

## *Morgan's Moment*

**"All beginnings are hard..."**

A famous opening sentence  
in a Chaim Potok book.

If beginnings are hard...

try endings...

like some did this week.

Bob Seger's song comes to mind...

**"Now it's finally time to leave..."**

**Take it calmly and serene...**

**It's that final famous scene."**



This fuzzy photo came from last summer after another fun visit from Beth, Colin and Don Whitney. They have been among our summer guests for many years.

At the time of that photo from early August 2011 we never expected that it was to be the last we took of him. A week ago this morning I was with him in Edmonds for a last good-bye.

Yes, there is a final time to leave. The game clock of life had run down for him, way too fast for any of us. The odds of winning were against him from the beginning. He gave it his best shot, just as he did throughout all his life in everything he did.

But pancreatic cancer is hard to beat. All the good thoughts and fervent prayers couldn't turn it back. The very best medical treatments also failed. No miracles for him. He stayed in the game until the final whistle. But really, it was time for him to leave. He died on 9/11, another fallen tower.

*MM Email Blue Sheet*

*Moment Ministries*

## **Take calmly and serene?**

If beginnings are hard, try endings. It's something that happens in all lives if we live long enough. Sometimes we have time, like Don's 13 months, to see the picture and prepare for what is coming. In fact, through a website called "CaringBridge" he and Beth kept us up to date on the course of his disease. Moments of hope. Valleys of tears. We were prepared. But endings are hard.

Just yesterday we made the journey from our cabin, across the Sound and north of Seattle, for Don's memorial service. We weren't the only ones. Pews were full with people driving from Michigan, Pendleton, Spokane, Corvallis, and many other places, in addition to local people and family in the Seattle area. It was a "Celebration of Life." It was a service he helped create. It was good.

Some people received notice of the "Celebration of Life" before they had notice that he had died.

What's to celebrate? Memorial services gather people who are in various stages of the grieving process. Those closest to Don have been on the grieving journey to one degree or another ever since he was diagnosed. Fears and tears have been companions for a long time. Many others have not been on that same journey. Some are nowhere near ready to "celebrate." I saw lots of handkerchiefs and tears as I looked out at the group of Don's family and friends.

I've learned through many, many such events that it is not helpful to make people, who are still in the beginning stages of grief, celebrate. And it is not helpful for those who are ready and waiting to move on, to dwell on their grief. You cannot fix what was. What was is. We have no choice but to accept what we grieve for. And that time will turn us forward. But there is a time when we don't know all of that.

There are usually lots of words spoken. Some words are traditional at such services. If people don't hear the words they don't think it's been a real funeral..

The expected words often do not register. We wait for them to get said so we can hear something more real. The minister is not usually looked upon as the source of the most real words. I understand that. We were lifted by inspiring statements from people for whom Don made a difference. But the unspoken secret of any memorial gathering is that the greatest source of comfort is the presence of people who come together to share and care. Presence trumps words when it comes to what is most important.

Can't we leave people with a word of faith? Some tried words about a faithful God, about a presence that is now with us. The same God that did not respond to 1,000's of hopeful, believing, fervent prayers? I squelch questioning thoughts. A memorial service is not a good time for theological reflection or correction. I don't impose my faith, or lack thereof. Faith, hope and love abide.

For this day we offer the best we know to offer...presence. Answers, if any, await another day.

— Art Morgan, September 16, 2012

