

THERE YOU WERE (AND HERE WE ARE)

May 13, 2017

Where am I? Where are we? We gather on May 13, 2017 to share the story of a lifetime told in stories and songs. It is the story of a man who this year turned 70 on the first day of spring. It is my story, and, if I have been successful in the telling, you may find your stories reflected (t)here as well.

When I set out to tell my story, I thought it might take a year or, at most, two. It has taken the better part of seven years to find the words and the way. It turns out the number seven has been here. My story has been told around forty-nine campfires, each arranged in seven stages of seven campfires. What I thought would be a journey mostly of memory, has transformed into a "Pilgrimage of Discovery."

Until I was fifty, my life contained, or should I say lacked, a "Missing Piece" and that fact sent me in search of a "Missing Peace." In my twenties, I learned that I was born in the shadow of a secret: my father was in a mental institution at the time of my birth. When I was a few months old, he came home. His life as a physician, entrepreneur, and family man was so successful, that it wasn't until I was thirty-six years old, that I learned, off handedly from a well meaning uncle, that my dad had not been expected to come home at all. This remained an unexplored secret within the family until it was unexpectedly revealed at my father's memorial in May of 1997.

That public revelation would be my father's last gift to me. In time I realized, four days after he died, that I had been given his blessing to take what had been hidden so long in the silent, shameful darkness of a secret and expose it to the light, turning it into a story. That gift, that blessing, took me on a twenty-year journey and brought me to this moment.

It took a longer than I thought it would to find, face, and free fears that had for so long festered in darkness and silence. Unconsciously, in so many ways, those fears came to define me. Over time, as I explored those fears and exposed to the light, I began to be able to *define them*. It was a small, yet significant change. Though the fears remain, there is room now for something more: *love*.

What began as a journey transformed over time into a "Pilgrimage." I learned on new levels and in new ways how to love and forgive myself, and in doing so, I became more able to love and forgive others, and, in the process, let others love and forgive me.



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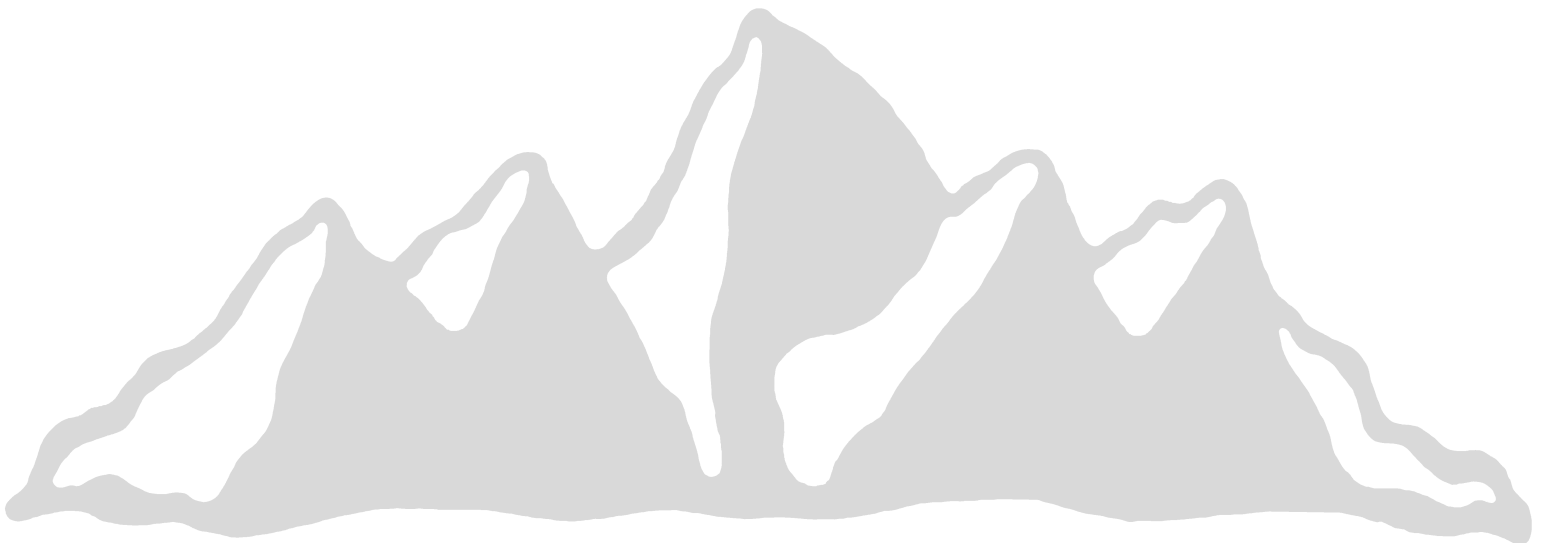
Let love go forward from this time and place ...



When those things became who I was I knew at last what it meant to be "home."

It means a lot to share this moment with you, knowing we are not alone. It is also amazing to realize how much more certain words now mean: *Faith. Hope. Love. Joy. Wonder. Mystery. Magic. Gratitude. Grit. Grace.* Those words, redefined by exploration and discovery, have become fundamental and foundational. It is those words - the meaning life gives them, and the meaning that they give to life - that I celebrate around this final campfire.

Seen in a certain light, it has been a long journey to learn what, on some level, I always knew: *something in me is broken and mine remains a wounded soul.* Seen in a different light, how liberating it is that such truths can be discovered; how they tightly they bind us to some greater shared human struggle, and allow us to become part of some timeless, ageless human stories and songs.



Let love go forward from this time and place ...