, making certain everything was handicapped accessible. Our resident carpenter, Gerry, and his crew did a beautiful job, but did not finish until two days before Thanksgiving. By then, I was over the top! But I still hoped we could go once more to France.

The next two years were a downward trajectory – Armin would lose some capability – I would cope - and grieve. And then we would get back to enjoying life. I began to do the driving and went to the bank with him. He would take his deposit slips as he had always done, ask for his balance, ask the teller to move money to his checking account. It was only later when I found a year of unopened bank statements that I realized how he had coped – by charming the

tellers who had helped him manage long after he was really able to do so. By then I was in charge of managing all of our finances which was very difficult. We had never even put our money together nor developed a budget! – not too responsible of us. But now it was mine to manage.

We bought a new car when mine needed expensive repairs. We chose it together and bought one large enough for his long legs for him to be comfortable and with the top-of-the-line music system – two of his passions – cars and music. But he never drove it. I continued to take him out driving in his car on Sunday mornings to the parkway where there was very little traffic. He had promised me his car would not sit another winter. When I told him I had a buyer for his car, he said, “No.” I reminded him of his promise and he let me sell the car without further objection. I had helped him keep driving as long as possible. It was hard for both of us to let it go. But he was totally comfortable riding in the new car with me and some of our happiest most relaxed times were driving to New York listening to beautiful music. I still feel him with me in the car when I play the music and reach out to touch him.

We continued to attend the Symphony and Chamber Music Society concerts even through the last fall. The theater had become too complicated for him to enjoy, but he loved the music. It took a lot of effort to navigate finding handicapped accessible services to make it possible. The ushers at the symphony were especially helpful. The new box seats had accessible spaces which I was able to arrange for the last year, and were accompanied by valet parking. That made it possible to continue to attend concerts all through the last year, including the Rochester winters.

Tending to Business

Although it took a while to work out, within three years of our marriage Armin put my name on the deed to his house – which I was contributing to financially. It took a bit longer but we made wills and signed health care proxy, advanced directives and power of attorney documents – and updated them. Our disagreements were small and resolved, treating all of our children equally in our wills, making each other our health care proxies and one of our children

the second person. We had complete agreement on not wanting extraordinary measures at the end of our lives.

Informed Consent.

In February, 2009, I made an appointment with Dr. Timothy Quill who was now head of the Palliative Care Program at Strong Memorial Hospital at the University of Rochester. He had been Armin's internist for ten years, leaving his practice to head the new palliative care program. I thought Armin would be reassured knowing Tim would be helping to care for him. They greeted each other with great fondness.

Tim asked Armin about his wishes and helped him to sign the new MOLST forms for New York State (Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment). The new forms were more explicit than previous versions we had each signed – but consistent in limiting medical interventions, including no hospitalization, no feeding tube, no intubation and Do Not Resuscitate (DNR). While I do not know if Armin understood the implications of what he was signing, I was in full agreement and they were consistent with earlier versions we had each signed.

We continued to see Dr. Quill every three months. He was very helpful to me in sorting out recommendations made by the neurologists, urologists and internists so that Armin was not subjected to useless medical diagnostic or treatment modalities which would not extend his life. Quality of life and Armin's comfort were the only criteria we used in decisions about his care.

Despite my commitment to these objectives I was frightened about how Armin's medical conditions would play out – would it be the prostate cancer with bone metastases, which is very painful, that would gain control? Knowing that Armin did not tolerate pain at all, this possibility left me frightened. But would it be better to stop the treatment – even with those outcomes- rather than have Armin live in a declined state of Alzheimer's when he would be neither aware nor have any quality of life. Tim was a steady voice as I struggled with decisions to do – or not do – in keeping with Armin's wishes.

Knowing that surgery, anesthesia and hospitalization have devastating effects on the mental status of older people, I hoped

Armin, above all, would not fall and break a hip. That would be the worst – fortunately we did not have to cross that bridge. Armin died having had only one unnecessary x-ray of his back – a consent I did not catch to prevent when he was having lower back pain. The pain was temporary and did not return. But the x-ray was useless in that it revealed only what we already knew – that Armin had metastases in his bones from the prostate cancer.

Family

Our family of six grown children who live across the country is not a blended family. Despite our hopes, it was too late for that to happen. We became a traveling family, visiting our six children and they us, celebrating marriages and arrivals of new children to our current nine. Only for our wedding, our 10th anniversary and Armin's 80th birthday were we all together and even then someone was usually missing. Oh yes, I think there was also a 20th anniversary and Armin's 75th or something like that. And there was an earlier birthday when Don and Vivian played a concert again for us, and Alisa, age 13, played Happy Birthday to Armin on her cello!

Armin had a special relationship with Molly, Meg and Tim's daughter, whom he encouraged and helped her start her interest in music. They wrote poetry to each other and Molly painted for him; they shared the hope of drinking margaritas together on her 21st birthday. Katie, Lisa and Chris's daughter, and Molly sang for Armin at his 80th birthday celebration and Cindy's family, Mairead and Caitrin, with their dad, Keith, did Irish dancing. Katie, Jacob, Mairead and Caitrin each made beautiful books about *Remembering Grandpa Armin* the first Christmas after his death. And Jacob, grown tall to 6'1" took his young adult wardrobe from Armin's closet after his death. He looked so handsome in his grandpa's tuxedo for his senior prom with his beautiful girlfriend, Zoe.

As Armin's health problems escalated, I developed a group email of family and close friends to keep people updated. In June of that last year, Armin's children, Shakati Singh, Meg and John came to visit. I called a family meeting to talk with them about the ending process – did they want to be called as the end neared, Armin's wishes from my discussion with him and the plan to have one

service immediately after his death and then set a date for the Memorial Service to give everyone time to arrange travel. They agreed on the plan for the memorial service.

Thomas has called me on almost every Sunday for a long time. It was especially important that we continue to connect through Armin's long illness and his visits were important times for us to talk, to remain in contact through the changing chapters of his life and what was happening in mine. I am grateful for his presence and support.

Cindy and her family came as well, the girls enjoying the summer visits to our swimming pool. Their energy and enthusiasm for visits to Granny's house were a source of joy and the photographs of all of our grandchildren remain in our home, marking their growth and special events. Our last Christmas together, with Lisa and Cindy and their families, we all went to Florida where we were able to go to the beach, drive Armin around in the golf cart and share an evening cruise to see the dolphins. It was very special, especially the photographs which remind us of that time.

The holiday visits of all of my children at Christmas and of John's family for Thanksgiving were place markers for the normal life we had created together and shared.

Friends

Several of our long-time friends came to spend time with Armin. Lew Ward-Baker came to play the piano and sing for Armin; Pat and I met for breakfast to make an effort to stay in touch with what was happening in our lives. Elaine and Bruce Fredericks came for dinner at our home and we in theirs, as we did with Lew and Pat. Bruce came many times to be with Armin and always asked if there were things he could do to help. They watched DVDs together, especially the National Parks Series by Ken Burns. Howie Kirshenbaum came regularly with his computer to bring photos of his travels to share with Armin. Each person brought long-standing friendship to the visits and made efforts to connect with Armin in ways that were both familiar and within his ability to enjoy. I was grateful for their visits and the pleasure and company they provided to Armin. Our friend, Bill Middleton, came on several occasions,

recalling their history of sitting in the backyard, talking about their wives while Bill smoked his cigars!

Our long-time friend and traveling partner, Lois Evans, came as well that fall to spend time with us.

Armin's Care

I was determined to care for Armin at home. We had purchased long-term care insurance to help pay for the costs of care, if needed. As Armin's needs increased it became more confining for me – and difficult to care for him and for all the business of running our practice and our household – and to have any time to take care of myself. I realized instantly one day that my daughter, Lisa, was NOW my health care proxy – and that we had not discussed my wishes. She was coming for a visit – and I asked my other children, Cindy and Thomas, to come at the same time. We sat in the same library where Armin and I had talked of his death, now mine, as I expressed my wishes – that I would want assisted suicide if it were legal (always wanting to be in control!) but in its absence that I would want no extraordinary measures – only comfort. Could each of them do that for me? They agreed. I felt secure knowing they each had heard the same thing, would be able to support each other and stand up to “the system” as necessary (especially the two who are experienced nurses!). With that, I changed my health care proxy to include all three of them. Since each lives away from Rochester, I knew it would be unpredictable who could get there first in case of any emergency.

They encouraged me to get help in Armin's care. I chose a friend we had known for many years – one whom Armin would be comfortable with. I gave up three hours a week of our privacy to have Kathy come and for me to be away. Armin did well except that he did not want her help with the bathroom (even when he needed it). But they worked it out when it was necessary. She asked him once if he was angry with her and he said, “Yes,” a most infrequent thing for him to express or acknowledge.

When Armin could no longer take a shower alone I took mine with him. It is not fun to get wet trying to help someone – so we just took it together and that worked for many months.

When I found myself yelling at Armin in the shower – the one thing he hated most was my yelling at him – I stopped to figure out what was happening. To appreciate, you must see Armin at 6’, 185# and me at 5’2” and much less in weight! He had lost strength to the point I was frightened with him in the shower. A fall would be devastating and in the bathroom, the worst – and I realized I had to ask for help.

One might glimpse my priority – to protect our relationship – to continue our life together no matter what it took. It wasn’t just for Armin – it was for me as well – to not turn him into a medical condition or patient nor me into a care-giver. He was a person, as was I, and our relationship the most important to protect.

The first step was to deal with Armin’s long-term care insurance – and its requirements. He was certified for care on February 28, 2011 on the basis of his inability to perform a certain number of activities of daily living. Though I had collected sources of help ahead, it was hard to find people who were certified as Home Health Aides – a requirement for his insurance. An acquaintance told me of an agency which her parents had used and been pleased with their services. I met with them and they sent Steve Nichols. He and Armin connected at once – and Steve stayed with us until Armin’s death – at first three mornings a week for three hours and eventually six mornings a week. Steve would do Armin’s shower by putting him in the shower chair and wheeling him into the handicapped accessible bathroom – thank you Bill and Gerry! And then dressed him in the clothes I selected for him – always things Armin liked such as his soft cashmere shirts in cold weather and always his stylish sports coats.

The issue of Armin’s size was always a difficult factor in his care – and Steve was not a large man. So we did it together. After a certain point in the process Steve could handle Armin alone – and I was free to see clients or run errands.

Armin’s favorite breakfast was waffles with fresh fruit and warm maple syrup (He ate two gallons in the last year!). He would eat it every day – but some days he had to eat cereal – you can guess why! He and Steve enjoyed this time together and some days Steve would take him in the wheelchair to the coffee shop around the corner. I also experienced in this process the disaster of trying to use

a wheelchair on our neighborhood sidewalks which were in such poor condition.

Our Work

Armin continued his work with clients through all the sequences of his illnesses. When he had daily radiation treatments, he never missed a day of work – it was what he held onto to maintain control. It was especially difficult for me to be “outside” that client priority but we got through it and he eventually regained his strength and returned to our normal life.

We had co-facilitated the therapy group for now ten years and I had increased my practice substantially over the last three years. It was a difficult time when I had to say that Armin was not accepting new clients. Some chose to come to see me; others not.

As clients reached their own points of need, things shifted. When I invited friends in a holiday letter to visit Armin, one client asked for an additional hour with him alone which gave her two hours alone, as well as one with Armin and me. (Her statement of her experience with Armin is in the ending of this paper). She also recorded some of her sessions with Armin and shared them with me which is an enormous gift. Another, when the lack of Armin’s speech bothered him, I joined his therapy hour from a place of our ongoing relationship in his couples therapy. Another continued to see Armin alone as she had done for years until the last week of his life. The day came in this process when I told Armin’s two clients that his practice was now closed, but that they were welcome to continue to see him as they chose. With my new clients, some were comfortable with Armin’s presence when asked; others not and I scheduled those when the Home Health Aide was here. One new client who was a hospice nurse said, “It felt comfortable to have Armin there in his chair and it seemed that he connected deeply to what we were talking about.”

Armin continued in all of these times to be the warm open presence he had always been. Sometimes he would say something that seemed “right on” despite the loss of his usual language and cognitive functioning. He seemed to me to be only love, warmth and

empathy during all of that time – the deep openness he had written of (A. Klein 2001).

As Armin's mobility became impaired it was a challenge to get him from his therapy chair into the wheelchair. Clients began to help me help him stand – and eventually lift him – into the wheelchair.

David was the first to help –and then offered to help me walk Armin up the stairs. There was a night when I could not get Armin down the porch stairs to go out. He was too frightened by the stairs and said, “Yes,” when I asked him if he wanted to go back into the house. I ordered the construction for the porch lift and chair lift for the stairs the next day (in April). In late June, as David and I lifted one foot after another up the stairs, we knew David was at the end of his physical strength and that it was a race whether the chair lift would arrive in time. It did - just barely.

Another client, Pete, ran out of money and I asked if he would help me with Armin going up the stairs at night. He lived very near and readily agreed. He began in late June to lift Armin onto the chair lift – and off at the top - and to lift him into bed. One night, as I was cleaning Armin after he was in bed, Pete stepped forward to help. I knew then that he knew how to do this. Pete's therapy progressed and he began to explore options for returning to his work life as a chef. I thought he would leave in two weeks. One night, as we put Armin to bed, he said, “Can we talk? I can't wait until Friday” (his appointment day. It was Wednesday).

We sat in the library at 10 at night and he asked me how I intended to care for Armin. I said I would care for him at home and pay for help through the long-term care insurance. Pete said, “I want to stay and help you.”

I was speechless. I could not get my brain to comprehend what he was saying – and that in future discussions that he was prepared to stay for a year! It took a few days and discussions to come to an agreement:

- that Pete would come to live with us
- that he would help in Armin's care
- that he would take the Home Health Aide training which I would pay for
- that he would cook for us!

-that I would pay him through the long-term care insurance (which required that he was certified)

Pete moved in on September 23rd. His knowledge from caring for his grandparents and other life experiences, his size and his strength made it possible for us to care for Armin – continuing the help of Steve. Only gradually did I come to know that Pete has a passion about caring for people at the end of life and a sophisticated understanding that all that matters is comfort and choice.

On Labor Day weekend, Sarah had come back to Rochester to stay with me. Also a client, she had gone home after graduating from the University of Rochester. She came back to pursue her plan to find work with children. She offered to help with Armin – and did – especially staying with him when I had clients whom Armin did not know. She was caring in wanting to understand his needs, the greatest of which was to come for me when Armin needed me.

Hospice

When two people asked me if I were using hospice, I called them and a nurse came for the initial consultation. She explained the services and the visits required. (Remember my experience with my mother). I said I wasn't ready – to give up the privacy for our relationship. But two days later Armin developed a skin breakdown on his back due to his incontinence. I did not know how to treat it and called hospice. They came immediately, provided supplies, expert knowledge and the same day an expensive mattress for the bed and pad for the wheelchair. We became a team with Lisa, the nurse, Karl a home health aide, Pete, Steve, Sarah and I now caring for Armin. It was very helpful in many practical ways. Karl came in the evening to help Armin to the bathroom to try to prevent further skin breakdown. He was very experienced with equipment and became an important resource for how to cope with both mobility and incontinence issues. A massage therapist, Jean, also volunteered to come weekly to give Armin a relaxing massage. All of this experience was very supportive in both practical and other ways. The process of having people in our home, with opinions of what I should be doing for Armin's care, was not always pleasant. But Lisa was most supportive of me in my wishes for Armin's care and I

prevailed. His skin breakdown did not ever completely heal and was the source of the only discomfort Armin experienced – when Pete would lift him it was impossible not to touch it. It was very hard for Pete, knowing he was hurting Armin. But as soon as Armin was in the bed or in his chair, he was comfortable. Hospice also provided a Comfort Kit and Lisa reviewed the instructions with me about the medication for pain and breathing support which might be needed at the end.

There was one time that Armin had a fever and the nurse came. Armin was not very alert during that time, but I decided not to call the physician or to have him order antibiotics and Armin's fever subsided in two days. Lisa commented that at that point she knew I understood what Hospice was about.

Our clients continued to provide a source of focus for me. It was challenging, satisfying and stimulating to work with them. Their acceptance and valuing of Armin was touching to me and rewarding to see both of them continuing to connect in loving ways. There were a lot of kisses at the end of every group and Armin remained his most engaged self in those times with clients in their weekly visits, listening to their talking as he had always valued in his work. In addition, the clients continued their therapy uninterrupted and participated in this natural process of maintaining Armin's involvement in life through the ending of his life. We continue to support each other in grieving and missing him now that he is gone, with someone saying, "I miss Armin in his chair," or another remembering and sharing something Armin had said to them in their therapy.

My daughter, Lisa, came again from Oregon that last year for my birthday and stayed a week. She was able to help in Armin's care, was supportive to me, but said she gained the most for herself – in part, realizing she had let pass an opportunity to get to know a really remarkable man.

What remained normal for me was getting in bed every night with Armin – as we had always done. I did Sudoku – which Armin never understood -- read, wrote poetry and then when I could finally sleep, wrapped my arms and legs around him. It kept us connected and me sane.

The Ending

Armin continued to be with clients until the last week of his life. I don't remember exactly why he was not able to go to the library that last week. But, our friend, Bill Middleton came for a week and spent time with him for the last time. I began to call people to tell them it was time to come if they wanted to say good-bye. On Tuesday, I wrote to Armin's children and told them if they wanted to see Armin alive, it was time to come. His daughter, Meg, wrote that she was coming on Saturday and bringing her daughter, Janey, who also wanted to come.

One of Armin's dearest clients came that week with her new grandson, Cameron Joseph, to say good-bye. She remarked recently how handsome he looked and how much we had preserved his dignity.

That Saturday morning Pete and I were able to help Armin into the shower, but we looked at each other as if to say it was the last time. Two of our clients came to say good-bye. One was crying as she had just found the email and voice message I had left for her. Armin was visibly empathic to her in her crying. Later, Meg and Janey arrived. I had left a message for Meg as they arrived at the airport saying to come now; that I thought Armin was waiting for her.

Armin was in his chair, dressed in his cashmere shirt with his gold watch. He looked great! He was alert to Meg and Janey and they stayed to visit with him for an hour.

That was the last time he was up.

We stayed with Armin continuously. When Meg left on Monday morning, it looked as if Armin was dying, but it did not come that day.

I went to bed with him that Monday night as usual, but awakened at 3am, perhaps aware that something was changing. I lay beside him, touching, holding, loving and protecting him that his ending would be peaceful.

Sarah and Pete were with me and with Armin until the end at 6am. We played his favorite music, Beethoven's Violin Concerto, which he had listened to with his father and Pete's favorite, Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition. I told him of our wonderful

times in Provence, remembering the sun, the garden, how happy we were together. I am still unbearably sad as I write this. Armin died peacefully with me beside him. It was November 15, 2011.

I have small regrets, but I felt and feel an enormous sense of gratitude that I was able to accomplish what I so wanted to do: to care for Armin at home, to preserve our relationship to the end and to maintain his functioning and dignity and engagement with people to the end of his life. I am enormously grateful to our clients, and especially to David, Sarah and Pete, who helped me care for him beyond any imagined possibility. It was a journey with profound learning and growth.

The Memorial Service

Thomas and Cindy arrived the same day that Armin died. Thomas came early and went with me to the mortuary and at his initiation they were able to arrange the cremation so that Armin's remains would be there the following day for the service. He also has a deep sense of ritual and arranged with me the dining room to serve as our gathering place. Of course, it would be run as a group, with everyone having an opportunity to speak as they wished. I have a large screen in the room which holds votive candles and each person who spoke lit a candle for Armin. Some of the clients came and spoke, sharing their love for and experiences with Armin.

There were beautiful flowers from my favorite store, Sassafras, some of them a gift from my sister and her family.

And Pete prepared a lovely meal for all of us to share at the end.

Three weeks later, with all of Armin's children present, we gathered again for an Open House in the afternoon and a service at 6pm for family and friends. One of my clients played his guitar; others spoke. Molly played her guitar and sang the beautiful song she had written, "Holding Hands" (Trull, 2011), expressing so beautifully her love for her grandpa and for us.

My sister, Coralie and brother, Jim, were here, but my children not, leaving the space for Armin's children to share this time alone, with old friends from their growing up in Rochester. My children would come again at Christmas when I would need them.

We marked the ending of Armin's life here, but not the ending of the impact he has had on so many people in his life as father, therapist, friend and my love.

In the spring, our friend from Qaxtepec, Carol Wolter-Gustafson and I took some of Armin's ashes to the cemetery in Sharon and spread them on the graves of his parents. We gave thanks to those who had given him life for the enormous gifts he gave to all of us. The rest remain with me for the ending of my life and our last travel together. But, in August, I will go to Provence to the first house we rented and begin to write our love story, *The Grace-Armin Approach*.

Caring for Armin with Unusual Help of our Clients: The Voices of the Clients

Shortly after Armin's death, Sarah sat with me in the library and began to talk about her experience with Armin. I realized immediately that what she was saying was important to her healing and wrote it down for her. From that she wrote the following for this account:

“What Armin Meant to Me” - Sarah

When I was with him I could be the kind of person I want to be—kind, sensitive, and helpful. I wasn't afraid of him. The more time I spent with him, it seems like the less afraid I was of other people. I could sing with him, and draw, and be open.

One thing I learned from Armin was to speak from the heart, because he did it constantly. It seemed like the best way.

To have a meaningful conversation with him, I had to be open, even when it seemed stupid because it felt like I was somehow unworthy to acknowledge what he was going through—that I couldn't possibly understand.

I remember one day, when he was having a harder time speaking or understanding me, I just got down on my knees and held his hand and said “I know it's really hard for you and I'm sorry that you have so much trouble.” It seemed to help.

He had gotten frustrated, and then he relaxed, smiled when I talked to him. He squeezed my hand. He might have said, “Thank you”—something like that. I think that was the first time I hugged him. Then when I tried to get up, he wouldn’t let me go. I think I did get a little nervous that he wouldn’t let me go—ever.

I didn’t want him to feel like he bothered me. I wanted him to know that I accepted him completely, and that the trouble he had wasn’t who he was, that it didn’t get in the way.

I realized that I would never understand Armin unless I was open to him.

When he was in his reclining chair—I wanted to find the right place for him, the right amount of recline, his feet up. I finally figured out the process for how to help him find it. First I had to give up what didn’t work—like moving him and asking: “Is this good? Is this good?” I learned to put him in one position, sit with him for a while, and watch how he moved. Sometimes he would sit up a little, and I would raise his chair back a little. Sometimes he would push his head into the rest, and I would lower it back down. It always felt strangely rewarding. He would lay back and sigh—then I knew I had him—and he would close his eyes. It’s funny the things that seem important. At the time, it seemed vitally important that Armin be in the perfect position.

There was one day when I taught him how to use the remote—he would play with the buttons, up and down. He couldn’t do it again, but that one day he did it.

I teased him that he was feeding the mice, and he always seemed to think that was funny. That reminds me of the whole ordeal with the rat we caught, and what to do with it. Grace and I agreed that we would say that Gerry let it go in the park. I remember telling Armin what was going on, and that Gerry let it go in the park, and he laughed at me! I can still see him at that moment. He didn’t believe me. He knew I was deluding myself.

Grace: You were his watchdog, Sarah, to see that he got enough of my attention.

I don’t know how he did this, but his face just conveyed—“I miss Grace.” It was in one of my drawings, where he looked a little bit sad. He would just go inward. I noticed it when I was drawing the details of his face—do you miss Grace? “Yes.” Do you want me

to bring you to her? “Yes.” I think that was the first time I interrupted you with a client. “Okay, we’ll go.” He said, “Thank you!” He was so happy to see you. It was beautiful.

Grace: I am glad you saw that.

He really loved you—more than I’ve ever known anyone to love someone, and it was returned equally.

I don’t know how to explain it, but it feels like he is still here—when you got up to answer the phone just then, Armin and I were laughing together. It made me feel good.

Looking back, there was at least one day where I think Armin saw himself as my therapist. We were sitting in the library after Armin had a session with a client. I sat down and there was a pause of silence, followed by, “Why are you here?”

At the time, I interpreted this as a question of my presence in his home. In retrospect, it feels like Armin was just doing what came naturally—being a psychotherapist. At any rate, I answered him very simply. He acknowledged me with a concerned, sad, “Oh.” He said it in a way that communicated clearly that he was open and available to hearing more, but not pushing. I continued to tell him the story of how it was for me at that time and that I had come to stay. He answered me with an emphatic, “Good,” the force of which surprised me and shocked me into really understanding the level of his concern for me.

In April, after Armin’s death, six clients and I attended the meeting of the Rochester Area Person-Centered Association, RAPCA, to share the experience, “Caring for Armin with Unusual Help of Our Clients.” As we introduced ourselves at the beginning of the meeting, Denise said, “I’m with Grace.” Each followed in the same way as the introductions reached them. I felt very touched and supported. Each of them has given their consent for this account of their experience to be shared.

David shared that, in great pain, he found Armin’s smiling face on the [Psychology Today](#) website and learned that Armin lived only two blocks from his house. He arrived at the front door at 9am and I answered. He asked if Armin was available and I said, “He is resting after the Y but I will check with him.” David waited in the library and a few minutes later, Armin appeared. Even that process amazed him. Later, when he was frustrated with Armin’s inability to

talk, Armin said, "My wife is a therapist." And David became my client, meeting with both of us and joining the group.

David said that helping to care for Armin helped him to feel needed and to emerge from his depression.

Denise recalled that she came to see Armin in great distress when the internship for her master's program in school counseling fell apart. She wrote recently about her first impression,

"I drove into the driveway and in front of me I see a car. The license had ARM GR. And the first thought I had was: *Oh great, he wants his vanity plate to read Armin the Great! What am I getting myself into?* I must have had some reservations for my mind to go to such a conclusion so quickly. Needless to say, he was great in so many ways and I am glad that our paths have crossed because he has given me so many gifts, including my relationship with Grace."

Her husband remarked recently that if that painful experience in her internship had not happened, she would not have met Armin. She also joined the group and continued her therapy with Armin and then later with both of us.

She wrote a journal entry on November 9th, 2011, "Armin on the brain...."

-building more than a therapeutic relationship, he was building a human connection

-extending not only a listening ear, a helping hand, and accepting smile, but also his heart and soul

-waiting for life to leave, waiting for life to enter, forgetting to embrace the life in front of you (Armin's presence reminded me to take in the life right now, which he did every day)."

"Meditations on Armin" - Annie

Annie wrote, "While searching the internet for a person-centered therapist, I came across a picture of Armin Klein wearing a warm smile that I would come to know well. When I called, Grace answered and disclosed that while Armin was still seeing existing clients, he had dementia and was not taking new clients. However, she said that she was also a therapist and currently accepting new clients. Grace asked whether I would like it if Armin sat in on our sessions and I said I would. Grace, picking up on my acute distress,

asked if I would like to come over now. I did and was so thankful for this first of many kindnesses. She told me their address and it made me smile because it was right across the street.

Armin missed only a few of our sessions and I always felt a lift when I walked into the room and he smiled and made some vocalization of recognition and greeting. At the time I knew Armin he was largely unable to speak but he was a master of communication in the ways that really matter. His smile, face and body conveyed an incredible openness as if to say, 'Here I am and I am present with you.' At some of the most poignant moments in our sessions, Armin would offer an empathic utterance that allowed me to go deeper into the painful emotion. There were many selfish times where I wanted more, wanted to know what was going on in that great mind. But what he offered was better: a therapist and a man distilled, allowing him to be fully open, empathic and compassionate. When I left I always gave Armin a hug and a kiss. In turn, he would kiss me on the cheek or take my hand and gently kiss it, always the consummate gentleman.

The last day that Armin was able to be up Grace and I sat with him and looked through their wedding album. Grace spoke to Armin and me about their incredible love story, a love I witnessed every day I knew them. I have thought about Armin often since his death but during my session today, I felt his presence and it made me cry both for the much-needed warmth he emanated and because I miss him. I not only miss Armin, I miss the community that came together to support Grace and Armin. The love and devotion expressed by family, friends, and clients is a testament to the incredible impact Armin and Grace had on each of us. It was a gift to feel part of the kinetic atmosphere created by Grace and Armin's love for each other. I would watch him watching her or see her whisper to him as she set down his drink and these exchanges spoke volumes about where they had been and the intimate connection they continued to share. At those times they lived in a universe of two. I will call on these experiences, these gifts, these lessons for which I am infinitely grateful.

Pete said, "I didn't know Armin. But when Grace asked me to help her with Armin, I quickly learned what he needed. As things progressed, I wanted to stay and help her. What she wanted to do

was what I knew that matters – to provide comfort and choices to people at the end of life.”

Josephine Gaeffke shared with us her experience. She was one of the two people who continued to see Armin alone until the end of his life. She shares the experience eloquently.

“In Therapy with Armin: 2003-2011” - Josephine Gaeffke

I was a client of Armin Klein from 2003 until a week before he died in 2011. I was in individual therapy with him through all those years. From 2009 onward, I was in group, couple, and individual sessions with Grace accompanied by Armin until he passed away. In 2010, Grace sent a letter inviting her clients and friends to visit with Armin. She left it very open what kind of help we might offer, so I asked her to have some more time for individual sessions with Armin. At first, I thought this might free up more time for Grace to do things for herself, but in the end I was very happy when she agreed to my proposal, because these “Armin Sessions” as I called the therapy I had with him in the waning of his physical existence, were so very helpful to me. It was an awesome experience to feel how his love and caring would shine through the seemingly impenetrable barriers of Armin’s silence and his inability to move. The Armin Sessions also felt like a very safe place to express myself in writing and out loud, and not to fear to tell my story honestly, openly, and deeply. These sessions helped me build confidence in myself, because I really was on my own. I had to find my own way to get back on the stage.

When I first came to Armin, he was fully capable of communicating verbally his great intelligence, culture, humor, wit, caring, openness, and great ability to love. But he said very little and I would get frustrated that he would never answer my questions. I wished simply to be told do A, B and C, so I could “escape” therapy quickly and go perform without memory slips. At that time I thought the only thing between myself and happiness was to have no more memory slips. After many years I realize I was right, not having memory slips is related to happiness, but a happiness that you can feel only if you have experienced the deepest pain. I had not only forgotten a few notes, I had forgotten extremely painful childhood

memories. To play without forgetting those notes and to achieve a deep infinitely rich happiness, I had to immerse myself in the pain of my forgotten past. To find ways into that place that terrified me so very much, was extremely difficult.

Armin never told me how to get to those buried places even when he could, however every word that Armin said helped me voyage there. Armin's words were like springboards. As I am slowly becoming a person these words and phrases spring more and more powerfully. Even at the beginning when those words seemed so mysterious, I sensed there was something important in them. When I first started recording our sessions perhaps I already sensed that, since forgetting was my special way of avoiding my pain, recording our sessions would hold on these portals into my inner self. Or perhaps, at first I was mostly in awe of Armin as an important man, so I thought his words must be important. With his characteristic openness to whatever ideas I had, he let me record our sessions. At home I would listen to my recordings, copy down what he said and then erase the recording, because I hated hearing myself so intensely, not yet being able to value myself. When he stopped speaking I stopped recording, until he died. I am so grateful that I did keep a few recorded sessions, which now that he is not physically with us anymore, are extremely moving to listen to. Listening to these recordings so many years later, I realized not only how precious whatever he had to say was to me, and how I could still grow from those comments. I also realized how helpful it was to hear myself. Now I record myself and continue my "Armin Sessions." I imagine he is there, and I go directly to my business of mourning my deeply buried past. Not only Armin's words, but also physical presence with his warm and kind way of being were powerful healing tools for me. And the memory of these continues to give me company in my lonely journey.

Armin at first suggested I write. I would write at first on scrapes of paper what he would say. When he could not talk or move any more I felt somewhat less terrified, and I dared to start simply writing down every word I said as Armin sat with me and smiled encouragingly. I would start crying as soon as I started writing. Even now when I reread those late Armin Sessions, I am deeply

touched, and I feel I can grow more from those Armin Sessions I recorded in writing.

From the beginning of my therapy I realized I needed to say out loud whatever popped into my head so I could learn from myself. That was somewhat possible when Armin was in possession of speech and movement. But as he lost those blessings, even I could see that my fear that Armin would hurt me violently, physically, and mentally was not reality, and I could begin to grasp that it was my childhood reality. So when Armin could not speak or move it was easier for me to open up, and I was able to start going deeper into the most intense childhood fears and pain. I knew he could not make fun of me or tell on me. I felt safest with Armin when only his smiling face remained.

Armin was always the person I feared least in the world, because he always was so encouraging. He was always accepting, and always listened deeply to whatever I managed to say. He made me feel for the first time in my life important and valued. He even rejoiced when I managed to express my rage, and cried of joy when I started to express myself. This warm understanding that I felt from him did not diminish when he lost his ability to speak or move. When he had been settled into his special chair, he looked so delighted to be there to listen to me. It moved me deeply. With whatever he could, he would express the same warmth, caring, and love he always seemed to feel for me. It just became more precious to me, because it seemed such a miracle of the life force. His love, warmth and caring overcame even the harsh diseases that brought on his end.

When I first began therapy with Armin, at the close of the session, he would often say something encouraging as I was bidding him goodbye. Even in the last year of his life, he managed twice to keep on encouraging me verbally. Just as it had been in my early sessions, his last words to me were the usual words of encouragement as I was bidding him goodbye after my session with him. Once that year he said, "It is wonderful!" At another time he managed say "You are brilliant!" Because I sensed he struggled so much to break through the barriers of his silence, I found the strength to break through the barrier of my pain to let them in.

Armin also helped me very directly with my music. He loved classical music, and he showed me how intensely I loved it too. He was open to coming to my house to have a few sessions as I played my harpsichord. Those sessions were very intense, but Armin at that time seemed extremely threatening to me outside of **his** chair, **his** wood-paneled consultation room, and in the role of listener to music. It became easier for me when he could not come anymore to my house, and could not say anything that I could twist about to make into a criticism of myself. In those Armin Sessions, I would bring a recording of a performance, and I would try to put words to the emotions I had while playing for the audience. That gave me the idea that in the music I was working on – the Goldberg Variations- each variation actually helped me access specific traumatic childhood memories. No wonder I had memory slips. That is a lot easier than going into that pain of my past. So with Armin’s help, not only am I working on a CD of the Goldberg and book about its theory and history. I also am including in the book, an in depth explanation how each variation is a portal to my forgotten and traumatic past, to illustrate an aspect of the tremendous healing power of this music.

For me Armin was most helpful at the end of his life, and even more helpful now where his kind, smiling, encouraging face is a powerful presence in my inner safe haven.

I feel very privileged to have known Armin Klein. I feel extremely fortunate that I was part of his dying process, because it gave me so many powerful opportunities for my inner healing and enriching my life. Thank you Armin and Grace for making this possible.

“Armin” - Jackie

He is a dignified man
 He is love
 He has quiet strength
 He is love
 He listens with intensity
 He is love
 He is a husband

He is love
He is a father
He is love
He revels in music
He is love
He unconditionally saves lives
He is love
He cherishes Grace
He is love.

End Note

If you ask me what I hope you will learn from our journey I would say:

-Aging does not define us when we continue to be the person we are and to engage in life in meaningful ways.

-Clarity about end of life decisions allows us to maintain control of our lives as much as possible, and that, with great determination, it is possible to influence the ending of life.

-Persons are so much more than a medical diagnosis, even when the diagnosis reflects devastating changes.

-Openness to giving and receiving love and care works in unusual and unexpected ways.

-Death is a natural part of life, but grieving the loss of a loved one is much harder. It is easier when the losses are shared.

-There is enormous power in love, shared in a relationship and in a community of caring people.

Every day is a gift, to make of it what we will.

If you need inspiration for the journey, I recommend the film, "The Intouchables" with Francois Cluzet and Omar Sy, in the true story of what humor, wealth, friendship and love can create in the most devastating of circumstances that life can offer.

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Acknowledgements and Contact Information

I want to thank:

My sister, Coralie Harlow Robertson, Norbert Hirschhorn, MD, Kathy Moon and Thomas Connelly, my son, for their editorial suggestions.

Dr. Timothy Quill for reviewing the manuscript as it reflects the Palliative Care Program

Thomas G. Smith of Harter Secrest & Emery for his review of the manuscript and discussion with me of the professional boundary issues involved.

And with gratefulness for her steady presence, Dr. Mary Dombeck, my therapist.