

The Spiritual Essence: Memories and Roses

**rev. jane
dwinell**

The month of February brings us Valentine's Day when we traditionally fete our sweetheart with flowers, chocolates, romantic dinners, and whatever else lies in our heart's desire. But this Valentine's Day, let's not forget our friends. Sure, our beloved may be our best friend, and for this we should be grateful, but our friends should be celebrated, too. They probably have stood by us as we went from love affair to love affair, from job to job, from home to home. They listened to us deep into the night when we bitched about our boss, or our parents, or the nosy neighbor across the street. They have stood us in good stead, time and again.

Remember your first best friend? Mine was Julie. She was a summertime friend. Her grandparents owned the cottage next door to my family's summer place. Julie was two years younger, but somehow that never mattered.

Whoever woke up first went next door. Most days we were in our bathing suits from morning 'til night, on her dock or our's, or somewhere in between. We loved torturing her little brother who was tied to a tree so he wouldn't fall in the lake or go in the road. We loved tuna fish sandwiches with potato chips (inside the sandwiches) and grape Kool-Aid.

We loved to play in the woods, turning blankets and branches into teepees. We were brave and beautiful Indian maidens, Lost River and Running Deer. We loved to go overtown

with my father on Sundays when he would buy the paper and treat us to Sugar Daddies.

My mother remembers how we would fight, screaming at each other and disappearing home, crying. And then how, five minutes later, we'd be back together playing as if nothing had happened.

Then when Julie was nine years old, her grandmother died and she didn't come back to the lake anymore. Since Julie, there has been a series of best friends in my life, some who are still

the other. Ruth said to Naomi, "Do not press me to leave you or turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die — there I will be buried. My God do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" Do you have a friend in your life to whom you would say these words? Do you have someone that means that much to you? What does friendship bring to your life? Who are your true friends?

Celebrate them. Take them out for dinner, buy them flowers or chocolate or whatever indulgences they prefer. You know what kind of indulgences they like; they are your friends with whom you've shared

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friends, some who have disappeared from my life. Each person was important at the time, helping me grow and be myself. My memories are strong, and I thank each one, wherever they are.

In the Hebrew Bible there are two stories of close friends — Naomi and Ruth, and Jonathan and David. In the queer community, the stories of these two friendships have often been expressed as lover-ships, even though there is no exact scriptural evidence for that. But, does it really matter? What we have before us are the stories of friends who would sacrifice all for

the deepest confidences, and had the wildest times. They are the people you'd call in the middle of the night from the emergency room. They'd bail you out of jail. They'll sit by your side when you're dying. Don't you think they deserve some roses this Valentine's Day? ■

The Rev. Jane Dwinell serves the First Universalist Parish, a Unitarian Universalist congregation, in Derby Line, VT. She lives with her partner, Sky, and their two children, Dana and Sayer, on the shores of beautiful Lake Memphremagog.



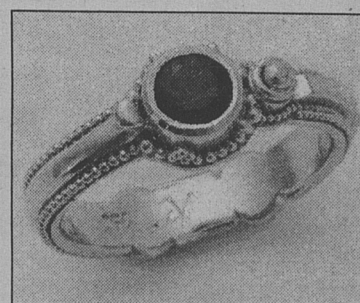
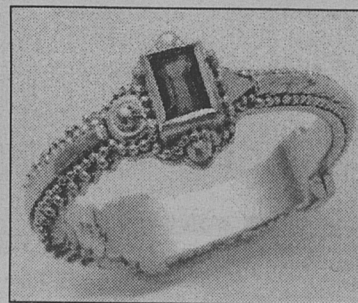
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