



# SEEDS

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*Being There: Delbert and the Sacred Circle of Listening*  
by Nancy McCormick

While living in Tennessee, it was my privilege to work in a Day Treatment Center for adults who suffered with chronic illnesses of the mind, such as schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder and severe depression. This became a cherished job as I developed rich relationships with the clients I co-journeyed with. Each day was a gift of rediscovery as we shared each others joys, sorrows, and concerns in our early morning group sessions. We were also developing a close knit community while we worked alongside one another performing simple chores, creating unique craft items to sell, inventing delectable things to eat and enjoying the fruits of our cooking.

These times became sacred moments for me as I listened, observed enjoyed and treasured the fellowship that grew out of these daily routines. But it was during the group sessions that we truly discovered buried treasure within our midst; this was the place we learned what it meant to be totally present to one another, as we listened to one another's stories. It was here that I learned that every individual has a story to tell and that every story needed someone to receive it for it to be complete. I have used the word sacred to describe moments of listening because I truly believe that when we are present with one another a "Sacred Moment" has occurred. While working at this Center I was reminded of the value of paying close attention to those I was with as a way of honoring them as individuals.

One such fellow, of whom I was especially fond, was Delbert. He suffered from the sounds of trains and voices in his head. One way he coped with the sounds was by pacing,



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Photo courtesy of Tallia McCormick.

singing, playing the harmonica and preaching; he did this a lot. He told me that these were good ways for God and him to keep in touch as he replaced the inward sounds with the outward sounds. This practice became his saving grace as well as a way for him to be intimate with God. Delbert soon endeared himself to my heart and I knew I was to learn sacred lessons from him. I made it a practice to sit with him daily as he would tell me stories of his childhood and family life. I heard about his struggles of working in the coal mines and his fear of dying in a cold, dark cave. I saw his face light up as he spoke of Dollie the Draft Horse who worked alongside him in the mines as well as in the corn patch. As

he told me of his mother cooking for the family, I could almost taste the corn pone bread, fried “tators” and green beans. He loved to frighten his nieces and nephews with spooky stories about big burly spiders he called Humper Jumps.

These opportunities with Delbert soon became moments of pure enchantment as the sacred art of listening occurred. It was a blessed time that brought healing to both of us. For me it was the realization that all people have a story, a tale, a legend to tell – and it can only be received if we stop and listen to them. This was a simple yet profound lesson for me, a discipline I needed to put into practice. For Delbert it became the chance to have someone take him seriously – someone who was genuinely interested in hearing from him, and hearing about him – a man whose value in life had been forgotten.

About a year after Delbert and I started our sacred circle he died tragically in a house fire. Our little group was shattered by the loss of our charming, whimsical friend. Today as I thumb through his delightful sketches and charming recollections about his life I am grateful for the time we had together. Those daily visits were indeed gifts of the spirit as Delbert and I grew in our “Sacred Circle.” It was a blessed time of experiencing spiritual communion as we walked toward wholeness hand in hand – one story at a time.

Thank you God for those magical moments of communion with Delbert – I am a better person for it. Amen.



Nancy McCormick lives in Southeastern Ohio on a draft horse farm that she and her husband Michael are building. It is their desire that this farm bring Hope, Peace and Love to all who enter. Nancy is a Quaker Pastor who is released to do ministry as a GOOD NEWS *Associate*. Nancy loves to minister to the elderly through prayer, presence and song; she listens to their life stories and sings to them and with them. Nancy is the author of *God is All Around*, a collection of stories and songs from her ministry.

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