

1. Your age? 58

2. When did you start the website, www.griegtogreatness.com?

The website went live on the internet in May 2008, which was one month after I received my order of legally licensed music CDs from the manufacturer.

3. Can you talk about your inspiration or reasons for starting a website to help others deal with their grief?

My inspiration, over a long time, was the result of my own experiences with loss and grief, the emotional anguish I endured due to the extensiveness of the sorrow, and realized so many others have endured as well.

4. If you can please share some of your personal story about your parents and their names or your pet (If not, we completely understand and please forget that we asked)?

My personal story started with the sudden death of my mother Sylvia in 1989. I couldn't have asked for a sweeter or more loving woman to be my mother. Coming to terms with how final her death was, caused me intense grief. All I knew was that I wanted her back, and I couldn't conceive of living without her. Although I had wonderful family and friends who were there for me, I felt a need to relate to others and their losses, and did so by purchasing and reading many books about the loss of a loved one and mother. After much reading, talking about my mother to family and friends, and time passing, it eventually helped me to live with her loss, but it did take a long time. Other losses during this period included the unwanted end of a short marriage that felt every bit like a death, and the loss of a wonderful little poodle named Café, that was with me during those very hard times. For both I spent an enormous amount of time in support groups and reading related literature. It was a great deal of loss in a short period of time.

Then in December 2001, my loving father, Carl, passed away, which was shortly after one of my mother's sisters passed away, which was also when we as a nation were shocked and reeling from 9/11. At the time my father passed away I was remarried, living in Lynbrook, and thanks to my wonderful husband Bill, my dad was living with us. We were caring for him since we were married, I by myself for over a year before we were married. My dad was ill and frail, and although one should expect the passing of an elderly person, his loss affected me beyond what I could have ever imagined. But then later I was able to understand the intensity of my pain because I read in bereavement literature that the death of a parent with whom you lived and cared for, is likened to the death of a spouse. I attended a local grief support group shortly after his death, and the remarkable friendships I made there still continue.

5. What was your experience in bereavement groups like?

As it says on the Grief To Greatness homepage, I believe that grief is the most universal and unifying of human experiences. When gathered together in bereavement support groups people connect on such a fundamental level. They are either forthcoming, or encouraged, to share their most intimate emotions about their loss, sorrow and relationship with the deceased. The group is a very safe place where no one is judged; and love, understanding and kindness flourish. I believe support groups or private counseling sessions are very helpful to those who need help grieving a loss.

6. Can you talk about the cd, "Love Is Eternal - Songs of Love, Loss, Courage, and Survival?" For you, what is it about music or dance that you love? What was it about these specific songs on the cd that moved you?

Shortly after my mother passed away I heard a song on the radio by the late actress Grace Kelly's (later Princess Grace of Monaco) daughter Stephanie, called Words Upon The Wind. It's a song that expresses her love for her mother, and of mother and daughter being together again someday. I found the song to be consoling in its sentiments, confirming my own after losing my mother. There were other popular songs by artists expressing their actual experiences with loss through song before and after Stephanie's including some which are artistic expressions of grief. Since then I thought that they should be compiled together into one CD because they were only heard sporadically on the radio

or on CDs. I thought their relatable and therapeutic nature could provide comfort, similar to a grief support group. It was 5 years after my father's death that I started to bring the idea for the CD to fruition. Although I spent a lot of time trying to license the original artist's recordings for reproduction, there were many music industry barriers, so I licensed excellently performed reproductions of the songs from a company called SBI America. When one looks at the selection of songs it may appear depressing, but listening provides realistic and readily available support from actual experiences and positive comments reveal that the music is uplifting and that listening helps the grieving to feel that their loved ones are still very much present in their lives.

Regarding the art of dance, I have a beautiful dancer as a stepdaughter. Her name is Erin and she majored in dance and has embarked on her dance career. I asked her if she could choreograph a dance called The Lyrical Interpretation of the Stages of Grief. She did so beautifully commemorating her recently deceased maternal grandparents and her performance can be viewed on the Grief To Greatness website. She is holding a photo of her grandparents. As the quote by Patricia O'Hagen on The Dance webpage says, Through art we see the vagaries of life, the joys and the sorrows, and we are able to reach beyond the five senses to other planes. Universal emotions have always been expressed through art. Art and self expression are also being used in grief support groups.

7. What was the process for writing the cd booklet?

Having read so many books and participating in many grief support groups, I wanted to write something meaningful, all the time bearing in mind that there are people who have had to endure infinitely worse kinds of loss than me. I didn't know how I could go on, so I could only imagine how anyone could go on after losing a child or children, or any untimely death due to terminal illness, accident, suicide, murder or war. I wanted it to be respectful in the section that describes my personal experiences, and hope I accomplished that. I also thought I should address each song in the booklet since the songs address various kinds of losses, i.e., loss of children, parents, friends, spouses or significant others, etc., and I thought it should contain a section on the psychology of grief so people could understand the various stages of the grieving process. Since I've observed that grief breeds greatness, I end the CD booklet with what I have come to realize, that helping others is a way of honoring our deceased loved ones, as well as facilitate one's own healing.

8. Does your approach to grief differ at all when it comes to the loss of animal companions?

Loss is loss, and it causes grief and pain. For me, having experienced both types of loss more than once, and spending time in support groups for people and pets, all I can say is I needed the support of others for both.

9. In your words, what does "Grief to Greatness" mean to you?

Through my own experiences in grief support groups, reading, research, and now a member of the bereavement field through the Grief To Greatness website, I have observed that greatness is often the result of grief. Of course the majority of people do kind and great things without it having to be the result of grief, but the bereavement field is unique because it is comprised mainly of professionals and non-professionals whose loss and intense grief experiences have propelled them to want to help others enduring the same emotional pain. So they write books, organize support groups and conferences, become public speakers, start foundations, write songs and poems, create comforting websites, etc., all in an effort to help their fellow humans make their own journeys through grief. The depth of their pain has helped them to realize the depth of their humanity. I've observed that individuals within the bereavement community are among the most genuine people I have ever encountered. I thought that through Grief To Greatness I could provide just one avenue for people to work through their grief and journey through it. In addition to the professional resources, referrals, community forum, links to other related websites, and products; we suggest acts of greatness one can perform on a monthly basis, and note acts of greatness being performed in our communities. There is a poem about loss with the line, and bury your sorrows in doing good deeds, that sums up the principle behind Grief To Greatness.