

The Circle Where Nothing Grows

by Gary Harmon

*In every dimension is a place where nothing will grow
When we leave this earth meet me there
I will gravitate to that spot where we stood before
I long for the place that is an abyss to all
Only weeds grow there, no trees will survive
They call this the place where nothing grows
As I walk through this circle of nothingness once again
A smell is noticed that is unrecognizable but familiar
I have stood on this spot before with my friend, my teacher
There arises recognition, a remembrance, a knowing
We have met here before and will meet here again
No movement, no time, no space, no we
Only that which is where nothing will grow*

The center of the circle became me and I became it on October 7, 2000.

The following is a tale of woe that is and is not my dream.

In the year 2000, my father died in the month of January after living with my wife and myself for about six years; he was 83.

What might be called the dark night of the soul had occurred to me a couple years prior in the early 90's and endured a few years due to personal unawareness, which turned out to be a necessary step of ego demolition. Stubbornness can be a hindrance when incorrectly directed.

During that time I called upon God to kill me but it was not my time, or perhaps I was not sincerely surrendering to a higher power yet.

The situation ended after spending thousands of dollars and severely affecting my reputation and pride. The damage was done and forgiveness linked with compassion and acceptance occurred.

In that summer of 2000, I lost my job but I had some money saved; if I were careful, it would last my wife and me one year. I experienced the pain of being a failure and the return to seeking definition appeared yet again. There was nowhere else to go; I needed conclusion to what had started.

Over the last 30 years I had tried to lead a "normal" life and was always redirected back to inquiry of the big questions, the search to find the last answer to seemingly unanswerable questions. What is living this nightmare? This required permanent non-replaceable definition.

Determination of disparate strength appeared for I was now a man fighting for his life. How could this have happened? Was I this stupid? I thought that I was in control of the situation; I was obviously mistaken.

The decision was made that I would not return to work until I knew who was going to return to work and not before.

I conserved all available energy, went into isolation and hit the books. I used that which I knew from Richard Rose from the many years that I had known him. However, a new tactic was added, two other advisers were added for a different perspective. I started reading Nisargadatta Maharaj and Douglas Harding books. When I came out of retreat, I visited Richard Rose in the hospital with some lifelong friends and ended up in an uncontrollable weeping fit that lasted the entire time I was at the hospital. Luckily I was with spiritual acquaintances who sensed that all was ok, and they gave the proper space needed that was required.

The following week my wife Linda and I flew out to Portland Oregon to meet Douglas Harding for a three-day workshop. My expectations were at an all-time low that realization might never occur. My teacher was gone, my father was gone and so was my job, and now in my late forties, I was at rock bottom; my 30's were a thing of the past and the goal still eluded.

We arrived in Portland and found that the home where we were to stay for the next few days was where Douglas and his wife Catherine were staying too, in the bedroom right above us even.

I met Douglas in the kitchen, tired from the flight from England; he was at the time 92. He was a gracious man with a sparkle in his eyes somehow reminiscent of my friend and teacher Mister Rose.

We began talking and eventually he asked what was holding me back. I heard myself saying "the fear of death." He looked me in the eyes and said. "We are going to take that fear of death and turn it into the death of fear." The next day, at the workshop, that is exactly what happened. My wife and I did an exercise with Douglas and Catherine called the big one and the little one using cutout holes in paper bags. While leading the group of about 30, Douglas and Catherine teamed up with my wife and me. The experiment concluded with Douglas taking the bags, which the four of us had on our heads, and then put them on his head so he was now looking out of the large openings. He then said that the same awareness that we experienced as individuals was the same awareness that he was looking out from then.

That was the catalyst; the trigger had been pulled.

I sensed a difference, a shift that was the same, yet in reality, very dissimilar. Something happened and time stood still. My mind had stopped, thoughts ceased. I vanished and was for that instant dead.

Then much later came the opportunity to ask a question. It was found there was nothing to ask.

That night I wrote the following in my notebook:

October 7, 2000, realization in Portland Oregon

“I know who I am.

I’m awareness.

Only one awareness that is everything.

Comes from All life, all planets, and all illusions of all varieties.

All and nothing, all and no-thing

What else is there to know?”

Later I thought to myself: Notes get in the way. The words will come.

Morning October 8, 2000—some words came:

“I turned on the light so that I see myself

I am that light and the paper I am writing on

It is so simple to see the one that is always available.

There are no more questions, all is death.

There are not degrees of enlightenment

I am the source of all things and nothing

The paradox is true for I am not death but life.”

As Douglas might say:

The journey was favorable.

The facts are friendly.

The journey home from

The place I never left

Some of the people present:

Cameron Watson of Vancouver, British Columbia

My wife Linda Harmon

Doug and Dana Fulton of Portland, Oregon

Douglas and Catherine Harding

Kathy of Portland

George and Ruth Smith

Brian and his lovely German wife and their little girl Selena

Michelle and Kirk of Washington state

Glenn of Ann Arbor, Michigan

Any road home is a good road.

The fear of death—becomes—the death of fear.

The chance presented itself to dine the following evening with Catherine and Douglas, and regretfully Gary had to turn it down for there was still balance to be regained in the absolute perspective...Douglas and Katherine knew and understood, for they were there with me as I was there with them.