



MADE NEW

One gift of intense spiritual experiences is that they can introduce us to new sensations that in turn can create new possibilities of response at every level. We can experience peace for the first time, recognize it as a physiological reality that we can return to, trust, orient by. We can experience bliss, or tremendous awe. We can understand that joy, abiding joy, has deep, inextricable roots in sorrow. We can experience what it means, physically, to be met in a place where we felt no one could ever follow us: perhaps the stillness unto death that precedes the psychological extinction of trauma. We can experience the freedom of talking in tongues when we have carefully controlled our speech and self-presentation every day of our lives. We can experience the intense relief of silence, both inner and outer, when words keep carrying us farther from people and from God. We can experience something intense, or sweetly dense, God-given, in a lover's touch.

The point I'm making here is that the experiential reality of mystical experience *is* its meaning. We know in a way that can't be explained away and we have been changed by that knowing, the quality of that knowing, in ways that change our image of ourselves, of the world around us, and of God. Sometimes these shifts can be very subtle. Sometimes they are world reversing. We feel God's love, not as an abstraction but as a sensation. We understand that our own hand, helplessly willing life into our child, is of God in a way that we never understood before. The understanding moves forward and back. It can reorganize us from pursuit, flight, or striving so that we can rest, return, receive. It provides us with the still point from which we can move the world because we, in our inmost physical being, have been so moved.

GRAHM LEE

Grahm Lee is a beautiful, slender brunette in her mid-forties. She exudes energy, good health, and emotional warmth and balance. She is one of the people I felt it was important to conduct a second interview with because her spiritual development and her life are so tightly in resonance that changes in one can lead to substantial insights and changes in the other.

In our second interview, she told me about a friend of hers, the same age, who said of her, "You really enjoy recreating yourself." I asked Grahm how she felt about that because my own impression of her life story and character is of a remarkably generous and steady development in spite of an unusual number of traumatic life events that could easily have evoked different responses.

Oh, I took it to mean re-integrating, becoming more whole in myself. It's like being a banker. My first marriage. I didn't give them up—they're still part of me. It's not about re-inventing, it's about re-integrating. Not being afraid of the next thing because it is all you. It's not even anything you say. Carl Jung says your power as a therapist is not what you know but who you are. Carl Rogers says that the most important thing you can give a client is that they are seen and understood. I felt seen when my friend said this. A primal thing. It felt wonderful. I take pride in that recreating, making us who we are.

Grahm is a mother of seven-year-old twin daughters, a therapist who now specializes in the trauma desensitizing technique, EMDR, which she often does in conjunction with painting. She is also happily immersed in her second marriage—and is a survivor of two forms of cancer.

She grew up in Georgia and Tennessee. Her father, a Baptist minister, worked first in small towns and then in Atlanta. He went on to work as a consultant for the Southern Baptist Convention.

Her memories of her childhood revolve around church as a social context and many of them are positive.

As a child, a young child, the church experience was real positive. It was part of what we were. We'd be at church Sunday morning and night and Wednesday night. It was the rhythm of life—my father was at the hospital, funerals, weddings. There was a lot of holding, touching, fussing

over me by older women in the church. I can remember them holding me in the nursery or while playing piano. There was lots of love and nurture, especially from the women. Lots of fun.

She remembers as well the importance during this period of going out with her mother, who was a Head Start nurse, to make home visits to poor rural families.

My mother resented it but also reinforced this 'toeing the line'. She'd take me out with her on these visits in a little VW beetle. I remember there were strong smells. Children with no panties (and I gave away my panties), running noses, flies, pot belly stoves, dirt floors, and television. A white cross instead of a child. Lots of death. I felt very divided. My mother would say, "It's our responsibility to help them." And we didn't have that much.

Grahm talks about various sides of her mother and the pressure they all felt to put on a good appearance. "My mother was stunningly beautiful. She let my father mold her, but she spoke her mind to me." Grahm describes herself as a "body-driven child, very musical," and her mother reinforced this side of her daughter because she herself could express a lovely physical spontaneity and sensuousness, for example, walking barefoot with her daughters to the grocery store. But appearances were very important. In Grahm's baby book, her mother wrote, "Wears her feelings on her sleeve."

A baby! What else is she expected to do! It helped me understand my upbringing. My therapist insisted I bring it in, she didn't believe me. But there it was: Wears her feelings on her sleeve. Of course it says more about her as a preacher's wife. But it was always there. "Grahm go play that piano piece. Grahm put on that nice dress." Like a trained monkey. One of my twins is like that, she likes to please and her teacher likes her for this. I tell her, "There is so much more to you than being cute. What else do you like about yourself?"

Dissent was not encouraged in Grahm's family. If she asked why innocent babies in Africa had to go to hell, her father would yell at her. He was physically abusive to both his wife and his daughters. As the older, more rebellious sister, Grahm would often insist her father direct his abuse at her to protect her mother and sister. Her mother threatened to leave, but never did. Years later, Grahm gave him a bill for the thirteen years of dental surgery she had needed based on abuse.

My intention was to say my truth. It wasn't even to have them hear. I