

BONNIE'S BRIDGE

(An excerpt from *Loving Grief*)

*I could stand on the bridge and get the sense of being completely with her,
a feeling I treasured then and still do.*

by Paul Bennett

I came often to Bonnie's bridge, several times a week when I was at my saddest. Being at the bridge still allows me to sink into Bonnie. It's a place where, in the best of circumstances, everything else goes away; I found myself coming to the bridge for the release. I could stand on the bridge and get the sense of being completely with her, a feeling I treasured then and still do.

In the best visits, I could come here and just be completely present to what I was holding of Bonnie, how I was holding her, how I was missing her. There was an energy, an alertness in my presence, an openness to everything that was here. Every bird coming along the creek was part of that experience of being here with Bonnie. I had an urge to know this place intimately, season by season. I could stare at the water pouring down through the chute between the two boulders and be completely bound to this place. I was being also, somehow, completely with Bonnie, because this was the place we had dedicated as her place.



So the place embodies the ritual, doesn't it? It's the physical place where I can pay attention to her, and either because Bonnie had the power to arrange it that way, or because I was paying such intense attention to this place, wonderful things happened here.

Maybe the gift of rituals is the gift of simple presence.

One day there were tiger swallowtail butterflies that swooped around me and then followed me a half mile along the creek back toward the car. There was the great blue heron that flew over my head one day and on another day stood in the water watching for fish. There was the hawk that flew low over my head one summer afternoon. There is a healing power in the kind of attention I was paying, in being intensely present to Bonnie's place. There was a healing power in laying everything else down and being with all my feelings, all of my anguish. And being with my fear, if I couldn't lay that down. But fear is really about the future. So if you are really here, right now, really present, you can lay the fear down also.

One Sunday in early September, walking down the road to the bridge, I was practicing seeing things with complete presence, and I was practicing breathing with my hand on my heart, a friend's suggestion for calming myself when my heart is full. As I walked up

the road, every tree stood out with its own personality, and I would stop before a tree, riveted, as if I were staring at a gorgeous woman or an ancient magical face. Whole hillsides on either side of the valley seemed vibrantly alive, and I was so present to them that it astounded me. On this magical day I wept for Bonnie, and the people who passed by were practically invisible to me. In this place that we chose to be Bonnie's, life was vibrating around me.

So is creating a dedicated time and space truly all you need from a ritual? Maybe it is. Maybe the gift of rituals is the gift of simple presence: A ritual makes you completely and honestly here, right now. That can bring deep relief from all the stirring around and talking and wrestling that we do with our emotions. If you give yourself the right ritual – something simple like standing on a bridge with water running under you, or sitting in front of a candle with a picture of that beloved person you are never going to see again – it is so simple. There is absolutely nothing for you to do but to be there. And that is a tremendous gift.

When Bonnie died, Paul Bennett lost the one person whose loving presence had been pivotal to every decision he made about his future. Loving Grief collects his eloquent reflections, written as he passed through the depth of his grief and into a new life he could not have imagined.

[More information from Larson Publications](#)

***Published by Larson Publications.
Copyright 2009; used with permission.***