

Tracey Spicer, Former News Presenter for Channel 10 Sydney

Solace in Grief

It was the day Mum finally lost the slender thread of consciousness.

Fifty-two-year-old Marcia Spicer was brave, beautiful and bolshie. But cancer had taken it all away.

She was an empty effigy of the woman who had made our lives so rich with love and laughter.

The doctor gave her seven months. She took every last day.

Dad, my sister and I sat by her bedside, held her hand, stroked her forehead, painted her toenails and cleaned the mucous from her mouth.

One day, exhausted by grief and futility, I sat on a bench in the lovely gardens of the palliative care ward and quietly wept.

A man sat down next to me. At first I thought, “How dare you intrude on my grief?” But then he started talking. He told



the story of his wife, who also lay dying on a small and sterile hospital bed. They had been married for more than 50 years. She was still the love of his life. His eyes shone as he spoke of their time together, the children raised, the lessons learned.

“You are an extraordinary man,” I marvelled. “How do you manage to cope?” I asked, desperate for something to fill the aching hole in my heart.

“We have our faith,” he answered simply.

It wasn't said arrogantly. He wasn't trying to convert me. But the look on his face said more than the 774,746 words contained in the Bible. His faith gave him succour. It was his armour.

Then he asked about us. Were we people of faith?

The Spicers are known for many things: the love of a good party; a deep desire to be near the ocean; a healthy dose of scepticism. But we had abandoned our faith.

I realised that this unexpected conversation was a gift. A simple act of kindness. It was as if we were in the trenches and this man – whose name I did not know – was shielding me with his armour.

Mum died the next day. That was eleven years ago.

I still grapple with the concept of faith, the perils of organised religion and the esoteric nature of spirituality. But I will never forget that conversation; nor the wisdom, kindness and courage that were contained within.



Tracey Spicer has held a long and bright media career. She is currently a fill-in presenter on Sky News Australia. She is also a regular columnist with the Daily Telegraph, the punch.com.au website, and regular contributor to Holidays with Kids, magazine, Travel and Lifestyle, Sunday Telegraph, House & Garden, Go Camping and Weight Watchers magazine. Tracey is an Ambassador for World Vision, WWF, the Queensland University of Technology's Learning Potential Fund and the Penguin Foundation, and Patron of the NSW Cancer Council, the newborn care unit at the Royal Hospital for Women and the National Premmie Foundation.

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Blake Beattie, Founder of International Pay it Forward Day, Sydney NSW

Paying it Forward



After starting international Pay it Forward Day back in 2007, I am truly humbled and amazed at the wonderful people in our community who make such a profound difference. There are so many people who open their hearts to others less fortunate and, in doing so, make this world that little bit brighter.

Since Pay it Forward Day began there have been over 250,000 random acts of kindness in 28 countries with sixteen state and city proclamations. Here are some of my favourite examples of people paying random acts of kindness forward:

One lady received a \$10,000 donation for a liver operation she could not afford. To this day she still does not know who performed the good deed.

Another person donated her unused flight credits enabling a family to be reunited at the bedside of a very sick relative.

One boy convinced his mother to top up a parking meter so

that the car owner would avoid a \$79 fine.

School children at Heathcote Primary School put together special care packs for sick children in hospital. They also baked Anzac cookies for the local nursing home and collected non-perishable goods for various charities. The children felt great about making others smile :)

The great thing about ‘paying it forward’ is it starts a positive ripple effect of giving in the community and there is no telling how many lives will be positively affected in the process. Of course, we should be paying it forward every day and International Pay it Forward Day is a powerful reminder of the power of giving whereby anyone of any age or background can make a difference.

I am a firm believer in the statement: “From what we get we make a living; from what we give we make a life”. We can lift each other up with kindness or get caught up in the busyness of life – it is heartening to see how many people choose the former. The difference we can all make is phenomenal!

Together we can make a difference and change the world – one good deed at a time.



***Blake Beattie** is also the Vice Chairperson of the Life Changing Experiences Foundation and an acclaimed Author and International Speaker.*

www.payitforwardday.com