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Artists Among Us — Linda Bryan Translates Life and Family into Poetry

by Christopher Cussat

Linda Bryan has found creative inspiration through her own life experiences and by observing the experiences of her family. In fact, family has always been a central and extremely important part of her life. Bryan is very proud to be a mother of a son and daughter, a mother-in-law to their spouses, and a grandmother to two beautiful grandchildren. After being widowed at the age of 37

when her husband passed away from pancreatic cancer, she decided to attend Penn State University (PSU). It was here that Bryan really found her artistic voice when she took a class in creative writing from a wonderful professor, Antonio Vallone.

For over 14 years, Bryan has worked as an administrative assistant in health-care—first for HealthSouth and then later for DuBois Regional Medical Cen-

ter (DRMC). Currently, she is the administrative assistant to Gary Macioce, Chief Operating Officer of DRMC.

It has often been suggested that painters and similar type artists like to recreate the world in their visual art because they ‘see’ things differently from ordinary people. Bryan believes



Linda Bryan

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Health Care Executives Deal With Stress

By Mary Lee Gannon

The stress of running a Medical Center in a region with one of the lowest Medicare reimbursement rates in the country pales in comparison to the worry of having a son in Iraq. Just ask Tom Timcho, president and CEO of Jefferson Medical Center who copes by defining what he can and cannot control.

“If it’s outside of my control I acknowledge it,” said Timcho. “There is no use constantly worrying about it.”

Shrinking reimbursement rates, increased regulations, the uncertainty of healthcare reform and other factors contribute to the rising need for executives and administrators to decrease stress with better work/life balance.



As an army first lieutenant in Vietnam, Timcho learned early how to make difficult decisions under stress. The values he developed in officer candidate school and on the battlefield at the age of 23 he shares today with his son, Michael who will be redeployed soon.

“Deal with life the best you can, one day at a time,” he said. “Before you know it, time passes if you focus on mission first and not yourself.”

In addition to being mission focused in the face of pressure, Timcho suggests keeping a sense of humor, exercising and holding close to family. When his children were young, he worked long days still making time to coach little league and softball.

“I’d schedule meetings around their practices, leave, shower and come back in time to have dinner with a bunch of doctors,” he said. “Otherwise your children grow up and you don’t know them.”

Gary Weinstein, President & CEO of The Washington Hospital finds patient safety and finances to be the key stressors for him.

“When you ask a patient 5 different times in an hour what their name is it can tend to drive them crazy,” he said.

Weinstein attributes the hospitals increased bad debt expenses to the downturn in the economy and its affect on people’s ability to pay their bills. The hospital’s bad debt for the first five months of the fiscal year is up \$1 million.

“That is a big hit to us,” he said. “A big part of healthcare reform was to be paid for by reduction in Medicare to hospitals. So we’ll be expected to produce higher quality care and take on more while getting less.”

Philanthropy is part of the solution that he sees to help fill in the gaps.

Exercise is a key stress reliever for Weinstein. He works out in the hospital’s wellness center at 6:15 every morning and plays basketball and tennis regularly.

Additionally, he is sensitive to how stress affects his employees and recognizes them by rounding throughout the day, sending thank you notes and applauding good work through their “Angel Among Us” program.

Regina M. Lutz, chief compliance and privacy officer at Ohio Valley General Hospital finds that her biggest stressor is getting information from people.

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that the same is true of writers. "Every day, situations turn into stories for me. For example, I wrote a story about my granddaughter and her little friend at daycare based on a conversation we had when she was only 4-years-old." So in essence, this is a prime example of everyday life becoming art for Bryan. "It was a conversation that another grandmother may have had with her granddaughter that would have just been any other conversation—but for me, it was a story," she adds.

As an artist, Bryan is definitely and naturally drawn to all styles of writing. She recalls, "I have always enjoyed writing—as a child I remember writing mystery stories and then moving on to composing poetry when I became a teenager." Today, Bryan writes stories for the Spirit of Women magazine at the medical center and she also enjoys fact-based writing. "But finishing a literary poem and letting the creative side of my writing flow is absolute joy," she adds. Bryan also notes that her favorite poem is always the last one she has written. "While some people find creativity in cooking, photography, or through painting a still life, I find beauty in words." Her favorite poet is Donald Hall.

Bryan explains that balancing her time (between professional responsibilities and artistic interests) is not difficult at all. "My love for writing is a hobby, and I work at it as I am inspired." Actually, her writing skills also often come in handy professionally. "I have ample opportunity to use my skills as a writer in my current job. In fact, the first writing class I took in college was a business writing class." Bryan also ghostwrites occasionally and really enjoys that as well—but she never tires of the thrill of seeing her name associ-

ated with a published story or poem.

Upon reflection, Bryan says that if she did not work at a job she loves, she would consider pursuing writing as a career. "I would probably freelance for magazines and try to fit my poetry in on the side," she adds.

Previously, Bryan has been published in a PSU poetry journal and has also won a few awards at local poetry competitions. But, this is not the reason she is passionate about writing. "If there were no competitions, no publications, and no recognition, I would still write. It is part of who I am—and when I see my 7-year-old granddaughter writing stories just for the joy of writing, my heart sings!" Bryan concludes, "It has been said that a designer knows he has achieved perfection, not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away. I believe the same could be said of a writer."

Touching on a myriad of subjects and limited to none, Bryan has written poems about her grandmother's farm, her husband and his illness, fictional short stories centered around actual events she has read about or seen on television, literary poems, rhyming poems, and acrostic poems.

The following poignant example of her work is a poem Bryan wrote about her mother's biopsy. "I wrote this more than five years ago and I am happy to report my now 83-year-old mom is doing well. Her physician had advised her that she didn't need any more mammograms 'at her age,' but I insisted—at which time a small lump was found, biopsy performed, and found to be malignant. A subsequent lumpectomy and radiation treatments followed up with oral medication has given her a new lease on life and she is now a five year breast cancer survivor!" †

THE PROCEDURE ROOM

*"Velma," the bespectacled and slight
Red-haired receptionist calls out.
Sitting next to me, my mother
Jerks to attention,
Squares her sloping shoulders,
Smooths her crisp powder blue silk blouse,
Then stands as straight as her arthritic knees allow.*

*"I'll walk with you," I whisper,
Taking charge as only the oldest daughter can,
Leaving my annoyed younger sister seated in the
waiting room.*

*I hold mother's paper thin and frail arm.
We look down the long pristine hall. I am scared,
But mother purses her lips and puts on her most stoic
face.*

*A smiling nurse stands below the illuminated red sign
That declares PROCEDURE ROOM.
About twenty-five, blonde and pretty I think she
Cannot possibly understand
One day she too will be old and broken.
But when she gently hugs my mother's waist,
Guiding her to the gurney
Where her biopsy will take place,
I make a mental note to forgive her for
Her youthful beauty and good health.*

*The door closes behind us.
I watch in silence
From the chair where I've been told to sit
As mother places an unsteady foot
On a little stool at the base of the gurney,
Taking her first step into the future.*

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