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**STORYTELLING BY ADULTS DIAGNOSED WITH TERMINAL ILLNESS:  
NARRATIVE IDENTIFYING THROUGH DIALOGICAL RESEARCH**

A Dissertation in

Adult Education

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dialogical qualitative research study was to gain insight into the process of storytelling with adults diagnosed with terminal illness as a way of making meaning of their experiences and lives. The study was informed by the conceptual frameworks of story, storytelling, and story listening which are grounded in the theory of dialogism. The concept of narrative learning emphasized another aim of the study which was to explore the way in which participants continue to identify themselves narratively through their stories. Conversational and semi-structured interviews designed to elicit stories were utilized with four male adult participants diagnosed with terminal illness. The verbal stories of the participants were presented in their entirety in the study and interpretation of the stories took place through the dialogical process. The stories were viewed from multiple perspectives and the multiple voices heard in the utterances of the participants were revealed.

The findings of the study indicate that there is value in the use of storytelling in order to make meaning of the life experiences of adults with terminal illness. This value lies not only in any meanings co-constructed, but also in the process of storytelling. Both the participants and the researcher continue to gain knowledge about themselves and their worldviews as the stories of the individuals are given space to interact and are allowed to affect the individuals. Viewing the study and findings dialogically, there is no final meaning found in the stories, rather meaning making and narrative identifying were found to be continual processes.

Based on the findings of the study, suggestions are offered for further research and specifically for the use of dialogical research. The study added to the development of the conceptual frameworks that supported this research. Implications for the use of storytelling in adult education are also offered.

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to Aunt Rose. Her love of life and family, her spirituality, and her dignity in death were truly inspiring and life-changing for me. Aunt Rose demonstrated the value of story for both the teller and the listener in the final days of her life which she shared with her family. While Aunt Rose struggled with her own disease, she generously offered healing to those around her and graciously accepted the support given to her. Her story is now part of my story and positively influences my construction of the meaning of life.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Our aunt, Rose, had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and was no longer able to care for herself when my wife and I invited her into our home. My wife is a nurse and was able to take a leave of absence from work in order to care for her. We hoped to allow her to maintain the dignity and privacy of her life that seemed important to this single woman. Her several days in the nursing home, sharing the room with three other women and being cared for by multiple strangers had seemed less than desirable. We wanted to allow her to die as she had lived.

During her first night in our home, our aunt remarked to me that she felt as if she were not accomplishing anything and that she was of no use. She had trouble assimilating to her new identity in life as one receiving care. Aunt Rose spent her life nurturing and caring for others—her parents throughout life and during their final illnesses, her nieces and nephews, and her grand-niece whom she spent the last several years helping to raise. I assured her that she was still useful and that she had already made people happy in her new setting, not only my wife and me, but also others who visited that first day including her young grand-niece. We spent the last month of her life together, sharing stories of days gone by—mostly of happy, but also of sad times.

I told my aunt that I appreciated her stories; indeed, I requested stories about my grandfather, her father. The sharing of stories seemed to give her purpose and helped me understand my history. I was grateful that she could share those experiences with me. The recalling of stories seemed also to comfort her. She realized her value to me and to our extended family by bringing us together, praying, laughing, singing, and sharing stories.

Adults who are unable to understand the meaning of their lives are said to be in an existential vacuum (Frankl, 1984). This existential vacuum is an undesirable psychological state

in which individuals often give up hope and the desire to live because of a lack of perceived meaning in their experience and existence. Adults diagnosed with terminal illness are in a particularly vulnerable, liminal, or in-between space that may present the individuals with new experiences that shake their previously held views and assumptions of the meaning of their experiences (Puchalski, 2006). However, adults with terminal illness are still able to develop and make meaning of their experiences (Fischer & Simmons, 2007). Indeed, part of the experience of a good death is the ability of the dying person to make sense or meaning of one's own situation (Fischer & Simmons, 2007).

### **Terminal Diagnosis**

A terminal diagnosis is generally considered a diagnosis by a physician with the expectation of the death of the ill person within six months and may be the most disorienting experience in adulthood (Buckingham, 1996).

People with terminal illness often feel cast aside by society (Frank, 2004b; Puchalski, 2006). They often feel useless, undervalued, and less of a person than before their illness (Puchalski, 2006). Some become virtually homebound, not necessarily as a direct physical cause of their illness, but from fear of being trampled upon in subways, in elevators, and on sidewalks (Puchalski, 2006). While there have been great medical advances in the treating of serious illnesses in recent decades (Frank, 2004b), there are still inherent mysteries to life and death that remain unanswered (Frank, 2004a; Puchalski, 2006; Tisdell, 2003).

The transitions that people with terminal illness struggle through are liminal or in-between spaces (Forss, Tishelman, Widmark, & Sachs, 2004). These ambiguous human experiences may be difficult to face and talk about and may represent disruptions in self-identity and personal narrative (Navon & Morag, 2004). These liminal spaces may require a re-storying

of one's life due to ongoing uncertainties (Mohlzan, Bruce & Shields, 2008). Three stages of re-storying (Randall, 1996) are narrating the story, reading the story, and changing or regenerating the story. The last stage of re-storying of a life may take the form of telling the story over, in light of new realizations, such as the knowledge of a terminal illness.

While a terminal diagnosis is obviously indicative of a nearing death, it is still a time for possible growth and development for the adult with the terminal illness. This growth will likely be represented with new understandings of self and reinterpretations of meaning (Fischer & Simmons, 2007). Adults diagnosed with terminal illness are much more than their illness. In order to understand them, they must be granted the opportunity to be whole people (Barnard, Towers, Boston, & Lambrinidou, 2000).

### **Narrative Medicine**

The stories of chronically ill persons and terminally ill persons have been elicited by practitioners of Narrative Medicine. Narrative Medicine is a clinical practice that takes into account the stories of patients, nurses, and physicians (Charon, 2006). The medical treatment includes not only a rational scientific approach, but also care for the affect and the story of the ill person (Reissman, 1990). Charon (2006) contends that the subjectivity of the ill person is of grave importance to the care for the individual. The stories are said to give great insight to the suffering of the individual as well as the desires of the individuals. Narrative Medicine's clinicians keep the individual's stories as a central focus in the care as each individual's experience is inherently different (Charon, 2006).

Storytelling of the professional is also important (Wimberly, 1997). Because storytelling and narrative are directly related to meaning making, the professional's story is integral to his or her own understanding of the purpose his or her own experiences, specifically those experiences

related to the treatment of adults with a chronic or terminal illness. Consideration of the professionals' and other caregivers' stories may bring about a more compassionate and generous care for the ill person (Frank, 2004a).

Hunt (2000) is steadfast in her belief that illness narratives are a way to empowerment. Illness narratives have a way of redefining self in new terms (Hunt, 2000; Hyden & Brockmeier, 2008). The creation of villains and heroes in narratives can bring about strategic changes in the broader context of the ill person's life. Many take the opportunity to redefine self in the social context as portrayed in the conflicts and resolutions found in the narratives (Hunt, 2000).

### **Storytelling**

A personal story is not simply a reflection of, but a shaping of one's lived experience (Gergen, 1999). The storyteller, while recounting historical accounts, chooses what to tell and what to leave out of the story. The meaning of the historical experience for the teller is also expressed in the story (Frank, 2004a; Rossiter, 1999; Soltys, 2007).

Indeed stories have a social aspect to them (Chase, 2003, Frank, 2010). Stories are intended to be told which means that there is an intended listener (Chase, 2003). The intended listener helps form the story as the narrator shapes the story in such a way that will relate to the listener. The listener's interactions continue to shape the story. The relationship that is formed between the teller, the story, and the listener is itself the space—which is shaped to allow for storytelling and is shaped through the storytelling (Chase, 2003). Part of that relationship is comprised of the interpretation of the story by both the teller and listener (Frank, 2000, 2010).

Frank (2000) believes that “stories as acts of telling *are* relationships” (p. 354, italics in original). Frank emphasizes, “Although I write of storytellers and listeners, I should refer only to the storytelling relation” (Frank, 2010, p. 354). He continues, “Storytelling is the recursive of the

relationship between those sharing the story” (Frank 2010, p. 354). The story creates meaning for each as well as a shared meaning of each other. The story is a relational act that necessarily implicates the audience (Greenspan, 2008; Langer, 1953). The teller and the listener are both involved in the story. The listener is a participant in that the teller may well change the story specifically for the listener. The listener also interprets the story (Frank, 2010; Tyler, 2007a; Rosenblatt, 2001); this makes the listener a storyteller as well (Randall & McKim, 2008).

While Tyler (2007b) is discussing stories of and within organizations, much applies to stories in general; Tyler believes that stories have a life of their own or an aliveness—an energetic vitality. The storytelling, indeed, is separate from the story itself. She explains that we may not have been in the event that others reflect in the story and the story is not the event. Likewise, the telling of the story is not the story. The telling is a relational representation of the story itself. The story is still “out there” (Tyler, 2007b, p. 6) whether it is told or not. The storytelling is relational, not only because one tells and one listens, but also because both are interpreting (Frank, 2000, 2010; Rossiter, 1999). The teller is interpreting the original experience and the listener is interpreting the telling as well as the story (Frank, 2010; Langer, 1953). Both are bringing themselves and their entire social-cultural, rational, and spiritual context with them to the relationship. The nature of the story will change as it is told and retold; new elements are added or emphasized; other elements are skipped over either in the telling or the listening. In this manner, the story has life and transformation (Rossiter, 1999).

Tyler (2007b) utilizes an unpleasant metaphorical analogy to distinguish between archetype and story which helps to show the importance of the details and the context of the story. In her metaphor, the body is a story. The flesh is the telling of the story. If you claw away the flesh, you come to the skeleton. She likens the archetype to the skeleton which, by itself, is



lifeless and unidentifiable to others. It is only through the presence of the flesh, the storytelling, that the person can be recognized and called by name. It is only when one is fully fleshed that one has meaning to another and relationship may form. Perhaps it is only when one is fully fleshed that one understands his or her own meaning. “In the case of story aliveness, the archetype needs flesh in order for us to recognize it, learn from it, be in relationship with it. It needs to be narrated, to be told as a story” (Tyler, 2007b, pp. 7-8). Storytelling, therefore, is basic to meaning making.

Frank (2010) discusses narratives and stories with different language, but similar construction to that of Tyler (2007a). Stories are living, local, and specific (Frank, 2010). Narratives, on the other hand, are the underlying resources from which people construct specific stories and the tools used to understand the stories that they hear (Frank, 2010). The story adds to the meaning of the narrative and allows others to interact with it. The story is what adds life to the narrative (Frank 2010).

Illness stories seek to be heard (Black, 2006). The telling of human experiences of suffering offers meaning and adds order and cohesion (Black, 2006; Frank, 2000; Harter, Japp & Beck, 2005; Mattingly & Garro, 2000; Puchalski, 2006). Storytellers do not tell in order for their stories to be analyzed; they tell to call for other stories of shared experiences in order for relationships to be built (Frank, 2000). With relationship as a goal of storytelling, comes a responsibility upon the listener to listen deeply and co-author the story. In listening to the stories, one must listen responsibly and care for the stories in order to build an ethical relationship. This is important because “stories have a life force, a vital energy, vibrations, frequencies” (Tyler, 2007b, p. 6).

## **Problem Statement**

Adults diagnosed with terminal illness are in a liminal space with the ambiguous possibility of alienation and stagnation, or growth and development (Fischer & Simmons, 2007; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Adults may use personal stories as a way of making meaning or developing self (Rossiter, 1999). A personal story is not simply a reflection of, but a shaping of one's lived experience (Gergen, 1999). Therefore, adults may grow and develop by telling their life story. The life story may help the individual understand his or her identity and purpose in life (McAdams, 1985). The storytelling can help the individual to develop a sense of where he or she is headed (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Frank (2005) argues that dialogue is invaluable in development of identity, values, and goals; storytelling can be a type of dialogue. Adults with terminal illness may utilize personal stories in order to promote growth and development at a crucial time when deterioration and death are the expected outcome.

The relational aspect of storytelling is of utmost importance and therefore, the story listener must be attentive and inviting (Rossiter, 1999; Tyler, 2007a). The active listener may contribute to the meaning making by creating a safe listening space involving authentic listening with empathy and non-judgmentalism (Tyler, 2007b, 2010).

Making meaning of experiences and lives for adults with terminal illness is important for their well-being. I have found little research in the field of adult education to study the process of storytelling with adults with a terminal diagnosis in order to help with identity formation and meaning making. This investigation into the process of storytelling with adults diagnosed with terminal illness may detail a route by which these adults may gain knowledge about themselves and their beliefs and understandings. I also gained knowledge about myself through the process.

The investigation also informs adult educators about the dialogical process in this form of research.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of storytelling with adults diagnosed with a terminal illness as a way of making meaning of their lives.

Based upon the purpose of this study, the following questions helped to guide the research:

1. How do adults with terminal illness make meaning from telling their experiences in stories?
2. What about storytelling helps adults make meaning of their experiences?
3. How does the story listener affect the storytelling and the meaning making of the adults who are terminally ill?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Informing this study is the conceptual framework of narrative learning proposed by Rossiter and Clark (2007) and the concepts of story, storytelling, and story listening framed by the work of Boje (1991), Frank (2010) and Tyler (2007a, 2010).

#### **Rossiter and Clark's Conceptual Framework of Narrative Learning**

Narrative is necessarily retrospective in that it views previous experiences in life (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). It reflects the values and meaning given the experiences by the one who has lived and recounts the experience. The life story, as a specific form of narrative, is not necessarily a chronology of life events, but rather a retelling of experiences usually tied together by values rather than by time (Rossiter & Clark, 2007).

These values expressed in the life story are framed in part in context expressed both internally and externally. Internal contextuality is the understanding of the experienced and

recounted events in light of and in relation to the progression or regression of the individual storyteller (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). External contextuality involves the familial and cultural contexts in which the development occurs. Without both internal and external contextuality, the meaning of experiences can be easily misunderstood (Rossiter & Clark, 2007).

This conceptual framework draws on the work of McAdams (1985). McAdams' Narrative Identity Model proposes that individuals develop identity through the use of life stories. Indeed, many believe that the life story *is* identity (Frank, 2000; McAdams, 1985; Rossiter, 1999). The model includes four primary component types. These are nuclear episodes, imagoes, ideological setting, and generativity script (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Nuclear episodes are specific experiences that are particularly memorable or significant. The memorability or significance of the episode is evidenced in the teller's use of the selected episode in the story. McAdams' imagoes are self images that define the character of the self in the story. The self may be represented with multiple imagoes throughout the stories. The ideological setting in McAdams' model is a framework of beliefs, assumptions, and values that help to form the meaning of the story. The fourth element of identity in the model, the generativity script, is the plan for the future or the individual's plan for a legacy for the next generation. The generativity script is part of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1982).

Adults with terminal illness may draw upon these components in telling their life story. The use of these components from the model in the life story may add to the individual meaning making of the storytellers (McAdams, 1985). This comes at a very important time in their lives so that they may achieve a better understanding of self (Soltys, 2007).

Also important in McAdams' (1985) model are the themes of power and intimacy. These themes can be seen in any or all of the four elements of the life story noted above. The power

theme is represented in episodes of the story when the individual feels strong or has an impact on others or the environment; whereas the intimacy theme is represented by interactions with others for the purpose of closeness, warmth, or relationship as the goal (McAdams, 1985). McAdams' model is of particular importance to this study because the study intends to understand the process of storytelling in the meaning making of adults with terminal illness who may be near their final attempts to make meaning of experiences through the use of stories.

Important to Rossiter and Clark's (2007) conceptual framework is the idea that development through storytelling does not represent some teleological development toward some better goal, but rather development by the meaning that is made by the individual. Also important in the framework is the idea that there is no end point in the development of the individual. Rather than some stage theories of development that consider growth through the progression of stages of development and, therefore, an assumed final stage that represents the goal of development, the life story developmental framework views development through the meaning made and has no end goal. This is of particular importance to this study with participants who have a terminal illness. A view of development as meaning making considers the freedom of the adult with terminal illness to continue to develop.

The meaning made in storytelling is made not only by the teller, but also by the story listener who is implicated in the story (Frank, 2010, Greenspan, 2008; Langer, 1953). The constructed meaning represents what the story offers and what we, as researchers, bring to it (Frank 2010, Rossiter, 1999). Stories, once told, are then part of the experience of the listeners. In this way, the story will continue and will develop not only for the individual, but for the listeners as well.

## **Story, Storytelling, and Story Listening**

Because of the relational process of storytelling, listening is of utmost importance. The listener of stories must be attentive and inviting. The storyteller must feel safety in order to share details of what may be a personal (Rossiter, 1999; Tyler, 2007a) or spiritual (Rosenblatt, 2001) experience. Powerful listening (Tyler, 2007b) is like going on a journey—the listener with the teller and the story. “Stories seek a powerful listening that is a deep listening imbued with a search for meaning and connection” (Tyler, 2007b, p. 22). Elsewhere, Tyler (2011) speaks of a need for authentic listening—involving empathy and non-judgmentalism.

Storytelling is central to the purpose of this study. Storytelling and the construction of narratives have been closely tied to meaning making. Humans make meaning by creating a narrative (Randall & McKim, 2008; Rossiter, 2009). People gain understanding of themselves and their part in relationship to others through stories (Frank, 2010). This study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of storytelling in the meaning making of adults with terminal illness.

Human beings, by their essence, are meaning-makers (Randall & McKim, 2008). It is out of necessity that meaning is made of life’s experiences—it is necessary in order to gain identity (Randall & McKim, 2008). The things that are remembered are often remembered for a reason—they may have had certain meaning at the time of the experience. The person may or may not retain that meaning as the experiences are remembered in the future, however, meaning will still exist—new or old—because new meaning may be created by the storytelling. Meaning constitutes “the highest level in the structure of personality” (Randall & McKim, 2008, p. 179). Stories give detailed insight into the storyteller’s understanding. This understanding is sometimes, but not always obvious to the listener. “Hidden below the surface narrative of stories

are the assumptions, models, expectations and beliefs that guide people's decisions and behaviors" (Silverman, 2007, p. 40). Meaning-making is intimately linked to storymaking "as identity *is* a lifestory" (Randall & McKim, 2008, p. 179, emphasis in original).

Personal narratives are invaluable in the research on human social life (Rosenblatt, 2001). "The strengths of narratives include the details, the information about contexts, the power of a connected story line, the openness and clarity about meanings, the depth of feeling, and the modesty of theoretical claims" (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 112). This study will seek to gain an even deeper, richer understanding of storytelling as a way of enhancing meaning making of adults with terminal illness.

### **Methodology Overview**

This study intends to gain detailed insight into the process of storytelling in adults with terminal illness as a means to make meaning of their life experiences. In order to best achieve this purpose, certain methods have been used to obtain and analyze the data. The methodology of this study is briefly explained here and in detail in Chapter Three.

Qualitative research seeks to gain rich, descriptive data (Merriam, 2002, 2009; Patton, 2002). This kind of research is based upon the assumption that reality is created rather than discovered (Merriam, 2009).

The type of study is that of Dialogical Research (Frank, 2005). Dialogical Research borrows from the work of the Russian literary philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin (Frank, 2005). Bakhtin's critique of Dostoevsky's insight into character development in novels as exemplified in Dostoevsky's character, Devushkin, describes the way in which social science researchers analyze, quantify, measure and define to the last detail the lives of the participants of the research (Bakhtin, 1973). Frank argues that social science researchers are expected to claim of their

subjects that every part of them can be known and explored and detailed in their research. Frank states, “Those expectations, Bakhtin argues, are wrong. They are wrong both as an empirically adequate description of the human condition, and they are ethically wrong” (Frank, 2005, p. 965). He goes on to state that a primary directive for social science should be: “Thou shalt not Devushkinize thy research subjects” (Frank, 2005, p. 965). The social scientist may say any number of things about the participants and enter into dialogue with the participants and their stories, but may claim no interpretive privilege or interpretive authority over the participants (Frank, 2010). Freire (1970, p. 89), a central figure in discussions of emancipatory learning in adult education, is explicit about the formation of and value of dialogue, “Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself.”

Continuing to expand his theory, Frank (2005) details what he understands as the meaning of two of Bakhtin’s key terms in his critique on Devushkin: *finalization* and *monologue*. Bakhtin, Frank (2005) argues, believes Dostoevsky’s greatness was in developing a new relationship between author and character. The character is free—not finalized by the author. The character is developed through his dialogue with other characters, rather than through an omniscient author. The character is never finalized in this new dialogic relationship—there is room for change—the character has the freedom to become more. With this new dialogical approach in mind, Frank claims a research report would not be seen “as a final statement of who the research participants are, but as one move in a continuing dialogue through which those participants will continue to form themselves, as they continue to become who they may yet be” (Frank, 2005, p. 967). By monological discourse, Bakhtin (1973) is referring to the type of last word that is uttered about its subject. This monological discourse includes medical diagnosis, judicial sentencing, and social scientific research (Frank, 2005). It is argued that the status of



professional is premised upon the socially sanctioned ability to utter such “monological finalizations” (Frank, 2005, p. 967).

In this view, narrative research must never attempt to have the last word (Frank, 2005). In its development of the story, the research must be open to what the story and the participants may become. The meaning of the present story depends on the stories that it will generate. Narrative research participates in the shaping of the story’s future, but does not control it. Dialogical research, therefore, does not see the stories of the participants as outside the relationship of the researcher; the researcher’s questions and simple presence instigate self-reflections that elicit not merely a recounting of life experience, but a change of life experience (Frank, 2005).

The life experiences of adults who have received a terminal diagnosis are important to understand. These experiences are important to both the individual in order to make meaning of his or her own life, and to other adults, many of whom will receive similar diagnoses. The cohort of participants in this study is particularly well suited for dialogical research. Adults with terminal diagnosis are in a liminal space. Likewise, the heroes in Dostoevsky’s novels are people who are “on the brink” (Bakhtin, 1973, p. 51). The dialogue in the novels as well as in life is helpful for people to understand their new and changing realities.

In selecting participants for the study, I contacted Hospice of Lancaster County for assistance in identifying potential participants. Hospice of Lancaster County is a local hospice organization that cares for people with terminal illness in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and their families. The hospice generally has a population of people with a terminal illness that numbers over 450. The average stay of the ill people is approximately two weeks, with the shortest stay of perhaps hours and an expected stay of less than six months, given the definition

of a terminal diagnosis. This study limited the number of participants to four in order to gain deep insight into their storytelling and the reaction to it. Hospice of Lancaster County assisted to identify potential participants who had indicated an interest for visits other than by medical personnel and who are expected to live at least two weeks and have the physical stamina to participate in at least two storytelling sessions of approximately one hour each. Hospice employees handed out flyers approved by Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board that explained the research study. The flyers were presented to Hospice of Lancaster County at a meeting of the Ethics Committee and unanimously approved by those in attendance.

In light of the demands of Dialogical Research, this study gathered information through the use of semi-structured interviews. I met with the participants individually for approximately one hour initially to allow the participant to tell stories of their experiences. This story was of the participant's choosing but involved elements of the life story as described in McAdams' (1985) Narrative Identity Model. A second session was with the participant within approximately one week of the first. This session attempted to clarify any points from the first session and allowed the participant to add to the story that was started in the previous session. This session also sought to obtain insight into the work of storytelling that took place earlier and the perceived value of that experience. Depending on time constraints and need, there was a third session with the participants. This final meeting again sought to clarify any previous understandings between participant and me.

Analysis of the stories of the participants took place in light of McAdams' Narrative Identity Model (McAdams, 1985), reviewing the information obtained to identify the ways in which storytelling assisted the participant and me in making meaning of the experiences of the participants. The stories were then analyzed dialogically by reviewing the stories from different

perspectives (Frank, 2010). The meaning imbued in the stories was better understood when the stories came into contact with other stories which takes place in the dialogical interpretation of the stories.

First, I looked to find the use of nuclear episodes, imagoes, ideological settings, and generativity script. Since these items are expected to assist in the meaning making of adults in reviewing life experiences, it is important to consider the use of these elements of life story by the participants. The consideration of these elements is in no way intended to quantify their use, but rather to assist with in the narrative identifying that takes place in these stories. Also, I reviewed the answers to open ended questions involving the participant's perceptions of the usefulness of the storytelling to the meaning making of the individual.

Dialogical Research is concerned with the dialogue that has helped to form the perceptions, beliefs, assumptions, and indeed the evolving identity of the participants (Frank, 2005, 2010). This dialogue is not only the dialogue that takes place at the time of the interviews and interactions with the researcher, but also the dialogue between the individual participants and all the voices that have helped to form the individual from his earliest days to the present. As a researcher in this type of research, I did not seek to have the final word on the participant, as the dialogue will continue and the participant has the freedom to continue to change and grow after my contact has ended.

Analysis of the data (stories) included dialoging with the stories by considering different perspectives offered by the stories and considering boundaries that were set by the stories and the participants who told the stories. The stories were viewed individually and together with each other and in light of my own stories as researcher.

### **Significance of the Study**

Humans have a desire to answer the mystery of life—the mystery of its meaning (Frank, 2010; Frankl, 1968, 1984, 1997; Puchalski, 2006; Tisdell, 2003). This search for meaning is something that often triggers spiritual experiences. The search binds people together, regardless of race, gender, health status, cultural background, education, or social status (Tisdell, 2003). At times of suffering people are often provoked into a challenge to readdress meanings of life to find new meanings that will fit new situations (Puchalski, 2006).

Adults with terminal illness often feel powerless and pushed to the margin (Puchalski, 2006). The ill person is often limited in physical ability and, therefore, social ability. Time is consumed with medical testing and treatment. They often feel they are at the mercy of their physicians and a burden to other caregivers. Treatment decisions feel limiting, especially when faced with advanced medical technology of which they are often uninformed (Puchalski, 2006).

However, adults with terminal illness may be able to have voice through storytelling. Choices of stories and images used can be empowering (Soltys, 2007). Without allowing for storytelling, those with terminal illness may lose or not fully discover their sense of meaning and purpose. Those around them may miss what could be a beautiful relationship that may develop from the co-created story.

As people approach the end of their days, they need to face death with a sense of completion in life; they need to prepare themselves psychologically by bringing together the strands of their lives (Erikson, 1968). The construction of a life story is important in the meaning-making of adults (McAdams, 1998; McAdams, Josselson, & Leiblich, 2006) and in the cohesion of the strands of life. The life story often highlights experiences of perceived importance in the life of the individual and gives insight into the individual's purpose and goals.

There has been little study of the processes of meaning-making through the use of storytelling by adults with terminal illness.

In order to fill this gap in the research of storytelling and meaning-making, this study was designed to elicit stories from adults with terminal illness in order to help them make meaning of their life experiences. The research had as a goal to give insight into the impact of the creation and sharing of stories on the formation and understanding of meaning. It was also designed to study the experiences and perceptions of the experiences of the participants and me in the process of storytelling and meaning-making. Eliciting stories from people with terminal illness may empower them at a time when they have been otherwise stripped of power. “People become empowered by their history, because their past is a vital source of strength, knowledge, wisdom, and maturity” (Soltys, 2007, p. 204). Attention to the experience of the learner is a central theme in adult education. It is profoundly empowering to understand “adult learning as a restorying process—the connection between the authorship of one’s story and claiming authority for one’s life” (Rossiter, 1999, p. 69).

When researchers listen to and interpret the stories of research participants, they understand that they are in a relational process (Frank, 2000, 2010; Rosenblatt, 2001; Rossiter, 1999; Tyler, 2007a). The act of interpretation of a story in order to make meaning is a relational process—the listeners interact with the characters and the teller of the story; they interact with the action and intent of the story. The constructed meaning represents what the story offers and what the researcher brings to it (Rossiter, 1999).

Because of my personal growth as a teacher of adults since my entry into the doctoral program in adult education at Penn State, this research is important to me. I have come to identify my philosophy of adult education as one that seeks to help emancipate adults (Tisdell &

Taylor, 2000). Recognizing adults with terminal illness as a group of adults that is often cast aside and forgotten (Puchalski, 2006), I was anxious to help them with what may be a need to continue to form their identity in light of what may be significant disruption of their previous understanding of the meaning of experiences.

This study has the potential to enlighten the people who work closely with adults with terminal diagnoses. Hospice workers, for instance, may gain insight into the usefulness of the use of storytelling and listening with these adults. Medical staff may also gain insight into the usefulness of stories to make meaning of experiences—perhaps to better understand the experience of their patients.

Another potential for the study is to have a role in the development of dialogical research as a type of qualitative study (Frank, 2005). This unique type of research has not had the popularity of many other types that have been well defined for many years. The dialogical form, as first developed by Dostoevsky in his character development in his stories (Bakhtin, 1973), has great potential in social and educational research (Frank, 2005). This study may shed light on the positive impact dialogical research may have on these fields, on the research participants, as well as on the researcher.

Because of the diagnosis, the meaning-making of adults diagnosed with an expected life-ending illness may certainly be disrupted, disoriented, or accelerated. Therefore, it is imperative for adult educators who are interested in lifelong learning to assist these adults in their struggle for meaning. While nurses tend to serve as the greatest informal social interaction of adults with terminal illness (Morrison & Meier, 2004), there is a call for allowing patients to tell their stories “certainly not with an expert who would reinforce the technical medical format, but maybe a real storyteller or someone who would know the importance of letting the soul speak and find its

images” (Moore, 1994, p. 174). This study allowed the individual to find the images to help make sense of past, present, and future life experiences.

This research also helped to develop Rossiter and Clark’s (2007) conceptual framework of narrative. This framework cautions professionals about relying too heavily on stage theory of adult development. The stories that the participants provide and their perceptions of the meaning-making that is produced by them, gave additional credence to the theory of a storying and re-storying adult development (Rossiter, 1999). From this perspective, an end stage should not be predetermined. The participants remain free to move about in other ways that do not fit a researcher’s predefined and prejudged stages. In Rossiter’s own words:

As adult educators, when we understand development as the unfolding of the life story, we can assume the role of engaged audience member as we come to know learners. We need not hasten to assess the developmental stage or phase of our learners, but rather, we can listen, receive and wait in hopeful puzzlement for the story of each learner to make sense (Rossiter, 1999, p. 69).

### **Definition of Terms for the Purpose of This Study**

1. Terminal illness is defined as an illness expected to end in the death of the person with the illness within six months of the diagnosis (Buckingham, 1996).
2. Adult diagnosed with a terminal illness were the terms used to describe the participants rather than the shorter “terminally ill” or “terminal patient.” These shorter terms were avoided as they tend to limit the person to the disease, rather than seeing the person as a whole being in light of the terminal diagnosis.
3. Meaning-making is defined as a learning process identified by the telling in spoken or written word either to oneself or to other(s) of the explanation of a given experience

either in past, present or future. The explanation is formulated by the individual in light of his or her specific context, motivation, and assumptions that may or may not be apparent to the individual.

4. Story is defined as an exchange between two or more people referencing, recounting, interpreting, or challenging a past, present, or anticipated experience (Boje, 1991). Differing from narratives, stories are living, local, and specific (Frank, 2010).
5. Narratives are defined as “the resources from which people construct the stories they tell and the intelligibility of the stories they hear” (Frank, 2010, p. 14).
6. Life story is defined as a verbal exchange referencing, recounting, interpreting, or challenging past, present, or anticipated experiences of an individual by that individual. A life story usually will incorporate experiences from various times in the lifespan of the teller (McAdams, 1985).
7. Nuclear episodes are specific experiences that are particularly memorable or significant and are recounted in the life story.
8. Imagoes are self images that define the character of the self in the life story.
9. Ideological setting is a framework of beliefs, assumptions, and values that help to form the meaning of the life story.
10. The generativity script is the plan for the future or the individual’s plan for a legacy for the next generation expressed in a life story.
11. Storytelling is the act of verbalizing a story which implies at least one other person as the listener.



12. Dialogue is defined as the verbal interaction of at least two individuals with the purpose of a better understanding of the other(s)' beliefs, perceptions, assumptions, or point-of-view.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

The study has the following assumptions as a basis for the research:

1. Meaning-making is achieved in part through reviewing and interpreting past experiences.
2. Meaning-making is important in adult development.
3. Meaning is socially constructed through interactions between an individual and society, family members, medical workers, coworkers, and researcher as well as many other contextual relationships of the individual.
4. Adults with terminal illness are willing and able to share their life stories with the researcher.
5. Adults with terminal illness are willing and able to share their perceived value of storytelling.
6. Eliciting stories can be an effective way to capture meaning and the meaning-making process of an individual.
7. Actively participating in the creation of a life story by adults with terminal illness creates the opportunity for the individual adults to form new meanings of their past experiences.
8. The presence of the researcher affects the process of storytelling and the content of the life stories of the participants.
9. Meaning may appear not only in the verbal story and responses of the participants, but also in non-verbal behaviors and unshared and unobserved manners.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The presence of an unknown researcher can impact the storytelling experience of the adult with terminal illness; without a listener the stories would not be heard. However, the participant likely had some assumptions as to what I wanted to hear or make some conclusion as to what is worth sharing with me. Because I was unknown to the participants outside this concept, I was judged as worthy or unworthy to hear certain stories and insights. This likely affected the stories told by the adults in ways unknown to me.

Also limiting this research is the participant sample. While the study intends to acquire deep and meaningful perceptions of the experiences of some adults diagnosed with terminal illness, the small, purposeful sample provided data that is not generalizable to adults or adults with terminal illness.

Another limitation of the research is produced by the fact that participants in this study have been diagnosed with terminal illness. Because of the illness, participants were unable at times to participate in the storytelling and interview process. There were times when pain, discomfort, or other medical issues interrupted and postponed the sessions. Time was limited for the participants, so that the research was, at times, an imposition on the participant and family members even though they have considered and given consent.

Despite these limitations, this research study has proved to be an important study giving insight into the process of storytelling and interpretation used to assist in the construction of self identities for not only the participants, adults diagnosed with terminal illness, but also for me. The study provided a method for those involved to elicit stories and review experiences and modeled a dialogical review of the stories.

This chapter introduced the research study and outlined the purpose, methodology and rationale. Chapter two is a review of the literature that guides and supports this study. It is followed by a chapter which details the methodology used in the study and its rationale. The fourth chapter presents the stories of the participants in the words of the participants. This is followed by chapter five which interprets the stories and discusses the implications of the study as well as my reflections.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of storytelling with adults diagnosed with a life-threatening illness as a way of making meaning of their experiences and lives. This chapter provides a discussion of both the background and framework for the research based upon a review of both empirical and conceptual literature from adult education and other fields related to the study. The chapter begins with a review of Rossiter and Clark's (2007) conceptual framework of narrative learning in adult education and leads into a discussion the concept of story developed by David Boje (1991), Arthur Frank (2010) and Jo Tyler (2007a) and its distinction from narrative. The discussion also details the concepts of storytelling and story listening derived from other work of the same scholars (Boje, 2001, 2006; Frank, 1997, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Tyler, 2007b, 2010, 2011). Next, Mikhail Bakhtin's (1973, 1982, 1984, 1986) concept of Dialogism and its relation to the conceptual frameworks used in this study are considered. The fourth section presents an overview of terminal illness of adults focusing on the possibility of learning, development and growth of these adults. Finally, the chapter summarizes and connects the material into a foundational framework for the purpose of this study.

#### **Narrative Learning: A Conceptual Framework**

Rossiter and Clark (2007) lay as a foundation for their conceptual framework of narrative learning in relation to adult education two central ideas. "The first is that narrative is a fundamental structure of human meaning making. That is, we think and perceive in narrative structures, and we understand the meaning of our lived experience through the process of 'storying' it" (Rossiter & Clark, 2007, p. 13). While Rossiter and Clark (2007) often seem to interchange the terms "narrative" and "story" some distinctions between the two for the purpose of this study are made in a later section of this chapter. They continue, "The second idea to be

advanced here is that narrative describes a way of knowing that is distinct from scientific knowing, in which the focus is on meaning rather than facts, verisimilitude rather than logic” (Rossiter & Clark, 2007, p. 13).

The facts, events, and episodes of a life do not represent the wholeness of a life. A human life is not a list of occurrences (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Rather, a human life also needs to have some understanding of the occurrences in order to go beyond a set of data. The meaning of experiences—the values and beliefs linked to the experiences is of great importance to humans. What we want to happen and how we relate different occurrences together are part of making meaning of experiences. The context is of grave importance to the experiences and the meaning we make of them. When we make meaning narratively, we understand life’s experiences—the facts, events, and episodes and their relation to one another “in a story-like form” (Rossiter & Clark, 2007, p. 14). The story adds plot and links experiences together through value and meaning.

Stories are useful in studying identity; the construction of a life story is part of who we are (Erikson, 1968). “Narrative Identifying” (Frank, 2010, p. 49) is a term that emphasizes the continual process of identifying oneself through the use of stories or their underlying narratives. Rather than assume one can find a sustaining identity through stories, *identifying* displays the lifelong process of identity formation and reformulation. The narrative identifying through stories takes place on at least two levels: the story calls its characters to be a certain self in the story and the listeners are called to identify themselves in particular characters (Frank, 2010).

The coherence of a narrative, or the integration of different parts of self in the narrative, reflects the integrity of the story. When considering coherence in the study of meaning-making and identity, four qualities of narrative coherence need to be examined: “the relative consistency

of the narrative, how the narrative is organized, the incorporation of multiple perspectives, and the modulation of affect” (Fiese, Sameroff, Grotevant, Wamboldt, Dickstein, & Lewis Fravel, 1999, p. 8).

The internal consistency of a narrative refers to its completeness (Fiese et al., 1999). Internal consistency is found in a narrative when the different parts make sense together—they are linked through underlying values or a rationale. This is completed in a narrative through the use of synthesizing statements that tie actions and experiences together with information regarding the reasons behind certain choices and actions.

Narrative coherence is supported through the organization of the story (Fiese et al., 1999). The narrator may choose to organize the story chronologically or it may be organized in another fashion such as parts of the story organized by their value. A life story and identity show narrative coherence when the narrator is able to communicate an appropriate organization of the parts to the audience. Stories that are not well organized or that include many incomplete thoughts may be incoherent. However, this lack of coherence or apparent lack of organization may be due to the interpretation of the listener or may display the ongoing process of identifying (Frank, 2010); identity may be in a particularly vulnerable state of flux for people dealing with illness (Frank, 2004a).

Flexibility is the third quality of narrative coherence (Fiese et al., 1999). While a life story shows coherence by holding to the values and convictions of the actor, coherence is also found in the ability of the narrator to consider multiple viewpoints. By showing multiple sides to a story, but choosing a side with conviction, the narrator is showing coherence and not rigidity. The ability to consider multiple sides shows the acknowledgement of complex relationships which may display a mature and coherent self.

The modulation of affect is important to a coherent story (Fiese et al, 1999). When telling a story orally, the narrator should be able to match the emotion of the story with the emotions shown during narration. For instance, when discussing “a wonderful experience” it is appropriate to smile and to have increasing intonation. When the affect of the speaker is consistent with the emotion of the story, the coherence of the story is supported and allows for a better, less confusing understanding by the listener. The affect of at least one speaker in this study was impeded somewhat because of the medication used to treat pain caused by his terminal illness.

There are three essential components of narrative inquiry—temporality, sociality, and place (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Frank (2010) discusses similar properties of story as living, local, and specific. These three components help the narrative inquirer understand people as being in transition, living within certain personal and social constraints, and within the context of specific space. The personal constraints discussed in my study would be, among others, those brought about by terminal illness. “A story is not neutral. . . . Telling a story, enacting one, or listening to one is a constructive process, grounded in a specific cultural setting, interaction, and history. Text, context, and meaning are intertwined” (Mattingly & Garro, 2000, p. 22). This setting and space is directly connected to the individual narrator.

### **McAdams’ Model of Narrative Identity**

The very nature of identity or self is an unfolding story (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). People make meaning of events across their lifespan narratively. Identity is one’s recognition of who he or she is and how he or she fits in the world. McAdams (1985) developed a model of identity through life story. The life story helps an individual find unity and purpose. It is a means to develop an individual’s niche in the world and a “continuity and sameness across situations and over time” (McAdams, 1985, p. 18). Indeed, McAdams (1985) believes that “*Identity is a life*

*story*” (p. 18, emphasis in original). Similarly, Bruner states, “In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narrative by which we tell about our lives” (Bruner, 2004, p. 694, italics in original).

McAdams’ model uses four components in one’s life story: nuclear episodes, imagoes, ideological setting, and generativity script (McAdams, 1985). These four components come together in a life story in order to form one’s identity. They help to emphasize themes and values throughout the lifespan—to help define unity and development of the individual. Together, these components make the life story more than a recollection of events—they add values and purpose which forms individual (and perhaps familial, communal, and cultural) identity (McAdams, 1985). Frank (2004a, 2005, 2010) would caution against the use of a life story to avoid finalizing the storyteller. The emphasis would more likely be on an ongoing process. The components, however, would still seem to fit into Frank’s (2004a, 2005, 2010) perspective.

Nuclear episodes are particularly memorable or significant experiences recounted in a life story that are chosen because of the new insight or understanding gained through them (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). The experiences can be high points, low points, or turning points. The fact that they are recalled within a life story often shows that they have meaning to the individual.

Imagoes are self images that appear in the life story (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). McAdams’ model often includes multiple self images that, together, help to formulate the self identity. Imagoes are evidenced in the life story when the self is seen as a character in the story and the imagoes help to define that character. “The relevant point in connection to adult education is that autobiographical learning activities set the stage for learners to articulate, reflect upon, and perhaps rewrite themselves as the main character in their story” (Rossiter & Clark, 2007, p. 45).



Imagoes can be useful in life stories in order to help construct possible selves or future-oriented concepts of the self (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). These future-oriented concepts can help set the stage for future action. Imagoes may be of particular importance to adults with a life-threatening illness who may have trouble seeing themselves in the future.

Ideological setting refers to the framework of beliefs, values, and assumptions that inform the worldview of the individual telling the life story (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). This establishes the relationship between the individual and the world. The ideological setting is the part of the story that helps to explain the underlying suppositions of the life story (McAdams, 1985). It is the setting in which the individual finds the philosophical beliefs and values that allow him or her to live, work, love, and play as the story unfolds. Changes in the ideological setting may take place upon reflection, which is similar to the transformational learning that occurs as meaning perspectives change or become more inclusive (Mezirow & Associates, 1990).

The generativity script, in McAdams's model of life story is defined by McAdams (1985) as an action outline for the future which explains what the individual plans to leave behind as a legacy for future generations. The generativity script comes out of a basic human desire to be productive and creative as an adult. For McAdams, the generativity script also involves care. The adult's caring for future generations seems to necessitate the generativity script.

In addition to these four components, McAdams' (1985) model of the life story incorporates two general orientations throughout all the elements of the life story. These orientations are power and intimacy also called agency and communion.

The power motive shows a preference or preparation for experiences which make one feel strong or have impact against the environment (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). The power orientation may have either positive or negative aspects. Aspects that might be seen as positive

would be things such as having courage, being action-oriented or having a “take-charge” attitude, or being adventurous. The power orientation can be displayed in negative terms such as aggressive, controlling, scheming, or antagonistic. McAdams defines the intimacy motive as the “recurrent preference or readiness for experiences of warm, close, and communicative exchange—interactions with others deemed as ends rather than means to other ends” (McAdams, 1985, p. 77). People who express the intimacy motive spend more attention on interpersonal relationships compared to those expressing the power motive. “Collaboration, empathy, and listening are among the positive characteristics of the intimacy motivation” (Rossiter & Clark, 2007).

The power and intimacy orientations are expressed throughout the life story revealed through identity carrying features such as the nuclear episodes and imagoes (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). A single life story will likely contain both the power and intimacy orientations, but will likely lean toward one end of the spectrum.

The self is not simply a “substance or an essence that preexisted our effort to describe it, as if all one had to do was to inspect it in order to discover its nature” (Bruner, 1990, p. 99). The self is also not simply a conceptual self created by reflection or a concept constructed just as we construct other concepts (Bruner, 1990). The self is “a transactional relationship between a speaker and an Other, indeed a Generalized other” (Bruner, 1990, p. 101). The self is “dialogue dependent” and “a way of framing one’s consciousness, one’s position, one’s identity, one’s commitment with respect to another” (Bruner, 1990, p.101). The self is culturally dependent (Bruner, 1990; Frank 2010). Human action is dependent on the cultural world and the realities that people construct are social realities, negotiated with others.

Erikson (1968) saw identity as a unifying force during the development of adolescents and young adults. As one develops a sense of self it helps to define who one is, adds purpose and unity to life. McAdams (1985) believes similarly that a life story can help to organize one's life and make it more coherent. The imagoes and ideological settings that are consistent in the life story help bring about this unity. While this may happen within the process of creating or telling a life story, other narrative theorists underscore how the stories may express different, multiple aspects of the life (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006). The stories may display multiple truths—blending multiple truths into a harmony—but retaining some characteristics of the multiple voices as well as the truth that there are multiple truths (Frank, 2010). This multivoiced aspect of the life story is discussed in greater detail in relation to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism.

While McAdams' (1985) model and the four components of his life story model are certainly useful in finding identity in a life story and helpful concepts for this study, the model was not used as a primary model or mode of analyzing the stories of the participants in this research. A limiting factor in this study was time. In light of the terminal diagnosis and in some cases imminent death of the participants, the storytelling sessions were cut short and arranged on short notice. The first of two or three sessions with the participants was their first exposure to what the study was about other than the small bit of information obtained through the flyer (Appendix C). Therefore, participants were somewhat unprepared for telling a life story. McAdams' model, which looks for coherence, development, and identity formation, would be better suited, it seems, for a better prepared, reworked, and perhaps performed life story which is not the kind of story the format of this study was designed to elicit. The model does, however,

help to give meaning to various components of life story which are found in the stories that were gathered in this study, and was, therefore, worth considering here.

### **Claiming Power through Story**

Telling stories about oneself may help adults claim power in their lives (Rossiter & Clark, 2010). Hunt (2000) is steadfast in her belief that illness narratives, or stories told by people with a chronic illness about their illness and its effects, are a way to empowerment. She states,

Because chronic illness can produce major disruptions to core components of identity, such as social roles and relationships, narratives concerning such illnesses hold the potential not only of articulating the disruptions experienced but also of reconfiguring one's very social identity (Hunt, 2000, p. 89).

Illness narratives have a way of redefining self in new terms (Hyden & Brockmeier, 2008; Hunt, 2000). Indeed, as humans, "we may need to be ill" (Frank, 2004a, p. 9) and stories of the generosity of ill people may show us what is possible at times of illness. The creation of villains and heroes in narratives can bring about strategic changes in the broader context of the ill person's life (Hunt, 2000). Many take the opportunity to redefine self in the social context as portrayed in the conflicts and resolutions found in the narratives (Hunt, 2000).

Attention to the experience of the learner is a central theme in adult education (Merriam et al., 2007). It is profoundly empowering to understand "adult learning as a restorying process—the connection between the authorship of one's story and claiming authority for one's life" (Rossiter, 1999, p. 69).

The use of life story in adult education has brought about various ways in which individuals can claim power in their own lives (Rossiter & Clark, 2010). When space is created

in the educational setting for life story, it allows for “deep and authentic mental connections” and the gathering of new knowledge (Rossiter & Clark, 2010, p. 90). When stories are honored and listened to, it permits the flow of both the learners’ and educators’ experiences to fill the educational space in new ways. Traditionally, formal education has not honored individuals’ stories and has even maintained walls that separate the person attempting to learn and the content.

By telling stories in educational settings or elsewhere, we affirm our experiences and claim them for ourselves (Rossiter & Clark, 2010). This allows us to take responsibility and ownership of our lives. The sharing of our stories may help us to “recognize an overarching cultural, religious, familial, or other master narrative that exerts a defining influence on who we are” (Rossiter & Clark, 2010, p. 90). Once recognized, we have the power to free ourselves from the claim that it has on us.

### **The Concepts of Story, Storytelling, and Story Listening**

This study relies heavily on the related concepts of story and storytelling and story listening. The concepts are developed here relying primarily on the work of Boje (1991), Frank (2010), and Tyler (2007a). These theorists have similarities and differences that allow for a dialogue (Frank, 2010) among them. Boje’s (1991) development of antenarrative, Frank’s (2010) argument for living with stories, and Tyler’s (2007a) view of the energetic vitality of stories, for instance, demand specific attention to each of these authors and inclusion of multiple voices in the concepts.

Story is defined as an exchange between two or more people referencing, recounting, interpreting, or challenging a past, present, or anticipated experience (Boje, 1991). Elsewhere, stories are defined as accounts of sequenced events, with plots that weave together complex

occurrences into unified wholes that reveal something of significance (Brown, Gabriel, & Gherardi, 2009; Gabriel, 2008). Stories do not simply represent, however, they bring something new into being; they are actors, not simply a means to get into the mind of the storyteller (Frank, 2010). Stories are sometimes fragmented narratives that do not conform to the traditional story structure of beginning, middle and end (Gabriel & Connell, 2010). Stories “told without proper plot sequence and mediated coherence preferred in narrative theory” are termed antenarrative (Boje, 2006, p. 13). Antenarrative is defined as “the fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted, and pre-narrative speculation, a bet, a proper narrative can be constituted” (Boje, 2001, p. 1). Elsewhere, antenarrative is described as the emergent story that develops as actual experience unfolds: “Antenarrative is before narrative, is before the order and structure of retrospective interpretation. Antenarrative is in the flow of experience, and for me it best captures the emergent and subversive nature of every act” (Adorisio, 2008, p. 613).

The antenarrative is similar to Frank’s (2010) understanding of evolving stories. Stories may provide new elements outside a narrative. The story may act and move before it is complete enough to be categorized into its narrative template (Frank, 2010). A narrative generally is complete with a beginning, middle, end, and moral (Boje, 2001; Frank 2010). The beginning of a story may provide some elements such as time and place but not yet be complete. Frank (2010) likens a story without a narrative to a fish out of water. Usually, the fish will have some life outside the water, but will soon come to an end. In rare instances, however, the fish may develop into a new species on land or the story may develop into a new narrative or “a new template, but in the world of narrative, very little is ever new” (Frank, 2010, p. 123). Boje (2001) uses antenarrative to describe the flow of experience or the collective memory before it becomes reified onto the story and before it completes into a narrative.

Stories are vital forces (Frank, 2010). Stories inform human life; they give form, meaning, intention, coherence, and boundaries. Stories express “how life may have turned out differently” (Frank, 2010, p. 33). The inherent vital force of a story is that which gives its property of being out of control. Once the storyteller and story listener free the story it cannot be taken back. It can be interpreted and reinterpreted by all who hear and share it, but once it is told a story cannot be untold. The ability to interpret and reinterpret may be limited to some degree by the teller as well as the listener, but to some extent, at least, stories are out of control (Frank 2010).

Narratives, when used as a term distinguishing a *written* rather than *oral* story, differ from stories in that narratives lose the sense of relationship. Relationship can be developed between people when they share experiences (such is storytelling) rather than read about them (in narratives). A story is created simultaneously and often in different variants as several people interact and add particular elements to the story (Boje, 1991, Frank, 2010). Stories delve into the richness of people’s experience and lives in ways that surveys and questionnaires cannot (Dunn, 2003). “There are, in particular, no hard and fast rules for distinguishing between stories and narratives or storytelling and narrativisation. Nor is there consensus on how stories and narratives may be distinguished from definitions, proverbs, myths, chronologies and other forms of oral and written texts” (Brown, Gabriel, & Gherardi, 2009, p. 324). Adorasio (2008) sees this complexity when discussing organizational scholars (p. 612, italics in original):

Some of them see story as the ultimate result of narration, where story is the plotted narrative and others that focus on narrative as the construction made over a story where story precedes narrative (for them there can be story without narration but no narration without a story) . Whether story precedes narrative or the opposite, whether the process is

*ex ante* manipulation of events or *ex post* reconstruction of an order, the separability of the two is not questioned.

Stories do not simply relate facts or objective truth (Gabriel & Connell, 2010). “Standing ambiguously at the cross-roads of lived experience and wish-fulfilling fantasy, stories permit the storyteller to sacrifice factual accuracy in the interest of making and sharing a point” (Gabriel & Connell, 2010, pp. 507-508). In this manner, stories are given latitude by the listener with factual accuracy sometimes exchanged for the value embedded in or the impact garnered in a story. Stories are not confined to literal truth, but also contain narrative truth. Narrative truth does not “claim legitimacy by appealing to logical, scientific and ideological paradigms, procedures and methods” rather it “draws its power from a story or narrative that ‘makes sense’ to those who tell it and those who hear it” (Gabriel & Connell, 2010, p. 508). The criteria for narrative truth “lie in the verisimilitude of the plot, the plausibility of the characters and *the extent to which a narrative ‘resonates’ with the experiences of those who create it or receive it*” (Gabriel & Connell, 2010, p. 508, italics added). These truths are neither absolute nor eternal but contain an amazing ability to both enlighten the listener and evoke emotion from the listener (Gabriel & Connell, 2010). The truth of the telling and the telling of the truth, however, are certainly linked (Frank, 2010). Dialogical narrative analysis focuses more on the truth of the telling rather than the telling of the truth (Frank 2010). Stories may lack telling of the truth in their lack of a singular or definable truth or in the simple lapse of memory. The truth of the telling resonates, however, in the teller’s and the listener’s ability to interpret the story (Frank, 2010).

### **Story Aliveness**

Stories of people with terminal illness, I suspect, have a special “aliveness” to them as Tyler (2007b) sees an “aliveness” (p. 4) in emergent stories. The emergent stories, for Tyler, can



be marginalized and pushed to the shadows of the organization. Likewise, adults with terminal illness are often marginalized and left in the shadows (Puchalski, 2006). Tyler (2007b) sees an importance in keeping stories as stories as opposed to being crystallized into narrative:

If they continue to live, to be told, and retold, they will change and grow. In the spirit of dialogism, the stories will bump up against other stories, they will depend on and integrate with other stories, and they will get smarter. They will become more storied, their essence enhanced. They will surprise us. I have seen it happen (Tyler, 2007b, p. 4).

While Tyler (2007b) is discussing stories *of and within organizations*, much of what she writes applies to stories in general. Stories have an energetic vitality or “aliveness” to them (Tyler, 2007b, p. 4). The storytelling, indeed, is separate from the story itself. An individual may not have been in the event that others reflect in the story and the story is not the event. Likewise, the telling of the story is not the story. The telling is a relational representation of the story itself. The story is still “out there” (Tyler, 2007b, p. 6) whether it is told or not. The storytelling is relational, not only because one tells and one listens, but also because both are interpreting (Rossiter, 1999). The teller is interpreting the original experience and the listener is interpreting the telling as well as the story. Both are bringing themselves and their entire social-cultural, rational, and spiritual context with them to the relationship. Rossiter (1999) explains that the nature of the story will change as it is told and retold; new elements are added or emphasized; other elements are skipped over either in the telling or the listening. In this manner, the story has life.

Jorgensen and Boje (2010) discuss the life of story as it continually shapes the identity of the storyteller(s):

Story is living in the sense that it is becoming, i.e. prospective sense-making.

Living story can morph, therefore into narrative into a state of beingness, and it shapes our individual identity or our organization or communal identity and imagined future. It is not finished, not whole, and is still alive in the ‘now’ and ‘here’ (p. 257).

Stories are actors in lives, and as such, are alive themselves (Frank, 2010). The life of the story is in part due to its capacity to perform which “brings something original into being” (Frank, 2010, p. 200). Stories are able to affect people’s lives. The identity of not only the storyteller but also the listener is continually shaped by stories (Frank, 2010).

### **Story Listening**

When we listen to and interpret the stories of research participants, we understand that we are in a relational process (Frank, 2005, 2010; Rosenblatt, 2001; Rossiter, 1999; Tyler, 2007a). The act of interpretation of a story in order to make meaning is a relational process—we interact with the characters and the teller of the story; we interact with the action and intent of the story. The constructed meaning represents what the story offers and what we, as researcher, bring to it (Rossiter, 1999).

Telling a story is a relational act that necessarily implicates the audience; the audience is implicated in that the story is co-created (Langer, 1953). The teller and the listener are both involved in the story (Frank, 2010; Langer, 1953). The listener is a participant in that the teller may well change the story specific for the listener. The listener also interprets the story (Rosenblatt, 2001; Tyler, 2007a); this makes the listener a storyteller as well (Randall & McKim, 2008).

Because of the relational process of storytelling, listening is of utmost importance. The listener of stories must be attentive and inviting. The storyteller must feel safety in order to share details of what may be a personal (Rossiter, 1999; Tyler, 2007a) or spiritual (Rosenblatt, 2001) experience. *Powerful listening* (Tyler, 2007b) is like going on a journey—the listener with the teller and the story. “Stories seek a powerful listening that is a deep listening imbued with a search for meaning and connection” (Tyler, 2007b, p. 22). There is a need for authentic listening—involving empathy and non-judgmentalism (Tyler, 2010, 2011).

Powerful listening is a form of dialogue that may be gentle, fearless, and playful (Tyler, 2010). This gentleness comes in the form of ‘authentic curiosity’ and “delight at the variety of experience that are possible for humans to have” (Tyler, 2010, p. 39). The fearlessness of the listening refers to the objectivity of the listener as opposed to the subjectivity of the teller (Tyler, 2010) who may be too caught up in her own story to be able to ask probing questions (Frank, 2010). A listener’s playfulness rests in the ability to trust the story enough to take it through deconstructive exercises without fear of breaking the story, but rather “increase flexibility, increase awareness and ultimately, simply feel good (or at least better)” (Tyler, 2010, p. 39).

Story listening is involved in reinterpreting stories as well (Frank, 2010). While Robert Coles (1989) is referring to the interpretation of novels, it brings meaning to the interpretation of life stories as well. Detailing information from a course he teaches at Harvard Medical School, “Literature and Medicine,” Coles discusses the meanings gathered by his students upon reading authors such as

Leo Tolstoy (“The Death of Ivan Ilyich”). I have found myself constantly learning new ways of interpreting those fictions—taught by my undergraduates and

medical students. Differences in interpretation become apparent when I teach...college youth as against physicians-in-training (Coles, 1989, p. xvii).

Coles (1989) and his students who have taken both his undergraduate and graduate courses commented on, “how a few years of life and a different intellectual agenda affected their response to a particular story” (p. xvii). Likewise, in listening and interpreting life stories, new interpretations may be experienced each time the story is retold or remembered (Frank, 2010).

Frank (2010) recognizes the importance of the listener. The listener may be necessary to witness and connect stories; the listener—just being there—may be a form of care necessary to the teller. The listener interprets the story as it is being told. The story then makes up part of the listener’s library or narrative habitus which continues to form the listeners’ new or ever-evolving perspectives (Frank, 2010). The listener is also important in that dialogue requires both difference and similarity which the listener may offer; difference is needed or there would be nothing to discuss; similarity is needed for a common starting place (Frank, 2010).

Greenspan (2008) understands that listening well is hard work. Greenspan teaches a course concerned with the analysis and interpretation of Holocaust survivors. In the course, he and students spend much time reviewing oral accounts of the Holocaust as documented through Greenspan’s oral (and now transcribed) interviews with survivors. Through their work, the students come to realize that the oral testimony reveals much more than simply a more vivid eyewitness account than any historian could portray. The survivor’s story reveals meaning-making of the survivor through his or her choices of words, images, remembrances. Often for Holocaust survivors, the story of the favorite fellow prisoner’s sudden death is more than just the recounting of a single death. Many times the story represents the tragic death of so many prisoners or the death of the survivor’s hope or the communal hope of the prisoners. The students

realize that the stories are representative of more than just a historical fact and yet the story is still quite limited. It recounts a moment in history as well as represents a shift in the meaning in life. However, as real as the emotions may be, the story is still not the Holocaust, but a meaningful interpretation of some parts of it. The students realize that in their listening well, they become active participants; they are implicated in the story; they are answerable to it (Bakhtin, 1984).

When able to meet with the survivors, the students seem somehow less interested in the historical accounts of the survivors—the significance lies not in the recounted act of resistance or the execution, but the remembrance and recounting of the events (Greenspan, 2008). The students realize the difference between the original act and the retelling of it. The significance lies now with the retelling of the story and its implications on the survivor as well as the listeners. They are interested more in questions such as how one can go on after the loss of friends and of hope rather than the historical facts.

The importance of the relation between teller and listener is explained by Jabri, Adrian, and Boje (2008, p. 677):

We communicate with persons who have interpretive rights; we communicate with purpose—we may wish to achieve something with others, but that does not negate others' interpretive rights. Moreover, we see our own ideas differently as we communicate. Who has not experienced the act of clarifying or explaining an idea only to have an unexpected insight? For Bakhtin, that is the guiding principle of communication: when persons communicate, when persons interpret and respond, then there is the possibility for illumination and for seeing differently.

### **Making Meaning through Storytelling**

Human beings, by their essence, are meaning-makers (Randall & McKim, 2008). It is out of necessity that meaning is made of life's experiences—it is necessary in order to gain identity. The things that are remembered are remembered for a reason. These things had a certain meaning at the time of the experience. The person may or may not retain that meaning as the experiences are remembered in the future, however, meaning will still exist—new or old. The *necessity* of storytelling for meaning-making (in terms of self-identity) is summed up:

Meaning constitutes the third and, in a sense, highest level in the structure of personality, the first being that of more or less stable traits, and the second, our adaptations of these traits amid the circumstances of our day-to-day lives. In the end, that is, it is the making of meaning that is necessary to complete—literally, to inform—our sense of identity. Insofar as identity *is* a lifestory, meaning-making is inseparable from story-making. In short, the necessity of meaning is tied to the narrativity of meaning (Randall & McKim, 2008, pp. 179-180, italics in original).

Without storying our lives, we will be unable to make meaning of our lives because lives change as experiences and settings change and reevaluating our story will allow us to reevaluate our meaning (Randall & McKim, 2008). Meaning can be generated only through interaction with others (Jabri, Adrian, & Boje, 2008).

There is an inherent value to the use of personal narratives in research on human social life (Rosenblatt, 2001). “The strengths of narratives include the details, the information about contexts, the power of a connected story line, the openness and clarity about meanings, the depth of feeling, and the modesty of theoretical claims” (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 112).

Bruner (1990) describes two universals related to humans' way of orienting toward culture and the past. First is human reflexivity or "our capacity to turn around on the past and alter the present in its light, or to alter the past in light of the present. Neither the past nor the present stays fixed in the face of this reflexivity" (Bruner, 1990, p. 109). The repository of our past may be made more meaningful in different ways as we reflect upon it or may be changed by reconceptualizing the past events. The second universal is our ability to envision alternatives. This ability is our capacity to conceive of other ways of being, thinking, or acting. The self, therefore, is both a consistent representation of individual being as well as a position from which change is possible.

Storytelling is more than a transparent medium through which one may tell about himself or herself; the telling itself is the object to be described (Bruner, 1990). The retelling of a life story can allow one to understand the origins, meanings, and significance of present difficulties in a manner that would allow one to see alternative future actions with the possibility of change. The story's context, genre, and moral are inseparable from its content. The story listener becomes complicit in the process of constructing the future possibilities. Frank (2010) references the metaphor of the Russian formalist, Shklovsky, when discussing the value of stories. The story can be likened to a sketched window, as opposed to a clear window through which one can see the object described. The sketched window is well worth looking at; it is not presumed to represent what is on the other side. The story, therefore, is not simply a medium that carries the meaning of the teller, but is itself the meaning.

Meaning is not a static position, but rather it is a continual process (Bakhtin, 1984). Likewise, storytelling is not static but is a configuration of historical unity—both of what one has become but also what one anticipates for future growth (Boje, 1991). Storytelling is a mutual act

between storyteller and listener in which meaning is continually created. The story lives on in the teller and the listener and the meaning derived from the story also may live on and progress as the participant progresses. “A person does not necessarily arrive at the ‘meaning’, but continues to discover meaning as long as he or she interacts with others” (Jabri, Adrian, & Boje, 2008, p. 669). In this manner, any person may continue to discover the meaning of his or her experiences as long he or she continues to interact with others.

Finding “meaning” in stories is a risky endeavor (A. W. Frank, personal communication, April 21, 2011). The risks include the listener interpreting the meaning of the story. “My core problem is that if the person had been able to state the meaning in so many words, s/he wouldn’t have told the story.” Frank continues, “the story is often the fullest articulation of that meaning one can find” (A. W. Frank, personal communication, April 21, 2011). Stories do create a sense of meaning, but the meaning is often implicit in the story or the acts of the story. To withdraw a specific meaning from the story risks finalizing the story with the meaning made, rather than allowing the story and the storyteller to continue to develop (Frank, 2010).

### **Critique from a Storyteller**

Gabriel (2008) critiques his own and others’ seemingly blind acceptance of the authority and value of personal stories. In recent years, there has come to be recognition of a great deal of a unique narrative privilege or poetic license for the storyteller. The “truth of the facts” does not matter so much as the “facts as experience.” The storyteller has gained the authority to embellish, exaggerate, and omit “even at the cost of sacrificing historical accuracy” (Gabriel, 2008, p. 154). It seems, Gabriel argues, that ideas such as “The truth of the story lies in its meaning, not in its accuracy” or “We are all storytelling animals” or “Stories are repositories of knowledge” have become so ingrained in researchers of stories, in particular in organizational



theory, that the researchers have become dull in their critical evaluation and analysis (Gabriel, 2008, p. 155). The researchers have been overcome by the seductive power of stories to leave unquestioned and uncritiqued the meanings and power within them.

The storyteller must be true to the narrative contract (Gabriel, 2008). In doing so, the storyteller has to balance the elements of the story to make it both “meaningful and verisimilar” (Gabriel, 2008, p. 159). The story must at the same time carry meaning and truth. A decision must be made as to whether the story is going to have the accuracy of reporting or a deeper meaning or some combination.

This caution does not seem to be a concern in the research that I am proposing because I intend to understand the storytelling relationship between the researcher and the participants and to understand the way in which the participants and researcher may learn from the storytelling process. Whether the story is meaningful or verisimilar should have no effect on the research at hand.

Story, Storytelling, and Story Listening are very complex concepts and are discussed rather minimally here. This study relies on several authors to develop these concepts in order to be used meaningfully. As expanded above, the concepts reveal a harmony among the authors while at the same time still maintain some individuality of the multiple voices incorporated in the development of these concepts.

### **Bakhtin’s Dialogism**

Dialogism is a philosophical theory attributed to the Russian literary critic and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, although he never used the term himself (Holquist, 1990). The theory is based upon human communication and relationships. Humans are complex living beings. Individuals have a voice or, more likely, multiple voices that are formed by the voices of others. This philosophical theory is important to this study as it is an underlying theory to the

development of dialogical research. Important in Dialogism are the utterance, heteroglossia, which means complex unity, and the unfinalizability of dialogue which are explained in greater detail below (Bakhtin, 1986).

### **The Utterance**

An utterance is part of active conversation that is a unit of speech (Bakhtin, 1986). The utterance may be a word, a phrase, a sentence, or a series of sentences that expresses a particular meaning in and of itself. An utterance reflects personal experience and the social atmosphere in which it is located. Every utterance anticipates the response to it and reflects previous utterances. In this manner, an utterance is multi-voiced, even though it comes from the mouth of one—because it reflects previous voices and anticipates future voices.

Shotter (2005) explains that a speaker produces an utterance that is of “a unique, unrepeatable, first-time kind” (p. 1). While the words are generally not unique to that person—they were heard from someone else first—the way in which they are used, with particular intonation, meaning, values, experience, and expression are unique to that speaker at that moment in the full context and with the particular anticipated listeners. This is what gives the utterance its importance. It is something that is created by the speaker and is a one-time event that cannot be repeated in precisely the same manner and context because the context is constantly in flux (Shotter, 2005).

The utterance anticipates the listener and the response of the listener (Bakhtin, 1986). While not typical to give personal examples in the context of a literature review, I do so here in order to provide context to explain Bakhtin’s concepts of utterance and heteroglossia. My father gave me a series of letters that my grandfather wrote to my grandmother in the early 1920’s, years before they were married; I keep them in a safe place. Even though they are *written* (unlike the active speech of utterances) they may help shed some light on utterance. When reading the

letters, we are hearing the *words* of just one side of the “conversation;” we don’t have the letters that my grandmother wrote in response. However, I can hear the *voice* of my grandmother in the utterances of my grandfather. He is both responding to and anticipating the responses of the beautiful young woman waiting by the other mailbox. Without reading her words, I can understand her previous response and the next response anticipated by my grandfather. We can see the progression of the relationship over the time of the letters even though we’ve read only part of the story.

Within the utterances (though written, and not spoken) of the story we can experience that not all of the “conversation” was unifying. We can hear the voice of my grandmother hesitant to move too quickly as he utters, “you might leave that ‘sincerely yours’ off when you sign your letters. Supplement it with something more tasty!” He continues, “I want you to be sincere, but you might give me a little more than that to pin my faith on” (P. J. Sauer, personal communication, December 6, 1923). This represents Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of heteroglossia, or complex unity which is explained in greater detail below.

This “conversation” between my ancestors may continue its life for generations to come. Each time the letters are read, new meaning and realization may come from them. My grandchildren will draw new meanings and understandings from them. We get a glimpse of the history of our city and the attitudes of some young people at the time. We can read the faith and courage, hard work and determination expressed by the young man so many years ago. We receive an appreciation of a culture bounded by distance, time and technology in ways that my grandchildren will never know firsthand. We hear the voices of the past as they now become part of our present and will in some, perhaps small way affect our future. In this way, these letters add to the complete unit of interactions of our lives or our family’s “systemicity” (Boje, 1991).

Systemicity is a complexity made up of language in dialogue that is forever unfinished and unorganized. Systemicity is, in part, the multiple voices that are heard (and sometimes unheard) by an organization (in this example, a family) that are forever a part of that organization and forever are a part of the development of that organization's continuing story.

### **Heteroglossia**

The voice of one is made up of the voices of many (Bakhtin, 1986). While only one may be speaking, that voice reflects other voices. Humans are social creatures and communicate with a language understood on some level in a conversation by the speaker and listener. The speaker, while producing a unique utterance, is speaking with the voices of those who have informed the speaker. The words used are not simply gathered from a dictionary but rather chosen from previous utterances of others and used in some manner unique to the speaker. The speaker borrows the words of others and places them in a new context, within a new voice, with new intonation and meaning.

Heteroglossia is a complex unity of the voices (Bakhtin, 1986). The multiple voices are still somewhat unique and recognizable, but form a single, harmonic voice (Frank, 2010). A choir is like heteroglossia; the choir creates a beautiful song out of the multiple voices of its members while one can still hear the individual voices. Frank (2010) uses a term, narrative habitus, which he likens to an inner library which has some similarities to heteroglossia. This differs some from Boje's (1991) term, systemicity, which he tends to use at the level of organization, rather than individual. All these theorists would agree, it seems, that heteroglossia occurs on multiple levels: within a single utterance, an individual's identity, an organization's vision, and on the level of an entire culture, to name a few.

### **Unfinalizable Process**

For Bakhtin (1986), all conversation is an unfinalizable, or never-ending, process. Likewise, meaning is not a static thing but also a continual process. The reality of the world is constantly being shaped by the utterances other people make. People will continue to reshape meaning as long as they are in contact with others.

Bakhtin (1986) credits Dostoyevsky with what Bakhtin described as a new and unique (at the time) way to develop characters in his novels. Dostoyevsky allowed the character development to take place primarily through the dialogue of the characters. Sometimes the dialogue actually took place with the words of only one character; however, the character was portrayed with multiple voices. What Bakhtin found most unique about Dostoyevsky's development was that there was no omniscient narrator describing the characters or interpreting their words and actions (as Bakhtin found in others' works such as Tolstoy). The characters were able to develop themselves through their own voices. Bakhtin praised Dostoyevsky for giving the characters freedom and not finalizing them. Because the characters were able to develop themselves through dialogue, the development was never completed.

### **Dialogical Research**

While the process of dialogical research as I use it is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, there are aspects of it that are important to discuss here in the literature review as well. The present section discusses dialogical research as it relates to the work of Bakhtin. Dialogical research is a type of qualitative research that seeks to allow the participants of the research to develop themselves and forbids the researcher from finalizing the participants (Frank, 2005, 2010). The researcher may draw conclusions from the research and the information

gathered (often through firsthand accounts from the participants) but does not expect or purport to know all that there is to know about the participants. The participants' lives are complex and they remain free to develop over time—during and after the research. While insight may be gained into a particular phenomenon under study, the researcher never expects to fully understand from the ever-changing standpoint of the participants.

An idea does not live in an individual's consciousness (Bakhtin, 1973). An idea begins to live only when it takes shape in a genuine dialogical relationship with other ideas. It is only through this relationship that ideas are able to develop and take shape (Bakhtin, 1973). It is only when an idea is shared and embodied by another and comes in contact with another consciousness and in the voice of the other that the idea begins to live. Without this dialogical relationship an idea would degenerate and die (Bakhtin, 1973).

Dialogical research will often gather information through the use of life stories (Frank, 2005, 2010; Sawin, 2004). The dialogical researcher understands that the life stories tell of the relation between the individual and others—family, community, culture, the researcher, and still others (Sawin, 2004). A dialogically constructed life story is not a life history “it is, rather, an ethnography of subject formation that understands the creation of a self as a recursive and dialogical process” (Sawin, 2004, p. 1). Sawin (2004, p. 2) explains the role of dialogical research, “We can come to understand” the participant, “I argue, not by treating her stories simply as transparent carriers of meaning but rather by analyzing how she creates an identity through communicative interaction” she continues, “how I as her immediate partner in conversation, am implicated in any account that comes out of our interactions.” The subjectivity of the dialogical process “locates significance in exposing the process through which the subject creates her self through interaction and in interrogating the traces from which we can track that

process” (Sawin, 2004, p. 2). Just as Dostoyevsky allows the characters in his novels to create themselves, the dialogical researcher allows the participants to create the self being exposed to research. The researcher does not search out a unified, finalized identity of self, but rather an unfinalized, continually negotiated performance that is developed through the utterances of the participants which exist as responses to other utterances and in anticipation of future utterances (Frank, 2005, 2010, Sawin, 2004). The actual meanings in effect are ever changing and are formed dialogically through not only the present interlocutor, but also the voices and utterances of all who have preceded and who are anticipated in the dialogue (Bakhtin, 1983; Sawin, 2004; Shotter, 2005).

Dialogical research does not seek to find the meaning of self as a particular stagnant thing (Frank, 2010; Sawin, 2004); nor does it see the self as “remade from scratch in every encounter but rather built up in layers of past interaction” (Sawin, 2004, pp. 7-8). This study considered the creation of self of adult participants with a terminal illness dialogically. The study analyzed the utterances of the participants in light of the multiple voices represented in and anticipated by the utterances. For example, I paid attention to the familial and cultural voices within the participant’s utterances. I, as a dialogical researcher, must understand that the selves that are described, portrayed and examined in a life story are complex and are never complete (Frank, 2005, 2010).

Shotter (2005) distinguishes between complex machinery and a living being in this way: A complex machine is made up of various parts and held together with various parts such as nuts and bolts that have no other purpose than to hold them together. Many of the parts may have independent functions and can work with purpose outside of the machine. The complex living being, however is held together not with lifeless parts like nuts and bolts but through other

organs which have various functions. Most organs in the human body have no use outside of the whole living being. Without the whole being, individual parts lose their value. Likewise, the social human being loses its value when removed from the whole of its context and cannot be understood to its fullest without witnessing and interacting with the full context. Dialogical research acknowledges this view, and while not expecting to witness and understand the *entire* context of the participants, recognizes its value and purpose in the development of the self of the participants (Frank, 2005, 2010; Sawin, 2004).

### **Terminal Illness: Struggles and Meaning**

A diagnosed terminal illness is one which is expected to result in the death of the person with the illness within six months (Buckingham, 1996). Frank (2000, 2004) and Kleinman (1988, 2006) are great proponents of illness stories as they help the ill person and the medical community to understand the effects of illness on people's lives as opposed to simply symptoms and disease states of patients. Kleinman (1988), Harter, Japp, and Beck (2005) as well as Frank (2000) are clear on avoiding the use of the term "patient." For them, the word "patient" limits a person to his or her disease and treatment. Rather, "ill person" or "person with a chronic or terminal illness" recognizes that there is more to a person than illness. The illness narratives are to represent the person, in all context, to the listener, rather than only the disease and its effects.

### **Preparation for Death**

Smith (1995) finds that terminal illness and facing death often bring to the mind of the ill person a feeling of having unfinished business. This case study presented the conclusion that a person with a terminal illness will often feel anger or disappointment in her or his perceived shortcomings or incomplete work. These feelings can be devastating to the terminally ill person and often create even more discomfort than any physical pain.



Much of the literature (Ayres & Hopf, 1995; Bigelow & Reid, 2006; Burack-Weiss, 1995; Johnson, 2003; McDaniel, Harkness, & Epstein, 2001; Rokach, 2007; Smith, 1995) is dealing with the focus of the person with a terminal illness on the perception of his or her “unfinished business” (Smith, 1995, p. 407). This feeling often brings on anger and despair. Unfinished business of terminally ill people often refers to strained interpersonal relationships that have not been resolved (Smith, 1995). Smith sees a need for resolution in order to ease the patient’s transition.

Smith (1995) refers to a “death rehearsal” (p. 407) in which a worker deals with the dying client’s anger and unfinished business by asking who the client would like present at the deathbed. This questioning may evoke answers that will reveal the unfinished business by suggesting who should not be at the deathbed. The patient’s response will allow for discussion as to why certain people would not be welcomed at the deathbed and bring to light some items of “unfinished business” that could be resolved to improve the transition of death.

In their qualitative study of elders’ beliefs and value of life-prolonging treatments, Winter, Parker, and Schneider (2007) also recognize the need for the person with terminal illness to wrap up loose ends in order to have a smooth transition in death. The study revealed that feelings of discomfort come with feelings of work that needs to be completed. The authors find that this work often revolves around preparing properly for the financial health of survivors.

Many adults with terminal illness attempt to finalize things for the ease of their family members after their death. “Patients take care of beloved ones by directing things that make (future) life as comfortable as possible for their beloved ones” (Proot, 2004, p. 58).

An ethical will is a vehicle for clarifying and communicating the meaning of a person’s life to families and communities. Many adults with terminal illness will create ethical wills in

order to pass on a legacy of personal meaning to future generations. The experience of preparing an ethical will usually has a cathartic effect (Soltys, 2007).

### **Family Communication Issues**

The family's ability to communicate openly during the terminal illness is imperative to allow the terminally ill person to face other issues (Mesler, 1995). Mesler argues that lack of communication between family members, particularly when those family members are caregivers, prevents the person with terminal illness from making progress physically and spiritually. Often this lack of communication is because of the fear of dealing with the culturally stigmatized topics of end-of-life issues (Burack-Weiss, 1995; Fisher, 2008; Johnson, 2003; Mesler, 1995).

Ayres and Hopf (1995) found that communicating with the terminally ill is rather difficult for many people. This is even more the case for individuals with high communication apprehensions or difficulty in communicating caused by shyness or often some fear of social interaction. In their study of seventy-four communications students, they found that it is also true that if the person with terminal illness is perceived to have high communication apprehensions, the communication is also difficult for the one communicating with the ill person. In this manner, the person with terminal illness with high communication apprehensions may suffer even more without the desire of communication by others. Without communication, adults with terminal illness may be left with unresolved issues in their final transition in the earthly life cycle.

Discussion between the family members and the person with a terminal illness regarding the impending death helps to promote closeness and to ease the dying process and the grief process of the loved one (Johnson, 2003). Johnson argues that because of cultural conditioning it

is often difficult for the family members to begin these discussions. Therefore it is important that someone outside the family circle start the discussions if necessary for them to take place.

The importance of communication between family members and those with terminal illness is apparent in Schroepfer's (2008) study of social relationships of adults with terminal illness. She found in her study, that terminally ill people often have the desire to hasten their death when they have a perception that their family members see them as a burden. This perception is often incorrect because of the lack of communication between the person with illness and the family (Schroepfer, 2008).

Furthermore, Hjorleifsdottir and Carter (2008) see open communication as important to relieve stress in order to spend needed energy on the physical. They see a lack of communication as a roadblock to the continued battle of the ill person in the physical realm. If family communication breaks down, undue stress is placed on the person with terminal illness (Munn, et al., 2008).

Dealing with the ill person's inability to communicate with family members is approached head-on in McDaniel, Harkness, and Epstein's (2001) case study of medical family therapy. They see the communication as a paramount issue and deal with family therapy simultaneously with physical health issues. They find that alleviating communication problems allows for discussion as to the proper treatment of the patient which eases transition.

Communicating about certain end of life decisions such as a living will and preplanned funerals well before a terminal illness arrives will assist in a smoother transition approaching death, Olson (2008) found. Her study revealed that those who preplanned for such issues found communication much easier on such topics when the discussions were imminent.

Fisher (2008) finds that family communication issues are complex during a woman's fight with cancer. Her dissertation focused on the communication between mothers and daughters while one struggled with cancer. The women usually found communication particularly difficult during the transition which caused an additional undue burden on the family member with illness. Those relationships that were able to continue open communication throughout the illness were able to focus more on other needs including physical needs than those who were not able to openly communicate. The difficult issues of illness and death often prevent open communication.

### **Finding Meaning in a Life with Terminal Illness**

Forming a cohesive life story, can help any adult find meaning in previous life experiences (Rossiter, 1999). This can be of particular importance for an adult with a terminal or life-threatening illness. Erikson (1968) points out that as we approach the end of our days, we need to face death with a sense of completion in life; we need to prepare ourselves psychologically by bringing together the strands of our lives.

Eliciting stories from people with a life-threatening or terminal illness may empower them at a time when they have been otherwise stripped of power (Soltys, 2007). "People become empowered by their history, because their past is a vital source of strength, knowledge, wisdom, and maturity" (Soltys, 2007, p. 204). It can also be a source of regret, remorse, sorrow, shame; it can be messy (J. A. Tyler, personal correspondence, September, 2010).

People with terminal illness often feel cast aside by society (Frank, 2004b; Puchalski, 2006). They often feel useless, undervalued, and less of a person than before their illness (Puchalski, 2006). Some become virtually homebound, not necessarily as a direct physical cause of their illness, but from fear of being trampled upon in subways, in elevators, and on sidewalks

(Puchalski, 2006). While there have been great medical advances in recent decades (Frank, 2004b) there are still inherent mysteries to life and death that remain unanswered (Frank, 2004a; Puchalski, 2006; Tisdell, 2003).

Humans have a desire to answer the mystery of life—the mystery of its meaning (Frankl, 1968, 1984, 1997; Puchalski, 2006; Tisdell, 2003). This search for meaning is something that often triggers spiritual experiences. The search binds humans together, regardless of race, gender, health status, cultural background, education, or social status. At times of suffering we are often provoked into a challenge to readdress our meanings of life to find new meanings that will fit our new situation. This search for new meanings brings yet more spiritual journeying (Puchalski, 2006).

Discussing how stories of illness reveal similar meaning-making, Kleinman (1998) states that illness demoralizes. Shared stories recuperate persons, relationships and communities—they are part of people’s “remoralization” (Frank, 2000, p. 354). Individuals who are ill can utilize stories to both reconstruct life as before the illness and construct a new story that deals with the illness in new ways (Frank, 2010).

Finding meaning in life (Frankl, 1984; Johnson, 2003) is important to the self-actualization of the individual. Meaning in life refers to an individual’s understanding that her or his life is worthwhile or worth living—that there is a purpose in continuing to live (Frankl, 1984). With this understanding, the individual may desire to continue living even against terrible odds and circumstances.

Frankl (1984) wrote about the ability for people to find “meaning” even in their darkest hours. He recounts his own ability to daily face the fear of death in concentration camps during the Jewish Holocaust, and yet to persevere because of the meaning that he found in life and for

which he continually hoped to be able to participate in more fully after his expected freedom.

Similarly, Elizabeth Smith (1995) suggests that when a terminally ill person finds a “meaning in death” (p. 408), the person becomes much more at peace with dying. She explains that this meaning in death may come from dealing with a mystical experience in which a “feeling of oneness” was present (Smith, 1995, p. 408).

Smith (1995) argues that the person with terminal illness must confront the “transegoic” – going beyond the “me” (roles such as mother, wife, husband) to the “I” (what is left when these things are gone) in order to make progress. In coming to terms with the substance of the person rather than the roles one has in life, the person with terminal illness may attempt to find meaning with her or his struggle.

Meaning in death (Manis & Bodenhorn, 2006; Johnson, 2003) is achieved when and if the individual recognizes that her or his life’s influences continue in some ways after death. When one finds meaning in death, it usually allows for a calmer transition into death for the patient. When family members can witness and understand the ill person’s acknowledging and acceptance of this “meaning in life” it can also help with the family member’s grief (Johnson, 2003). Among the things that make this self-actualization difficult is the amount of time that the person with terminal illness has to reflect on such spiritual things. This time is sometimes limited because of the physician’s discomfort with and therefore lack of discussing terminality with the ill person (Waldrop, 2006). Waldrop (2006) also finds that a late diagnosis—within two weeks before death—can certainly disrupt the meaning-making of the ill person. Often the person with terminal illness needs to deal with some physical issues before tackling issues of meaning. With a short period of time, it is often not possible. Johnson (2003) suggests that meaning in death is often easier to find when an individual has already found a meaning in life.

Smith's (1995) longitudinal case study of a 32 year-old dying of Hodgkin's disease and her spouse gives great insight into an ill person's struggle to make meaning of life and death. The fact that the study is longitudinal is important. This allows the struggle with meaning to be seen as an ongoing process rather than simply considering the meaning gained. Following up with the widower revealed the understanding that the surviving spouse took away from the experience—a positive understanding—because of the spiritual growth that the ill person experienced and had shared with her husband. This growth was in the form of gathering meaning and an understanding of her purpose after her death as a memory for her surviving family as well as her looking out for her family after death (Smith, 1995).

Bigelow and Reid's narrative (2006) developed the idea of the person with a terminal illness making meaning of suffering and expression of concerns and meaning through poetry. The narrative tells the story of the young person with terminal illness returning to her junior high school to discuss her struggle and her expression with her previous English teacher. The narrative describes some of the contact between the two and the teacher's desire to have his former student share her story in her poetry.

### **The Spiritual Relationship**

The spiritual journey is not always bright and happy. There may be dark times of suffering and doubt (Puchalski, 2006; Rosenblatt, 2001). When the journey does bring new meaning, it brings healing—wholeness. The new meanings may reconnect the suffering person with others and the world and a higher power. The healing may bring peacefulness, contentment or joy (Puchalski, 2006).

Spirituality has been a topic of discussion in adult education in recent years. Indeed, Tisdell (2003) argues that spirituality is an important part of experience, especially in

experiences surrounding death. It is at times of birth and death “where the great mystery of the Life-force is present in all its fullness” (Tisdell, 2003, p. 18). It is important to focus on the spiritual in particular when faced with the individual adult’s imminent death or that of a loved one (Manis & Bodenhorn, 2006).

Tisdell (2003) argues that adult educators that are interested in emancipatory education must be aware of and open to the spiritual and cultural expression in the lives of those involved in education—teachers and learners alike. This openness to the interconnectedness and wholeness of our lives helps us make sense of our lives. Likewise, hooks (2003) believes that adult educators must use spiritual practice in order to teach counterculturally.

Dirkx (2001) uses the term “nurturing soul” in education. He also uses words such as “interconnectedness”, “images”, “relationship”, “imagination”, and “fantasy” to describe soul in education. While not directly discussing spirituality in education, certainly terms he used are terms often used to reflect spirituality. He argues that the one-dimensional focus on the intellect in learning denies the images, fantasies, and myths that surround the intellect and should be valued aspects of the learning experience. Focus on the agenda may leave little room for the meanderings of the soul. “Denial of soul within the learning environment is denial of a life force and makes itself felt through an absence of energy, enthusiasm, or vigor” (Dirkx, 2001, p. 9).

Education should be designed to search for meaning in the mysteries in life. Lerner (2000) believes that awe and wonder should be the first goals of education. Students need to respond to the universe, each other and themselves with awe, wonder, and amazement at the miracles that are with us daily. Students should not be taught “*about* awe and wonder” Lerner emphasizes, “Rather, I mean we should teach students to actually embody awe and wonder in the ways that approach their own experience of the universe” (Lerner, 2000, p. 243, italics in



original). Being open to the spiritual in adult education may be better achieved by more authentic teaching (Tisdell, 2006).

Spirituality is also about making meaning (Tisdell, 2003). This meaning is based upon previous experience as well as perceived connections between individuals and their world and others within it. Rather than solely through critical reflection and dialogue, spirituality may rely on affect, and the mystery of the connections between things to make new meaning of new experiences.

For many, spirituality is expressed through stories, narratives, myths, images, and rituals (Briskin, 1996; Moore, 1994; Tisdell, 2003). Educators must make space for moments of spiritual learning to occur because they are often outside the realm of the expected or planned. The moments of grace may occur, however, because the educator allowed the time and space for them (Merriam, et al., 2007). Also important is to allow for dialogue. It is within dialogue and discussion that people may feel the interconnectedness with one another, themselves, and perhaps a force beyond them.

Another spiritual experience, for some, is the practice of qualitative research (Rosenblatt, 2001). In relation to his work as a qualitative researcher, Rosenblatt has delved into the meaning of spiritual experiences of participants and has experienced a spiritual journey of his own. He understands spirituality as something that “cannot be captured in words—or maybe it’s just that the words make what I have experienced seem more ordinary, definite, and cognitive than I experienced them” (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 113). Rather than define spirituality, he lists the “kinds of things I think of as spirituality include a sense of what is most important in life, what it means to be human, the most fundamental meanings of connections with other humans and with the universe, the meanings of life and death...” (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 113). It is noteworthy that his

list includes mostly the *meaning* of connections and experiences, not necessarily the connections and experiences themselves. He does not imply that all things spiritual are wonderful; indeed Rosenblatt gives a warning to potential qualitative researchers that “in some ways it” (his spiritual journey prompted by his research) “has been painful, disquieting, identity-disrupting, confusing, frightening, and relationship-rocking” (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 113).

A time of illness may be a good time to consider spirituality. Moore (1994) believes that “if we allow sickness to lead us into wonder about the very base of experience, then our spirituality is strengthened” (p. 167). Tisdell (2003) likewise believes that times of illness as well as healing tend to lend themselves to the spiritual. She contends, “The drive of spirituality is the drive to wholeness, to holiness, to health, and to make meaning of that wholeness. Fundamentally, this is what spirituality is about” (Tisdell, 2003, p. 48).

Clearly, Tisdell (2003) understands that times around the mysteries of birth and death often can lead to spiritual moments. However, Tisdell (2006) also sees the spiritual connection in everyday occurrences:

*I experience* what I call this Divine Spirit every day—in the eyes of living beings that I share this earth with; in the beauty, majesty, and vastness of all of creation; in the mystery of the order in the chaos of the universe and the interconnectedness of everything that I do not entirely grasp or understand...take me to the depths of my being where that Divine Spirit also resides, where I find inspiration to look at the world in new and creative ways. This, to me, is a version of being “saved” and is available every day in the ordinary experiences of life... (Tisdell, 2006, p. 266, italics in original).

The meaning-making that is fundamental in spirituality (Tisdell, 2006) gives spirituality its right to consideration in adult education. Adults understand their experiences through not only cognitive reflection, but also through their relationships and connections with other people and places and things.

Some of the themes discussed in previous sections of this chapter have things in common with the spiritual theme. Unfinished business may be completed in one's ability to transcend the end of being at death. Certainly making meaning of death can involve the spiritual or a holistic view of the life cycle. Communication with others deals with one's relationship with others and the outside world. Dealing with grief can sometimes be ameliorated with spiritual connections. However, the spiritual theme is separated here because it is often not limited to any one of these topics, may include all of these topics, and can go well beyond. The spiritual theme usually involves a connection with a higher power which may not be evidenced in the other themes.

This spiritual theme is evidenced in Bigelow and Ried's (2006) narrative. This article brings into account the spiritual as Ried's poetry touches upon her interpersonal relationship with her higher power and connections with other people and the world. They find this as somewhat settling to the person with terminal illness to express the spiritual and hope that it will touch others. They have a holistic view of knowledge and meaning making described in Ried's poetry. While she does not find meaning in suffering and death by themselves, Ried does find meaning in her poetry and her expression of her pain, grief, loss, and loneliness.

Smith (1995) argues that "the human is more than either the sum of his or her biological parts or the influences of his or her environmental milieu. In fact, the self extends beyond the bounds of the physical realm into what is often referred to as the spiritual or transpersonal. The transpersonal recognizes spirituality and transcendental needs as intrinsic aspects of human

nature” (p. 404). The individual should move from a “fearful reactive stance to a proactive conscious awareness that allows for optimal growth in the confrontation of one’s personal mortality” (Smith, 1995, p. 405).

Johnson (2003) sees the major worries of the person with terminal illness as fears of personal suffering, concerns of being a burden to others, abandoning loved ones, regrets about unfinished business, and fears of dying alone. These concerns can be addressed, she believes, through help with exploring his or her spiritual self. Through this exploration, the terminally ill person may come to find understanding in death and somehow transcend death by understanding how one’s life may continue even after an individual’s death (Puchalski, 2002).

### **A Good Death**

The idea of “dying well” is discussed at length by Fischer and Simmons (2007). The transition from life to death occurs, for most people, over a period of time. This liminal period is often a period of pain and loneliness. Dying well would be to approach this period and engage it as a natural part of human life that can promote growth and understanding. When dying well, pain would be reduced and fear and loneliness would be abated. As Fischer and Simmons (2007) see it, a person would successfully transition when reaching “certain landmarks: asking forgiveness, accepting forgiveness, expressing love, acknowledging self worth, and saying good-bye. In the final part of the transition, dying well also means letting go, surrendering to the transcendent, to the unknown” (p. 191). The best sign that one has died well, is not that it was easy without pain or struggle, but rather that it was of value and meaning for the person and those near (Fischer & Simmons, 2007).

Meaning in life is something that can change and develop over the lifespan (Erikson, 1968). It is very important for people to find a meaning in life. Frankl (1968, 1984) speaks of the

lack of meaning as an *existential vacuum*. This lack of meaning can bring about despair and depression. For one to die in this state would mean that one did not die well (Fisher & Simmons, 2007).

### **Frankl's Existential Philosophical Perspective**

In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl (1984) sets out his psychotherapy which he terms logotherapy. Logotherapy is named from the Greek word *logos* which denotes *meaning*. Frankl's perspective emphasizes the unique capacity of humans to perceive meaning (Schulenberg, Hutzell, Nassif, & Rogina, 2008). Individuals strive to find meaning in life; Frankl's form of psychotherapy focuses on both the formation of this meaning for individuals as well as the striving to achieve it (Frankl, 1984).

Logotherapy is often regarded as in the humanistic-existentialist school of thought (Schulenberg, et al., 2008). "Existential therapy is about helping people to reclaim and reown their lives...existential therapy expands on medical intervention by inviting reflection on the meaning of the intervention" (Schneider & Krug, 2010).

Frankl's (1968, 1984, 1997) writing and theory has primarily a Humanist tone to it. He is quite clear that individuals have freedom—even in the direst of circumstances. Frankl (1984, 1997) spent years in a concentration camp. There he was severely limited in his physical freedoms; however, he contends that he never was limited in his freedom to choose. He always had his freedom to identify a meaning of his life and existence. He contends that this freedom was his reason to go on—to continue his life rather than wish it were over (Frankl, 1984).

Frankl's logotherapy sees individual responsibility as the essence of human existence (Frankl, 1968). He states the categorical imperative of logotherapy, "Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to

act now!” (Frankl, 1984, pp. 131-132). In this imperative he sees the individual as ultimately and solely responsible for his or her actions. He sees the therapist as one who makes the patient aware of this responsibility and one who is unable to judge. The patient decides for what, to what, or to whom he or she is responsible (Frankl, 1968, 1984, 1997)

Frankl’s theory is not strictly Humanist in the purest philosophical sense of the term. Frankl believes that there is an ultimate meaning in life or what he refers to as “super-meaning” (Frankl, 1984). Because of his belief in an ultimate meaning beyond the human capacity to grasp, the theory steps outside the strict philosophy of Humanism which treats human capacity as paramount.

A person’s search for meaning in life at a specific moment is what matters (Frankl, 1984). A general question of the meaning of life is comparable to asking a chess master for the best chess move. There is no best move in chess apart from a particular circumstance (Frankl, 1984). Likewise, for human existence, one should not search for a general meaning, but rather a meaning specific to an individual human at a particular point in time.

Frankl’s logotherapy (1968, 1984) is primarily a practice of psychotherapy and therefore is under the care of a psychotherapist rather than a researcher. Frankl uses a metaphor to describe what he sees as the role of the therapist. Rather than an artist who paints a picture for others to see, he sees the role of the therapist more of an ophthalmologist who tries to get people to see the world as it really is (Frankl, 1984). This is not to say that he believes that there is a universal meaning in life, but that he intends to elicit from the patient what his or her individual meaning is, rather than present the therapist’s view. A logotherapist, in Frankl’s (1984) view, “is the least tempted of all psychotherapists to impose value judgments on his patients, for he will never permit the patient to pass to the doctor the responsibility of judging” (p. 132).

Adult education should strive to develop self-directed adults who would be responsible for evolving into a more enlightened human existence (McKenzie, 1978). The primary goal of adult education, according to McKenzie, is the search for personal meaning (Elias & Merriam, 2005).

In their book, *A Life Worth Living*, Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (2006), in introducing positive psychology recognize that many scientists dismiss psychology as a recent introduction to humanity as a side effect of the somewhat recent hyperdevelopment of the frontal cortex that has not aided in the development and survival of the species. They defend the science of positive psychology in this way:

When trying to understand what it means to be human, we cannot ignore what we value and why. Nor does it make sense to conclude the emergence of new capacities, such as that for reflection, is less important for the destiny of the species than the more ancient genetic programs that control so much of our mind and behavior. (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006, p. 4)

### **Narrative Medicine / Lifestory as Therapy**

The stories of chronically ill persons and terminally ill persons have been elicited by practitioners of Narrative Medicine. Narrative Medicine is a clinical practice that takes into account the stories of patients, nurses, and physicians (Charon, 2006). The medical treatment includes not only a rational scientific approach, but also care for the affect and the story of the ill person (Reissman, 1990). Charon (2006) contends that the subjectivity of the ill person is of grave importance to the care for the individual. The stories will give great inside to the suffering and desires of the individual. Narrative Medicine's clinicians keep the individual's stories as a central focus in the care as each individual's experience is inherently different (Charon, 2006). Storytelling of the professional is also important (Wimberly, 1997).

Randall sees the work that adult educators do for individuals “in transition...Helping them cope with and comprehend these transitions lends a therapeutic component to our work” (Randall, 1996, p. 238). Restorying our lives allows us to “construct a more contradiction-free and generative narrative” (Bruner, 1990, p. 9). The individual is not “a victim of her existence but of her experience. It is not the person that needs doctoring, that is, but the story” (Randall, 1996, p. 239). The elicitation of a lifestory allows the storyteller to tell the story through a fresh lens which will bring about new enlightenment and perhaps new meaning of past experiences, present circumstances, and future possibilities (Randall, 1996; Randall & McKim, 2008).

There are three stages to re-storying that take place that may make the experience therapeutic (Randall, 1996). These stages are narrating the story, reading the story, and changing or regenerating the story. The first stage simply involves the telling or venting the story with honesty and intensity. This would involve a trusted listener who listens intently and delightedly (Tyler, 2010, 2011) not only to the content of the story but also to the form or genre of the story (Randall, 1996).

The second stage is that of reading the story “which means having told it, then studying it, evaluating it, critiquing it, with an honesty I may never before have experienced” (Randall, 1996, p. 240). In this stage, the narrator takes a step back to review what has been told, what themes have arisen from the telling, what values have been laid bare, how the individual has been characterized, and in what ways might the story have been different if it had been told from a different perspective or from another’s point of view. “It is a stage of deliberate de-storying, which means entering a state of relative storylessness where everything about my life as *composed* is, in principle, up for review” (Randall, 1996, p. 240, italics in original). The reading stage is of great importance; the “difference between a mere life and a good lifestory lies in our



ability to read. In essence, the better we read, the better our lifestory will grow: the wider, the thicker, the more imbued with meaning” (Randall & McKim, 2008, p. 257). A good reading of the lifestory will allow for the possibility of a more positive view of death. The “more adept we become at reading our lives, and the thicker we thus experience our existence, then the more we will envision death, not as a mere ending, but as a matter of open closure” (Randall & McKim, 2008, p. 257).

The third stage after narrating and reading the story is re-authoring it (Randall, 1996). This stage allows the narrator to regenerate the story with new insight and a new perspective. The narrator looks to how he or she can compose a new story that is “*big enough, with a horizon broad enough, to account for as much as possible of my actual life and render it available to me as a coherent, re-membered whole*” (Randall, 1996, p. 240, italics in original). The stages do not necessarily come in sequence, but are intertwined throughout the process.

As educators who listen to the stories we must realize first that we are now characters in their life story (Daloz, 1986). We are also keepers of their story (Randall, 1996). “We can provide them a safe, hospitable space in which they can tell their story, can get it out, and get it straight” (Randall, 1996, p. 241). In listening, we need to be an open audience, delighted to be allowed to share in the experience, and confirm the teller (Randall, 1996; Tyler, 2011). We can help the teller “shift from being a character who is unquestioning within it, going along with its flow, to being its narrator, one step closer to being its author” (Randall, 1996, p. 241).

We are to assist the teller in the reading of the story and in the critiquing and questioning of the assumptions therein (Randall, 1996). We may help the teller question what values were seen in the story and whether these values fit in with present and future plans. The turning points in the story are to be evaluated. We can help to evaluate the position of this story within the

larger stories of family and culture and how the individual's story may have "been restricted and misshaped by the larger stories in which they have lived—stories which are always that, stories, never givens; structures that are not cast in stone but can themselves be restructured, recomposed" (Randall, 1996, pp. 241-242).

While assisting a teller in this process of becoming an author of a life, we realize that we become a co-author (Randall, 1996). We can assist as the tellers integrate their life into their new lifestory and "we can be a *catalyst* for them as they fashion an inside story that is more reflective of the breadth and complexity of their actual existence and more in harmony with their expression to the outside world" (Randall, 1996, p. 242). Through this process a new story will unfold over which "they have greater author-ity, greater control" (Randall, 1996, p. 242). We must realize also that in our assisting as a coauthor, we, in turn, may be coauthored by them, as our interaction with them and providing care for them has indeed helped to restory ourselves (Daloz, 1986).

Dignity is at the heart of our care and concern for the person with terminal illness (Frank, 2004a, 2004b). For Frank (2004b), dignity is hard to define, but it is easy for us to identify when it is compromised. Frank (2004b) believes that in showing dignity to others, we make time and space for them, we offer them healing in whatever way we can.

The question of whether it is fair and ethical to take the limited time of people with terminal illness in order to conduct research was posed in a study by Barnett (2001) to the terminally ill participants. The study showed that a large majority of the participants believed that the time and effort was both ethical and valuable even where there were no immediate effects of the study. This study had a median interview time of eighty-three minutes which may, for the present study, be a reasonable amount of time to begin stories. Storytelling of illness

seems to have definite immediate positive effects, such as making meaning of human suffering, and would therefore, be even more valuable to the participants.

### **Worldview Construction and Adult Education**

Making meaning of one's life experience or creating a worldview has long been a goal of adult education. Many adult education theorists, including Lindeman (1961), Bergevin (1967), Apps (1973), Brookfield (1985, 2005), McKenzie (1991), Cranton (2003), hooks (2003), and Taylor (2008), seem to view worldview construction as a primary goal or as an end of adult education (McKenzie, 1991). "Insofar as any educational experience contributes to a person's interpretive understanding of the world, education is involved in worldview construction" (McKenzie, 1991, p. 109). Education is not a preparation for life, but is coexistent with life (Lindeman, 1961). Indeed, "Education is life" (Lindeman, 1961, p. 23). Lindeman saw a path of learning for evolving personalities. Knowledge leads to power; power leads to self expression, freedom and creativity; creative freedom leads to enjoyable experience and a world which goes forward in knowledge under a discipline of specialization. Lindeman believed of adult education that "its purpose is to put meaning into the whole of life" (Lindeman, 1961, p. 5) or in Leon McKenzie's term—"worldview construction" (McKenzie, 1991, p. 111).

According to Paul Bergevin (1967) adult education has several general goals including:

1. Helping adults achieve a degree of happiness and meaning in life
2. Helping adults understand themselves, their talents, their limitations, and their relationships with others
3. Helping adults understand the need for lifelong learning
4. Providing opportunities to help adults grow spiritually

The emphasis on the acquisition of happiness and meaning is essential to Bergevin's philosophy (McKenzie, 1991). This was true even in the pursuit of mundane, everyday, or vocational knowledge—the ends of meaning and happiness were to be sought.

Jerold Apps (1973) believed that human beings were more than animals in that they have minds and souls. Because of this, people are constantly seeking to understand themselves, their relationships with natural and social environments and a Higher Being. Adult learning is the process by which we seek these and various other understandings. Adult learning is continuous throughout life, with an emphasis on an understanding of relationships. These interpretations can be understood as worldview construction or meaning in life.

Another adult education theorist, Stephen Brookfield (1985), called for the critical assessment of external sources and internal assumptions framing human (individual and collective) conduct. "Such critical awareness will involve a realization of the contextual, provisional, and relative nature of supposed 'truth,' public knowledge and personal belief" (Brookfield, 1985, p. 46). With the understanding that comes from such critical reflection should come a transformation when discarding previous unquestioned assumptions that no longer carry meaning or value. This will bring about new interpersonal relationships and communal change. Adult education has as a basic tenant, a continual critical evaluation of beliefs, assumptions, and again, in McKenzie's term—"worldview construction" (McKenzie, 1991, p. 111).

Brookfield (2005) sees the importance of critical theory in adult learning. Critical theory envisions "a society in which people live collectively in ways that encourage the free exercise of their creativity without foreclosing that of others" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 39). The well-being of the individual is intertwined with that of the collective. Adults interact generously and compassionately. In order to maintain the well-being of oneself and the community, adults need

to be aware of point out injustice, inequity, exploitation, and oppression (Brookfield, 2005; Horton & Freire, 1990). A critical worldview will counter hegemony and question ideology that portrays the control of many by the few as the norm (Brookfield, 2005). Adult learning, in light of critical theory, sees as a goal the liberation of the individual and, thereby, the community. Adult learning is not just about recognizing how the world is and our relationship to those around us, but also recognizing how the world might be changed for the better (Brookfield, 2005).

Transformative learning theory “seems to have replaced andragogy as the dominant educational philosophy of adult education” (Taylor, 2008, p. 12). Transformative learning theory involves adults making meaning of their daily lives. Adults develop a more critical worldview and transform their perspective as they learn new ways of viewing the world and their position in it. Transformative learning theory involves taking responsibility for one’s own values and meanings rather than accepting them from others. In this way, transformative learning theory is related to critical theory in that they both deal with adults developing meaning perspectives or frames of reference that shape the way they see the world (Brookfield, 2005).

Adult education has as its primary goals transformation and development of students (Cranton, 2003). Regardless of the subject matter in the education of adults—whether technical skills or fostering self-awareness—the power to transform lives is present in education (Cranton, 2003). Technical knowledge and its acquisition allows adults “to gain communicative knowledge—the knowledge of ourselves, others, and the social world in which we live” (Cranton, 2003, p. xi). This also enables the learner to be freed from the lack of knowledge or the ability to do something; it is emancipatory. This emancipation in turn allows the liberty to gain more communicative or technical knowledge. Also important in the education of adults is the creation of opportunities for individuation (Cranton, 2003). Individuation involves the learner

becoming more self-aware, more aware of collectives, separating one's self from collective as well as joining collectives using critical reflection.

The importance of community and hope is obvious in the work of hooks (2003). Adult education needs to teach “mindfulness about the quality of life in the classroom—that it must be nurturing, life-sustaining—brings us into greater community within the classroom” (hooks, 2003, p. 173). The present moment and its meaning are of great importance. We must focus on the present, “the here-and-now” (hooks, 2003, p. 173) and be present to each other in community with each other. That is a primary focus of education for hooks and in that way “we are better able to respond to one another and our subject matter” (hooks, 2003, p. 173).

McKenzie (1991) sums up the early theorists in his own terms, “Adult education, to use my language, is and can be a major factor in helping adults construct the network of ideas, values, feelings, beliefs, opinions, intuitions, judgments, choices, and actions that constitute a worldview” (pp. 111–112). Worldview is simply “the contemplation of the world” (McKenzie, 1991, p. 1). More specifically, it is an individual's vantage point given a person's experiences from which the world is experienced and interpreted.

While called by different terms by different theorists, making meaning of life's experiences is seen by many as a primary or even necessary goal for adults. Whether termed worldview construction by McKenzie (1991), meaning in life by Frankl (1984), critical evaluations of beliefs and assumptions by Brookfield (2005) or transformative learning theorists (Taylor, 2008), or achieving a degree of happiness or meaning in life by Bergevin (1967), the value and meaning given to experiences by adults are of grave importance. The positionality of individuals within their world is developed through one seeking an understanding of one's experiences. This study seeks to help adults with a terminal diagnosis reach that goal.

## **Storytelling, Adult Education and Adults with Terminal Illness**

A recent case study (Brendel, 2009) investigated the meaning-making of terminally ill participants through the use of stories shared between nurses and patients. The study was designed to investigate the impact of the stories on the formation and transformation of meaning in order to confront problematic assumptions about dying. The research considered the meaning-making through the lens of transformative learning theory.

The case study did not focus on the method of storytelling, but rather was focused on the transformative nature of the meaning-making of death and dying by the patients (Brendel, 2009). The study indicated that the patients struggle not only with the concept of death, but a sense of who they are in the face of death.

My research was designed to elicit stories that would help the adults with terminal illness in their “narrative identifying” (Frank, 2010, p. 49) in light of their terminal diagnosis. This identifying may or may not be transformative. The storyteller may focus on previously gained assumptions of self rather than challenging assumptions as transformative learning theory values (Brendel, 2009). Brendel (2009) found this “process of re-familiarization of old assumptions about the self...provided a profound sense of comfort.” He continues, “This process may hold a value equal to or greater than challenging assumptions in the context of death and dying” (Brendel, 2009, p. 357).

### **Summary**

My research elicited stories from adults with a terminal illness in at least two areas. I asked for a brief life story in order to gain some context and background. I also elicited stories from them that help them to realize their current understanding of their values and the meaning of their life experiences. These adults referred to previous experiences in light of their current

experience of living with a terminal diagnosis. It was not my objective to ask, “in light of your current diagnosis...” so as not to overly emphasize the life-threatening or terminal illness if that is not participant’s intention. I asked generally for stories that helped the participant to form his current values and meaning of his or her life experiences. For some, the disorienting dilemma, the terminal diagnosis, may already have caused a transformation of their perspectives so that transformative learning has already taken place prior to my asking. For others, my questions may have been an impetus for meaning-making or transformation. The stories that were told may well help the individual form new meanings, gain new insights, or question old assumptions. The stories existed in light of the current diagnosis and every other previous recalled and suppressed experience in the adult’s life without me specifically asking.

As an attentive, powerful, sensitive, and empathetic listener (Tyler, 2007a, 2010) I received the stories with care. I attempted to relate to the storyteller and share the journey along with the story. I engaged in dialogue with the participant and story during the interview and well after. Tyler (2007b) discusses the aliveness of stories:

Over time, I began to interpret them in a way that expanded on my understanding of the Native American belief that they are alive because we tell them, to a belief that we tell them because they are alive. I now see the stories as alive *before* we tell them, and alive whether we tell them or not. I see the act of telling as an act of enlivening the stories, that is, of deepening their energy, fostering their vitality (p. 5, italics in original).

In this view, the stories of adults with terminal illness, which are co-created expressions of their meanings of life, can live on well after the death of the teller. As the researcher experiences the original telling of the stories, they will then live on in the experience of the researcher. The



retelling of the stories fosters their vitality—the vitality of the meaning of life for the participants. The life of the stories will carry on with other readers and their co-authored meaning-making and through their new experiences with the stories.

In line with the purpose of my study, Thomas Moore (1994) sees the importance of allowing people with terminal or chronic illness to tell stories in order to find meaning.

I also recommend a time and a place where patients could tell stories about their illness and hospitalization, certainly not with an expert who would reinforce the technical medical format, but maybe with a real storyteller or someone who would know the importance of letting the soul speak and find its images (Moore, 1994, p. 174).

This chapter reviewed the literature relevant to this study. It focused primarily on the conceptual frameworks of narrative learning (Rossiter & Clark, 2007, 2010) story, storytelling, and storylistening (Boje, 1991; Frank, 2010; Tyler, 2007a, 2007b). These frameworks were linked to both the cohort of adults with terminal illness who are the intended participants of the study as well as with the work of Bakhtin (1973, 1981, 1984, 1986).

Chapter Three presents the methodology of this research study. It defines the paradigm and type of research and details the methods used and the rationale for my choices in the design of the study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

One of our most difficult duties as human beings is to listen to the voices of those who suffer. The voices of the ill are easy to ignore, because these voices are often faltering in tone and mixed in message, particularly in their spoken form before some editor has rendered them fit for reading by the healthy. These voices bespeak conditions of embodiment that most of us would rather forget or own vulnerability to. Listening is hard, but it is also a fundamental moral act; to realize the best potential in postmodern times requires an ethics of listening. I hope to show that in listening for the other, we listen for ourselves. The moment of witness in the story crystallizes a mutuality of need, when each is *for* the other (Frank, 1997, p.25, italics in original).

This chapter explores the methodology used in this study. First, an overview is provided with an explanation of the research paradigm and type and the rationale for their use in this study. Next, my background, as it relates to this research, is discussed. Following that, the data collection and analysis are discussed. This chapter includes the strategies used for verification of trustworthiness and reliability. Finally, research ethics and informed consent are discussed in relation to the current study.

#### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of the study was to understand the role of storytelling with adults with a terminal diagnosis as a way of making meaning of their experiences. There is little research in the field of adult education on the use of storytelling with adults with terminal illness. These adults are often in a liminal, or in-between, space which can be a cause for disillusionment as well as for growth and development. The creation of a life story can help to create meaning for

the individual and development of self (McAdams, 1985; Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Through the use of storytelling, adults with terminal illness may continue to learn, grow, and develop.

Based upon the purpose of this study, the following questions guided the research:

1. How do adults with terminal illness make meaning from telling their experiences in stories?
2. What about storytelling helps adults make meaning of their experiences?
3. How does the story listener affect the storytelling and the meaning making of the adults who are terminally ill?

### **Qualitative Dialogical Research**

When preparing for a research study, it is imperative to select the research paradigm and methodology that is most appropriate for the investigation. The purpose of a study and the research questions lead the researcher to a particular kind and type of research. This study's purpose and research questions lead to a qualitative study using storytelling within the dialogical research type. The goal of the study was to gain descriptive insight into the process of meaning making through storytelling within a cohort of adults with terminal illness. The dialogical research design leads to the optimal insight into the process being studied. The following sections describe both the interpretive research paradigm and the dialogical research type. The rationale for choosing this design is also discussed.

### **Qualitative Research Paradigm**

Qualitative research has as its main purpose to achieve an understanding of how people make sense of their lives (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). This approach explores a human condition or problem in detail. The researcher conducts research in the natural setting and seeks to find a more complete picture (Creswell, 2009). The findings of qualitative research are

subjective knowledge—the understandings of a particular person or cohort within a certain phenomenon or process (Patton, 2002), with a main goal to delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making (Merriam, 2009).

A qualitative research design is imperative in order to achieve the goal of this study. While the meaning of the individual's life experiences gained through the use of storytelling is important to the individual participants and me, it is the *process* of meaning-making through storytelling that was the focus of this study. Because the process of meaning-making for the cohort of adults with terminal illness is what is under study, the choice of a qualitative design is optimal.

A key assumption of the qualitative paradigm is that individuals construct reality from their social interactions. Meaning is constructed, not discovered. Qualitative research attempts to understand the way in which certain people construct their reality (Merriam, 1998, 2009). “Qualitative methods allow us to explore the social world with the assumption that day-to-day realities are both variable and complex. They enable us to understand everyday experience and how people organize and interpret various aspects of their lives” (Barnard et al., 2000, p. 399). This research study sought to understand the use of storytelling as a means of constructing an individual's understanding of personal experiences. The telling of personal stories helps to construct identity, reality, and personal meaning (Randall & McKim, 2008; Rossiter, 1999; Rossiter & Clark 2007). It is only through the qualitative paradigm that a researcher gains an in-depth view of this process of constructing reality.

Another assumption of qualitative research is that it is emergent and flexible (Merriam, 2009). This kind of research allows the researcher to make changes in the midst of the study in order to gain the most detailed information to support the purpose of the study. This study was

open to change as the participants guided much of the research in their choice of stories. The participants shared their life stories; their choices further directed the research. The selections of stories caused the interview sessions to develop and redirected me to new meaning. Change within the design of a qualitative study for the purpose of a deeper understanding of the process or phenomenon that is being studied is permitted and desired in the midst of the study (Merriam, 2009).

Another assumption of qualitative research is to describe how people interpret what they experience (Merriam, 2009). This study sought to gain such a response from the participants—insight into their interpretations of the effect and the usefulness of storytelling in order to help make meaning of their experiences. The storytelling process itself created new insights for the participants and me. The interviews were geared toward the interpretations and the perceptions of the participants.

Within the interpretive research paradigm is a type of research known as dialogical research (Frank, 2005). This type of research is optimal for this particular study. Below, the type is defined and the rationale for its choice in this study will be explained.

### **Dialogical Research Type**

Dialogical research is a type of research within the paradigm of qualitative research that attempts to gain insight into human experience through the use of and analysis of dialogue (Frank, 2005). A basic tenet of dialogical research is that the participants and researcher interact with each other and the research is formed in part by this interaction. The researcher understands that the participants' voices are informed by other voices—societal, cultural, familial, and by that of the researcher. The dialogical researcher does not intend to finalize the participants; while attempting to understand the participants' experiences, the researcher does not expect to know all

there is to know about the experiences. The participants are free to grow and change before, during, and after the contact with the researcher. The researcher attempts to portray the findings in light of this fact and in the voices of the participants.

Dialogical research draws on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary critic, who gave great insight into dialogue (Frank, 2005). Bakhtin credits the Russian author, Dostoevsky, with a unique way of developing characters in his stories and novels. This unique manner was through the use of dialogue. Dostoevsky's characters were revealed to the readers through their dialogue both with others and themselves in his stories. Dostoevsky did not narrate his stories as an omniscient narrator, rather allowed his characters to be "internally free yet also formed in dialogue with other characters" (Frank, 2005, p. 966). In this manner, the characters claimed identity through their dialogue. This was in no way making the characters autonomous, rather the characters' voices and identity are formed "in an ongoing process of anticipation and response to *other voices*. Each voice always *contains* the voices of others" (Frank, 2005, p. 966, emphasis in original). For Bakhtin, this new relationship between character and author is one in which neither party finalizes the other (Frank, 2005).

Bakhtin (1981) discusses the way in which Dostoevsky abandons the usual monologic approach to character development which would entail the single voice of the author or narrator to describe the characters in a novel. Bakhtin's literary critique of Dostoevsky's character development in his novels gives great insight into the unresolved nature of dialogue which is the nature of dialogical research. Bakhtin (1981) sees "the acute and intense interaction of another's word" (p. 349) present in Dostoevsky's novels in two ways. First, Dostoevsky's characters represent "a profound and unresolved conflict with another's word" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 349) on multiple levels. These levels include another's word about the character's lived experience, the

judgment or recognition by another, and on the level of the character's ideology—the world view of characters' "unresolved and unresolvable dialogue" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 349). Dostoevsky's characters' discourse to and about others is an unending struggle with others' words in all facets of life and in all ideological activity. The characters' utterances are audible voices that help to form and transmit the discourse of another. Second, the novels as a whole are the utterances of Dostoevsky—representing the same never-ending, unfinalized dialogues between characters (embodied points of view) as well as between the author and his characters. The dialogue is never complete—it remains free and open. The life experience of the characters in Dostoevsky's novels remains unfinalized just like the discourse, even though the plot may be finalized (Bakhtin, 1981).

In a similar manner, dialogical research is never-ending (Frank, 2005). The researcher does not seek to have the final word; rather, the participant in the study remains unresolved and unfinished. The voices of the participants live on in their consideration of the researcher and those that interact with the voices in the future. Others who read the research become involved in the relationship and become another voice in the dialogue. The voice of the participant also becomes a voice in the construction of the self of future readers. This study attempts to find the voice of adults with terminal illness who are often cast aside by society as unproductive and of no value (Puchalski, 2005). The dialogical research model demonstrates the value of the individual participants and their ability to continue to grow and develop despite their terminal situation.

This dialogical qualitative research study sought to find the voices of the participants. The voice of the participant is expressed through either inner or outer dialogue (Frank, 2005). The researcher hears the voices of the participants which may also be the voices of others. The

voices act in dialogue in response to and in anticipation of other voices. As the researcher elicits stories in storytelling, the participant responds to the researcher who is now implicated in the story. For Frank (2005), the storytelling is relationship between not only the teller and the listener, but through the social dialogue, others that speak through the teller.

Holquist (1990) discusses dialogue in terms that Bakhtin might utilize. “Dialogue is a manifold phenomenon, but for schematic purposes it can be reduced to a minimum of three elements” (p. 38). It is “an utterance, a reply, and a relation between the two. It is the relation that is most important of the three” (Holquist, p. 38). The storytelling and listening relationship is an ethical one. The listener (researcher in dialogical research) enters into the relationship and becomes part of the teller’s struggle toward a moral life (Frank, 2005).

Often, adults diagnosed with a terminal diagnosis are assumed to have little to contribute to society (Puchalski, 2005, 2006). They are often taken for granted and cast aside (Puchalski, 2005). Such is the monologue of the capitalist society that seeks a monetarily productive effort from each member of society. Dialogue disrupts monologue (Frank, 2000). The dialogical research that allows the voices of adults with terminal illness to be heard is important to contend the power that casts aside this group of individuals.

The dialogic approach to understanding stories involves taking account of the role of the listener (Sawin, 2004). The narrator of the life story, the storyteller, “talks and sings simultaneously to her immediate audience and to the ghosts and listeners past and future, both of whose understanding and response she anticipates” (Sawin, 2004, p. x). The life story, therefore, is a form of “multivocal communication” (Sawin, 2004, p. x). While the stories are from the standpoint of the teller—the meaning of experiences expressed in the stories is socially constructed; the teller understands experiences in light of the social reality in which he or she



exists. The expression of the stories is also in anticipation of the understanding of the listener, or how that understanding is perceived by the teller (Bakhtin, 1981; Frank, 2005; Holquist, 1990; Sawin, 2004).

“The quality of the oral narrative also depends greatly on the quality of the listening offered to the speaker. The process requires deep trust among the participants” (Dominice, 2000, p. 19). The researcher, therefore, must be aware of the need for this trust and be a good listener. The researcher needs to authentically demonstrate care for the individual participants and for the stories in order to allow for a good storytelling relationship. Indeed, my experience with adults with terminal illness has made me aware of some special needs. I am also concerned for all adults to reach their potential.

This research study elicited stories from adults diagnosed with terminal illness. Adults with terminal illness are often searching for new or perhaps final meaning. The diagnosis of a terminal illness may disrupt the foundation of an individual’s understandings and force the person to reconsider current meanings and viewpoints (Puchalski, 2005). Allowing adults with terminal illness to enter into a storytelling relationship that has the potential to construct a new view of self and understanding of experiences in light of current circumstances gives the storyteller a chance at emancipation. Illness demoralizes (Kleinman, 1988). People use stories in order to remoralize—the storytelling relation “recuperates persons, relationships, and communities” (Frank, 2000, p. 357). The adults with terminal illness are struggling with the meaning of experiences, of life, death, and suffering (Puchalski, 2005). The telling of life stories helps the individual define self within these new life conditions. “Meaning making is intricately linked to narrative. People make meaning in a narrative fashion; they recount past experiences and explain meaning and values in them. Storytelling is basic to humanity in developing identity

within one's culture" (Blake, Stout, & Willet, 2004, p. 56). A life story does not simply recount history; it expresses meaning and values related to the experiences and the teller. Stories may interpret or challenge past, present, or anticipated experience (Bruner, 1996).

Another goal of this research study and that of qualitative dialogical research is subjective meaning. Research utilizing storytelling does not call for data to be systematically analyzed, but rather it calls for a personal engagement with the story and storyteller (Frank, 2000; Jabri, Adrian, & Boje, 2008). This personal engagement brings about the dialogical form and the resulting knowledge desired. The dialogical process of meaning making is unfinalizable (Jabri, Adrian, & Boje, 2008). Dialogical research recognizes that the participants and researcher together engage in meaning making as a process rather than a goal.

### **Background of the Researcher**

As a researcher conducting a research study in the interpretive paradigm, I was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. In this dialogical research study, I elicited stories from the participants that helped them narratively continue to form their life story and identity. The participants of the study and I learned through the storytelling relationship. Together we formed new understandings of previous, present, and possible future experiences.

I became integrally interested in the stories of people with terminal illness when my aunt, Rose, spent the last month of her life at our home. She was a single woman her whole life, always available for those in need. She was a cohesive force in our family—able to pull the family together. My wife and I had the opportunity to bring her to our home to spend a little more than her last month with us. My wife was able to take a leave of absence from her work as a school nurse to be Rose's primary caregiver. We had a great experience caring for her and sharing time with her.

When she first came to our home, recognizing her inability to help with the chores of the house, Rose felt worthless and complained that she was not useful to us. However, she soon found that we loved her presence with us and appreciated her sharing her time with us. We talked, laughed, and prayed together. We spent time with other family. We grew in mutual respect.

During that month, I spent a lot of time listening to my aunt's stories. She enjoyed telling these stories—from childhood times to recent stories. While we did not expect a cure for her illness, I do believe that my aunt received some healing.

This time with my aunt came at the start of my second semester of study in the Adult Education doctoral program at Penn State University. It was a time of change and challenge for me. I had recently begun a search for my philosophy of adult education. While I had been teaching adults for nearly twenty years, I had not questioned my teaching philosophy or realized that I had one. In studying various philosophies of adult education and questioning my own reasons for teaching and my view of the purpose of adult education, I came to see myself as somewhat of an emancipatory educator. I see this research study as an emancipatory study—allowing adults with terminal illness, a group suppressed by much of society, to express their understandings of the meaning of their experiences.

I was convinced of the value of stories during a course on storytelling in organizations that I participated in at Penn State. While the readings and activities in the course were compelling, perhaps the most persuasive event for me was outside of the class. When I was first discussing the use of storytelling with my wife, she did not seem to understand the value of studying storytelling in an advanced degree program—at that point, even I had my doubts. I asked her to tell me stories about what nursing means to her. She told a couple stories about her

dealings with her patients. One story dealt with her patient coming to terms with cheating on his ex-wife many years prior. She asked him if he ever apologized for his infidelity and if he thought that it may help if he had. He hadn't, yet. After their discussion, he apologized to his ex-wife and she now visits him almost daily. Another story included a young male student from her work as a nurse in a middle school. He visited the nursing office most every day—not for medical reasons, but usually to discuss a football game, an exam, or something else going on in life. The young man lived with his father and perhaps was looking for a mother-figure with whom he could share stories and get feminine affirmation. It was evidenced in my wife's stories that her role as a nurse is much more than a medical role. She sees her purpose in nursing as one of healing not only the body, but the soul as well. The nursing stories lead us to a deeper understanding that would likely not have been evidenced in an answer to a question such as "What functions do you do as a nurse?" or "What does a nurse do in the nursing facility?"

In a dialogical research study, the participation of the researcher is important. The dialogical framework of the study emphasizes the participation of the researcher in the creation of knowledge. The interaction of the storyteller and the story listener is of utmost importance (Frank, 2005). The interaction has changed me. Some insight into the effects of this study on me is detailed in the section, *Reflections*, in the fifth chapter.

### **Participant Selection**

Selection of participants for a qualitative study is very important. This study sought to obtain rich, descriptive information that will give insight into the meaning making of adults diagnosed with a terminal illness through the use of storytelling. Qualitative research usually involves a purposeful sample of participants. A purposeful sample is a selection of participants for a study that are likely to give the most insight and information that will help the researcher

toward the purpose of the study and to help answer the research questions (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). To that end, I selected four participants for the study. This qualitative study is designed to achieve depth in its detailed data. In order to gain the depth of understanding rather than a breadth of understanding of the issues, a small sample is sufficient and desirable in such a study (Patton, 2002).

The participants were solicited, in part, through Hospice of Lancaster County. This organization generally has a population of people with terminal illness that numbers around 450. The geographic area that is covered by the organization is primarily limited to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and, therefore, is within about a twenty-five mile radius of my home. This made it rather convenient for me to travel for data collection. The organization's census has consistently remained around four hundred-fifty and the average patient is treated by Hospice of Lancaster County for about a two week period. Therefore within one month's time, there may be approximately nine hundred people treated by the hospice. The large majority of the beneficiaries of Hospice of Lancaster County reside in their home, while others may be in nursing facilities, hospitals, or at one of two short-term inpatient hospice units in the county.

In order to gain insight into the purpose of the study, two of the participants were selected from a group of adults identified by members of the Hospice of Lancaster County medical staff as willing and likely able to participate. Individual participants needed to be available for approximately a two week period in order to allow for the initial and follow-up interviews as described below. The participants needed to be perceived to be healthy enough to participate in extended periods of storytelling and interviewing—likely one hour or longer sessions—over that two week period. The hospice medical staff helped coordinate the selection process. I presented a Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board approved flyer (see Appendix C)

soliciting participants to the medical director and ethics board of Hospice of Lancaster County. After presenting my flyer and a summary of my proposed research to the ethics committee and answering questions, my research was unanimously approved by those in attendance at the ethics committee meeting. My flyer was then reproduced and supplied to social workers and nursing staff who presented them to adults with terminal illness who, in turn, contacted me directly if they were interested in participation.

The age of the participants was limited to adults above the age of twenty-five. This is regarded as a generally accepted age for participants representing adulthood. While some may argue that a more specific age range such as adults above the age of sixty-five would form a more specific cohort (e.g. perhaps feeling more ready for death having lived a full life), the conceptual framework of Rossiter and Clark (2007) sees the development of adults as narrative, rather than in stages, and would not presume adults of a certain age to be more developed in such a way simply because of their age. In this view, the four participants ranged in age from fifty-three to ninety-two. The individual development was expressed in stories rather than in representing a certain level of developmental achievement or stage (Rossiter, 1999).

Because this study has storytelling as a primary mode of collecting data, a space appropriate to that end is important. Therefore, adults confined to hospitals and long-term care facilities were excluded from this study, as the environment in such locations may lack the privacy needed for storytelling and listening. I solicited stories from the participants that will tell of their life experiences which will likely be quite personal. As such a researcher, I am already at a disadvantage—not knowing the individuals personally—and will therefore need to be able to build trust with them. Fewer distractions from the environment of long-term care facilities and hospital settings helped in this endeavor.

In addition to the two participants obtained through the aid of Hospice of Lancaster County, my solicitation flyer was presented to two other adults with terminal illness who were directed to me by non-hospice employees. These adults also agreed to become participants.

While any adult may be able to form a life story and gain insight into his or her own identity through this storytelling, I was specifically searching for adults with terminal illness who desired to participate. There are two primary reasons for this. First, I believe it may be very important for adults to have an understanding of the meaning of their experiences before they die (Fischer & Simmons, 2007). Also, I believe that adults who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness are likely to have a unique perspective on the meaning of life experiences. These adults have been exposed to what would be the most disorienting dilemma for many adults—the diagnosis of the terminal illness (Puchalski, 2006). These adults are likely to have questioned some previously held beliefs and assumptions or may be lead to that questioning during this study.

This study had four male participants who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. They ranged in age from fifty-three to ninety-two. Three of the participants were white while one was African American. All of the participants were married heterosexuals and living with their spouses.

### **Data Collection**

In order to attain the desired depth of information regarding the use of storytelling as a means of making meaning of life experiences, the interview sessions were rather open ended. The length of time for the storytelling sessions was often at least an hour long. I did not limit the length of the sessions so that the participants and myself could spend sufficient time telling and listening to stories and gathering the meaning within them. As the stories are representing the life

experiences of the adult with terminal illness, it was quite possible that the storytelling sessions could run quite long (and a couple sessions did) in order to satisfy the teller that sufficient meaning was achieved in the stories.

The first session with each participant spent some time getting to know the participant and beginning to establish a working relationship. “The first task for both caregivers and researchers is to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect” (Barnard, et al., 2000, p. 400). I thanked the participant for his time and his trust with the stories and assured each that I would treat his stories with the care and attention deserved. Then, open ended questions focused on eliciting stories from the participant. The conversational interviews allowed the participant to select the stories that are perceived to be important to that individual. Obviously, my presence as a listener and researcher may have had an effect on the choices of the participant as the individual storyteller keeps the audience in mind (Frank, 2005) and anticipates the responses of others within the dialogue (Bakhtin, 1973).

Storytelling is central to this qualitative study. The study intends to shed light on the use and effect of storytelling as a means of making meaning of life experiences in adults with terminal illness. Therefore, I conducted open conversational-style interviews that elicited stories with the participants. During the first session, questions were asked to elicit stories such as:

1. Please tell a story that was told to you perhaps earlier in your life that seemed to be an important story at the time or some other time in your life.
2. Please tell a story from your own experiences that gives you insight into your values or the meaning of your experiences.
3. How does storytelling help you gain a better understanding of yourself?
4. What about storytelling helps you gain a better understanding of your experiences?



5. What is the relationship between the stories you heard and your own stories of your experiences?
6. How often do you share personal stories?
7. If you have shared personal stories with others, what do you believe you have learned from that experience?
8. Has storytelling between you and your family provided you with a meaningful experience or a learning opportunity?
9. Has the process of finding meaning in experience through storytelling influenced how you work with the public and/or colleagues in your professional and/or personal life? In what ways?
10. In what ways have your life experiences seemed to follow in the manner of the stories you have heard?
11. How have your life stories reflected the stories that you grew up with?
12. In what ways do your personal life stories contradict previously heard stories?
13. In what ways do your experiences seem to be formed by stories that you've heard?
14. How has storytelling influenced your spirituality?
15. How does storytelling connect you with your past or your future?
16. How does storytelling connect you with your family or ancestors?

Dialogical research is a method of qualitative research that seeks to gather data about a particular phenomenon or cohort; the dialogical researcher understands that the participants are not finalized—they are free to grow and form themselves and “continue to become who they may yet be” (Frank, 2005, p. 965). The researcher also understands that individuals inform themselves and are formed through multiple voices in dialogue. The researcher must understand

that his or her voice plays a part in the participants' becoming, just as the participants' voices become a part of the researcher.

The meaning of any present story depends on the stories it will generate (Frank, 2005). Because of this, the researcher cannot view the participant as fixed even in the representation of the storyteller's own words, as these words will call forth other words and further meaning. This is central to dialogical research. This dialogical research study is seeking the meaning of adults with terminal illness and the dialogical researcher, unlike many researchers, understands the unfinalizability of the meaning made by the participant, even upon the death of the participant, which in the case of this study is presumed rather imminent.

During a second session with individual participants, I reviewed some of the storytelling from the first session and asked for any important insight that was gained through the telling of the first stories. This session was in the form of semi-structured interviews to gain insight into the use of storytelling in the first interview. If additional storytelling was necessary, a conversational style interview was used. In order to gain insight into the use of storytelling, questions to elicit such responses were similar to:

1. Was there something in particular that we discussed in our first session that shed new light on some previous understanding that you had?
2. Did any story that you shared last time surprise you with a new meaning that you received?

I also shared any important understandings that I had acquired from the first session and sought to find if my perceptions match the understandings and desires of the participant. This type of questioning may look something like:

1. I recall a story you told about your first job and your boss. I understood that to be an important time for you and your understanding of how hard work pays off in many ways. Is that the understanding you get from that experience? Do you think that was more from watching your boss or from your own work?
2. I understood that you seem to have had a hard time forgiving others. Would you agree? Why do you think that is?

I asked if there were any other stories that were recalled that the participant believed to be important to the teller. This allowed the participant to share more stories that may not have been recalled during the first session or may help to clarify any perceptions that I had received that did not meet the desired goal of the participant.

During the same session I asked open-ended questions that sought to investigate the perceived value of the storytelling sessions for the participant. The questions were guided to determine if the participant found the sessions helpful in making meaning of life experiences.

These questions included questions similar to:

1. Were our storytelling sessions useful in helping you find new meaning in your experiences?
2. Was the storytelling something new to you or is it a regular part of your social interaction?
3. In what ways was the storytelling useful to you?

Other questions were developed in the midst of the open-ended interview in order to get deeper and more extensive information about our interactive storytelling.

The audio of each of the sessions was recorded on a digital recorder and stored on a password protected laptop computer. I later transcribed the interviews into writing. This required

much time and allowed me to become more intimately involved with the stories and other verbal data recorded in the sessions. Time constraints did not allow me to fully transcribe each session before following up with another session for the individual participant; however, I did at least review the audio recording before the next session with the same individual.

During the interview sessions I took field notes, observing the setting in the private home. I attempted to document non-verbal communication that I perceived in the midst of the interviews. I also used some of the surroundings to help direct some conversation when necessary—such as asking about a family picture in the room and documenting its presence in my field notes.

### **Data Analysis**

A good life requires telling a story from as many alternate perspectives as possible (Frank, 2010). The dialogical process utilized in this research includes looking at the participants' stories or parts of the stories from alternate perspectives. In the analysis, I considered different ways of viewing the stories in order to be open to different interpretations. Analysis of the stories, from a dialogical perspective, opens up moral complexity, in part, by viewing the stories from various viewpoints.

Boje (2001) outlines an eight step process of deconstruction of stories which ends with the eighth step of resituating or restorying it. While this process of deconstruction and restorying certainly would have powerful consequences and assist the participants of this study with a new view of their stories, such a process, it seems, needs to be performed by an experienced practitioner with the participation of the teller. It seemed unethical to go through this entire process without the main characters of the story, the participants diagnosed with terminal illness, who may not have time for the process. With nearly nine hours of transcription from the first

participant alone, the detail required for Boje's (2001) eight step process would be nearly insurmountable. More than that, the process calls for us to "renarrate the narrative" (Boje, 2001, p. 29). Like Tyler (2010), I wonder who has the right to deconstruct the stories of others? Certainly, some deconstruction of stories takes place all the time (Boje, 2001; Tyler, 2010). However, the focused and determined process prescribed by Boje (2001) likely would have to take place without the input of this study's participants because of the imminent death of the participants. For this particular study, Frank (2010) offers what seems to be a more ethical response to the stories and their tellers which incorporates some of the spirit of Boje's (2001) deconstruction, but seems to allow for even more openness. The freedom offered by Frank's (2010, p. 72) "practice of criticism" was more ethical without the continued participation of the study's participants.

Interpretation of stories requires similarity and difference (Frank, 2010). The dialogical researcher seeks to find similarities between stories as well as differences. Without difference, dialogue cannot take place. However, without some similarity, there may be no starting point for consideration. In analyzing the stories, I dialogued with the stories and allowed for dialogue between the stories in order to allow the stories to expand. The dialogical process allows the researcher to say any number of things about the stories or the participants as long as the researcher does not claim interpretive privilege (Frank, 2005, 2010).

Analysis of the stories also involves analysis of the researcher and his or her perspective. The stories allow the researcher and participants to consider how life should be lived and how the stories call upon those involved to shift their horizons (Frank, 2010). My analysis, therefore, included considering my own perspectives, stories, and goals. The generosity offered by the

listener began in dialogue, speaking with the participants, rather than about them. The generosity continues in the offering of oneself in order to be changed by others (Frank, 2004a).

The conversational style of interview sessions allowed for simultaneous collection and analysis of the data (Bogdan & Bijlen, 2003). During the interview sessions, I analyzed data as it was collected and adjusted the interview questions to get additional information or to confirm the connection to themes that I had determined from previous interviews or to data gathered from the present interview.

After the data from the storytelling was transcribed I left the stories intact. The stories are presented to the reader in their entirety in the fourth chapter. I reviewed them in light of the four parts of life stories from McAdams' model of life story—nuclear episodes, imagoes, ideological settings, and generativity scripts (McAdams, 1985). These parts of the stories were considered in order to reveal various aspects of the life story model that were used to assist in analyzing the stories. In light of the dialogical research method used, I do not suggest that I can come to a final conclusion from the stories of the group of participants or from any individual as they, the participants and the stories, are still free to grow and change. The meanings of the experiences of the participants as derived from the stories are not endpoints, but rather continually negotiated.

After transcribing the follow-up interview data which provides the insight into the value of storytelling with the adult with terminal illness, I looked for themes that represent the perceptions of the participants in this regard. The dialogical research is to be seen as an ongoing process (Frank, 2005). The analysis examined the process and offered “an account of how researcher and participant came together in some shared time and space and had diverse effects *on each other*” (Frank, 2005, p. 968, italics in original). The dialogical research by design is “*open ended*, which in dialogical theory is both empirically correct and ethically appropriate”

(Frank, 2005, p. 968, italics in original). While themes were gathered, they are not the centerpiece of the analysis, but rather a preparation for personal stories (Frank, 2005). I do not typify the group of adults with terminal illness which may be a way to finalize the participants (Frank, 2005), but rather demonstrate the power of future possibilities—even for adults with a terminal diagnosis.

The analysis of the data gained insight into the multiple voices heard in the stories of the participants. The stories as well as the verbalized perceptions of the value of the storytelling for the participants are presented word for word. I analyzed the participant's perceptions of their storytelling experiences and determine any identical perceptions among the participants.

### **Verification**

Researchers seek to have data and findings of their studies that are believable and trustworthy, and moreover, they seek to have findings are supported by the data (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Quantitative and qualitative researchers use different terms to describe this. Qualitative researchers seek confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability in their study findings (Patton, 2002). Also, in the qualitative paradigm, studies' usefulness may be due to their acknowledgement of subjectivity, authenticity, triangulation, reflexivity, a richer understanding of a phenomenon or cohort, and specifically important in this study, its additional contribution to dialogue (Patton, 2002).

Confirmability is present in a qualitative study to the extent that it represents the situation being studied rather than representing the bias, beliefs, or distortion of the researcher (Merriam, 2009). The researcher adds to the confirmability of a study by acknowledging and accounting for personal subjectivity and bias that may be in the studies' findings. In order to add to the confirmability of my study, I kept an audit trail—a record of all correspondence, notes, and other materials used for my data collection. In this manner, I can show that my data is an accurate

portrayal of the participants' situation and perceptions. During the open-ended interviews I shared some of my understandings with the individual participants so that I could be corrected from any bias or misunderstanding during the interview processes.

Credibility is represented in a qualitative study to the extent that the findings are representative of the reality of the participants of the study. The study's findings, while actually the understanding and interpretation of the researcher, are credible to the extent that they demonstrate the understandings and perceptions of the participants (Merriam, 2002). In this study, I added to the credibility of the study by reviewing some of the data collected and findings with the participants of the study. In this manner, my personal bias and distortions of the data may have been pointed out or prevented by the participants reviewing my collection of and perceptions of data. These reviews of data and findings with participants are known as data checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A study demonstrates dependability if the data and findings are considered reliable. A qualitative study is dependable if it is likely that other researchers will be able to obtain similar data and findings (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). The dependability of a qualitative study also addresses any changes that are made in the midst of the research in order to obtain deeper and richer data. The analysis of my research addresses any changes in the data collection and the necessity of them during the study. In this study, the dependability does not extend to the storytelling as much as to the interview sessions in which I sought to find the perceptions of the participants in relation to the usefulness of the storytelling. The life story data is too individual and subjective to expect other researchers to find similar data.

The transferability of a study refers to the extent to which the research findings may be generalized or transferred to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A study demonstrates



transferability when it is specific with the details of the sampling, methodology, assumptions, and theoretical or conceptual framework utilized in the study. I sufficiently detail these elements of the study so that future researchers may more fully understand the fine points of my research.

The verification techniques described above show my study to be trustworthy, believable, and supported by the data obtained in the study. The written description of the study, its methods, data, findings and bias of the researcher will address this through confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability.

### **Ethics and Informed Consent**

I understand that there are possible consequences to this study. The adults with terminal illness may be in particularly vulnerable state. There certainly was information that was shared that was very personal and emotional. The information obtained from the interviews as well as the identities of the individuals in the study need to be kept anonymous. The nature of the study and the ways in which the data will be used was made available to perspective participants. Informed consent also needed to be obtained before beginning the study with any participant. These issues were addressed with the participant through the use of an Informed Consent form which was approved through the Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board. The participants' signatures on the Informed Consent Form indicate that they understood the risks of the study and entered into the study voluntarily. The form (Appendix B) also included a description of the study and how the findings were to be utilized.

The Hospice of Lancaster County Ethics Committee mentioned before the study began that some of the participants may want to have their stories documented and given to the participants or to family members. It was clear in the consent form that this would not be possible within the context of this research study. However, I did have contact information for

volunteers from hospice who would be available if the participants desired to have their stories documented for distribution. This was not requested of me, however.

I understood that the recalling of stories by adults with terminal illness had the possibility of creating some distress or concerns for the individuals. Three of the participants were under the care of hospice services which include the assistance of a trained chaplain to assist with such distress. I was prepared to suggest contact with the chaplain and had the phone number available if needed. However, I did not see the need in the course of the interview sessions. The fourth participant who was not participating with a hospice provider at the time was a deacon and a retired chaplain who had sufficient contacts for such services if necessary. Again, this did not seem necessary for any of the participants; however, I was prepared.

### **Summary**

This chapter detailed the methodology used in this study. The study sought to understand the role of storytelling in adults diagnosed with a terminal illness in making meaning of experiences. To best achieve this goal, a qualitative dialogical research study was conducted that utilized storytelling and open-ended interviews. The chapter reviewed some possible questions that were used to gather and verify data. The rationale for the kind and type of study was also supplied in this chapter.

Chapter Four presents the stories of the participants in their entirety—in the raw and emotional nature shared with me in the interviews. The chapter, however, is not without interpretation, as both the teller and listener interpret the stories as they are being told, recorded, and in this case, rewritten (Frank, 2010). Chapter five will continue the interpretation as well as present implications derived from the research and my own reflections.

## CHAPTER 4

### PERSONAL STORIES

Four people shared their stories with me, a virtual stranger, for various reasons. Each took time during their lives to share some insight into their life and perspective. It is my hope that I showed them generosity in the care I am giving their stories and that they perceived me as a delighted listener (Tyler, 2011).

I have presented their stories here as unedited as possible, attempting to supply the participants' stories in their own words from their standpoint. "These stories contain no hidden or coded meanings that require analysis; they speak clearly for themselves" (Frank, 2004a, p. 7). However, the stories ask for reflection which is attended to in the next chapter.

Some interpretation takes place in the presentation of these stories even though they are presented with little editing. Choices are made during transcription including what notes to include and exclude. The placing of punctuation is the choice of the transcriber and a mode of some level of interpretation which is why I found it important to do my own transcription—as a participant in the storytelling relation. Likewise, Barnard, Towers, Boston, and Lambrinidou (2000) recognize and note the interpretation in their narrative research:

We have imposed our sense of theme on experience, which in its pure state has no theme but simply follows the continual flow of life.... These narratives are works of fiction in the sense that they are the result of creative, selective, shaping processes that are inherent in all storytelling. We do not present them as definitive, "objective" story, "the way it was." On the other hand, we have tried to be as faithful as possible to what we witnessed, and we have tried to situate our observations and our identification of themes in the larger

context of other empirical and narrative research on palliative care (Barnard, et al., 2000, p. 404).

Additionally, I have edited the stories to remove some of the redundancy. In particular, Sam was rather forgetful and would repeat the same story multiple times, both during the same visit and repeating the story during another visit. In presenting his story, I have removed some, but certainly not all of the repeated stories, and I have done so only when I believe them to be repeated because he had forgotten that he had already told it—not when it was repeated for emphasis or with some apparent new meaning imbued.

I removed my questions and comments to the extent possible without making the storyteller's words too difficult to understand. Since the interviews were conducted in part as a conversation, removing my words would sometimes remove needed context. In some cases I have inserted my questions or comments within brackets. I have also added context in brackets when necessary to present the reader with information that would explain what was going on in the interview at the time. For instance, if we were looking at a picture I make mention that fact in brackets when it is not clear in the stories below.

When transcribing, I did not correct grammar in the stories of the participants. Many of the grammar mistakes show the conversational tone of the interviews. The stories were not canned, prepared stories from the participants; rather they were raw conversation displaying the emotion of the individuals and what seemed to be trust in me. The errors are not presented here as a reflection of the intelligence of the participants, but rather to display the conversational tone of the interviews. I used italics to show emphasis. Sometimes, I used either commas (,) or three spaces ellipsis points (. . .) to show an abrupt change in subject with little or no pause in speech with the comma representing less of a change.

Each participant's story is preceded with a small amount of biographical or other information in order to help the reader position him or herself within the storytelling relation.

### **Sam**

I visited Sam, a 92 year old white male, in the same home where he lives with his wife as he has for well over 50 years. Sam and his wife raised their grown daughters in that house and now enjoy retirement there. Sam has a hobby room on the second floor where he builds and displays model airplanes. He was anxious to take me to this room where we spent two of our three visits discussing mainly his memories of being a pilot. He obviously loved flying a plane—he did this primarily as a hobby, rather than as a profession. He earned his living most of his life in other professions, some of which are discussed in this story. As he discusses in his story, he was in the Air Force during World War II. However, Sam did not serve as a fighter pilot during the war. It seems this was both a disappointment to him as well as something he felt “lucky” about.

Sam seemed anxious to share as much of his experiences as he could in the small amount of time available to us. He shares some of this anxiety as he discusses the difficulty he finds putting ninety-two years of experiences into several hours of storytelling. This anxiety seemed to cause him to jump around a good bit from story to story and his poor memory caused some of the repetition found in the stories. Sam's love of people is evidenced in his story.

#### **Sam's Storytelling Session One**

Our nephew went to West Point. He graduated. That was an honor.

Get me my car [referring to his walker]. We're gonna go upstairs. Point is: you don't know what's going to be before you. I'll ride up and you can follow me.

[I spotted a picture of two girls and asked if they were his children.]

Yeah, there they are: two girls; they're getting up in years. They were here as babies at one time. [Switching to a picture of a plane]

That's a show plane now. That's when I did search. I was a member the civil air patrol. Now I'm going up [the stairs]; you follow.

I'm 92. Well, maybe I should be under the ground. I gotta watch myself if I fall. Over there [pointing to his hobby room] is the living room we can walk over; this was real nice. We had a cellar and she [wife] had her three offices down there. It was nice here but you know we can find nobody to drive us any place. We have to pay \$55-\$60 for someone to take us a few blocks. And we can't afford it--we just can't. So many of the doctors--I should be at the doctors right now. But we don't have no way--nobody to take us. Now wait. [Pointing out various things around the room]

There's models that I started. Wait a minute. Well there is the newspaper write-up full-page and that, you ought to read that alone. And that was the picture of my laundromat see? I had a successful business but I want to tell you something: everybody stole my money. At the stock market my money was going down and they said, "We are going to take care of you." They must have been taking a couple thousand dollars and I would get maybe like \$100. I went to see a certain guy who's up in the stock market who is, I can't say; he said, "Sam, you know what they're gonna do to you?" He said, "they're gonna take all your money." At that time, that was a quarter million dollars. They got a whole part of it and I got the different papers here. Wait a minute; I want to hurry up but I know I don't have time.

That's the airport [pointing at a vintage aerial picture of a section of the Lancaster area]. And you know when you're going out the Manheim Pike at the big place that sells rugs there? That is sitting up right in here close to it. There was a couple of airplanes the Manheim Pike the

gas station and this was a terrible field. Here's a six place Ryan, sister ship of Spirit of St. Louis. These are welcome cabins and these are Eaglets which were popular. Now they have that right there? Jesse's day started in around the late '20s and kept going through the '30s. This was a picture taken of the-- not sure whose it is but that was a Waco.

I was cleaning house here [looking around the room].

You see that? [Pointing again at the aerial picture] You know what that is? That's F & M [the college]. That's the airport. Do you notice something? There wasn't a house around it. Over here—that was the fairgrounds. We had a beautiful fairgrounds at one time; that was part of it. I have to save this to tell you, but that was a terrible field and we had a barnstorm every weekend, almost, to get--to make a dollar. We'd go to up the river above Harrisburg to the different airports. We went to Lewistown. I'll tell you, I can't think of all the fields now. We landed and haul people for a dollar.

I'm gonna skip some. Everyone of these—I get the kits [model airplanes] out—they never were complete. Beautiful things never were in the things [missing from the models]. My last airplane was a Cessna Skyhawk. [Switching to an experience in which he nearly crashed while flying in bad weather]

I'm interested in telling you how I met God through a woman. I got lost—no I didn't. We're at an air show in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Ever hear of it? That's a pretty far trip. He had retractable landing gear for a fast airplane. We went out in his airplane. And coming home he said, "Hey, Sam, take me home." I was tired. And we had taken off. But I flew the whole way, his airplane. The weather was terrible, it was foggy, hazy, *hazy*. Coming down to Chicago I could've taken the wing of the airplane and just cut into the storm. That was a thrill to see a big storm following you down. And I could've, I came down...Chicago...Cleveland, I called the

tower at Pittsburgh and they said “Hey, I might be able to get you through a corridor.” And it was so bad—the weather. And so everybody—they started getting concerned. The Pittsburgh towers said, they called, and said, “Where are they?” He said, “They’re dead! Nobody ever came through all that ever lived!” The women were crying and everything; called again. They said, “If they’re in there now, they’re dead.” They were so *firm* with it in the Pittsburgh tower. The pilot did get bewildered. They’re like that; they just don’t know what they’re doing anymore. Bill was his name and I said, “Bill, I will take over here quick. Then you get on that radio and find me an airport!” I was foolish. I couldn’t see my whole self, hardly. He was in the western part of Pennsylvania. They were bad. They were so sure that no one ever came out. Well, I found the field, an airport, and I landed. Then a few people came out the next day for an air show there. They wanted to call it “the Angels” ‘cause there is no way we were coming out of there alive. But I did. And one day, it was a couple years ago, there was another show out there. I saw an elderly lady and she said, “Sam you know what happened? What saved you? I guess you’re giving credit to the Angels or something.” She said, “Sam, God did that; He saved you; He brought you out of there; He saved you because He wants you.”

[Explaining his growing understanding of her words]. I couldn’t believe it. My wife was always a Sunday school teacher growing up, and I came home and it didn’t dawn on me right away, but I had tears. And she [the elderly woman] said, “Sam” and she knew the Bible, A-Z, and I couldn’t get over that. And she said, “God, he’s gonna take care of you!” In the following week I thought I’d get the plane ready for the show and these hot and mucky days like it is now [it had been near or over 100 degrees for about a week] I said I think I’ll take a family around. Out there I passed out and the airplane landed itself. It went over the runway and came back in. The tower asked, “What happened?” I woke up. What happened I guess, I quick told him, “The



wheels stuck.” That got me out of a lot of red tape. Anyhow, when she told me that, my flight I came in and I passed out before I landed the airplane. I always, every landing I did, I would close the doors put my hand on and say “Thank you; you brought me home again.” I didn't do it. I said that to the plane; I said that all the time. Because somehow I believe it was talking to me. After you get so close I had a lot of other, oh, close ones. I should have been dead from what I've seen when I was younger, the crack ups and stuff. And I don't know. But we don't know what's before us. My wife and I raised the two kids, we went down to Ocean City where I belong to the Ocean City Fishing Club. Is my rod over there yet [pointing to the fishing rod in the corner of the room]? And a member, what's it called because I'm in so long? I don't have to pay or anything. Were you ever down at Ocean City?

We went to Ocean City, not Maryland, but Ocean City, New Jersey. We had glorious times; I joined the fishing club and fished. We flew down there in less than an hour but then you had to wait three hours for the taxi to come out to the airport. He said he didn't know the airport in town. And then, I said, we're fishing one day and I looked up and he said, “Sam do you see what's coming?” And I said, “Yeah!” and he said “You have to get out of here!” And the storm was moving up the ocean and was terrible looking. And I said... I don't even know if we put the fishing equipment away. But I said, “You better get out of this; soon to be a terrible storm.” I said, “You make a call quick to the cab.” The taxi guy took us out there he went around and couldn't find the airport. We're gonna be in for it. But anyhow, I got to the airport, plane, jumped in, and the storm is there but here he pulled out. “Come on!” But they were close. And I could go on and on and on.

That laundromat—that's a wonderful write-up they gave me. There is two or three times I was in the paper. I want to tell you, the newspaper people—I took him around for over an hour.

“How are you gonna put all this in the paper?” And he said, “Sam you’re only gonna get a couple seconds.” And that's the way it was. You'd be surprised other write-ups in the paper what they really had.

Now there's a guy [showing another picture], that's a B-17 that actually happened that way in the picture with a shell right close to the fuselage. I don't think those guys--unless you see a parachute there--I don't think those guys got out. [Switching to a discussion of entering the Air Force]

I was in the Air Force. I was working at Armstrong, I'd go up to the main office and I said I wanted to go to the Air Force—“You don't have to go.” I was made a department boss and he says, “Sam, you don't have to worry.” And I said, “I want to go.” After about three times he said, “Okay you can go.” I said I want to fly; that's the Mustang right there [pointing to another model]. They shot down close to 6,000 planes from the Mustang squadrons alone. This is a powerful fighter--I forget I could get out of these, of the models. They didn't send a wing. Where the wing fit into the fuselage was a beautiful piece--they didn't even send them. Every model ended because there is something missing. Now I don't know. I'm having a fellow, from his vacation. We might just start smashin' up everything except the small stuff see? There's fuselages. That was my first that was a P 40. Do you remember the Chinese general? You could tell there where the airport was or whatever because of the heads of our pilots killed and hung them on the fence posts.

I don't know how I'm gonna do it yet. Oh. Can you look at that hanging there? Take that picture off the wall. Those are biggest gang pilots left there. I guess you, Herr was in the military; they own the big store that Herts sold the school supply stuff. That was Geltz over there; that's his homemade airplane hangin' there. They changed that airplane around--he flew

that, God, I got, I don't know. Over here that was the P 40. It flew the supplies that protected the DC3, badly needed supplies into the Chinese, I guess. I can name most of them over there [pictures and models of airplanes across the room].

No; that was, I might have been [in the picture]. They were an average of about 10 years older than me. I was the kid that was out there washed airplanes; I never got paid. But finally I did get some money. My father died in the '30s in '32 I think it is. And I, that was right in the heart of the depression and my mother said it was terrible; we were poor. She bought a suit and the suit is \$15. Exactly what she was paid. She pulled out her pay and gave it. I was about 14 or 15 when it [happened]. And it hit me so hard that to think my mother... I hope the kids realize how their parents sacrifice. In other words it gave me a sense of that. I used to walk from F & M [college], see, out to the old airport. It was *cold*. It never got much above 0, the weather. I walked out, I couldn't feel my legs I was so froze. And they finally gave me a key to go in that little office. And from there I worked up. I got some time off and I can show you more pictures but we can't take the time. I'm just skipping in here so fast. [Pointing to a picture of the airplane he owned for many years and which he entered into shows]

That I won first place. And the one guy was manager the airport and the other guy in the newspaper, he might have owned the newspaper down there. Over here is another showpiece. I could have won a lot more. That airplane up there that had 35 horsepower. That one right there, it had 35 horsepower. We didn't think about that, we were just flying. And that was horsepower and that was an airplane. It had no instruments, hardly. 35 horsepower?

How we had it. We flew open airplanes. You think of a cold winter morning and you try pulling those props. What we went through! Nobody knows! We had a fellow get killed on the Fourth of July around Middletown. Until I have time we had a field--picked up and haul people.

You see the little airplane there? On the window sill? That, I used for Christmas was one of the best for small planes--have everything in detail. He had one like that. And he put her in a tailspin. Down. It never pulled out. Of course I had the job of picking up the wreckage. Oh God! In the middle up front was folded up like the accordion. But, I can't begin to say. You know, those boys, [tearing up] when you're going down in the plane you can wave to the guy that did it. You know, you see it in the movies now and then but it was--when you got hit it was terrible. You knew--The flame, it caught fire. I wish my mind would keep-- I guess I do stuff like this in the past.

[I asked if he ever got hit as a fighter pilot. He answered with experiences from the Air Force in which he never piloted.]

No. No. I was lucky about something. I was 25. I believe we had an Air Force. The Germans were waiting on us with about 34,000 front-line fighters and planes. You didn't remember the peace treaty. We were trying to create peace, but then Hitler got tough and he declared war on us and China, I mean Japan. So that made it easy for Roosevelt to declare war in our name. And how we changed! Armstrong... Changed these factories; we were making automobiles and changed over the fighters and all. This country really was amazing how we changed and the people, the women got their jobs and worked all night. So I wanted to be a part of it. That's what I did. But then, so I enlisted and it...and I got sent all around the country to get firing—learn how to shoot. I will never forget it; the guy saw me with a machine gun like that he said you don't do it like that you lay it on the side and rake it. All those little things I can remember.

That right there [pointing to another picture] is down at Ocean City a group shot of us right here flying. That's my wife with me. He was one of the photographers down there. I forget

what he did. We had that airplane because it was very *rare* of a Cessna. Cessna usually had double struts. That airplane is all metal, single-strut there is only a few of them. And that's what made it valuable.

[ I asked, “ That’s why you won all the air shows?”]

Yeah. I got a call one night. He said “Sam you to pack up and go south for the big air show. You're gonna be in first place.” I said, “How are you gonna do that?” He said, “Sam, I'm going to be the judge. I landed in Smoketown Airport and I saw your airplane, Sam. I've never seen anything that is as *beautiful* as yours, Sam.” But none of us got down there. Weather was always against a light plane. It just didn't work. There were more flights canceled and I had to cancel.

So anyhow, I wanted to do my part. I see those cemeteries. Do people realize what those guys had to do in sacrifice—in the graves? They probably thought, “Well I'll die because my kids and my wife and my family are gonna be safe.” See. I cry, oh God, I cry here alone. Taking these pictures of what I had and my wife. But the other guy wasn't as lucky. I finally got sent to Florida. I was in charge of the--is like the pilots from overseas the combat pilots and I had a nice hotel and I, it rained. I was at Sebring, Florida. It's almost like in the middle the state I think. Anyhow, they, I'm trying to keep myself [pause], oh God I can't think! [pause] Down there they made me in charge. I tell you anyone going to enlist and they get better preference is an all-around I just missed the boat to be overseas but after I was, I was considered lucky. That was a slaughterhouse over there! But anyhow, [pause, tearing up] I lost a lot of guys that I knew. [pause]

Now I'll tell you a quick, funny one. It rained hard and the windows were open and in like the hotel so I jumped up we were all sitting around there talking and laughing, anyhow, the

one guy said, "Take my raincoat and close the windows." So I had to go out in the rain and I go in the guy's room and they jump up and salute. Here I had a Colonel's uniform on--his coat. I didn't know it. If it would've been war, I'd have been shot right there on the spot. Other things I don't know. You think I want to tell somebody and it goes away from me and I don't remember. I never thought I'd...I never thought I'd get like that. That's what old age does to you. It does. Your mind changes. Oh my mind! [Switching to his family removing the guns from his home]

You know my family turned on me. They said I'm not stable, so they had my guns taken. They took my revolvers apart. I say to them, "I don't believe I would shoot anybody." You wouldn't but you would sure scare when they come in. But wouldn't they have to have a certificate to prove that I was not stable? I was thinking of that, but I'd have to, my friends would have to be put in jail I guess. [Switching to his loss in the stock market caused by dishonest stock brokers]

And all my money...One day there is over a hundred thousand that they were taking. Just think of that. I was always such a small guy and that. I was listening to a girl, a woman evangelist last night. She's good. Then I heard somebody else sayin' that all will pay, they all will pay. And she was preaching and I caught it that the people who were dishonest will pay. And I imagine those in the crowd. Like a friend, they'd put their arms around you and say they'd take care of you. This guy tipped me off and he should've been on *their* side. But he wasn't. He told me. So I went to the stock market, got out what was left. On the down market yet I believe I had to take it out. [Changing to a story about the laundromat that he owned]

And then the laundromat is, then people said you didn't have to have someone out there. I was sexing baby chicks and turkey and had to travel up near Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire to Hubbard Farms. I was making good money, making good money. So I got some

friends to take care my laundromat. And I got a phone call one day he said, "You know, Sam, in that the guy's house there is a pile of money." That was my money—wrapped quarters. We got the candy money and the Coke money there's hardly any. But I took over. You see. But it was too late. I needed money real bad. I had been a Mason for 50 years and what's his name was the president. He said, "Sam, get a..." I said I could use money. In those days you either got bigger or just dropped out. So I had a fellow, he was an architect they told me what I needed in my laundromat is a turnaround. I got the money. I walked in he said, "You go see the girl over there." And she said, "Only about 100,000?" And this is the depression. And it came time for me to go to the zoning board. You remember the zoning board then? Oh, they were tough. If you want to put a fence post, you had to get permission. And my architect said to me, "Sam, no way to get your okay for the laundromat. You want me to do this, Sam?" and I said, "No, this is for me then it's okay." It was my turn and I said, "I'm Sam and I want to build my laundromat." And you know everybody on that board stood up and said, "Sam, get going! We use your laundromat." Boy, and friends... You always be honest you never cheat, they'll always be good... you do it straight to your customer and I did that. I grew my laundromat and when it's just about finished a man and his wife came in with this "Boy," they said, "Sam, we been looking around for laundromat and we will buy one. We want yours." They said, "You could name the price." So I got a good price and sold. Just think of the people, how they control their, get stolen from, but they do it. They're crooks. If you only knew how bad it was out there. So I sold. Made out pretty good. [Returning to stories of piloting]

I got in with other guys. One was an Armstrong bigshot; we had a good group. They're all gone except there's two of us. But it's all over now. I'm the only one. I have this but those pictures, there's history behind every picture. Over here look at that bulletin board of stuff. I

gave some of it. Would you set that right across there? Thank you. And you see, wait a minute. This is my workbench, [turns on the model airplane with lights and gun sounds] Nearly gone? Those are pretty good size bullets for that plane. I don't know what's wrong but I don't want to monkey with it because I may not ever get it together. And there's all my stuff, you see, that one. Little racers. Do you think they're worth anything?

See, um, and the fire engine there? And the airplanes there? Laurel Hardy was my favorite comedian. See that? They're playing with a... had just taken a... That's a British plane. He came in for a landing after showing one up and one upside down, smashed in. He suffered. His head was taken off. Right after that picture he was dead. And it happened down in Florida—the big airshow. Went down there. We traveled to airshows; we hit every weekend trying to make a dollar. I'm telling you, had nothing, out there is a field and I had to come in and Roscoe Turner came in with an enormous airplane. How he got it out of there I never knew. There is famous people that came in the field.

There is my laundromat. I should let you read that about my laundromat. I had people passing other laundromats to come to mine. It was clean and I honored everyone and they told me they said “Sam, careful of the F&M people they're gonna ruin you.” They are the *opposite*; they're good customers. But it showed the, boy, did they ever show respect! Before Christmas my wife and I, she made cookies and we had everything and I had a table and everybody could get free everything. Nobody else did that for Christmas. And the F & M guys said, “What are you doing this for?” For you are in college aren't you? [Returning to the model planes]

You know it takes a long time. That airplane over here, that was the Eaglet. I'm never gonna get it now.



I almost died, my wife and I. I feel like if it happened almost anytime. I had so much pain. Just walk around I said to my wife, "Well, I want to go. I want to go, dear, have so much pain." And she did, too. We both fell in this house. I had a lot of falls. If you ever fall, you're gonna remember. Had a close one the other day. I was just touching a certain chair to be sure I have hold of it and I just went down and, oh! I can't tell you all times that this happened. And you see the old-time picture here? Can you read that? I don't believe I've ever read it [the newspaper article about laundromat]. You know every person can talk to me and I can hear their voices of them I can hear every one of them talking as it was; ain't that funny? You see I have pictures. I had a good day, had a wonderful day. And the crooks did, too. I can't remember, go ahead just keep reading. It was back in the early '70s; I'm pretty sure.

You could be right, maybe I'm wrong. I'm not saying because, things fly by. I feel as though I have to go up to heaven. I will see what that's like. I tell everybody I don't know if I'm gonna. I'll be one of Santa Claus's elves. Help them repair toys. And each old man won't have to go to heaven or hell. If I make up these stories. I wonder what it's like. All my friends, what it's like on the other side, there it's different, it's just different. They say you have a house. But even the ministers don't know. I'm anxious to find out. I tell everybody, well I might be God up there, maybe that's what He wants, fitted to take his place. Oh. You shouldn't even make fun of the Great Person. But everybody, they don't know. I don't know. That is about right here, this grass growing up around. We took a tour up in New Hampshire someplace and coming back they say "Sam's yacht." God dammit it makes me mad when I can't get it. [Forgetting his place in the story] This was a great big boat so I got up close, I get up a little closer to look around like a they said, there is a boy he said, "You want to look around here?" The captain showed me the depth of the water around and everything and I said, "Is that microphone hooked up to the whole

ship?" He said yeah. "Can I say something?" I said, "Everybody, this is your captain if this boat sinks I go off first." [laughing] and the more people that are out there are dead too. Sam, what's wrong with you? [Recognizing he got lost in a story]

I took karate when I was 75. I got... One day there is a large class I said to my instructor who is tough I said to him "You know what I'd like to do today? I'd like to fight you." Oh that was my downfall. He said, "Sam in the fight you're doing pretty good, but I had to lay you away." Everyone would've seen, the drama, was watching us. And he did; he gave a kick and I went. I laid there and everybody walked up. But I learned; my wife said, "You learn to keep your mouth shut" and I said I will. But I learned. I learned by doing so I took up karate. I was in the boxing. I was at the Y[MCA] for 25 years every morning box and away and for couple of hours; I'd go swim for a couple hours and I'd do that. And they think that all that strengthening that I did helped my heart to be a little stronger. There's one thing I would.

Why someone can't take over that old airport that's still there down the road a piece; the airport. I've been trying to promote, just to get it, we could start a museum. But they could be set someplace they could start the final airplanes and put them in. Would you believe the rug people that own it, the hangar, I just wonder what they would want it for. I go out, but nothing ever came of it.

I have that, and the same for the ladies that take care of us now, the nurses say Sam, "You're doing good; boy, you're doing good but your heart is getting weaker." I fought for that saying to be done away with. I don't think it's a good one; I think they could find something more, rather than saying you're perfect and everything but your heart's getting week. Isn't that a dumb ending? When you think about it, it's stupid; it's almost something we could do without.

Why can it be “Hope everything's better” or something different than that, but I can't get any. I talked to one doctor; nobody's on my side or listens to me. I'm just little Sam.

Oh, but I think the airport out at the museum. You know the early days out in Chicago, do I have the picture of that? I have it here; put it away here. That's the early air show. They stand out and tell you that the plane is coming in for landing, only by voice. Today they announced the plane, but that's an early, early show. I would say that 100% of these people are dead.

If I had been a rich man, I'd buy a mountain, just a mountain, I'm just dreaming, like a whole state. I dreamt one morning that the mother deer, the tears came out of their face and the little dear says, “How comes Mommy, nobody is shooting at us?” “Oh Sam now owns us. Nothing can happen to us.” I love them—all the little animals. I own this house and that dog, Boomer. He wouldn't know what it's like to live with somebody else. We've never raised a stick to him and everything. And I said, “We can't leave here, Dear, and leave him to be given to somebody.” So we get down on our knees ask God to keep us well enough that we can outlive him... And that's the way, when I see the graves I know what they did, nobody knows what a horrible thing that they went through.

Oh there's the fighter. You see that one model over there? That was in Reading at their show, here the guy, a guy was an airline pilot, he flew for the organization. That airplane would cost millions of dollars. Even though I saw one for sale was like \$250,000 just for an unlicensed airplane. He said it's a shame out in Arizona they had a brand new, the four engined airplane rotted and they chopped it all up. And even though, probably somebody bought it somehow they chopped it down, boy, oh boy. Imagine millions of dollars in the engine. Now the gasoline's over six dollars a gallon for aviation. So imagine what some like it that could chew up just starting it.

I don't think I could afford to. I went down to this town, and got to, they said they could, I sold my airplane. They said, "Yeah, go open up that hangar and see." Here was a brand new year new Cessna. Close to \$200,000. "Do you want to go up?" I said, "Guys, I want the instructor." The airplane was simpler; mine was a suicide. You could fly and you could fly in weather. I got around many air shows I asked everybody and I said what do you do and they say I don't get them out of the hangar, over five knots wind and one day at this, the wind got up and blew everything away across the field. So the wind was blowin' about 40 to 50 mile, and there I was with a little tail flier so I wanted to get home, too. So I'd taxi down and they all waited for me to look at what I could do. Never before. I made a turn she came to, I kicked the controls just right; I went up like a helicopter and I got control of that airplane. But you see no one would fly them, a 5 knot wind is not blowing. But I did. I found out if you want to do something you have to do it yourself first, that's why I took karate. I got the heck beat out of me and stuff, but I took it.

You know they were going to attack the German planes and the Germans decoded our secret and waited and waited with all their guns and become boom boom boom. And so you see it's hell I tell you.

How do you like this room? I fixed it up. This was my one daughter's bedroom. And I did it, didn't even have no tools. I mean I just made everything fit. I have plenty of stuff over here. Well listen, you better go. [Switching to another picture] That was down on South Queen St. when they had the war days. They probably announced my name and other people that were in the service on that plaque. Or something like that. Turn it around; is there any date on that? Maybe on the back you can take it down. [Written on back of picture: Service flag Second World War South Queen St. It doesn't have a year.]

But see the war, or when was the war declared? 1941, Yeah. What do the cars look like? Is that a Buick? I had the earlier Cadillac—was a two-door torpedo back all-white, first air-conditioning. I had one of those of them, then my job changed, was using it back and forth to Connecticut. Here's what I put on all the air shows on an easel. [Showing a poster about his showplane] And we'd hang that up in the hangar at the airport. Built in 1950, 1950 that Cessna was built. And on down. And I got a call from one of the guys then, down, you know, the place they fly over and everything disappears? The Bermuda Triangle. He wanted me to go down; he flew around over. What else can I say? Took that picture here of me in the air. Boy, that's the way it was. And they gave me the pictures too. And that one there, it was different when you flew. I know if you flew they got in bad weather you better... my wife wanted to say something to me I told her shut up don't even... I was on instruments and if you would lose something I came out of already in bad weather flying like that [gesturing upside-down], so I didn't know it. So that's what I mean, if you use it too much, you're gonna get cornered you can't get out of it you'd be upside down and not know it.

I didn't want to lose it so wasn't allowed to look at anything. I came the whole way home that way one day with my wife. You see I don't know, I must've been under God's graces for a long time and didn't know it. And that was a great honor. But I do know. My God. Just think all of those hours and hours and weeks and weeks another model; there are parts missing. And here's another one. I think that's the Mustang so far.

Now look at that [a model airplane]. Ain't it nice? I had the tail started in and had a wire for the landing gear. That wire was so stiff I could have never made it look right. So I created the real, the way the landing gear was. It was coming down like that, see. In this airplane look here something's missing, here's something broke there's something . . . It's a shame to break it up. I

have had the tail made. I felt good. The girl said everyone cheated. That I felt the same. I forgive them even though one or two of them I see all the time, that took from me but God was good to me I have to be good to them too and I did. I forgive them all. We are so broke our budget can't reach so we make do, about, maybe for 10 days that refrigerator is so low but I guess, what can I do? I never had a lawyer to get money back like that. That man said if you start trouble, he'll fight me. He already warned me. And I had the questionnaire, maybe it's and that is it. But the money for a lawyer, oh my God, it's tens of thousands or something like that. I had to give it up. But I felt good. They say, then I heard a guy announcing that all these people who are corrupt will pay. But you don't know but they don't. Because I have a good life right now but I'm not asking for them to be punished. If I would see them again I would say Sam would say "don't worry about it you're forgiven." I never cheated I wouldn't cheat no one but boy oh boy, honest to God I can't. Hey, you've gotta go. I keep talking.

I want you to come back. Hey, during the day are doors are unlocked. You've gotta watch it though with all the cronies around. And so I unlocked the door. Different people I never met on my block. Please come back. But we can sit on the porch or we can sit on the back porch and have coffee and donuts or whatever. Just have a good time. Thank you.

I talk about them and cry. I think you know those German wives and children and men are better looking than we? They'd be welcome and the man was in war died. They had blood too! And I think Hitler said that they don't, "If you don't shoot, they'll shoot you" or some phrase like that. Oh God damn. I can't fight. But I can feel for the. I feel for. But that's, my wife says, "Sammy, have to let it go!" So I try not to think about it. But I can't help it.

I don't know what I'm gonna do, but I gotta do something. My friend, he has his airplane out at the airport, yet. He live up above Lititz, there. And, uh, he might look at a home down in Florida; I don't know if he will or not.

Do you know, the forest, the rain forest is practically gone. They're gonna be sorry. To make housing. That was the center points of the weather people. It never should have been. We're getting too many people on this earth, when they have to take the rain forest.

Did you ever see the old pictures of Lancaster? Out on East King Street there was a town. That was all town. I don't know what happened with the growth of people. Five or six of them. One was up on West King Street.

They're trying to work this debt out right now [The United States Congress is taking up increasing the Federal debt limit]. I don't know how they'll ever get that figured out. Well too many people are arguing and it looks legitimate, sometimes. I don't know how they're gonna do it. And somebody said they might have to stop the Social Security and all. If they do, we're done! 'Cause that's how my wife and I are living on. If it does, the whole nation would stop if they do. You know, I'll tell you about politicians. They like to scare you and that's what they're doing. Try to scare the American people. It's easier to take over.

I'm gonna be leaving this old earth and you and some others might be here to see it—what's gonna be.

You know, in the early, early days of the Roman Empire, they used to drink their tinkle—their pee, because it had a vitamin in it. But in my medicine cabinet, you 'll see a bottle of liniment and castor oil—two things.

My mother would get, say, \$15 a week at work and when she took me to get a suit she paid her check. Today, they could put fight up and punch her for it. One day these little kids

came there 'cause they each got a penny and they said, "Sam, can you get a penny?" I went in to see my mother and father. He couldn't find a penny in her pocketbook. I came out and said they couldn't find one. I didn't turn around and say, "I'm gonna punch ya!" I accepted it. And I grew up with it. Something told me, I better, I was only 14 or 15, I thought I got a way, to take my money from my mother? She gave me her check! I didn't think she even cared. But they do; your parents care and they'll do that and I thought that she gave that money and that set me back, as a little kid, I couldn't believe it. I went out and walked up in cold weather way below zero to find work. I liked it at the airport. I'd go out; I came down Lemon Street to Charlotte crossed over the railroad track walked in back of that factory that was there, the foundry of some kind, and will follow the railroad track back over the Reading Railroad track, and cross over the three bridges in Roseville and there is a farm down there, then out to the airport. When I got to the airport I couldn't feel my body, hardly. They must've to given me a key I didn't have to do it. The rats in the office, they were all frozen dead. But I started to wash an airplane. When you wash airplane cold. And got the water, oh God's freezin' your fingers off, *for a dollar*. But an airplane took most all day to wash. A lot of service. I remember that. Maybe I can't think, almost all that I do, that's my trouble.

Hey, when will you come again? You don't have to set a time. Just make a call to Sam. Your time is limited; I understand. Do you think you learned anything?

My mind is wandering so much. I'm convinced that I carried on I think, "He don't want that like that."

I'd like to have you for supper, but we make food scarce. Nobody knows it I'm but getting \$1,400 and getting it from the government. That I understand, I don't demand because. Do they do the same thing to their veterans in other countries, do you know?



As a country we wouldn't have to do that, I don't think. There's plenty of people out there that aren't makin' it. And I'm one of them. Beginning to cut way back, yeah we are.

I look; there was nothing easy for us. If we thought the 35 horsepower that was a Cadillac. We enjoyed it—was what we had to accept. This guy's got airplanes, but, boy, so they had to borrow the money and the salesman would be settin' there begging to sign or something. Today the whole debt thing. People overspent. That's what they did they do and instead of one home, they got two homes and two boats and the airplane. I'll see what I can do. My mind is, I can't believe it, how I think of the story to tell you and then it goes. I can't, I can't bring it back. I can't believe these things.

Hey can you outen' that switch there? In this room is memories. Right here there is memories. There's something, not, right over there, some I didn't get finished you'd be surprised that our manufacturing would be so sloppy and not have everything in it. I can't believe it. That airplane without a wing. I saw that picture on the war, one day I knew how they felt. Oh God, do you know the tail gunner? That could be a parachute there, one person, there are seven or nine people in there yet. That airplane's falling. You can get the airplane like that! Just think these two fighters can operate at 25,000 feet they can operate better shooting and all. Imagine in World War I they couldn't get over 10 they could maybe, but they couldn't fight in it. I wanted to fight and then. You know, the president. And fly them, but he flew an Avenger, a Navy plane, an Avenger. And he got his oil line shot and you're done for, you can keep that engine goin' a little while. So he landed. He must've notified the submarine group or something they picked him up I think, according to the pictures. I'm not sure. But it looked like it. '19 '20 '21 to think what they had, what we had to go over there. I think we have to give the war people their credit. People. So I never, I hate to think that I didn't go myself up for anything. When I pass across that I always

cry. We don't know this family. We don't know. Appear that's the. In airplane the... Wait a minute. I have to turn. I'll get turned. I daresn't lose it. That airplane that there that you never heard of Bill Hart at Brownstown. There at the crossroads of the town he had his hamburger stand and he made sandwiches for a nickel or dime and Smitty at the airport made a fortune on that, but that was just a front seat that was Bill Hart in the back. Well he got killed out there near the Belmont quarry or something on the Fruitville Pike was a tower, something, came in there too slow on a turn there is a south wind blew, any abuse at that frontline. He slowed her down and it stalled went in and got killed. Beautiful airplane. No. It was a Fairchild's 22. Oh boy! And he went down. Every time so they got hurt or something they said, "Get a hold of Sam. Get him."

I don't know that I do. I get some days I, I don't know any model club, do you? Might want something? Some stuff like this?

Tell you what happened. I got gone good fit in like a certain on that I tried it. It's a special glue if you ever let it stick your finger for a minute you better cut the finger off; that's how powerful it is! I can take glue I got put on and then hold it up all those operates on that I had to hold annual set so powerful it's it's a special glue and I'm out of glue stare in the red it is myself and build another system cost very much be combined out. You know we have a beautiful gift shop out there at the airport has everything aviation but that whole side caved in I have to decide if I should rebuild. You want to pick it up and put it in there?

Yeah. Now, look at that right there is it is straight with you here when you sign. That should be rebuilt and destroy that airplane.

Can I get through life worrying?

Okay, then they took my airplane, they took my car, they took everything. I guess they're right I would never want to pass out and fall on the city of people. That's exactly what I'd do. Told by the doctors and everybody that I should keep that posted. The other day I had a fall and oh God, as I thought I could make my hand reach a certain thing that I didn't reach it. Okay here we go.

Now listen, you come back when I have to talk airplanes or anything. You just sit around you can walk out there and see my deck if you want to quick. Just help yourself. [I go out and look at the back deck.]

Did you see? If we would go to a home, it would cost about \$6,000 a month or \$8,000 maybe a month. As far as I can see, we made a pact with the dog; I will not desert him. You come back. You don't have to talk.

One day I saw my old grandfather and he was like this. And I thought, will I ever look like that?

We're always here; when you're done with your job just come over, grab a cup of coffee or something. I wonder what, when the weather is gonna a change? It might be the climatic changes; suppose it would stay like this; it might stay 100 degrees. I don't know; it could happen, could happen. You better go.

### **Sam's Second Storytelling Session**

I'm getting organized you can sit down on a chair. I try to get things organized for you. I want to do something. Just go back over in detail. I can help you maybe, like a couple of pictures. You can have more time at these pictures. There's a book that would help out. Oh boy! Well wait. No wait. I'll wait till you get settled don't worry.

That's has a different thing. Now here's our plan. I don't how they took these pictures. Now maybe something happened to me. You like to have these? Just look at them once.

Now here, went too fast over this. Do you have a magnifying glass at home at all? One of these pictures is rare. I can't lose it. I want you, had things circled for detail, good look on a field we had. You can study all that when you have time. You see the fairground?

Here. This is it [the airport on an aerial picture]. That goes back; there was a gas station there on the Manheim Pike. We don't; don't look too much at this. But this is early days of the Waco. This is a biplane that came out. That was what we all had. Imagine a cold winter morning trying to pull that prop but we did. We had suits on. Now this is a Waco, had a tank. It was a watercooled 90 horsepower. And this was about 100 because they don't have the tank. They called the tank Waco. I had a very good friend who was killed in one, one time. But it's a good picture if you want to pin it up and take care of it, instead of sleep at night, you could look at that.

Put those pictures in this envelope. The newspaper isn't coded on the right stuff to print so they said we don't want. That was all right, so. I thought maybe you could take it along. That picture of the fairgrounds, you see we had a big prosperous fairgrounds. My father, I used to go out to the railroad station in Lancaster when the station was downtown. Of those big powerful steam locomotive chug chug chug, then. They carried the troops in the World War I, too. And he took me out to the fairgrounds. I could maybe show you the path that you jumped off the train and went down to walk down to the gate of the fairgrounds; there's a picture someplace if I come across it of the women and men just in their best evening gown, parasol, and hats. The men had their suits on. And by the way, you went to a ballgame, that's how you found the women always dressed up, that was something. My father was invited by Connie Mack two times up to training. Two times he must've gotten homesick and came home. Here he was a good left shortstop. He

could catch. He was like the stars of today catching stuff. He had a big-name. "Dusty Myers" they called him. Now I have pictures somewhere, will do them up. And then. Things got pretty slow in the chicken business but I was, wanted a job extra that I could do, so I sold fire extinguishers. I tried to make a living at that. So I went in a paint store downtown I walked in and said that, he said, "Oh you're one of those smart guys?" I said, "No." He said, "Selling these fire extinguishers that are no good but don't put the fires out" and he was carrying on. He had a big barrel size like that and throw all the dirt and paper in there and lighted it and I was ready to put it out. Big fire came up and I was getting' ready to shoot it with my fire extinguisher. He said, "No, not yet." It's now up, flames coming up like mad. He said, "Okay!" But by god, that fire extinguisher didn't work. I turned around and just walked out. I heard fire engines, but I never looked back.

There is another one, something I did there. When I worked the company sent me over near Gettysburg I went over the dirt road near Ike's place. Remember that the golf place near Ike's? Oh, you should see. It was a hot day just like today, couldn't breathe or anything. I looked up the field and I saw this guy fishing in these big boots and everything on a hot day and, oh man, I couldn't get over it! I know that he would've been killed, so I jumped in the car so I go to get help, I drove up the road just a short distance, saw a nice person, then I jumped out I told him I said, "Hey that guy out there. There is no water near the place out there he was fishing." I felt that. I said, "Should I just let him go out there?" And he looked at me and said, "Yes." I said, "He'll die!" And he said, "Well, I don't have no boat to go after" [laughing]. Could not get a big laugh. I said, "Hey everybody, you can make an extra effort and if you make a speech, you better not use it." People caught on and said, "Come on now."

My first time over to the hospital they had exercise. I forget, there was the regular General Hospital and there is a class with wheelchairs and then everybody to train them. They did a wonderful job. So my wife and I, the first time I went, I looked down the line I saw the wheelchairs and they looked [sad] no life, no living. I said, "Boy... I can't let that go like that. I have a lot of work to do here to get them laughing." So I got to class the next day, you weren't supposed to talk or supposed to find out. But anyhow, I came I found out what they did for a living and who they were and they smiled we laughed and every day I came in and we laughed. We looked for each other at the dinner table to sit with, and after a while everyone was up, knowin' each other's names. I met one pilot that flew the B-17 and they had the big one and myself and him go and one day, I said, "How long you been here?" He said, "I've been here a while." And I said, "Where you graduate from?" He graduated from the military place, what was it called? West Point. Yeah. He had 21 or something years with them. He must've been a teacher. He could've been. And he said, "I'm going out tomorrow" or something like that. I couldn't stay away from him. A West Point! Oh God, I thought—West Point! You know West Point I'm sure had a fine school from the start. You know there must've been thousands of schools I picture, I can't believe it. How quick everything had gone. I believe Hitler had 35,000 planes; I think we must've matched that at the time. But we weren't trained, you see. When you had something coming toward you with bullets or someone on your tail and you didn't know how to get him off. I think we suffered a good bit. So anyhow, it got by me, what did I just say? Can you think back to how we were? The British sent Chamberlain. I, we were there for peace. We didn't want to go, for everything was going too good, I guess, in this country. And Hitler got smart and he declared war on us instead and the Japanese did the same thing. So that made it easy for Roosevelt to get a war in the Congress and he could just walk in. But how we changed this country! I never thought

that. But anyhow they, I am, I was 25, 25 years old, leaving to go into the service; they left me go and all over the country to get trained and I told you yesterday, told you about laying the gun on the side. I got it. But then, because I enlisted, they sent me to Florida in charge of like a hotel. And then I told you the story of how I put on the raincoat of the colonel. The little things like that only Sam would do.

And him. Here's I got, then they sent me this [a framed award]. I was leaving the air show. My plane was climbing out when they awarded me that. So that was sent to me.

Do you know where that is [pointing at another picture]? Do you recognize that? That's the Oregon Hotel. That was back in the '20s and has great history. It was a hotel, changed hands a couple times and my father took over and a hotel that had a bar. Oh, it was history. You can still see it. On a good day, take a drive out the Oregon Pike, make a turn, sits out there; can't help but see it.

Yeah, lived there for a while and then my daddy died. And on the one side was a grocery store. Here it is. Then we lived on New Dauphin Street. Next thing I remember we were living on Pine Street. She evidently didn't think it was right to see. I did sneak up and see my daddy died. And he was all bones. You, he couldn't even do anything I guess in that day there is nothing for pain or anything and so. First thing I do. Living on Pine Street where, lived on Pine Street the guy next door was a pilot of World War I. He flew the old Jenny. He was really something. Now. When he got out of West Point, this is my nephew. I said, "Hey Matt I heard you had a battle." And he said "Grandpa, that battle" he was in charge of his group of about six or seven tanks. And he was waiting on the other groups to get in for support and they're going to attack. But they never came. So he gave his order for his group to attack. And I said it was a *battle*. And he said "Grandpa, it lasted all day." So you can imagine what a battle it was. He got

the medals of honor and different things. And he came home and he needed a job. So he was done.

At one point I had \$100,000 in one group. I had....We might run across it somewhere; it was that long, all the stock. I had that. So I was really hitting. I got the dog I was very wealthy from the stock market. Had a beautiful home and a lot of other property. And he told me how to do it, I started making money. And then a depression came so I took on selling fire extinguishers and different jobs. And I did buy a laundromat I got it off of the owners of the Turkey Hill. They were the owners and they had two laundromats. And they offered me the keys they handed me that laundromat. I didn't even know how you put the wash in and put the money in. They handed my key like this and said goodbye. I didn't know enough and I made a success of it. I found you don't want to do, when you're going into the business don't take on partners. Go yourself. If you lose, you lose if you went in, when, but to have somebody else tell you what you do that's no good—that friction. I could never swing that. I did it myself. I got this laundromat and I said, “Well I need a lot more room.” Over there on Mary Street. So he said we will dig—go across here and make the room to put the big machines in that. And he got on they had dynamite, there is an enormous rock just another way a little bit must've been clear across the city way down. But they blasted up and chiseled away enough. Going in these laundromats you got cold water most of the time and this and that and I decided to be different and installed big tanks. People will never get cold water. And they didn't. The big tanks oh they cost, I had one man said “Sam, I want to be a partner with \$10,000.” So a regular professional, friend of mine. If I had a lot of property when you signed over as a partner he not only became part of everything else don't they? I think so. Well I'm not, I won't do that. But I did figure that I don't think. \$10,000. I spent over \$100,000. So if you got a guy who thinks he knows.



You know a lot of movie stars, and what's his name, lost half their money to the guy that was taking care of their savings. Stole from them. I had property. I bought my sister and I in that house. A friend of mine bought garages but I thought well in the meantime, in come the real estate people, while Sam you got to get out. I worked hard some of the used equipment, it would have paid. Well, I want to tell you something will give you a better chance, but I gave you a chance to buy the laundromat and I didn't know what to do but then I went into the bank and the president downtown on the square. They estimate one day I could've needed the money either in business you expanded or you went out of business; you didn't stay small size and I need money, wanted about 100,000 or something. They said go to see, I guess she was the secretary. And she said, "Yeah, how much do you want? No, it's no problem." And then zoning; zoning came. My guy that did the engineering of it said, "Sammy, you're good at it." But I did it. But the idea in business I think you have to be honest at all times. And that's what I did. But the bank president—we belong to the same Lodge. That's how. As I came through my life, you know, my mother buyin' me that suit with her paycheck, it was something like a, I don't know, it was just something hit me. My parents, my mother sacrificing. Evidently that was when, the kids today say, "I'll punch you in the snoot if you don't buy me this or that." There was not a good attitude. I remember, I remember that my laundry because of it, people came past the regular laundromat and went to mine 'cause we had something they didn't. We had always had candy and free stuff on the table all decorated and then, if you remember in the paper there was people poisoning things and so we couldn't take a chance on free stuff. We stopped it. So go to the Christmas party. Thought we were generous. That was the way you treat people. Everybody I talk to now, I say, "Oh, were doing good."

There is one guy who works and is doing extra work. He gets preference of the jobs now; I understand there might be a promotion and he may get it. You know the people that say, “I don't feel like the work.” They stayed home, they goof off; there is a lot of that.

Must you go soon? I don't know how to hurry here.

[I asked Sam what made him so fond of flying—with all the danger in flying?]

You know I wasn't that bright in school. But I could clean, I like cleaning. And airplanes. I saw several airplanes, over the city and I, you know I wish I could tell but I fell for it. To fly I wanted to fly, fly, fly. Why? I don't know why. Maybe there's people that want to play golf, there's people that want to do everything baseball, or they want to play marbles or this and that. You know what it is? It could have been something else I like but I will, that's a good point, question. Why? But I took to it. And I told you how far I walked out, what I did on cold mornings and finally, how they gave me a key to get in and out without – only a few airplanes, some days it was full, the guys had airplanes, sometimes they give me extra money. That was a terrible walk and I'd get out and walk out cold; it was never up to zero always down. As a kid! Now that's, figure out how old I might've been. I was born in 1918, 1918, they're walking out let's say '30. And a guy was at the time about 14 yeah about 14 or 15, that's what I was doing. There is a severe depression.

[My father] died in 1935, you know my mother must've been so hush-hush. Well, I can't remember even the hotel. Then she got a house right up on Pine Street near the college. I don't know she just did it. But she had insurance money—a policy. She never told me much of anything. Didn't know much about my father used to have me go to the ballgame out at Rossmere. It was really, had a sanitarium out there; is there a sanitarium there yet? I don't think so. The hotel is over there in that one big house that it's in. And they would go over there and

drank. That's what my father did drank and drank and smoked and smoked. Affected his throat. And the Hollywood movie stars all had that. Remember? I wish I could answer that right. I think everybody and every kid wants to be an automobile mechanic; there is something there that you want. And maybe I was reading books about it; maybe I did. No I didn't. I'm trying to give you the honest answer and I can't.

Yeah, I saw a couple airplanes—five. That's another story after I got it, you got to know the pilots think they're all about 10 years older than me. I got to wash their planes. It was cold and I made a dollar. Some guys never paid me for any. But it didn't matter I was too thankful to be around the airport washing them. I gotta love it. See the planes and the smell of it. Oh! We just had the guys and we are all trying to make a living. So we pick out fields to go to and haul passengers. We go up to Mount Joy we do around 12 different airports, I am right, now. And we take the airplanes up there, circle over the top and waved. I can remember at the Quarryville airport. That was the worst. And man, tryin' to land! So we'd advertise in advance and we'd go down and drive a car with the flyers all about the airplanes. And they come in and I tell you.

But I flew the Cessna. What a beautiful airplane. About \$190,000 that went to. Think you get it new for about \$18,000. And this house \$12,500. 'Cross the street might've been about \$8,000. I think it'll never go back to that. I worked at Armstrong for sixty-five cents an hour; my two weeks' check—it was \$55.50. And I didn't go in the office and to the boss and say, "I got to have more money; I bought another car and my son's going to college." You didn't tell him that story back then. But I can remember I sold my mother's house and then I got the corner laundromat that had a store and an apartment in at the laundromat. But I didn't want the other stuff to worry about. All I wanted was the laundry. I think I told him I would buy one; what was I to do with all the equipment? So the one family, they own a house next to those garages and

one big one at that time. I think I paid 10; I sold it for 20 or something. I sold those and I made a profit. The corner stores, that would be my sister's and having the fireplace re-pointed. It was an old fireplace. Around the field that was across from there was where the cows could be butchered in that day. So I sold that. And he came over and said, "You got a big promotion did ya? Do you want to buy the property?" So they came and looked at that and all the bills and doubled it. So when I added up everything I didn't have to go to the bank; I did it all myself. With my money! I can't believe it! I had it all, up \$7,000 a month. So I just could see all that. I sold it all off and took the laundry. The gas company came out, close up the street if you are an apartment there and took a bath and nobody else could use the water. So I had all that fixed. Grew, trying to make a name, I guess. That's what I did. Then my wife said one day to pick out some of our friends, three or four friends having money and so forth. I was making darn good money. I was earning sixty-five cents an hour and only, I was earning maybe \$700 a week. That was a lot of money. I was doing good, give it all up because all the profit—I got the Coke machine and the candy machine had hardly any money. And the police, they said, "Okay Sam, who handles your keys?" And I told him. And they said, "Get the keys as soon as you can." And I did. The guy was one of my best friends he threw the keys at me; nearly hit me in the face; could've killed me like that across here. Imagine that—asking for *my own* keys. And he was one of the main ones, and there were others. It was over it all. And one day the one guy who is over at the one guy's house and he said, "Sam, he has of rolls of quarters." And see, we used to wrap the quarters in orange. Today, I'm suffering. Today they want me to borrow money on the house and I won't do it. We didn't do it all those years. Gonna try. I came in several days, so much pain I said to her, "Honey, I wish the Lord would take me. I don't feel good today." Nowadays, I felt such bad pain—24 hours of pain. I asked the Lord to take me. I had so many close ones.

I belonged to the civil air patrol. I got a call one morning early one morning they asked, "Can you report with your plane to the Harrisburg airport?" and it was still dark. Going after the Penn State people who went down. They had their own plane; they were looking and went to pick up their son and they had a plane and they didn't make it someplace. Anyhow, they went down so I had the search and oh boy. I had to go flying low and had to get them to identify a truck, but even hauling stuff then one day a guy saw a flash in the woods and here was their plane. But you see when a plane crashes because it takes all those tree limbs down with them and the plane goes down the limbs bounce back up. They must, they didn't make the opening someplace. We couldn't find them. I can remember, and the Harrisburg early one morning to see the tower and they call us up.

And the weather. I can remember, did I tell you? I was taking off to Ocean City with my wife. We took off in the late afternoon as I was rising up out of the runway of the in close to me was the worst weather you might have seen. You could see it, coming up the ocean. It was like fog and stuff. I said to my wife, "Look at that!" I said I was talking to myself. You watched your internal banking and all your instruments available. And if they would vary, you had to straighten, get straightened out lots of times, you straighten them the wrong way. For instance I went up there, Penn State, to a field and only came out of the clouds and was flyin' on my side and didn't know it! Would you do? You could be upside down without knowing it. So my wife leaned over to say something to me. And I said, "Shut up!" She told me about what I said but I was unnerved 'cause I'm not an instrument pilot. When I was watching, I didn't talk and didn't do enough, I just watched my instruments. As if they had gotten away. That's what happened when my partner lost control and I grabbed the controls. What was I saying? Yes, the weather, yeah. I came up low the whole way out and I knew I had to get up to 3,000 feet over the

Wilmington airport control tower. As long as I was above a certain level I didn't have to , but I always did to let everyone know where I am.

There probably isn't anything you can write down. I don't think there's anything to write so far? How do you do that?

[Returning to the story of the stock broker who stole from him]

Well all that money and here I didn't know that the guy was, had his own stock place on Duke Street there. Near Dean Witter's you see. So I just showed him a few papers there, I don't know what papers he saw, but probably in one of these books. And he said, "Sam, you go over the Dean Witter's and you get that stock out." And I said, "They're good to me with their arms around you, buddy." Put their arms around ya. But I was only get I wish I had put account of those checks I think is about \$100 but they were taking maybe a couple thousand for themselves taking it. He said, "They're gonna pick you dry, Sam." In other words, then I ran into and sort of counted on things had guided Dean Witter boosted "Oh if you decided to fight you have to fight me." You see, he scared me. But fighting those big guys but the lawyers they want many thousand dollars so I couldn't do it. Oh, we made money but nothing like to support a lawyer's fees. That's what they said that I got out and I don't know I got left, but it wasn't very much. And probably I got it out when the stock was down; I could've waited and sold and made money, but I didn't, I had to get out.

I would have been rich, Armstrong is growing, people were being hired, I had stock from that too. I would've made some could have sold. But I didn't have a chance there is taken it. They're adding their interest with their profit. It's perfectly legal. I couldn't believe these people. That was okay. So listen, my wife being a Sunday school teacher and she told me she said, "They'll be paid." I couldn't visualize that 'til one day not long ago this old lady who died the

other day I told her the story and she said “Sam, who do you think protected you like that? The Angels?” I said, “Yeah!” She said, “It was God. It was God that wanted you, Sam!” And she said it so precise that I do, I do. And the following did I pass out and the airplane landed itself. And every time I put the airplane away I say, “Thanks, you brought me home.” I didn’t do it. To my airplane. I whispered everything to my airplane. The airplane had gone off the runway, came back on the runway and it was said that the tower is yelling, “What happened? What happened?” And I said I think the wheel stuck. If I wouldn't have, the FAA would have arrested me, they could put me in jail. I put my airplane away. That night, late, I called a man that was interested in buying my airplane. I'd like to sell. I thought I better not try to keep pushing it. He said okay and he bought it. But in the meantime, I heard an evangelist talking about. This one I think she was talking everybody that might've been a cheater, who did wrong in their life, but there is. She was so firm that they were gonna be punished. And just a couple weeks before that I heard something, I wasn't listening to the program in and say “They will be punished!” He was quite a person of the Bible. So, I put to good two and two together that they're gonna be punished, my wife said. You said to say them know that but I said, No God, you forgive them.” But I did but I don't know if they were forgiven. Everybody that she did, there was one whole outfit that went on. He used to fly in a helicopter. He put some of them in jail I think I lost thousands. They could call Sam do you want to buy stock in the sun so? Did they take the laundromat profit? So I fell for it.

I forgave everybody and we did without. We couldn't buy the clothing we couldn't do anything. My car has rusted out fenders at the bottom, I can't even afford fixing that because that affected me. But I just, she said, “Sam what would you do?” I said, “They’re forgiven.” I'll be alright when I come to the gate. But that happened.

I would go past the cemeteries and see the crosses and wonder some of them must have been tore up bad. Regular guys here, are the marines and all and I would say to myself, That's alright, Lord, if I die for my family to be safe." The view of the family. And I did cry because I could almost put myself in their shoes. You know after a battle, they'd be lined up laying around to bury them. What for? We're lucky we get pension stuff. I wondered if other countries do the same thing for their veterans? Because I know I had a job, I said two airplanes I want to fly them; imagine me. But I did alright. I did alright. I don't know, but how can God forgive these people? Of all, you know way back in the Roman days, when they had scales, people would buy their meat he had his foot or something on it, they were cheating people way back then. They were divorcing people and that stuff was going on. So how do I know their sins? We all were sinners. But I asked. I don't know. I don't know what's gonna happen when they open the book. I don't know but I'm sure, sure there is a devil and there is a God. There is a good side that and the bad people pick up the devil side. But the other night I seen all those people, and she was a good preacher, well I knew that there is still a lot of good people. They must be the ones that are guiding this country the good people yet I just dream what I dream about what I would do if I was rich I'd buy a mountain and have it all open. And you know I hate to even step on an ant. Set here and let time go by and he came right past me; I could've stepped on him and I said maybe he's shopping that maybe he had a mother and father; it's things I got, I start to think about. Did you know if they wouldn't shoot the deer, they wouldn't shoot it for us, we wouldn't be eating the food. Must be legal. I don't know. I don't know a lot about it. All's I know is I was saved by God. You dread, when you take off that your motor keeps running or it's a bad time. Oh boy. It isn't. It's fun flying, but you don't know as long as things are working.



[Finding a newspaper article on global warming] Here, here's something here. What's this in here? This was, this on here someplace, on the change in weather. Is this gonna be like this on Christmas [heat wave]? It could be. It's on there someplace.

This is a first airplane [a picture]. An American Eaglet that sold for \$900; hardly any instruments. It's a—three cylinders. I don't know. I think that goes with that. Your head was between a strut that's the strip went like this. It's called the Cobain strut. That was the Cadillac of the air. Ain't that something? You are here, I forgot about this already, we used to meet the trains, around the railroad station in Lancaster we flied right low and then there was no electrification and we could fly low so low that you think the engineer was gonna fall out waving and all the people on the train; we were so close with the almost talk to them with it. That was illegal, but of course we didn't know; that was fun! To take your airplane writing I talked to fellow that had a bigger airplane. Isn't that beautiful? That has nine cylinders on. 90 hp. Stepped it up a little bit. They had them in those days nine cylinders and 90 horsepower. The PT-19 with the Ryan engine would throw oil out and the Eaglets would throw oil. I'll tell you. I had to wipe the oil tanks clean and everything down with gasoline and a can with a brush or use rags; don't think I got paid; I was around the planes it didn't matter. Let me tell you. The Ocean City soon as you see from...I can see Ocean City I would belong to the fishing club and the airplane would be out there; I felt apart of Ocean City it felt so real. There cottage I was renting and everything, the airplane, sit down there at night, so I just felt...and in the fishing club I have my own locker my own fishing stuff I could go any hours of the night. Gave me a good feeling when you looked around, "I am a part of you." I can't tell you how you would've felt if you would've had something like that you feel so whole that you belong somewhere—that you are something, see?

You know now, Bill Hart, you never drove around Lancaster did you? I mean outside Brownstown? He was the one. When this settles down the position of our seasons, I think they're gonna change; They announced that forest in Africa, the rainforest, is going to be completely wiped out; they're gonna build houses, they have to build them for people. That's what's happening is world, this can be too many people. Then they have to live to an unit, a foreigner, he still spent the money.

We're all people; we're all human beings. And um. Do you want to take that one along? [pointing out a book across the room] You read about...that's a good. Some of those pictures—they're all precious. Did you look at them?

My daughter, she's a very sweet little girl; she has cancer. She's had one operation; she had a bad setback.

You can see the detail [in the pictures of a book] take your time with everything. And that picture--you get to see the fairgrounds. You see the horses that they had those days. I wish I could tell you how dressed up the people were at the gate and, oh my. The races. It's all over. [A phone call interrupts]

But there's a lot more there is probably. Maybe I'll be gone. I'd like to live. My dog down there means everything to us. But he might find a good home, I don't know. But boy. These little animals I see come across. I had one here is a name for. Every morning I get up. Crawl out from nowhere, but what do I want I hurt them for? He didn't do nothing to me, take him out and he had his friends and relatives don't you think they have a life, too? I don't know I just think about it. I guess I go half nuts here. I can't sleep at night. I just lay with my eyes wide open. I feel good. They tell me it. Give me a pill to sleep; then they said I'll feel good. I feel just as bad then. I told him I didn't want to did not take anything. No let's get going here. [Returning to a picture]

Oh that's Bill Hart. You ought to take a trip out to the Brownstown to the square, the hotel; he had the airplane. If you want to take that along [a picture of the pilot]...There wouldn't be no point; you wouldn't know him. His wife just died not too many years ago.

I tell you, I had a car second car that was 10 years old, they don't make it anymore but it was like new. So anyhow, this guy and I'm gonna and he said I said what you get it for he said \$3,500 had two phone calls and set that as a steal. That car was shining. When you got...it was an Oldsmobile. 10 years old. I called him and I said, "how'd you make out?" And he said, "Sam, the car broke down; I put it in the junkyard." And he was a liar. He was supposed to be one of my honest friends. He could close the books and say, "I don't even know you." That's what I mean.

So we're just not doing too good. And any time the Lord calls my wife and I, we're ready, I'm ready. Sometimes I can walk down the hallway, the pain, arthritis pain. I fell a couple times. You have your hands and touch sometime and it's not there and you're gone. When you go, you hit. God that's awful! It's not been easy I worked, one day I had, what's it called in your back? I was numb from the waist down I couldn't feel anything; I got a call to go and I went out, I couldn't even carry any equipment. I think I gave out or something. I still reported to work. I wanted to work. They used to travel and different people didn't want to go, work all day and night, jump still in the car and drive up to Vermont or New Hampshire and still worked all night. That's what I did to earn my money. So I had a decent living. And then so much was stolen. And now I heard the two famous people say that they're gonna be punished I forgive them. But I don't know what God's gonna do. Maybe Hitler's his right-hand man, you don't know! You just don't know! You wait. Now listen. Did you see the models I made over here? You see, this is all tore out, I was pressing too hard. The glue is like cement. I was pressing too hard and just exploded.

All this gave way, the bottom gave way, I thought well maybe have to this then you look through, see it's not even the sides; that's not right. How I did that I don't know. And be impossible all this in here gave way. And I gave way and I restored it. That's not right but I can cover up a lot of this with paper and you'll never see it. But I would know it. Maybe I might do that anyhow. Have an aviation book on the mistakes of pilots even though they were the best and out West. And they made mistakes. Some of them had I guess I started reading it. And the book on World War I, there is a group of Frenchmen and a big shell hole. There they are dying and a dog came creeping in and that is a whole one day. And he showed them the way back to the line. And there is a weird looking place the dog pointed to it. And he broke loose. People roofline of the members the dog got loose the dog one in bark and growl and carrying on and scared him. A lot of the handlers and the dog was shot by the attacks. I started but I couldn't keep going with the book. So that's down there. Yep. I don't know why I start feeling for everything. I don't know and again I don't know. I just have a feeling for everything—every ant. Why is that? Is it because I'm nearer to God and the Bible than I ever was before? Maybe that's it. Well I hope I helped you. I tried to tell you, I had a terrible time just walking out and you know how cold it was and how we lived. So I walk along the Reading Line and the soft coal would fall off; I would take a big bag along and on Saturday or Sunday I'd have it nice and warm for everybody. I made the fire. And I fill it with soft coal and it would last all night, see? For didn't have any call the firemen throw some. That's only did it. Was just as I told you stand out there in the wind and it's so cold I got to the airport didn't know if my legs worked so cold you couldn't touch; it was just like frozen. We didn't have modern stoves and stuff, but we made it. And then Monday, a city official, I guess, said we needed an airport. I tell you, you know on Prince Street over the last bridge out there is what road is that? The Manheim Pike here—the Fruitville Pike at the end of

Prince Street. There that gasoline station is out the pike, past one light is a crossroad goes across and back in the Fruitville Pike and back that was gonna be the airport. What a deal, I think that's what they had planned. But just think jets had to get down on 911 really over Lancaster almost scrape the wheels on the hospital make a safe landing from the Fruitville Pike there is a site out there but it was all politics. I, what's his name, but it worked out. And then I believe it did. And it has a nice feel.

It's hard to get people to bring their airplanes in and make money that. Up at the Middletown it's 10,000 foot. Just think about that. That's a lot of airport that, anyhow, they decided they could make it. But that was the sacrifice of all the other guys, see? But if you could could've seen that field out there, there is nothing to it, one part if you went off of it Roy Geltz missed the field there he got over too far in the water and he said, "Sam, will you clean my airplane?" I said, "I think there's bullfrogs inside you know?" Well, there could've been. So was there few got off of it. Mailman out the there is Clarence Kurtz the Spirit of St. Louis and this other guy, but anyhow it was there. I know where he cracked up, I know why he cracked up, down there off the Oregon Pike, I can still see it. See I can say that but you're sitting there, you don't know. But you don't know what it was to crack up. Maybe will be with think maybe the girls will think of something.

I don't feel as though I've said anything. Am I hitting the right things? I told my wife today said honey I gotta talk about life. That's the only way I know it. How things looked in the fields and you walk and there was nothing around. Back then Manheim Pike was like a cow field and Armstrong had their dump out there I'm in the east wind came these to burn stuff that came in of this is in that burning laws then. They just did it.

They used to get me every time a plane wrecked and they say, "There you are, Sam."

This one right in E-town is where there are bones of that one airplane I tore apart. And yet I can't remember. I remember the middle was a so...looked like an accordion. It's all past. And when I go it's gonna go. I don't feel as though I did right. I don't know. I think I talked about myself and yet, if I don't tell the story...

I didn't eat my dinner; I don't have much appetite. But in the morning I drink at thing that has all those vitamins. I drink that, and then my wife makes meals I can't always eat it than just a throwaway but she said I got to eat you should see how thin I am. I weigh 185. I never weighed that before. That's why I'm so handsome. If you believe that, you lied. But it will be over someday, just like it is for me. I think it gets you down and you might get that you kill an ant and are about could you know what did he do to you? Let's with its me. I don't know. Well you better run along. I don't think I'll be able to get down.

I wish you could live what I lived a little bit, but you can't.

### **Sam's Storytelling Session Three**

Did I tell you about barnstorming? It's a big part of the aviation and depression; it's what we wait for the whole weekend so we can get out and make some money maybe.

Hey, we have an air conditioner. It's better than outside isn't it?

Now listen, When I was growing up, a lot of good things went by. Maybe we're gonna miss a little bit of it. But, I got thinking of barnstorming. We used to get the airplanes--pretty well all the airplanes around that we had then—five or six, we had more than that at one time, I believe. Lancaster has an airport! So, first, we'd start out putting big cardboard things around at the different beer places and stores and places around the town we're going at. We'd go to New Holland, Quarryville, the worst field, Coatesville...We'd go into different fields and sell rides for

\$1. Now we would sometimes, we flew there to those towns to take them for a ride for \$1. We'd just go a route around their town. Maybe, if they had just a couple dollars more we could take them somewhere else a little farther, they could; that would be welcomed. You must remember, this was in the heart of our recession—it was terrible. And, boy, I tell ya, I remember, [one of the pilots], he'd say, "Come on Sam, we were going to" up above Harrisburg [forgetting the name of the town], I'll tell you, we better get at some stories—they are flying by me. Wait a minute. Above Harrisburg, yet, Sellingsgrove...anyhow, I was walking around the airport and I had a pair of earphones with the cord hanging down. Art had a Waco cabin—a nice cabin airplane that could hold a pilot and 3 people in it. It had 2 wings, but was built by the Waco people who built some nice airplanes, I guess even for WWII. Art says "Why don't you just keep that on?" He said when we go into this airport. We had to compete for the passengers, see. It was a nice field up there...I'll get it...I'll get it. Anyhow, so these earphones. If you had an airplane with that setup in those days, you had a lot of money [chuckling]. Getting out of the airplane, we'd be seen with the earphones. When you think about it, wasn't it somethin'? How the things like that went over real big. Anyhow, we had a center there where the ticket guy would go and sell tickets for other planes—we weren't the only airplane. We had some nice bi-planes...You had to shine them. Because two of you wanted the passengers There was an airplane that came in called "The Pilgrim". It was a six or seven hundred horsepower, and you set right---here's the engine, here's you, and the rest of the airplane. Did you ever see the Lockheed Airplane—Amelia Eirhart—she flew in one. You sit right in back of the engine. A couple guys up there were killed in one of those planes. You don't have a chance, if you wreck, that engine's gonna land right on your lap. I got in a fight with a big husky guy with no teeth. He was telling people about us—"he cuts the rides short; you ride with me 'cause he cuts the rides short."...we had all kinda things. I picked

up a club and dirt and dust was startin' to fly...Hah! Then Art came over, anyhow, most all day Saturday and all day Sunday we walked around in the sun, "We'll take you up" We'd go over to the cars and try to get the people. It was a job. And I got 10%. It was a hard 10%. If you looked in their pocketbook you didn't see much. If he was gonna take his girl up, that was the \$2. It was hard. It was hard times. And uh...Down south there was...Quarryville, it was the worst field. [Another pilot] flew in with a Ryan. Now that was the sister ship of St Louis. It was about 300 horsepower. It was quite an airplane. He'd take that to the airshow. Many people were crowded around and it was a terrible field. He almost cracked it up; the field was too short. He was from Lancaster. He gave you all the written work for your flying time—instruments. You could see where the dirt and the grass got itself between the wheel and the tire...man, he was really breakin' to stop...So he took it back. I'm sitting there and the dirt and dust comes flying; he comes by and a plane comes up and cracks up right beside of me. It was no small plane. You had to slow the airplane down. On a hot and mucky day. Today, it's different.

I went out to the airport early in the morning and there was [this pilot]. He was getting out the landing gear and getting it all ready. We didn't have much there; we had a welding torch, we had a little shop, and we had a little old stove made out of a 55 gallon drum in our little office. We had our parachute which was... [another pilot]. You see in the old movies, showin' the old things--that was it.

Garden Spot bought an autogyro. Helicopter they call them today, and that was beautiful. It carried a passenger. We all went out to an airshow out towards Coatesville. You know the Amish could spend money for flying—the rides. We could just drop the plane down on the Amish farm to give rides. The dollar was just so [kissing his fingers] so big and precious. A dollar. I worked at Armstrong for 65 cents an hour. That was \$55.50 for a two-week pay. That



bought us more. Our rent was around \$30-\$35 per month. We bought groceries, we had a couple dollars maybe left over. When you went to a restaurant—we would barely eat out—I could tell you where they all were. You could go to nice places where you could eat a nice meal for \$1. We went for a... to look for an airplane with a buddy—up in the coal region. And we spotted a sign that said “Restaurant”. We went in there and nobody was in. It didn’t look like much of a restaurant, but it was a restaurant. And the woman came in, “You gentlemen want to eat of course” and the waitress there said, “Please sit down we’ll get your meal ready” and when it came out it looked like a Thanksgiving meal on your plate. I couldn’t hardly eat it all. My buddy cleared his plate. He made \$20 a week at Berkshire Knitting Mill in Reading. She came with the check and it was only about 75 cents. [Returning to a story about a helicopter crash]

I want to go over something else here. Now this may not seem like anything to you, but it meant so much to us. When these storms would come up it was like a movie. We were out with the autogyro and they were out with the other plane and we were in the field and this big storm came up and we all scattered. We waited for them to get home, but nobody got home. The one guy out in his airplane was all the way out and in between two heavy big trees. And then the Waco, a big one came in and it was raining and dark and we had the beacon and the beacon there out at the new airport was right there. We used to climb it to eat lunch in the summer. The summer was a big deal. It was two pieces of thick bread and one little piece of bologna. HaHaHa. The women were there and the rain and the lightning, yet. The autogyro wasn’t reporting yet and so after a while the two guys came in. It was right after they passed over Litz around the shopping center there—Glen Moore Circle. And hey, boy, my mind...he...the engine quit. I never knew that in a heavy rain, but it did. And it hit and those propellers, they just break up. It was a new one and they didn’t know how to get the safety belt off...they would have burnt

up! But they finally, the pilot he was a good boy, was all white, because, he was so mad, he couldn't get out and his son was in the front seat of the thing, no it wasn't his son, it was his brother, and they got out and came in. It was just like in an old-time movie. We were in that old office and we were waiting for the sound to come into the airport and circle, Oh God, it was something. We got, we ran out, we ran across that whole field to Glen Moore Circle, in the rain and all; I had a pair of white pants and shoes; I must have dyed them. [chuckling] You couldn't tell what color my pants were. And man, it was something. The Garden Spot was on Prince Street right there and they were selling some Fords, I guess. They didn't try to fix it. Maybe they didn't have much insurance...It was a pretty penny to replace the rotor blades. [Switching to the trains that ran into the city and how the pilots would fly real close to them]

The trains. Boy that was it. We used to fly in so close with our wing, you'd think sometimes the train engineer was going to fall out. In those days there was no ventilation in there. They'd all go to the windows and everybody was waving, almost shaking hands. Things like that were maybe against the law, but we did 'em.

We had our Cessna out from about 1935 or a little later on. And then we had another type of light plane out there before that. They came in with their. . . in the middle 30s. I was getting instruction in about...my father died in 32 I think, yeah 32. So it was around 34, yeah 34. If you had a Waco or a heavier plane or a biplane, that was in the hanger first. The light planes that was the only planes that we could afford to fly very much. And that was true. If you'd see the cabin planes settin' out, [the owner] must be going away or something like that.

I was thinking of roads, how you have it in your car. If you drove out the Oregon Pike, where the shopping center is, at the bypass, where the pike branched out right there, a restaurant and a bank, that was a pasture and black angus used to wander into that point right there. That

was a beautiful stone building and all through there was pasture. Just think of that. Do you know where the...right there where the Lancaster Shopping Center and across there was a restaurant they tore down and then the Manor where all the big trees are, that used to be our airport in there, there wasn't any trees then. The restaurant was torn down, there's a bank there they say. So I don't know. I don't get out there. I won't know Lancaster, it's changing. And so it's hard to visualize that. There's a guy, on the front porch, I think it was that big fancy...you'd have to drive around sometime to get yourself an idea...there was nothing around there...just think. That bypass crossed over in the middle of the woods. You go out there at the Oregon Pike and that busy intersection with the gas station and the supermarket. Do you realize that hill, you had to climb, you might see that come across and at the top there is Roseville Road and you can see Oregon Manor where the people built the restaurant at the top of the hill. I rode a bicycle across that hill before there was anything, and I run into an old horse and wagon setting in that field. Oh!! I mean I was hurt, but anyhow. There was another big hill. We mustn't have had the power. What was the battery when it came out? Was it a 6 or 12? The power. We came out in the morning and if it was cold, you couldn't even start it. I went out to a laundramat meeting in Reading. I had to let my Buick run the whole time, it was so cold I could have never gotten it started. I know my father he had to turn around and back it up. A 1926 Chevrolet. Imagine the power today. He'd step on the gas at poor house hill out there and he'd get it going 100 miles an hour I guess. Oh Gosh. I don't know if that is interesting, any of it—the barnstorming and all. A good day, \$100 or a good show you'd get \$200 taken in, but just think, there was rows of guys there. I had to be yelling, yelling, yelling. Matter of fact the guy that was the original ticket salesman. You don't ever remember Smitty's at the airport with his night club there. And he had

an orchestra playing nearly every night there. Oh boy. Anyhow, Smitty was there and he had his place... now what was I trying to think of, what did you just ask me?

You know, somehow I got 10% maybe of \$100 dollars, that was at the local airport and maybe at an airshow a little more. Each guy had a job in town. Some worked for Armstrong, but that was extra dollars. A hanger out there, it was only around \$10 rent. I think now at the airport it is around 200.

Gas is \$6 for aviation now. Just think of that. Some airplanes with all this horsepower use so much just to start. People that had the hangers were usually no more than the average worker. Armstrong had their big hanger, see? They had two jets, that's something to see now. [another pilot], he's like me, almost getting up there. The idea of flying a jet...trying to think how you went on your vacations to Ocean City NJ. When you flew into that one airstrip where you could look across the bay, to a town, the CrabTrap, did you ever eat in there? That was a famous place. You felt...you'd tie down your plane...and I was a *part*... then I belonged to the fishing club yet...it was something to feel that you had that feeling that you were really a part. . . you were just...I could never...I don't know, did you ever—did you go to Penn State? You feel like a big part of that, don't you? You do. You Do. Someone asks where do you go, you think "Oh boy, Penn State!" My grandson was going up the river to that other place, military, West Point. I told him that I'd still wear my uniform in bed if I had gone to West Point. I'd be so proud, and to graduate. That was not easy...

Life....Life. I lay here like this, I lay here with my eyes open...I'd be wide awake. I get up around 5 o'clock, go down, get my stockings on, I have my shoes there...

I'm going to the '39 reunion over at McCaskey. My wife was the '38 so I always went with her. I never got, since school's over, I don't ever remember seeing any of my class, so

they're gonna see that I get there. The 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week...I have it here somewhere. To the '39, they didn't want me to go, getting in the car. . . I say you guys are trying to make me a sissy. But you see, I'm so cautious of falling, if you ever fell reaching for something, it was drastic.

Yeah, there is so much, you know, when I went into the Air Force, they must of knew I'd been around airplanes, 'cause when I came out of the hospital, and reported back to my group, the officer said, do you want to go on to Santa Anna? And I said "no". Because in the hospital, I got to know, Boy we must have had a couple hundred thousand pilots and all. I ended up going to other airbases to get machine guns and rifles and different guns.

The gas chamber...I was doing nothing...and someone says, "You. Don't you believe about the gas chambers? People go in and don't have no mask. Take off your mask." Down I went. I believed it then; it was there. You don't know the things I saw. But yeah, I got shipped around and shipped around and I got a good deal. I was sent to Seabring Florida and got my wife to go along, she was a green hornet too. She never travelled. It was snowing up here, and when I got up on the train it was beautiful down there in Florida. I was put in—it was like a hotel—the rooms, the barracks, it was for transit pilots, combat pilots coming in and stuff; I got to meet them. You know it's right here. [pointing at foot] That's an arch that shouldn't be there. Your arch curves like that, mine curves like that because it was so flat. What it was doing was creating pain up my leg and up my back with that pressure. It was. I couldn't walk. And then at the same time, I had a hernia about the size of a grapefruit hanging between my legs. It was a rupture...I was carrying heavy bags around the barracks. And then those officers—do you ever see those suitcases they carry? From the airplanes, I had those to carry up the steps and stuff. I was trying to hide it. My nose—I would just sit and it would bleed, bleed, bleed. I needed an operation. I needed that and this down here and they caught up with me, see, so I didn't have a chance to be a

pilot. There was a million of them—that was front line. But I went down there and it would rain, it just was raining, pouring down, it was a Saturday, I think or something, and I didn't have a raincoat or umbrella, so the officer said there, "Take my raincoat"... I told you—wasn't that something, I'd go into the room and the guys would jump up and salute... I should have been dead, but it was all in fun. There was the main head doctor of the base, high ranking saw me. He used to watch me in there lifting and trying to get these heavy suitcases. And he said to me one day, "You report to my office." He said, "You're going home." But I didn't want to. I told him how bad I wanted to get in and he knew that, but I was just no good. And my wife and I came home on the train, The Silver Meteor, I guess. That's how I got out. Then other guys were going up to the doctor playing too. But I knew I had trouble, because I didn't know that it was damaging me. Then I went back to Armstrong and got my job. They put me in the stencil department out at Armstrong. Now that's the one where you have to cut out. . . they make the print for the linoleum. They have one that they make that has the little blocks in. Then it had to be sanded smooth even. I was out-classed there because they only took like retired and older people that were... I could have been cleaning latrines, maybe.

We first organized a club to fly, first. A good fellow, he got killed in a car, so there was just two of us left. He must have been an executive at Armstrong. I felt honored. But he was good to me. If I was out at the airport and I was gonna fly, he said, "just go ahead, Sam." Now he has heart trouble and he can't fly, and of course I can't and the now the whole gang is gone. The whole thing. It's a... Jessie Jones era. He had his two daughters, they would give the Air Force guys instruction. But I actually went out when I was about 14 or 15 and I want to tell you, it was *cold!* My home was in there on Lemon Street, Mulberry Street, I told you already the trail I used to walk. I believe the engineers of the Reading Line used to hand me big chunks of coal, it was

*so cold*. I tell you I had torn clothes, we were poor, and I did anything on a cold, cold day, try washing an airplane and your hands would swell up. Boy, but I did. And I did them. I would clean the airplane, and when the guy would come out to look at his airplane. You wondered how did I know I liked flying, but I just liked *cleaning* for some stupid reason. Around the landing gear where the nuts and bolts were, they would never wash and clean that. I used to do all that. The parts that you always missed.. but you know. The guy that owned The Pennsylvania Hotel on Queen Street where the other theatres were. When I cleaned his airplane he'd give me \$15.

Long days. Lots of times there'd be people who wouldn't even pay. But I didn't mind, I was satisfied. I'll tell you, when my mother got her check and bought me that suit for \$15, it seems it came in me and up to my brain and told me I better grow up and help. They don't do that maybe today, he'd punch his dad in the snoot, until he bought him a car maybe. Those days you were more thankful, maybe, I think.

And maybe, I don't know what about today, now, they're getting the deficit ironed out. That must be something, I would want to be in that argument... You'd be a Democrat getting something good going, you'd be a Republican would down it maybe. They threatened to do away with Social Security and all. That was only a threat; they couldn't do that. They'd like to get you going. They're fine people; I believe they're smart, the Senators. I believe they know what they're doing...maybe they do. Well, they took a wage increase I heard. Ain't that something? That's arrogance. See you and I we're just... We're nothing. I had all my money taken in the Stock Market. The one was [a certain company]Security and the guy flew around in a beautiful helicopter. They had an office where they did all the lab work. It went under. Some of the head guys were put in jail, I guess. And I lost quite a bit. Joe and Lillian owned the Turkey Hill at one time. We used to go out to their place and play cards and stuff, Boy they had a

mansion. One day, they said. I had to look for another job from chick-sexing. A lot of times during the summer, the chickens dropped off. And then later on it started to be different. I would sex. I'd go to the hatcheries; they'd get all their baby chicks out, about 100 in a box. I'd put two boxes out and you had to look; I had sort of a magnifying glass to see that little sex organ. And I had to guarantee maybe 98-99%. If you were working maybe 2-3 days without going to bed and half eating, and you still had to be good. I travelled up to Hubbard farms up in New Hampshire and up to Vermont. And I'd go down South to a place and all. I travelled all over and I'd make good money. And the one...and I had the laundromat going real good and my wife said, "Sam, you can't be doing these two jobs, you've got to hand the laundromat over to some friends." My best friends I knew, took close to all my laundry money. One guy called me one night and he says, "Sam, I was at this guy's house and I saw a pile of quarters wrapped already." We were trying to figure out where it was coming from. The Coke money was always kept separate; we had two older machines in my Coke and Nehi. What was the other one? I made a telephone call and said, "I want two brand new machines. Can you arrange that?" Of course you know. He said "Sam, to get new machines, I don't know, It's gonna take some doing." And then he called, "the new machines are sitting in front of your place." And I think they might have changed that. I built it up. People were my customers and if it wasn't right, I made it right. And at the holidays, I had, we had about the size of that table there and we had candy and drinks and a college girl came in and she said, "Sam, what are you doing with all that?" And I said, "It's for you people." F & M always went out a little early for the holidays and my wife and I would make cookies. That went over good. If someone threw something on the floor, I'd pick it up and throw it in the trash. If there were smoking or something and threw that on the floor, I'd pick it up a couple times, and they said, "Sam, don't cater to them, they're going to kill you off, they're no good."



I'll tell you—they were the best, most honest, nicest guys you ever wanted to meet. They cooperated with me. They never did anything but to help. They were sweet. And I built it up nice. And they stole. Then I got a call, “You're changers don't have any money in 'em.” When they took the money from the changer, I had to call the police. The detectives could tell me what was happening. I could believe it; I cried. I couldn't *believe* it, they were putting their, they were stealing, and when the changer was getting empty, that meant they were getting desperate. A changer, when you put a dollar bill in it and you got your return so your dollar would always be put back. They were stupid, they didn't know. [Returning to his loss in the stock market]

Then the Stock Market, I did good, I did good. 'Cause I teamed up with one guy, an older man and he must have had a book, just on stocks, and he was very rich on stocks and he took me under his arm. Because the chick-sexing almost went to nothing in the summer, see. But ah...Can you help me? Where was I? Yeah the Stock Market, but it was goin' bad, too. He'd put his arms around you, “Sam, we're gonna make you some money. He'd walk you out to your car and open the car door. And he called me Sam. God darn buggers, and they knew how to do it. So something was going wrong and I got air of it. My money wasn't showing up. My wife said “You have to have them help you.” Anyhow, where am I at here? You know if we're gonna get a story we're gonna have to work fast, 'cause I'm going. Where was it? He was a stock broker and he told me what they did. I nearly fell over, because they're like glue aren't they? “do you know what they're doing? They're picking your stock!” I said, “What do you mean picking?” He said, “You're not gonna have any money. If you let them keep managing your money...” In other words they were giving me about \$100 a month and they were taking dividend checks for maybe \$2,000-\$3,000 a month. Imagine my friends putting their arms around you like that. He said tell them right now you're selling out. It was a down market that day I believe. Boy I had. I started

crying one day I was counting up to close to \$100,000. The guys were the head of the stock market on the corner close to the courthouse. They would treat you like best friends, but they were taking it. I got a paper to fight them, buy a lawyer would cost thousands to fight.

My wife and I suffer. She got a hearing aid and we still owe on it.

She left [her job at] the newspaper early. No one ever told her she could stay a little longer for a full pension. That's what we're trying to do.

We gotta cut back. Because inflation's coming along.

We ask God to keep us. He is so perfect.

What are you gonna do? Forgive them.

I bought some models and couldn't pay. I had to wait till the end of the month. I asked God to forgive 'em. I heard this lady on the TV. I heard, "They'd be punished." She was saying anybody that did wrong would be punished. I believe there were a lot of people cringing in their seats. I believe there's a lot of hypocrites. We still don't know what's gonna happen. We don't know. Hitler might be on one side of God. We don't know. I don't know.

A couple days I had so much pain, I think, "I wish he'd take me today."

We both were in the hospital at the same time, my wife and I. And you think when you're vacationing and living—you never think something's gonna happen. When you get older, I just wonder if you ever want to die, 'cause the pain, oh boy, it's awful. Cancer, diseases I never heard of, people get.

My wife and I are together over 70 some years. Cause I'm the boss HA HA HA. I'm lucky she's upstairs now.

The girl that comes here from the church, I couldn't think of her name. My wife says, "You better write this down." [Remembering his employment sexing chickens]

I worked. In chick-sexing, I worked. You had to look at it just right. If you moved it a little wrong, you'd call it wrong. When the farmer sold them, if he sold them wrong he'd lose a lot of money. You had to work sometimes 3 or 4 days straight. Then the Koreans came in and cut the cost. But we had our share. I had decent money. That's when I lost it all. Just think what they are paying these days in the nursing homes. We have these bills now that we can't pay. Oh We'll pay 'em, but we are extended like we never were.

I can remember my wife from when we were first married. She's different now. But I'm gonna help her. I'm gonna stand by her. Don't matter how bad it gets. We were both told the doctors can't help. Some night it is just gonna be the end.

[I ask if telling stories has helped at all] Sure, You bet. I might have forgotten it, I have brought things back. And all my friends, I can hear them talk. They've been dead a long time and my father and mother. You'll hear, you'll be able to take me a hundred years from now and you'll be able to hear my voice. That's a funny thing, isn't it? Yeah! I have to laugh even at myself, cause I'm always laughing and I don't know why I always laugh. My wife will be on the phone or something and she'll say, "Oh No!" and I'll be laughing. And she'll say, "How can you laugh at that?" Because I'm laughing at the other side of that story or something like that, see? And I'll always laugh. Right now everybody, all my friends will say it don't matter how down in the dumps I might be...I might be in the hospital "You still make everybody laugh, Sam." I went in the hospital and I was supposed to, there was a thing where you take exercises at the General. Everyone there [making a sour face and sitting still] You're not supposed to know who they are, you're not suppose to know where they worked or anything, see? I'd say, "Oh, I see" [in a facetious tone]. Then I finally...till I was done there in a couple days, I knew everybody and everybody knew me, and I knew a record, a beautiful model woman, she had three records. And

I met a guy from up in the military. And I met a combat pilot flying a B-17. The other one flying a big one, and myself. If you wouldn't be allowed to mingle, you wouldn't know. So when we came in the hall to eat "Hi, Sam, come over, sit down here" or something like that. Oh, God, the waitress was calling everyone by name. The wheelchair people "You're doing pretty good, Sam." I had them laughing. I don't think they're carrying on like that now that I left. But now I'm trying to do that right now.

I don't like when the nurses and doctor will say that your heart is good, but your heart is getting weak. You're getting old. And that's the way they leave you. I would like it changed, but I don't think they'll listen to me, but couldn't it be, "I hope your heart holds out." I know I'm gonna die. They'll say, you don't know.

I had a cousin who had a heart attack in New York . She was in the hospital. They said, "You're all right now, you can go." She went up and paid her bill and fell over dead with another heart attack. So that's why I, I'm so nervous. We had a friend who was visiting one of the homes and she stumbled over a wire and she never came out of it.

How things happen. I was scared. I was out in the kitchen. I fell out in the kitchen. My wife hit the bed and broke something. I broke something too. The nurses out there...what am I in...when I knew of it it was the final end, all the people in it, you were gonna die—hospice. That's what I'm in. But they say, "Sam, you could live forever and I could die." And they're telling the truth. Nobody knows...I'm afraid when I try walking. I just get afraid walking over to there.

I'm gonna die one of these days. I have a bad heart. Imagine flying--I must have been flying with a bad heart. I don't know. But it's all over.

But I'm glad to meet you.

Did you see that one picture? That was our airport out there. A lousy field. It was partly politics where they built the airport. But I imagine if they had built it close to Lancaster on the Fruitville Pike, the jets today would probably be scraping the rooftops of the hospital. And out there. Just thing how. But, it was due to sacrifice and hardships that they decided to recognize an airport here. It was those old pilots and the dying and the misery that we had.

Nobody knows what it means to be poor and they learn to fly. You were asking me how did I know I wanted to fly, that was a pretty good question, maybe it was just seeing an airplane flying over Lancaster, maybe that was it.

I wasn't smart in school, but I was clean, I wanted to clean, I picked every piece of paper up. The airplane, when I washed them. I washed them better than anyone. Then one day the old ticket salesman didn't show up. It was out at the old airport and one of the guys yelled to me. I was walking around with one of those big baskets of candy and soft drinks. They said, "Sam, you're pretty good selling soft drinks and stuff. Will you sell tickets?" And I did. They'd hand me maybe a ten dollar bill!

On the cold mornings I'd walk out. The chains were the favorite for protecting you when you drive your car. That was the modernation of the wheels that day. I don't know anything good for ice. That particular year or month, all through Orange Street were the tracks from the chains. One guy was stuck there without chains, but he was able to just follow the track, but that's how it was. Everybody--that was the who's who when you had the chains. On a cold morning, you could get stuck and you'd have to dig down with your bare hands, that was awful.

I know I was going to do a chick-sexing job in Hershey. Everybody was going slow. I was going down the highway like it was nothing. I was going on a solid sheet of ice and didn't realize it.. Just think of that. You had to be there to go on the ice or snow. Many times the ice or

snow would pile up in this alleyway two or three feet high, and I'd shovel the whole way down to the end. And the plow would come and plow you in all the time. I'd wait for it to be clear and I'd tear through and my car would make it through it.

I went to work with one of my disks out. If you ever have one of your disks out your almost completely paralyzed. I was over here in Neffsville at a big hatchery. But anyhow, *cold*. We had winters where there was so much snow you couldn't see your car out front. But I'd get up and shovel the alleyway out back. You get a call early in the morning, "Sam, can you go up to New Hampshire or Vermont, there are chicks that have to be done?" You are dead tired didn't have any sleep before but you did it. You did it because I knew I wanted to make some money. But you know I didn't realize how Social Security was all right just don't lose that.

It's gonna come in someday, maybe, you just had the house paid off the mortgage and you retire. A lot of people, that's about the only thing. When I went and bought a car I paid for cash I sent in my income tax in cash and man. I bought this house and a couple payments \$12,500. Because. I don't know why I often wondered did I ask you the same thing? Are we the only country that pays our veterans? But it's all right you bet you! You have your 401(k). Now if you're in a war and got hurt or something you'd be well taken care with so security a 401(k) and the Armed Forces pay. You see, I got in on I think I heard another guy whose initials are different he's get maybe \$400 or \$500 a month more in pension. With a different name are different date you're at the bottom of the telephone pole. But I'm thankful for what I did get. It was helping. But everything was down, it was working out. Now, she had to get a hearing aid she owes on that. We're cutting back on things like food. Our daughter takes her to get our groceries. I'm drinkin' that drink in the morning that gives all of vitamins. We found another one not quite as good but it's good it gives the vitamins. Controls your weight and everything. So we had to go

the cheaper one. But still good and has many, many vitamins. But I'm wondering you know you said took karate when I was 75. You know I took up boxing and that was all the equipment I did that for 25 years. They wonder if that didn't help my heart—the fighting. That's what they're saying that it's not all wasted.

[Addressing the me] Do you have a hobby?

The nurses from this outfit are great. Every little thing you know they keep asking and how do you do that are right for you? We fell we both fell but we didn't have no broken bones, but I didn't know if we fell now you have to pay for the ambulance. As I said we'd have to lay here on the floor as we didn't have the money. But they say you have some local insurance or something, the protective, not for everything. But the debt. How about this here you pay off your house and you get a reverse mortgage. I don't like that and the other one is so expensive but I know two people that spent \$250,000 they're broke but they kept him and still with them.

Do you know that two Armstrong men that went into the bank to deposit their pay and right after the teller took their checks she pulled down the metal gate. And they said, “Are you closing?” And she said, “We just went under.”

My father was a ballplayer I think I saw contracts for hundred dollars a month or something that's different than the million. You know that some of those announcers make \$10 million a year? How on earth is that? [Turning to a discussion on the Germans in World War II]

Well there's been two TV stories on. And it shows that and the men and it shows the German soldier he appeared out of the woods and all and they all have shot him. And they found photographs by him. Kids and the wife. Yes they were their children and the guy and they had good jobs in Germany and stuff. And Hitler, even their children would tattle on their parents to gain the good of Hitler. Yes, and just yesterday there was a group in there in this house that had

fallen down or something. So the Germans were with him and the Americans have the uniform. So they'll put the rifles down disarmed themselves each one they put their arms on the ground. And they went after this one guy that was supposed to be in this house gone down. And a fight started but they straightened it out. But in the war too in World War I it showed they would waive to each other. And they did the same thing here. How can I describe this? They're human, we're human and somebody said Hitler told them if you don't get them, they will. And then Hitler, he declared war on us and Japan. The pictures [movies] that I saw were amazing.

I got up. But I didn't step on an ant. I saw an ant, now the woodwork here, across they finally got it. It finally went in the right place and I thought, I wonder if he had a mother and father? I wonder I wonder. How 'bout the animals? Do you know that the rainforest they had taken away. And they're gonna be sorry. Because the rainforest is some kind of a focal point for the weather. They have the houses for people, just think were gonna get overpopulated.

But now they took my guns away from me. They said I was not stable. A friend of mine and my daughter. They found my guns here and took them. They assume that I was unstable and I said well, maybe I am, but I don't think so. But I want to tell you, wouldn't they have to prove it? In court, if I went to court? But they're my friends and I thought, oh boy. I think if I were laying there and they would rust rather have my revolver empty because I couldn't have pulled the trigger. We talked with one guy who is a sharpshooter and you know what they do to a general or something? Imagine that. But they had. Could you have pulled the trigger? They say in the war a lot of the guys didn't shoot anybody shot over the head or something but then somebody got them. But yes, I saw pictures and I saw pictures of families that were over there too, see. We all agree were so friendly with each other but what was this about? Well, there it was. Then maybe Hitler was after world conquest.



But imagine in a burning airplane. I heard about one guy that lived after burning in an airplane, he must have landed in the water. Must have, because he lived.

They're still looking for German Gestapo people.

Yes they are and animals are gett'ng' scarce.

Did you ever see them people? What do you think? You see the graves of the crosses as far as you can see; everyone worked and had a family you had to go off to war. And maybe just before he died he had to satisfy himself and said, "I died so my family safe now. They're safe." Maybe I don't know. They were killed instantly it was different.. I've seen people burned up with airplanes. I swore one guy started to sit up now I doubt sometimes above a burning would change but I don't know. When you're living on vacation and working you're not thinking of buying a casket. You know come to think of it where's all these people at? Billions and trillions of people have died. Where's the satellite at for them? That's what I say. Point is, I'm gonna be findin' out one of these days. I don't want to go now. I have my house, my wife, my dog It's all paid for. I ask God if I could stay. 'Cause there's a lot of people that died they're all dead.

Let's get back to things.

You know we used to go out to... Did you ever hear of Sandy Beach out here in Oregon? You go out there out the Oregon Pike and it comes down to the creek the bridge crosses over. That was sandy beach. That was where you went and who is who you swam in that at that bridge in that creek. I don't know what they charge we couldn't afford a pool even. And Sandy Beach got popular you could go out there and swim. And we fished it for bass. It was down, I think under that bridge was the Little Cocalico and the big Conestoga Creek was, and down and meet at the fork down a bit down. But I want to tell you the old farmer there said it was shallow. He said you know that was the original Turnpike. He couldn't even see the markings. And that

would go across the Pike and up to Akron somehow. And we were fishing and came to the shallow water and I thought I'd jump out and we'd carry the boat over the rapids. I jumped out and the guy said, "Sam you disappeared." I was in about 10 feet—a big pool of water. I could've just disappeared. I thought I'd just jump out. I did. We had big you BB guns were popular. We'd go out down early in the morning daylight and shoot the birds. I must have been a nut..One guy came back and said, "Sam, I shot 18 robins this morning." I don't believe many people have BB guns these days. But back then you had to buy a BB gun and you'd buy the steel BBs and they go right through the glass.

I'm just wondering to get to heaven you still gotta pay the price of all your sins? 'Cause I think of all the birds I ever shot. I don't know; I don't know; you don't know. I lost some pretty good friends just recently. They were, they sat on that davenport; he was dead in a couple weeks. He was a heavy smoker. I never smoked and I never drank. But that don't... My wife was always a Sunday school teacher with church. And she brought me in. Or maybe I'd be out there. And that's another thing my other uncle had a farm. It was a deserted farm in a hill land. And snakes galore were on it. You'd be up there cutting the weeds and a big rattler would be caught in the sickle in his hand. He turned the barn into riding horses. And I'm on the west how they ride 'em like that on TV. There is an outsider from out West from one big state there, Arizona, I believe. They came there they were champion riders. They came to visit my uncle. But anyhow, they said "Do you have anybody to ride here?". Oh yes it's my cousin there is a champion. Boy he could ride. I can see that. Did you ever hear of a bridal wise horse? This course was going like a bat up this road but there is also path at the right. He would decide to go that path I decided I was goin' straight and I was in the air. I thought just let yourself limber and let yourself roll like we learned a gym class. And I did. I rolled and rolled.

That was me the--show--off kid. Like the karate guy. I said, "I'd like to fight you."

You know every time a guy got killed or something at the old airport they'd say "get Sam get Sam. Get him in an airplane and get him up." There is a way try to make me get away from fear, see. Now the day my wife drives around with the club and I fear that.

How you word all that? Put all that together?

Well here's my life. Well I talked about a few things for lifetime. And gotta be a whole lot of things we missed.

I'll tell you, but I found out that in business only go by yourself. Don't take a partner. If you have children and they fight don't go to the other parents and tell him why her child did this. Just don't get involved. We have two girls and they fought and we don't take sides I know I'll help you get some information.

You know in school the little grade school at East junior high down there was a colored girl and boy, colored boy, that I got friends with. The class was all quiet and all we had to do is look these each other and we'd bust out laughing. We'd go down to the principal; we just couldn't help but we just started laughing.

Here's an aviation book that you could read. It's about good pilots that make mistakes—forget to do this and forget to do that.

He's a pilot friend of mine and they bought a house above Lititz. They're on vacation, he might want to sell the house here and buy a house in Florida. Now they say more houses are dropping in price. But anyhow, he's 50 or 60 and his daddy died out in California when he was out there. But we became real close in flying. He has a plane that you can retract your gear, so it has some speed to it. I had a plane that was very tricky to fly—it was like suicide. You have to watch every move of the plane. But I guess I landed it—I never had a crack-up like that. But,

that's because I'm stupid, I guess. His wife says, "As long as Sam is with him, I know my husband is safe."

I wish, you know, to get in the war in those days, I figure I was 25, that's too old. If I had been flying, I might have been very cautious compared to what you are when you're 18. But I cry over these people that died because I know they were human beings. Was I right or were they right? Just because we won, maybe we're going to pay for it. I know we mistreated the Indians. We called them savages and take their home—that was *their* home. And that was wrong! We're gonna pay—this United States and maybe we are now. I don't know; but isn't it mixed up? You just go along with the tide. Just think a year or a couple years.

A friend of mine bought me this chair. Mine was falling apart; every time I rocked some metal would fall out. So he paid over \$1,000 for this.

Our gas stove went bad. You know when I came in here, you wouldn't believe how that kitchen was. My kitchen was horrible. A big 4 burner stove and at the other end was the kitchen sink. But on this wall over there, see. I came up with this idea.

When you get old your gonna have things to do that you wish you were. But time rolls, it's over for me. I miss going out and opening that hanger door. I used to close my laundromat late at night and a friend of mine would say, "Do you want to fly?" and we'd fly clear over to Gettysburg, Chambersburg at night. Only an idiot would fly at night like that. A *single* engine like that at night. We cleaned that airplane down. The belly used to get so, with the fuel, the gasoline and the oil—that was the hardest part to do—to wash them. But you don't have to do that today. We had our day. It was fun.

I had motor failure already, about 200 or 300 feet off the ground. What I was doing down that low? You got me.

They say when a jet shakes, you better get out of it—it's going down. It's already stalled. How 'bout that? That's a heavy aircraft. Who would have ever thought we'd ever see that? And parachute...They say Hitler removed the chute for when his men jumped. They say, but I don't know. You wonder about that.

Now listen...I don't feel as though...I was on looking for a Penn State was down with his wife. They got killed. I got a call early in the morning to...

[Wife brings coffee and ice cream sandwiches...]

What time is it? At 6 o'clock...I must take 100 pills.

You know, I just, with you I don't feel I did right. I told the truth, but there is so much more in a life.

You know, they had parades and everything else for the veterans. I want to tell you something. At the airport we had a Navy program. There must have been a million schools.

When I got my laudromat, they knew I was looking for something. They say we have two businesses there. They dropped the key in my hand; I went in there, I didn't even know how to run a washer. I didn't know what a changer was. I just didn't know anything. But I learned—I learned by keeping clean. You know some of the laundromats must have been terrible, but I kept mine clean. The zoning board used to be strict at one time, you couldn't—if you were going to put up a fence post you had to go through zoning. Years ago, I had a fence put on, so you had to pull in, push the button, close the garage and walk in, in safety. The house over here, they have the garages in the cellar.

Do you ever go down to New Dauphin Street and Marshall? The stucco homes—we lived in the second one from the corner. That was in the cellar, that car was always nice and warm. 1926 Chevy. But my cars, I always had Buicks and Cadillacs. I had one with a 2 door torpedo

back. They had air conditioning and nobody had it then. I know what it was to be on top; now I know what it is to be on the very bottom.

The woman in the back there said, “Sam, who did you thank, the fairies or something?” I said, “Maybe.” She said, “Sam, it was God! It was God that wants you, Sam.” But I don’t know.

Maybe I’ll stop and help repair toys with Santa.

There was a million dollar man, he bought the house and he started pointing it and he said, “Sam these are better houses than they’re building now.” And then there was this girl who got one from her dad and I guess there were finageling to get a business downtown. A parts man. I wonder what you pay rent today? \$700 or \$800? I had a woman... I was late paying a bill and she said, “We’ll just take your house.” I don’t think it’d be that easy. We found out. They can’t walk in your house and just take it.

I don’t know when the lightning’s gonna strike. How about you? Do you have good health?

They tell me, I may die anytime. It’s harder with a heart. I never thought I had a heart. Maybe it’s stupidity.

Walk out and look at our deck. See how we have our kitchen all remodeled. Go ahead, go the whole way.

[looking at the back deck and thanking wife for coffee and treats]

Hey, I want you, you did see in the aircraft room.

A person will have a hobby when you retire. You know out in Oregon—Sandy Beach, on down the next creek, we had a cable across two trees and we could swing out, must have been terrible deep there. You could dive, dive deep, you could go under the guy, playing tag... We had a field.. We had out on the Harrisburg Pike that creek by the old folks home? There was a terrible

storm and all the stuff cleared out by the bridge and it was very deep and our swimming pool was about 2 inches deep.

The old grocery store. When you wanted a pound of sugar, they had to walk for it. They had a rolling step ladder. Anything you wanted they had to walk for it.

The cemetery...Do you think someday they'll transfer all the graves and build buildings?

My father died when he died in 35 and there was an argument for where he was buried and they gave me a long rod. But my father, even the casket was gone. At that time and then I did it over there and hit the casket. And then we didn't have vaults like we do today..you have a vault and everything. I believe my father was all bones I guess. You know, they might, they could never redo that and move that place.

All those guys are dead now.

I don't know what it's gonna be. It's a big mystery. My wife and I was very close. See she has a girder or something they call it right in here and she gets coughing and it gets pressed against something she could be coughing until it could be the end and they can't do anything for her; they can't operate, see—we're too old. But listen, you want to go.

You're not lying to me that I helped you?

I never forget I had the YMCA guy out. He was here about an hour and I said, "how are you getting all this in the paper?" and he said, "Sam, you're only getting' about 2 seconds." And that's how they do. It makes me mad when the photographers standing and talking in front of the wreckage of a plane and talking and then he goes off and you never saw anything. You know on the Today program, what's his name makes a whole million dollars a year. You know if I was really, really rich, I'd buy a whole mountain or maybe a whole state and then I'd ... the mountain would have roads and stuff and I saw a deer come out one morning with the little fawn and he

said,, “Mommy, how come there’s nobody shooting at us?” “Sam bought this and has new rules.” Dumb dream, but boy oh boy.

I just saw a place where they do stuffing in all the different animals. You see, we can’t let some things go because we’re getting our food from them. ..

What part of my story do you think you liked?

[I told him I particularly appreciated what he said about the humanity of the German soldiers.]

You daresn’t think about it or you’ll start crying like I do. I sit here and I see on television different things and the different pictures that I saw of the families, and God, they’re better looking than.. they had jobs over in Germany, sure they did. And they got up in the morning and they went to work and they had kids...Same as us...we blew them away, though. Just think. One airplane shot down almost 6,000 planes. Now lots of times they are on fire and he’s burning. He’s burning up and he can’t get out. Or, it’s burning too bad, and at Christmas time, I’m sure they had people that would like to be home, too. See, what can I do? I cry, I cry and I cry. For everybody I guess. I don’t know what’s wrong with me.

You know after an airshow, or I’d go out to the airport early or something and I’d stand there so lonely and quiet. Now my wife, and these nurses, see they don’t get scheduled, and I say, let them all come...I like company.

I lay here all night and all night, and I just look. I can’t sleep, I just *can’t* sleep. God, God, God, where have I sinned? Boy.

I never want to be on top or the winner, there is more fun at the bottom. I got my taste. At Armstrong as a manager. I got my taste. Now it’s all over. I come down here in the morning around 4 o’clock I put my stocking on here. I go to the kitchen and I drink that vitamin stuff. Sam: I have my stuff all laid out up there...with my models.



My girls took my rifle and my guns—guns that were priceless. They took them and dismantled them. They said I'm not stable. I thought they gotta prove that don't they? I laugh at every little thing. My wife gets upset—"You're laughing at something serious" maybe I'm looking at another side of that. There is maybe another side. There is.

### **Max**

I visited with Max, a licensed practical nurse (LPN) in his mid-fifties, three times: the first and third times at his home and the second time at the inpatient hospice unit where he spent a few days for symptom management. Max seemed uninhibited with his storytelling, anxious to help me with my research. He struggled, however, with his breathing throughout the interviews. Otherwise, it seems, he would have talked for days.

During our storytelling sessions, we found some similarities in our stories and some connections which we had but did not realize before. Like Max, my wife was an LPN who had worked in many setting similar to his. His obvious care for his patients struck me as similar to that of my wife.

On my first visit, he called to the front door from the kitchen to tell me to come in. He was seated at the kitchen table. Before I sat down he asked me to do him a favor; he directed me to the fridge for a bottle of water. When I got it out he said, "that one's yours."

The phone rang. He did not answer. The answering machine answered and the caller hung up. From that point on the machine beeped slowly in the background reminiscent of the sound of a medical device monitoring in the hospital.

### **Max's First Storytelling Session**

So you want me to start when I was a youngster? I'm an Irish triplet. I have a sister 10 months older and 10 months younger. And ah, my mother was an alcoholic; she couldn't get

pregnant so she went and got fertility pills. And we are put in a in a [pause] my memory's really bad so I'll tell you but will take a little bit. We were put in a nunnery and my mother was put in a state mental hospital for three years. My father up and left. Us kids were handed out, adopted, and my mom finally got better. And then the priest gave her her rights to be a mother again. And us kids were all brought back together. So I would have been five; my sister would've been four and six. I was born in Queens, New York. My mother was a model. She dated Mr. America. She married the leader of the Boy Scouts of America. Then she, ah, [coughing and clearing throat] she remarried five times and they were all either alcoholics or perverts. And she was a severe alcoholic. And ah, I could tell you some horror stories. Like Christmas Eve getting picked up by my stepfather and blood all over the car and Christmas morning going downstairs cause nobody, they didn't tell us to come down, and a they were naked laying in the bed wouldn't wake up and we opened our gifts. So I didn't have a very good childhood. My dad, stepdad, there was one time when he held me upside-down in this hollow tree and made me hold up these kittens these eight kittens. He put them in a milk box, a Turkey Hill milk box, we moved down the Conestoga, and may he made me drown them. He wasn't a very nice person either that guy wasn't. She had two kids to him. And then she married three more times; two were perverts and the last one was—I guess okay. We ended up in Florida. Her mother lived in Florida so that's where we ended up.

I got married at 21. Had two children and became a nurse. And then I stayed a nurse for 30 years. And ahh, I was always a hard worker; I never sat. I married. I divorced my first wife and she didn't want the children so I took the children so I knew what it took to raise kids--what it *didn't* take to raise kids. Can I take a break a minute?

So then when I was ten, I couldn't walk and the neurosurgeon in Lancaster, [Dr. A], and [Dr. B.] sent me to Philadelphia and the doctor down there diagnosed that I had a birth defect in my spine so they had to do a spinal tap or a spinal fusion. [Dr. B] made the mistake of saying to keep up, as I was, worked when I was young I lived in the country so I worked for farmers and I worked hard labor. And ahh, my spine took all the beating up here I herniated a disc up here [pointing to his chest]. I told [Dr. B] and he did an MRI of the lumbar MRI up here, I finally talked him into taking the MRI up here and that's when he found the herniated disc and he said he would not operate it is too dangerous. That I wouldn't be able to walk because at the, 'cause I guess they had to cut your chest open. So I became a nurse. Got out of hard labor; I became a nurse [chuckling].

Back then they didn't have lifts, so when they had to have the lift they called Max. And then I had trouble with my throat, I had trachea ischemia; they sent me to Philly they wanted a doctor down there that does, ahh, cancer patients and he said he couldn't fix me. Ahh, COPD, depression, [pause] ahh, there's a whole list, like 20 of them, diagnoses, degenerative disc disease, joint disease, ahh, I can't think of any right off the top of my head I can't think of anything more but there is more cause there's like 20 diagnoses. So that's where I'm at now and they only give me, [Dr. C] only gives me so long. The last time he gives me six days to six months. I just got back from [the] hospice unit yesterday. They took me off of morphine I was on morphine for like probably about six years and now I'm on Dilaudid and I'm on a whole slew of meds. I have to weigh myself daily. I take probably, I probably take probably 20 meds: water pills; Ahh, I was on Prednisone 70 mg and I gained 75 pounds. And they took me off of that and I think I broke my foot they're not, they're not gonna fix it; they said it, there's no sense in that.

So now I have a son that's 31 who has two sons; my daughter is 30 she has two sons. My second wife--I took over raising her 21 and 22-year-old. We decided to have one between the two of us; she's legally blind she can't see anything out of the right eye and she can only see like spots out of her left. Oh, I have diabetes bad; they can't get it under control.

And then I have another granddaughter or stepdaughter who is 20 or 21, yeah 21 and she has one son and neither the 22-year-old nor 21-year-old neither one of those fathers ever, ever, ever bothered. I was the only person the bothered. Can I take a break a second?

We are getting ready to move. I have to use the urinal—bathroom--I'll be right back.

Look out the back door. See that apartment building you look out the back door? [That's where you're moving to?] Yeah. Then she won't have to mow, my wife, and she don't have to do snow.

I don't want to bum you out too bad, Dude. You want to keep going?

[I ask, "So you were an LPN for 30 years? Where'd you do that?"]

[Nuring Home A] for 10 years, [Nursing Home B] for 10 years, [pause] and 10 years at [pause] [Personal Care Facility A]. At my last job. I was 11-7 supervisor. I worked out of this wheelchair behind me. \$37,000. Insurance had the choice to either renting it or buying it. And they bought it.

Back in '76 I graduated well, I didn't graduate--I got my GED. They did me and two other older ladies--a write up in the newspaper because as I was a male nurse in '80, in 1980; back then there wasn't and the two older ladies—you usually became an LPN when you were younger.

I filed for disability probably about two years ago and my wife is an excellent, excellent nurse she is a CNA [Certified Nursing Assistant] but she would've made an excellent RN

[Registered Nurse] and she's excellent on paperwork and she sent my paperwork in. And the social worker read my dilemma and she came and helped me get it right away. So I've been on disability for about, about a year and a half, yeah about a year and a half. And I had since then I had two spells--really thought I was going to die I went out and that's when [Dr. C] saw me when he first came he says, "This man—he isn't dying." I said, "You know what, [Dr. C]? I remember 30 years ago when you applied for the hospice, to be the hospice physician and you got the position and I was just so happy for you because you are such a nice doctor; and he is! [Dr. C]-- Very, very fine person.

And [Pharmacist A] is out of this world, Man. Telling you what--there is a time when I was going through a rough time and he gave me my medicine for free and there ain't nobody in this world that's going to do that! And you can tell him I said that.

Well I tried to always live life [tearing up and pausing] the way it should be lived! And I want people to treat other people kindly. My attitude was if I walked in the room and you are laying in the bed, if I did anything less for you than I would for my dad, I didn't belong in nursing--same with my mom. There's too many mean people in the world; there's a heck of a lot of nice people, but there is a lot of mean people.

Do me a favor real quick; Go into that real quiet; right inside there'll be a hospital bedside table and on it a business card. I want you to grab the card.

Read that card.

[The card states "Please forgive me. Number two: I forgive you. Three: Thank you number. Four: I love you. Dr. Ira Byoc: Four Things that Matter Most.]

Along the thing that your wife that his you know what one thing I told you I'd check about mother and father has a lot of times, I go in and the nurses would complain: [Dr. D] will

yelled at me. And I work 11-7. [Dr. E] the way he talks to women, talks to the females. He is not even allowed in [Nursing facility A], because of the way he treats female nurses. Not me I pick up that phone, and 99.9% of my patients I sent out stayed out. So if you have a heart use it! Use it! And don't be afraid. One day [Dr. D] yelled at me and I told him because of all the five people that I told you—my five stepfathers--they taught me not to be afraid of men, not to take no shit from somebody if somebody needs something. Actually I haven't. I had him pray, [Dr. D] pray with the patients. He is actually a kind heart and the girls are afraid to get to know him.

[Addressing me] Did she [my wife] ever have a run-in with [Dr. E]? Had hair down to here, beard down here; his kids the same way. I don't know--must be where he grew up in, because he won't talk to the female LPN; will talk to an RN but he will not talk to LPN's except for a male LPN.

So you want to stop? I want a rest.

I'm always here.

I'm ready; I'm not scared; I'm awfully young. You know it's weird? This lady over here, she's a housekeeper over at the hospice center. Small world. [long pause] Ok.

### **Max's Second Storytelling Session**

[Max was admitted to the inpatient hospice center the night before I visited with him there. He was admitted to the facility for symptom management during a severe attack with his breathing difficulties. I sat in a chair very near Max and during this session he reached over and held my hand.]

You're lucky got me; last night I almost died.

I hope I was helpful to you. [Switching to stories from the past in which he witnessed unethical behavior from nurses]

I saw ... I saw an RN; she was sucking the Demerol out of syringes and then refilling it with normal saline and dropping it on the floor.

I saw a nurse take a bottle of sleeping pills and drop them out of her pocketbook and drop them in the, a bus.

I saw a nurse take a television from a patient.

I saw a nurse have a patient die on her and write an order for Talwin and not thinking the doctor would come in and pronounce the patient. That was in the day when doctors had to pronounce the patient.

It is from that day on from those examples that were coming to me from the one nursing home I worked. It taught me to be even more diligent at my job because if we don't care about each other who is going to take care of you? When the day comes and the day *will* come that you *will* need help. You've gotta pray that you get a nurse who cares.

*I am.* He's paying me back big time, *big-time!*

As a matter of fact when you called, [pause for housekeeping who opened the door to drop off some clean laundry and restarts after he waves as she leaves] when you called, my pastor was here and God sent him to me. 'Cause I never knew him, I never met him. My first wife had an affair with the pastor of the church. So I sort of, not that I gave up on God, but I gave up on...people. As far as *trusting* people. Then of course, then we ended up getting divorced.[pause] But this guy here, God sent him to me. 'Cause, since I'm ill, I've been trying to think about ways I can still help people try to get them to feel better about themselves. And him and I, we have been banging heads to try to think of what I can do. And he came up with an idea this morning. Write ah, maybe write a prisoner a letter, send them some pictures of the outside

world--what it looks like. So I's considering maybe doing that. And that would be something I could do.

Last night [heavy breathing] about nine o'clock,[pause] about eight o'clock, they called and said they had an empty bed [he had been waiting for an available bed at the hospice center]. An ambulance came and picked me up about nine. And at 10:30, I lost, I couldn't breath, so I was lucky I was here. And they kept giving me medicine, staying with me, talking with me, calming me down. And my wife couldn't leave 'cause she works at [a private duty position]. So she couldn't leave her client alone. And uh, [coughing]. They took all her hours. Didn't they call and give them all back to her [chuckling]? So now she has 60 hours next week. They can't go over 40, but she is such a good nurse, they're making an exception for her. There is a lot of clients that they're willing to pay out of their pocket. And they're willing to do it. That's how good a nurse she is.

So the pastor's to get a large print Bible at Borders since they're closing up. He's gonna go do that this morning. I thought that was awful kind of him.

Back then that was back in '85 when I was telling you about all those things. Back then they would give you a slap on the hand and tell you to go get some treatment. They didn't require anything like that [leave your job or lose your nursing license]. And their name in the paper--the home, they didn't want their name in the paper. When I seen those sorts of things going on.

They brought the police in. They dusted a \$20 bill and each supervisor checked in at the end of their shift and when it came up missing [from a patient's room] everyone had to go up through the blacklight, and they caught the scoundrel. They said they could bring the TV back no questions asked. They could just bring it back. And sure enough one morning I was coming into



work and saw a garbage bag in the driveway. Then I went into the maintenance guy and said, “Dude, why is there a garbage bag in the driveway?” he said, “What do you mean?” And I said, “There's a garbage bag at the end of the driveway.” He went out sure enough, wasn't it the TV? Between that and my youth. Oh and I used to ride my bicycle from Lancaster city to go to work every day. It was 12.7 miles. Yeah, 12.7 miles. This one night we was working and there is a doorbell--the doorbell rang so we went out and a girl was there, she was frantic. We asked what was the matter and she said “My boyfriend was hanging his head out the window. He was sick.” And didn't his head hit a mailbox and it almost ripped his head off. From his neck. From the side. Almost off of his body, almost decapitated him. You see ugly things. I saw two cancer patients. Can I tell you gross stories? That will gross you out. 'Cause these are *really* gross stories. There is this time that this man is, his name is Mr. A and he came from the town and his family helped to establish the town. He used to always complain to me that his face didn't hurt, but it bothered him. But he didn't want anything on. So I kept in close contact with the doctor, and finally the doctor said take half normal saline half peroxide, mix it together. Take the basin and when the basin under here the cancer had eaten his face [pointing an area nearly half of the side of his face] that much of his face away. He said take a syringe and slowly irrigate. So we take a syringe. And just leave the 4 x 4 open the whole way. So I went and did what he told. I have the solution, get the RN supervisor and we went into the room. I held the basin and she had the solution. She slowly put the solution over the open area where all the skin was eaten away. And all of a sudden his face started to move. And here these flies landed and layed eggs and the maggots ate the meat off his face. That's why there is no smell. And one day I wasn't there but they say he died. It ate into to his carotid artery and he held a pillow to it; and held it there until he died. And he was the nicest man you ever wanted to meet.

And then there's another guy who had facial cancer and he died the same way. But he didn't have that fly thing.

And another time, I was in two fires, and a flood. One fire, someone took a cigarette flicked it on an empty bed and shut the door. And I went in at three o'clock I was working 3 to 11 that that the ceiling had about that deep [motioning about 3 inches] of the ceiling was covered with smoke. I went in and I said to the dayshift nurse, "Why's the ceiling back on your floor all full of smoke?" They said, "What do you mean?" And we looked up. We quick pulled the fire alarm, went around and open all the doors to we found the mattress that was on fire and opened the back door, open to the outside and threw it. And the other one they just that day finished reconstructing the kitchen and the activity room for the Alzheimer's unit. And she was giving instructions to make popcorn and help them string popcorn for the Christmas tree. Didn't she get a phone call she had that much oil in there and she walked away and forgot about the pan with oil and it burned. And then the other time it got really cold in the winter and a pipe broke and we had to get the fire company out to help vacuum up all the water and all that jazz.

So I had quite an interesting career, quite an interesting career. And then they had I'm not going to name the facility, but they had a courtyard and someone had the idea to bring in a long eared rabbit. And was a female but it had babies until it was said and done there were 120 rabbits there in the courtyard [laughing] it was funny. It was because the residents that all the inside rooms you could look out the window and watch these rabbits all, all day long and they would eat the grass and hay and whatever people would bring in: lettuce, carrots from the kitchen.

And then there is another time me and the supervisor were pretty tight, we leave you two stories on this one. We were, it was supertime and there it's a money making thing; some of the homes are just moneymakers and the kitchen, they're only given so much money to make soup

or whatever. On this one supper they gave Steak 'ums, soup, and peaches. Didn't he just put the tray down and walk away? And we walked in and she had the Steak 'um sticking about this much outside her mouth. She was dead as a doornail. I did the mouth and my supervisor did the stomping [gesturing CPR motions]. And then this other girl, the same as doing something she shouldn't have been doing and there is this little bathroom back of this room. We took her in there and the supervisor now is the first one in and as soon as I open the door I saw the feet go up in the stall. And didn't the supervisor give this girl all kinds of heck? And this other girl was in the stall and she didn't ever know. So what I did was, I was only one out, I sat at the desk and waited and waited and waited. And finally this girl came out I went over and said "Look you can't say anything you heard in there because you'd get in big trouble."

And then while I was fresh it was my first job, they called me up to the supervisor's office and I had a man had a bed sore had a hole this big and he had a bed sore this big. We took a colostomy bag and put that on and collected all the foul odor and foul fluid. He eventually got septic and died.

The girl who was 17, tractor-trailer... they ran into a tractor-trailer and she hit her head and nurses thought they'd be smart and they put a note under her "Eat My Pussy." When another nurse turned her to change her, this note was there. And all of them got fired. Which was good. Because this poor girl was only 17 years old and she didn't know you are there--didn't know anything.

Never met my dad; my mother had the FBI try to find him and the last place we knew where he was--was out by the Grand Canyon working on a cattle ranch. That was back in the '60s so I never got to meet him. I saw a picture of him one time. He was a good-looking man. Blonde hair blue eyes about six--two. He just couldn't handle, I guess, all the kids.

My mom passed away at [a nursing home]. The same thing I'm dying of, COPD [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease]. Eight years ago. It's an interesting story. I always told her I'd always be there for breakfast unless I was running late—by late I mean 8:30. It was nine o'clock I was driving by; I only live about a quarter mile up the road. As I was driving by; this is where I learned to listen to my intuition. I heard something in my mind say “Max turn around; stop; turn around and go back.” So I did so I pulled in the parking lot, turned around and met the nurse in the hallway. And she said “Max, I see you got my message.” And I said, “What do you mean I got your message?” She said, “That your mom’s dying.” I said “What do ya mean that my mom’s dying? No I didn't get home yet.” So I said, “Get on the phone right now and get to the doctor; get an order to make her comfortable. Get her Ativan and Roxanol.” They gave her two drops of Roxanol and a half a milligram or a milligram of Ativan and it didn't touch her. I went to the RN and I said “Listen you the get the doctor on the phone and get better orders than that or I will.” She said “You know what Max?” I said, “What?” She said, “Hospice is in the house right now.” I said, “Let's get them down here right now.” So they came down and they gave her like three times that and it calmed her down. She lived for about another five hours and passed away. But she said she loved me and they were the last word she said.

And at her funeral at [the nursing home], everybody loved her there, and they had the candles and the one lady from the funeral home picked up the candles and start walking with them and she had her hair brushed out and it was real frizzy and didn't one of the candles catch her hair on fire?

[Pause.]

They made me in charge of the veterans’ wing. And I've had veterans tell me they could kill me with one hand they could take me and kill me and just like that they could've snapped my

neck. And they would've, too if I would've dared them. I took care of two patients with [a horrible rare disease] did you ever see that? If you ever get a chance don't pass it up. The first one was a girl who could read seven languages she worked out of the out of New York out of the United Nations. The other person was a dentist. And they were both only in their 40s early 40s. And she had daughters he had no children and they didn't know yet if her daughters had [the horrible rare disease]. What happened was she went downstairs into the local grocery store with no clothes on and was raped. Her daughter lived in Lancaster. And then the dentist died and I didn't get the story on him.

I was sitting at the desk one time and there is this lady her name was Edith. There is chairs and they're all lined up around the television area. And she went over to sit down to watch TV and hear there is no chair when she went to sit. She sat right on the floor. Thank God she didn't hurt herself.

Anyway I was telling I got called up to the supervisor's office and there's three supervisors there. All three of them my 3-11 supervisors. And I was young I didn't know I was doing. And the person I was telling you about with the bedsore I wrote on the 24-hour sheet—remember the old sheets that came in three different colors? And I wrote “patient had moderate amount of pussy drainage.” Instead of purulent, I wrote “pussy drainage;” they called me to the office and asked me about it and we must have been laughing for 20 minutes. So there were some good times, too. I had fun too that was one that had a that was they set me down and said just sit down and she said Max, what you call drainage when it's red and it's thin. And I said pussy. And they started laughing and she said no not pussy.

Yeah [I learned from my experiences] from nursing and from life.

I try to improve on what I know is I don't want to stop at all. I don't care if it's my last day I want to continue to improve as far as how I treat you as you or anyone else I may look at. I want to treat others as I want to be treated. I'm not ready to die now. I'm not, I'm not afraid to; but I'm not ready to. What it is I think, I feel like I have more to do. But we better use the time He gives us and use it to the best of our abilities.

I'm glad you followed up on me the way you did. Because I don't know how much longer I have but I wanted to finish talking. Because if I can help in any way, shape, or form. I think about you every day. That I want you to become the best you can be.

I wonder if my dad's dead you know it? That's one thing I always wondered. I wondered with all the things I have wrong with me if he, he had to have some things wrong. You would think wouldn't you? For me to have as many illnesses as I have. Like you know uncontrolled diabetes and all that stuff I wonder, he had to have things wrong. He had to have bad health [and I inherited it] from him. As I don't think I got it from my mom.[My mother] had COPD and she had stroke and she had, COPD, stroke, alcoholism. She was a very intelligent person, she just didn't control herself. She didn't, sometimes people that are intelligent like that or smart, generally intelligent, but when it comes to common sense they don't have it. Could she've had a lot of mental...oh, she had bipolar real bad. She lived actually she lived [in an apartment] that's where she lived and I go up every day—every, every, every day until she went into that. I would cook for her, clean for her, do her laundry, spend time with her, read to her. She was not homosexual--she was what's the woman—a lesbian, she was a lesbian at the end.

I drank until the day I had a baby, I put the bottle down. I went and got my GED and went to school and became a nurse. I don't think I ever enjoyed drinking I did it because—to fit in. I smoked marijuana. But I stopped that at the same time.

[I shared these stories with] my pastor, my brothers and sisters, my children I try to share with them, the bad points about why you shouldn't do this her way shouldn't do that.

[I go over the stories in my head] yes and especially now I wish in a way I wish I wouldn't I wish I would have, I wish I would have lived a full life because I'm 52 or 53 I could've been 63 or 73 I could've done another 15 or 20 years of doing good for people that's how I look at my life. It's a waste. It's a shame. Because I don't know too many people that want to do good to other people. They're very selfish mostly very selfish. A lot of people are so...[Addressing me] And you hang in there you hear me? Don't you give up! For me, okay? Could you have...I can tell you have some more.

I'm going to do that prisoner thing [be a pen pal with prisoners]. And also he's gonna go out to Borders today and get me a big print Bible. And read the Bible, as I want to read the Bible again. And then I'm going to give it to my daughter--she's legally blind. My 17-year-old.

And these nurses here are so nice I can't get over this.

And do me another favor use this when you're talking to a class full of people or whatever, you can't be like me and you it has to come naturally, you know what I'm saying?

And another suggestion. Interview some of these nurse—these nurses. Because I'm telling you there's some very special nurses here, very special, and you'll be able to follow up at the end of your dissertation of how maybe, give some kind of understanding of how people can be the way they are. You know what I mean? But there's a reason there's a reason for it, doesn't just come. You know you can't just say one day I want to be a nice guy and do that for the rest of my life. That's not how it works; there's a reason for it. And everyone I talked to about hospice almost everybody says they are the best nurses you could ever run into. And I see why now. At first I thought: yeah right you were dying or your grandfather is dying, you're just saying it to

make his time there a nice job. But that's not the way it is. What I'm seeing with my eyes it is true. They are genuinely caring people. I've never, it's, if the dead in Christ go up first, these guys here are going right to heaven.

We're gonna move August 1, but now I guess they're having a tax break if you put new windows in? In your home? So they're gonna put new windows in and new carpet and now aren't they taking their time? They want us to wait until September. But my wife, God bless her soul, she is such a good nurse, such a good nurse, they took all of her hours from her, and yesterday she has 50 hours and she got a phone call yesterday evening and they gave her 70 hours back because her clients begged to have her back 'cause they want her to be the only one to take care of them. And again, I'm gonna give you some good stories about people now. This past Christmas my wife went into the convenience store to pick something up and she had \$100 in her wallet, that's all we had, because of me being sick. And she came home and she was looking around the house and I was just sitting there at the table I was watching her and she was frantic getting more and more frantic and I said, "Honey, what's the matter?" "Nothing" and she just kept looking and looking and got more frantic and more frantic. And I said, "Honey what's wrong?" And she started crying sat down at the table and started crying and I said, "What's wrong?" "I must've dropped my wallet in the parking lot at the store." I said, "Sit down and take a deep breath and everything is going to be all right." As soon as I finish saying those two sentences the doorbell rang. I went over to the door and opened the door and there is this guy standing there with hair down to here and he handed her wallet. He said. "Ma'am I found this in the parking lot and I didn't know if this is all you had for Christmas and for your kids." And he said, "I'm gonna be honest with you I was going to keep it but I decided not to." He said. "So, here you go." And I said, "Stop. Stop!" I told my wife to give him a \$20 bill. And she did. So



that there are good people, there are a lot of good people. Where are you off to then? Well I appreciate your coming. Will you do me one favor? Could you make me a copy of what you do with this? What I'm going to do, there are some other things I'm gonna write them down because there's things I, I, I can't remember so I will jot them down.

### **Max's Storytelling Session Three**

[We met the third time back at Max's house. They hadn't moved, yet. He was watching a Phillies' baseball game.]

I played for [a local little league team]. And we had a really good team. And we won the championship. And for a gift they sent us to Philadelphia to a game. And me and my friend we lived in the country, we never saw a black person. Never saw TV, we had a TV, but we only had one channel and it was back in the redneck times. And weren't there seven black kids and they wait on us and they jump us for, we had snow cones, and they jumped us for our snow cones. They beat us up. So it was our first exposure to the colored society.

That was the only [professional baseball] game I ever made it to. My brother-in-law, they met last week and watched the game in, and stayed at a hotel.

Yeah, I don't really know, remember who they played.

You have to excuse my house. We're moving actually right back there [pointing to the apartments right behind the house]. I went out this morning, I stepped outside on the deck, my golly, I turned right around and came right back in. Wow, wow! [We were in the midst of a heat wave.]

Well things are looking a little bit better. Yeah they right now I'm doing fairly well and level. Except my eyesight, my eyesight, I don't know what's going on there, it's awful blurry. But

other than that I'm doing fairly well and they are going to come two or three times a week instead of five.

I sold a lot of my furniture, got rid of a lot of stuff. I seen my, dog my one dog today It was nice—the boy. The girl's down the road here but we saw the boy today. Anyway, they're coming two or three times a week instead of five days a week. And just keep things and take it as it comes. [Another doctor] is going to get involved in the design and there are two doctors involved. [The new doctor] is a pain specialist they have me on Dilaudid now which has helped because I was on the morphine for probably a good six years and so switching it around I think helped make a difference. I'm sleeping better. These past two nights I slept the whole night long so that was real good 'cause I haven't slept all night forever. And then I guess ah, and then today I went, I went down to see my daughter and my grandson. Took some food down, with the economy the way it is and we try to help each other out. So I took a little bit of food down there and that was nice getting out, getting a little drive down the road.

She's a good girl [Max's wife]. She's immaculate. Her house is never messy. I'm sure she's embarrassed [things are in disarray because of the impending move]. My pastor and three guys from church are going to come help get the big stuff and then the boxes and stuff are going to get carried by weaker people.

My 17-year-old daughter I told you she went down to Wildwood, New Jersey. She came home with Buster, a rat. It's tail's gotta be that long and it's body is gotta be about that long. Buster. We're gonna have some Buster stew. Ha ha ha ha. No it's a cutie; he has curly hair. Well all right. I witnessed a positive. I started an exercise program trying to build up some strength. Just my eyes are getting worse because I don't know if I could handle, well I have to handle it, but I don't want to lose my sight. I don't know they didn't really give me a reason why

my sight would be gone like it is. They took me off all the Prednisone so maybe it's just a matter of time--so I'm hoping. 'Cause like my wife wrote your phone number down I couldn't read it.

You know what? He [the pastor] is something. He came out there every stinkin' day. Now you tell me tell me how many pastors do that. Not *every* day! And he's the one that's encouraging me to do the exercise, like with cans of corn or whatever and use it as weights and different things like that. Hospice didn't say, they didn't say anything about recuperation but I'm going to. And when it's my time it's my time. I mean, when it's your time it's your time. You could go out and get in your car and that's your time.

I'm not gonna give up. I'm not giving in. Even if I do lose my sight, I'm still going to keep on keep on goin'.

There were things [mom] taught us kids to live by like if you don't have anything nice to say don't say anything at all. Hard work, be a hard worker. She really didn't [tell many stories]... This is the truth, in third grade--if I told you this stop me. In third grade they announced my name, the third grade teacher announced [Max's first name] and I just sat there and she said again and I just sat there. And she came up in front of me, walked up right in front of me and she said why aren't you answering me? I said because my name is and blank sheets that we mean my name is Max is has some my name I said, "My name is Max." She said, "No, your name is [real first name]." Suddenly... I didn't know what my name was until third grade. And all the kids started laughing at me. I went home and I can remember yelling at my mom for not telling me what my name was. I asked her why and she said she didn't want me, she didn't want to be associated with her husband, she didn't want to say his name; and his first name is my first name. That's why I was always Max.

I was always the guy out on the playground that if somebody was picking on the little guy, I was the guy that went over and stuck up for him. That I did.

Yeah you know it did—it [Telling these stories] released some stress in my chest because I carry that with me. If I pass you going on the road and I say, “Mike, I am Max” and like I say “You know, my childhood could really bug me.” But to have someone ask me about my childhood and my hard life—that was sort of like somebody caring about me, you know, like. And I know you're doing it for research but I know you're doing it for more than that. You're doing it 'cause you care.

So in that way these past couple days or week, a couple times you called my phone and you called and I have the phone set up, course I'm not working and stuff and I got creditors calling me. The phone rang I was like just there-- and you hung up and I'm like darn. You're probably saying, “Max is probably done with me.”

But [having someone listen] makes me feel better. And I can tell it's not gonna go away. It's gonna stay with me. It's not something gonna go out there and say oh this guy interviewed me. No. Inside my heart I'm gonna say somebody cared enough about me to want to know about me.

Because my pastor, I tell because I trust him; my sisters I trust them, and obviously I trust you or I would have turned you down. And I would have. I'm not afraid to say no. So you asking me was, it sort of seems to be fallin' in place. It fell in place, you know, everything that's been going on for the past, my whole life; this with me and you sitting here right now, it was meant to be, because it wouldn't be if it wasn't meant to be. You know what I mean? It's hard to explain. Yeah, fell in the place when you know what the weird part about it was? Our last visit, now this

is our last visit. I got the good news I might live to see another 10 or 20 years. Who knows? And it turned out good. It had a good ending to it.

Yeah, most of the things that happened was sad, but they were [pause] they were, they happen for a reason. They happen for me to be kind to my children they happen for me to be kind to my wife, there was a reason it happened. And it's like all coming together, why it happened. Why the experiences I had, I had.

Like I would never, ever have my children wake up to me being drunk laying on the couch, ever. Especially on Christmas morning! I would never do it. And you know why? 'Cause you and I are sitting here talking about it and I am seeing when I talk about it, I don't get to talk about it much, but when I do get to talk about it reminds me to of what I can do to be a human being.

Yeah. I mean you couldn't make... if you, me and you were buddies and you wrote down what I would tell you, you would, it would be nonfiction--it would be a nonfiction book. And to be honest, I don't think I've ever read a book that even came close to what, half the things, I mean I know terrible things happen to people--don't get me wrong a lot of terrible things. My whole entire life until I became a father and everything, then things leveled off. But it would be hard for me to believe it's going to go through that like, for instance my mom's brother was a homicide detective in New York City. Her other brother was a--I don't know what position he held, but he held a really high position in an airline, I can't remember which airline it was, but he held a real high position in an airline. My grandfather was a very intelligent man and made a lot of money on the stocks and bonds--that's what he did for a living. I can remember one time we were going between New York and New Jersey and we are crossing a bridge and I can remember him sitting, me and him were sitting in the back of a car, and he was dressed like a gangster. He

looked like a gangster. And he was one of these proud Englishman. And that's the only remembrance I have of my grandfather. And then my grandmother, of course she lived longer so I remember her. So I had a homicide detective uncle, a big-wig in the airline, there was one other really interesting --I had an uncle who wrote a book about my family. My sister has the book and the book is written all about his brothers and his sisters and my mother was in and my grandmother and grandfather in the book. Now, I didn't read the book. The reason I didn't read the book *yet* is I'm not brave enough to read it. If that makes sense. Because they were very, very strict. You had to do what you're told or else, well you know, or else got it. Yeah my other uncle wrote a book. If you want I can find the name of it, the name of the book. Yeah I'll let you know

But in a way it's a vicious cycle. 'Cause I saw what it does so I didn't do it; my son didn't see what it does 'cause I didn't do it, now he drinks and carries on. And that's what they mean when they say alcoholism is a vicious cycle. It skips every other generation. The children themselves too drunk to drive home and pass out in the driveway. He has two children and a wife. He'll defecate himself. What can I do? What can I say? What I did do was I told him I'll never babysit your children again. Not when you go out and drink. And he got very angry at me, but I didn't care. As a matter of fact ,when before we lived here we had a really beautiful home and he used to smoke weed and drink vodka and we kept catching him doing it. I told him either he quits doing it or he moves and he moved out and he didn't graduate, didn't get his high school diploma. I remember the day he left he said, "Dad are you really gonna kick me out?" And I said, "Yeah." And it's the hardest thing I ever, ever, ever had to do. Even to this day I will let him know. I hope he knows how to treat his son. My four girls and a wife--he could burn the house down. He'd smoke weed, then he'd put the pipe up in the ceiling. Of course we're pretty close. He knows I was right. I mean like I said it was a hardest thing I ever did but I was right doing it.

I hope you never have to do anything like that. It's a wonder they don't, they give you handbooks for everything but that [laughing].

This is the honest to God's truth my 21-year-old daughter, her dad is in jail for the rest of his life. I don't know what he did but he is in there for the rest of his life. People do things without thinking. I'm sure if he had to do it again I'm sure it wouldn't have.

If you have any questions, do me a favor, feel free to call me anytime. And give me like time to answer the phone. Stay on the phone a little bit and then I can get to the phone. That would be neat—sort of neat to get together sometime, maybe.

[I did call several times and didn't get an answer; he died before I got to see him again.]

### **George**

I spent two visits with George, a white man in his seventies, whom I knew prior to my research. Storytelling was not new to him and he jumped right in.

#### **George's Storytelling Session One**

So first what do we want to do? Life? I'm very blessed. I am the youngest of seven children. I was born in [a town] in North Dakota which is way out in the western part of North Dakota near Montana and South Dakota border. I would say I come from a pioneer family. My ancestor came over here in the 1700's. He was indentured to a blacksmith who paid his passage over here. Then he worked for that blacksmith and eventually, he married the blacksmith's daughter. Then um, as the family story is told, he was in the Revolutionary War. The money, the script, that they gave him; everybody didn't accept or they gave less value to it, so in trying to compensate for that, the government had land out in Western PA that they would sell to men that had the script. So, my ancestor got a farm out there. Then his sons, I think he had 6 or 7 sons and a daughter, and they stayed out in the western part of PA and the men got farms themselves and

the families kept growing and I guess land became scarce and then in the early 1850's, my ancestor, not the one that came over from Germany, who was Conrad, but one of his grandsons, went out to Minnesota. Minnesota was opened up for homestead in 1854 so that they went out there, a group of them, people from the area, not just my family members, and they started a town out there. And my ancestor, I'm calling him my ancestor because I'm not clear on his name, I think it was William, who married a Gordon's daughter. When he went out there, instead of getting his own homestead, he purchased one from somebody who started one but was leaving it. So he had a cabin built on it. So my family lived out there and as time went by, they multiplied and went to different areas there in Minnesota and today, the cabin is in the fairgrounds in Freeborn County in the Southeastern corner of Minnesota, they have a historical village there and their house is there. And my grandfather died when my father was a year old. And my grandmother being a widowed woman with a child and trying to support herself, my grandfather's parents said, "We'll raise your son and send you to school to be a school teacher." So she did that and then she went, her parents, were there in Minnesota and they migrated to Minnesota as that was opened up to homestead out there. So they were real pioneer people. My father, I guess when he was a teenager, he went out there with his mother and started ranching out there. My grandmother remarried and the man she married had a homestead, so my father used my grandmother's homestead for himself and he would catch wild horses and break them and sell them. So he was a rodeo rider, also. He was in a rodeo in Philadelphia and he got kicked in the stomach by a horse that threw him off and he had to go to the hospital. So my mother who was a widow and had three sons was there in the audience and my half brother said, "A guy got hurt and we should see what they are doing to help him." And she went to the hospital to visit him. And from there they started a correspondence writing back and forth to each other. So he



proposed to my mother when he came back to Philadelphia. And they got married and then after a while, this was in the early '30's so things were economically bad. So they went back out to North Dakota and that's how it came to be that I was born out in North Dakota. And then from there in the late '30's or early '40's they decided to move back to Philadelphia. My mother's family was saying, "Oh, things are good there, we can get your husband a job and you'll be better off." Like where we lived it was like fifteen miles to the next ranch, so it was really sparse. My mother could do anything, I mean *anything*. She was a real pioneer woman, so I think I have some of that pioneer spirit in me. And then I was raised in Philadelphia, went through twelve years of Catholic school and one thing the nuns were telling us is that only Catholics were going to Heaven. So, my father wasn't a Catholic, so things that I would learn in Catechism in school I'd come home in the evening and talk to him about it. Trying to get him to convert. And so I think by having that purpose in life, it strengthened my faith. And then, it came to a point I guess when I was a teenager, he said, "Do you want me to become a Catholic because you want me to or because I believe?" [pause; choked up] So I said, "Because you believe!" He said, "I don't." [choked up] So I didn't ask any more about that. But in high school I had some good Catechism, Theology, or what did they call it, apologetics courses that really gave me insight and knowledge into my faith and I was really strong in my faith. When I got out of high school, I was planning on going to LaSalle College and I got a job in construction and I was making really good money at that time and I thought, "maybe I'll go to night school instead" So I went to engineering at Villanova in night school. Well, I worked during the days, but see that on these construction sites there were always people there that were trying to convert people. Like you'd see at lunch time they'd bring out their Bible and everybody would move away from them, like they didn't want to be bothered that much. Well I would go sit next to them and I would get into

discussions with them where they would have to go talk to their preacher to get the answers to the questions I was asking them. It really built a strong faith in me.

I met a young lady who I married and we had three children. And I worked in construction and I liked to go into an apprenticeship in carpentry. And as I moved along there I would try to notice who the important person was. So this one job they had me helping out—when you get ready to dig a foundation you have to put up what they call batter boards. And these are boards that are set to an elevation that they can excavate from. So you stretch strings around which would be the perimeter of the building. Then they'd dig down seven or six foot or whatever measurement you gave them to do that. So I was helping the superintendant do that and he got called away and so I was there and asked another young fellow to come and help me and I went out and started staking out houses by myself and he came back and checked them and they were good. And he didn't help me anymore, I just continued with the helper. And then in the carpentry work, there was always somebody who did the layout work. Say you put a floor on and then you're gonna build the walls, you mark lines where the walls are gonna go and then you put wood down for the plates and mark where the windows are gonna go and the doors and the studs and all that. So there were times we'd get caught up to the layout man and we couldn't do anything so we would try to find something to do and I would go help him and see what he's doing and help him put the marks down and then it got to the point where he would be working on the front wall and I'd go do the back wall. And that got me into supervision pretty early. Let's see, I was married when I was twenty-one and when I was twenty-four I think, I built my own house. So I did that on weekends and evenings. I started in the beginning of July, and we moved in in December, In the beginning of December it was complete. [My wife] was saying to me, "If there is something not done, I am not moving into there. I'm not gonna do it." Because you move

in and it gets put off—what you're gonna do. So I got the place completely done. And then, I worked in construction as a foreman, a superintendent, building houses and apartments, sometimes having twenty-five men work under me. And then I guess the next significant thing that happened—I went on a marriage encounter and so it was, uh, probably when I was twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old. I had an experience like an “Aha” moment or a snapping that changed. It came to a point during this marriage encounter to build communication between husband and wife. And you had to do some soul-searching that you would write down some answers to questions that they gave you and shared them with your spouse. One of the things we had to do was to write: What is my reason for living? And thinking about that and writing that, I came to this conclusion to be a lover—that God put me on this earth to love. So that changed my life. From that point, I, don't know the right way to put it, I became more active in my spirituality and conversion and things like that.

We got involved with other people in our neighborhood; we lived in [a city] in Pennsylvania, and we would do a Scripture passage, we'd go to someone's house, there'd be like six or seven couples and we would, whosever house it was would pick out a passage and we'd read it and then we would write what meaning it had for me and I'd share that with my wife and that sort of—and she did the same thing and shared with me—it sort of built our spirituality and built the connectedness amongst the group. We became more active in the Church. I was a lector, we didn't have Eucharistic ministers back then, and so getting so involved in the Scripture we said, “How can we live our life as Christians? How can we do this better?” So if we lived in a community where we could share; this group of people we had—once a week we had a meal together—and our whole families would come, plus this time we would be together for Scripture and we would see each other for church and other kinds of functions so some of us were thinking

we should live in community like they did in The Acts of the Apostles. Eventually, I found this place out in southern Lancaster County, it was a sixty acre farm and there was a couple there and their daughter who had fixed this barn up as a retreat center and were trying to do a similar thing that we were, only they didn't have a group of people, it was just that one family. So we came out and met with them several times for over a year or so and then we decided, I'm saying we, the group, we did everything in consensus; and it took so long to do everything [chuckling]—we spent most of our time on decision-making, but we sold our houses, there were three families from my town that sold our houses and one family from over in [another county] who we met down at this converted barn. We sold our houses, put the money in a common pot; we bought the property from the couple that had it and we built houses according to family need—the size and things and then trying to support ourselves. The best way I had in that was in construction, so I started a construction company where we would do framing, and we would build some houses completely on our own as builders as compared to sub-contractors just doing the carpentry work and so I had a construction background, we had two draftsmen and a school teacher. That was our crew.

Things were going fairly good, we had a lot of struggles, but things seemed to work their way out. To give you an example, somebody had a difficulty, they needed more money to buy something in order to get something as a family so we took a Scripture passage and we shared that around like we usually do and we took time to pray about it and what meaning does this have for me? And we'd come together and talk it over—talked about what was in the Scripture—and the issue of this family buying something just dissipated and went away. So that's the power of the Scripture and dialogue. And then I don't know if you are familiar with Myers-Briggs type—it is a type—personality sort. We had two nuns with us, too. So out of the twelve adults

there, ten were of a similar Myers-Briggs type—intuitive, I call them “naval gazers,” I wasn’t one of them, I was more of an action person, an SP—“let’s do it, even if it’s wrong, let’s do it.” We were trying to get—we had a couple retreats there open to the public and having people come—it was semi-successful—we had people come, it was no way to sustain ourselves financially or anything, we needed, I thought we needed a ministry. There is something that has to call us together that we really get involved. Like we had our houses built and now we have to have our ministry. So doing this consensus thing we’re going to wait on the Lord—like the Lord will show us what to do. Now, we had help, like we went up to the Jesuit Center in Wernersville for different workshops they were having up there, one of the priests up there came down and helped us in some areas. And then we had three priests from town that would come out and say mass for us, so we had mass twice a week at our barn there in our retreat center. Because we didn’t, I think, because we didn’t have this ministry we sort of dissipated and one by one the families left and so [my wife] and I and my family were there for fifteen years.

And then through that involvement and being involved in the church in town, the pastor there asked me to become a deacon for that parish. So I applied for the diaconate and was accepted and let me think, I was eight years down at [one church] and maybe twenty years at [another church]. As I look back, I see this all as part of my faith-journey, you know, one thing leading to the other. So in the midst of this, when I’m a deacon, down at [the first church], I would preach—we had three masses: one on Saturday and two on Sunday—I would preach at the three masses every other week. That’s what [the priest] really wanted someone to help him do.

And I got ...discovered that I had prostate cancer. I’m riding home from work and I hear this commercial—it said, “Open up your wallet to a picture of your family—a family picture.

Now put your finger over the top of your face. Can you imagine what it would be like in your family if you were not there? You should have your prostate checked.” So something just like [gulp] and it drained my blood sort of like thing and it was on my mind so I called a urologist. You know to go to a urologist, you usually have to have a recommendation from your family doctor—I didn’t even have a family doctor—I was never sick. So I called up and made an appointment “why are you here?” and I told him about what I heard on the radio. And he said, “You know there is a new urology practice starting up and they’re doing what they can to get customers.” And he gave me an exam and he said, “You know I don’t feel anything in there—no lump.” He said, “Your prostate’s a little firm, but it is nothing to worry about. I wouldn’t do anything about it.” And then I said, “You know, there’s times that I get up a lot during the night to urinate.” And he said, “Well, we could do some procedure on you that would open up inside the penis.” I call it the “roto-rooter” when they do that. So he said, “But at your age there is nothing to worry about.”

So I had the procedure done and then I, this is like before Thanksgiving. We were going away as a family, we were going up to the Poconos for Thanksgiving dinner; one of my brothers had a cabin up there so we went up there. I had a blockage and I couldn’t urinate at all. A blood clot or something must have gotten in there. So I went to the local emergency room and told them I had this procedure done like three days ago and so they put a catheter in me and said, “Go to the urologist that did the procedure and have him check it.” So this was Friday after Thanksgiving so I was at the emergency room at a hospital up in the Poconos and I said to [my wife] “Let’s just drive me home. We might as well go home.” So on the way home we stopped at the doctor’s. So my doctor who worked on me wasn’t there. But the other doctor was and he said, “Come into my office here.” He said, “Yeah we got the results back from your biopsy and

you have prostate cancer.” And it’s just like...I had no thought in my mind that I had prostate cancer because of all these assurances; I was 49. “Not at your age” and he didn’t feel anything and all this stuff, I was... And he said, “You know if you want me to I can get you a prescription for some pills that will help you through this...”

So we went home and [choked up] we just held each other and cried. To hear you have cancer just puts everything on hold. What does that mean? We made an appointment for me to go see my doctor the next week and he suggested that I go to Johns Hopkins to this specialist down there. It was the urologist that taught him. So he sent me down there. And he said, “I wish I could help you.” So I went back to my urologist and they suggested going to all these different—Sloan Kettering in Philadelphia and New York. And I decided with my wife that I wasn’t going to chase all over the country and put it in God’s hands and do what we can here in town. One thing the doctor recommended I go see a radiation doctor. So the radiation doctor said, “If I use all the radiation that you could take it wouldn’t do it; if you have surgery and they cut away all that they can, and then I’ll have a chance at it.” So, that’s what I decided to do.

Most of the people in the parish pray for me. At communion time, people coming up to communion, in my line and in father’s line [tearing up] would reach over and put a hand on me. It felt like my feet weren’t touching the floor. It took all my strength just to stand there. [pause] Every time someone touched me it was like a wave coming over me.

So, sometime after that, my doctor recommended that I have the surgery and the radiation, so I decided to do that. But, in the hospital the night before, the doctor came in to check me before the surgery and I felt just so blessed that he was going to come in and say I didn’t need it; it was gone. But that didn’t happen [tearing up]. So I had to think in God’s time and in God’s way. And I had the surgery and I had the radiation and I had a reoccurrence; well,

when I had that done they didn't have that test that they have now for prostate—PSA. So when they started with the PSA tests, they noticed that it was elevated a little bit so they recommended some hormone therapy for me, so I went through that. And that took the PSA down to negligible. And then it was like for twenty-five years I would go maybe once a year to have my PSA checked. And then a year ago, maybe fifteen months ago, when they checked it, they noticed it went up so they said come back in three months and in three months it went up some more and in three months it went up some more. And they sent me to have a body scan and it didn't show any cancer. So, your PSA doesn't mean that you do have cancer, but it is a most likely indicator. So in January, I went for another body scan and they saw cancer throughout my body. And then, I started with double vision—not constant, but periodically it would come in. So, I went to my family doctor and he sent me to another doctor who sent me to a radiologist and they did an MRI. I had a tumor inside my skull here [pointing to his eyebrow]. It was pushing on my eye; you can see even now it is up higher than my other eyebrow, it just started pushing out. So, I had that radiated and they notice another serious spot was on my vertebrae on my neck. So they radiated that, too. I got ten radiation treatments on my skull and my neck in the vertebrae area. With the one on the vertebrae I could become paralyzed. The urologist, he sent me to an oncologist and he said the only thing he could do for me was some...the stuff that makes your hair fall out...chemotherapy. And you know, they said the advantage of it is that it might not be good for what it does for you. So in general overall, the chemotherapy would extend my life two months. So they're not saying how long I would live, I might live two years and with chemotherapy two years and two months or I could live six months and that would be six months plus two months and I didn't want to do that—go through all that suffering for that. So the urologist started this medicine to strengthen my bones, it's called Exgeva. I get a monthly shot



for that and so it won't stop the cancer, but it will strengthen the bones and keep that going. And then, he got me into a trial for a trial medicine that two people receive the medicine and one person receives a placebo. So you don't know what you're getting, it is a double blind study. When I started that it took all kinds of scans and x-rays. Then this Wednesday I'm going for more scans and x-rays and they'll compare them to see if anything is happening there. I don't know what else I could tell you; that should give you a...insight into who I am.

I would highly recommend the deaconate, but it is as much work as your doctorate. It...I don't know how the guys put up with it and get through that in three years, three and a half years and going one night a week and all day Saturday and getting stuff to do at home. So it's a lot. But we need more men so you should consider it when you get through what you're doing.

Another thing, when I was in the hospital getting surgery and had the chaplain come and visit me, I thought, you know I don't feel comfortable going into the hospital and talking to people, you know that maybe if I...they were offering a course at the hospital there for chaplaincy, so I thought; I'm going to go and take this one unit of clinical pastoral education and at least in visiting the people from my parish I'll be more comfortable in doing that. And one night in the hospital, we would have to be on call overnight once a week. It was like one o'clock in the morning and they called me down to visit somebody who was having some difficulties and try to calm him down and pray with him. Walking back to my room where I stayed overnight, it was just quiet in there, and I experienced a holiness that I thought this is just like being in church. So I thought well, maybe I'll look into seeing what it takes to be a chaplain, so I applied to [a teaching hospital], because they had a program there...I forget the word...that's one thing, my mind is not holding up for me...an internship, so I applied for it and like fifty people applied for like six positions, so I thought I don't know what kind of chance I have at getting that,

because I didn't have a college degree. But they accepted me and I went through there and got three more units of clinical pastoral education and to be a certified chaplain you needed four units and then I got certified by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains and that's a whole thing [chuckling]. So when I finished like the last week in August was my last day for my internship and in September I started at [a hospital] as a chaplain. Someone that was there retired and all through this thing doors were just getting opened for me. Like for me to get accepted at [the teaching hospital] with people that had so much better qualification than I did, so I don't know how they picked me. So I was ten years at [the hospital] as a chaplain, I really, really liked that and then it got sold, I got down-sized.

I just retired and, you know, still have my duties at [the church]. I don't know how much longer that I...I feel a weakness that I'd hate to fall down on the altar or something and have a hard time sitting still...I don't want to be a distraction.

You know, I never used notes for my homilies until a couple years ago and I just can't do it anymore.

One thing from my father was: A man is worthy of his bond. Like if you give your word, you have to do it. You know, you don't have to sign papers—you say you're gonna do it—you gotta do it. Just like your word is your bond. I see him as being the most honest person I know, or knew. Being out in North Dakota when you tell somebody you're gonna do something, they're counting on you, you gotta do it.

My father did become a Catholic before he died [chuckling] Well, it was near the end of his life. And he was in the hospital and I would go visit him and read some Scripture to him and stuff, but there was a pastor from my mother's church came and visited him and baptized him and brought him into the Church. My father would always go to mass with my mother.

In my chaplaincy experience I was a chaplain for hospice. And when things started slowing down at the hospital they sold it to another company and I started working for that company as a chaplain. In visiting people who were dying I tried to talk with them to see if there was a story that they wanted to tell, to get out, or what's something in their life that they wanted to do if they had a chance of doing anything you could, what would it be? Just to get them to talk about pleasant things.

This is an apartment that we built on to our daughter's house. About eight years ago or so we were having a picnic here and we said, "You know it is just so nice here, it is a shame that we would have to go home. And what do you think if we build an addition on there?" And they said, "Fine!" So we did. That used to be their porch and we made this entryway here. We eat dinner with them two or three times a week. And we eat by ourselves the other times. It gives us a sense of extended family, but we also have privacy. And my daughter is a chaplain at [another hospital]. She was very instrumental at starting a program...what do they call it...When somebody is getting care just to keep them comfortable...palliative. She started palliative care for babies that aren't going to make it. She was very instrumental with that. She works with [a non-profit organization]. People that have miscarriages and they bury them—[a funeral home and cemetery]—they bury them like every three months. They collect them from all the hospitals. They have a program for that and she is pretty involved in that, too.

They probably should have a deacon at the church with me not being up to par. Baptisms and RCIA classes and preparing people for baptism, the children, and taking Communion to the sick and shut-ins.

We tried to use a form of dialogue in our community. It's been so long now it's hard for me to remember the precepts, but are you familiar at all with parent effectiveness training? PET?

So it's different from that, but I saw a correlation. Instead of saying to you, "Do you want a glass of water? Can I get you a glass of water?" I'd say, "I have water here if anybody wants any." So you didn't question, you didn't put people on the spot. You talked about it, but not in a way that would be threatening in any way. We tried to do that in our community and in our family. When the kids were younger they caught onto it so fast that they could use it and you'd ask them a question and they'd say, "Is that dialogic?"

This is something that just popped into my head—my father saying your word is your bond. When he married my mother who was a Catholic, he had to promise to raise the children Catholic, so I'm going to a Catholic school no matter what [chuckling]. So this that I'm putting on him, that I'm learning in Catechism in school—he got it back.

### **George's Storytelling Session Two**

You asked me what I learned and by my father being a man of his word, and when he married my mother, with him not being a Catholic, he had to promise that he would raise the children Catholic. So he did everything in his power to get us to go to Catholic school and to mass on Sunday. And so, that probably had a big significance in my faith and developing it.

It's probably a little bit of both, but just seeing my family as doing that—being pioneers and going out to new areas—different areas that were opened up for homestead. Me moving to Lancaster County to come out and start that new community, that was a...really part of that spirit. And I guess I just took that for granted, it was just real natural.

So I had, made me think of something I wanted to share with you, but I don't know where my wife put it. With us starting Retrouvaille in the Harrisburg Diocese, that was over twenty years ago, it is still going on. And just this past week we got some letters from people

who experienced the Retrouvaille, last year, five years ago, ten years ago, and they thanked us for starting it [tearing up]. So, things like that help me to reinforce that I'm on the right track.

I've always shared my life's stories, like part of the marriage encounter and the Retrouvaille is doing that, so...

Yes, it's that...It's a reciprocal thing. When you open your heart to other people, they respond and open their heart to you [tearing up].

Yeah, it... I guess it [storytelling] makes it real. It brings my emotions up to the surface. I try to get my family together—this is my children and grandchildren—and we went on vacation. Everybody's aware of my condition; I talk to them openly about it. And just like we can have this last time together, so we went down to Myrtle Beach for a week. The younger kids wanted to hear stories. They wanted to hear about my younger days when I was in school and about my family out in the West too. They seemed to be hungry for that.

The result [of the bone scan] is that I am going for another scan. That they didn't see any significant changes, so I'm gonna go six more weeks and then they're gonna take another bone scan and see where things are at that time. And maybe choose to try a different type of treatment. It is disappointing in a way, that you want to hear from the doctor, you want him to tell you what things are like and you're hoping to hear good news, but just to say, "Well wait another six weeks and we'll take another scan" is anticlimactic. Especially with my family. My one daughter and her family lives in [another state] and they are all waiting to hear, "What did the doctor say? What did the doctor say?" So I have to call them up and tell them. So as soon as I come back from the doctor, I call my two daughters. So...my biggest struggle now, I guess, is to keep my pain under control.

Most of the time [when I tell my personal stories, I don't see myself from another point of view] and I guess that's why I get emotional. I wish I didn't do that; I wish I could get above that.

I was working with people who had cancer and had a process of going through, trying to help them be aware of their condition to talk to the doctor—to get information they need from the doctor, to share with their family their condition, to help the family, let the family help them make their advanced directives and part was getting them to share their life story too; to get them to talk about that. So, I dealt with I don't know how many cancer patients, but quite a few over a period of a year and a half, so...For some of them it was like cathartic, they got to clear things up in their mind, and by them being able to share their story with me, it was like a first time and then they could be more open when sharing it with their family. There seems to be in some instances where the patient doesn't want to do anything to upset the family, like “I know I'm dying but don't tell my family I'm dying” and the family is saying, “we know he's dying, but we don't want to tell him we know” [chuckling].

This is an experience, even a doctor's...in working in the hospital and the trauma center as a chaplain, a person passes away and like the doctor doesn't want to tell the family. You know, some of them are pretty up front about it, but others are not. They would be thankful, or try to get me to break the news to the family.

It's funny how people hear things. Like even for a doctor, in one case I recall from the emergency room, telling the wife that her husband died and she's saying , “Are you going to take him up to a room?” or “When will he be able to come home?” It completely went over her head. And I said, “Doctor, I don't think she understood what you told her, would you please go over

that again so she understands?” And he would say, “We couldn’t save your husband, he passed away.” And it took a couple times for her to hear that before she could accept it.

That reminds me of a similar situation, where this young girl was killed in an automobile accident. So it was the chaplain’s job to go through the patient’s wallet when trying to identify them. The medical staff is working on the patient trying to save their life, so. And here’s the other thing, usually, men have a wallet and women have pocketbooks. When they are in automobile accidents, they leave their pocketbooks in the car. So, I called the police station to see if they had this woman’s identification and they patched me through to the police officer on site and he looked in her wallet and told me her name and her address. So I looked it up in the phonebook and I called home and the father answered and I said, “Your daughter’s been in an accident and we’d like you to come to the hospital.” So he came in and first we take him into a little conference or waiting room there to tell him, “Your daughter was in a severe accident and she didn’t survive.” And then after he seems to calm down, we take him back to see the body or person and we went back and he said, “That’s not my daughter!” And like all the blood drained from me, like how can I make a mistake like this? That’s why I was telling you about the round-about way I had to get this information, somewhere it must have messed up. And he said, “No, that’s not her!” And her brother was there and said, “Yes it is, Dad.” So, it *was* her, but the father couldn’t accept it. So we went back into the conference room and I talked to him for a while more. And I took him back the second time and he said, “She’s breathing, I can see her moving; she’s not dead.” So I took him back to the conference room and talked with him and prayed with him and we went out the third time and then he accepted it. I think there are things that our body won’t let us accept and we have to work into it. So I tried to be conscious of that and let people

grasp things at their own speed, because that's a defensive mechanism so that they don't have a breakdown. Gotta work through it.

I guess of all things, I liked being a hospital chaplain most. Really, you can touch people's lives and you're touched by their lives, too.

I'd like to point out the difference between a pastor, that includes protestant and Catholic, a pastor and a chaplain. A pastor is like a pilot for an airplane--that he has a destination that he is taking the people on the plane to, and he has a certain route and rules and regulations, that if you want to go with him, you follow that. Now, a chaplain is more like a travel agent, saying, "Where do you want to go?" and "How do you want to get there?" So really, putting it on the person, to get them involved and in touch with their faith and how they want to proceed. So, it's my experience with the chaplains, say in Lancaster County, the Catholics are ten percent or fifteen percent of the population so most of the people are not Catholic. Only ten percent were Catholics that I dealt with.

[We] use stories to get the message across...That's what I tried to do, more so in my earlier years than the later. I would put my homilies together in the form of a story and then I'd remember them. Rather than look at notes and so I'd try to keep things in story form.

[And the people hearing can remember better too, when it is a story.] I have people meet me and say, "I remember when you said [this or that]." And I have no recollection of it, twenty years ago.

I really appreciate it [our research] too; it helped me to put things in perspective. Give me another perspective, some knowledge about myself that helped me interact with my family. It all helps.



Sometimes I'd say to people, "Can you imagine what it would be like if your father was here with you?" And they stop and they think and they really do that by giving them the suggestion, "Can you imagine?" and they imagine it and it keeps them in touch with it.

### **Melvin**

I was introduced to Melvin and his wife through a mutual friend and he agreed to meet with me for my research. He was diagnosed with terminal breast cancer, unusual for a male, but deadly none the less. I heard stories of him from both his wife and our mutual friend. I found that it was physically difficult for Melvin to tell stories. Melvin was very quiet—mostly because of the pain medication that he was on. Both he and his wife had explained that it really made him tired. I arranged to meet with Melvin, an African American male, on two different occasions; his wife, one of his primary caregivers along with their son, arranged the visits. Melvin was about sixty-four years old when we met. I visited him on two occasions at his home where he lived with his wife of forty-five years and children and grandchildren.

Melvin had constant company with either his wife or son or another family member staying in the living room with him where he had a hospital-style bed. I started the conversation by sharing some of my story of my aunt moving to our home during her terminal illness. I thought it was an appropriate opening since I understood that he was being cared for by family, some of whom moved in with him in order to help care for him. The family seemed to be a very loving family. His family, especially his wife, were anxious to have him share his stories and helped to fill in so that I could better understand their husband and father. When Melvin was quiet, the others around shared stories which Melvin listened to and often smiled. Below is Melvin's story.

### **Melvin's Storytelling Session One**

I'm here. Wherever you want to start. [His son prompted Melvin to start with his education] I got an education, oh, got a bachelor's degree. Went back and got a master's degree in engineering at Penn State. That's my educational background. Electrical engineering. Came back out of school and worked for a company called [an international company]. Don't know if you ever heard of it. I worked for them for I'd say about 8 years. Got through that. I got a lucky assignment. I went through the U.S. down through the Virgin Islands. They put me down through the U.S. and down through the....I lucked out, got lucky and...

[Where after the Virgin Islands?] We screwed up somewhere buddy, at least I did. I don't know what you did. We hit the Virgin Islands, uh, after the Virgin Islands we went, uh, down through, Atlanta was actually before, we went to the Virgin Islands before.

[His wife walked in the room.] That's my wife, Sue. Hi Sweetheart. I didn't forget, I'm just in another world here right now. I took all those pills and they're knocking me out. The pills make me sleep. They got me going.

[His wife filled in some details of his working at age of fourteen shining shoes and how he went on to digging ditches with the electric utility company.]

[He asked me:] So what did you start as? [I filled him in on my start at work at age of fourteen].

I was in the Virgin Islands six years. They needed some help in housing, from that standpoint, after the hurricane hit. They didn't know how to handle some of the things. I went down and handled a lot of the housing integration...Where are the girls? [asking his wife about the children and grandchildren.]

My story is really not what you'd call a big story. It's not a big story. Worked hard, started working when I was 14. 14...was really the years. I was here in Lancaster. 14 years old here in Lancaster. My brothers...needed to support them at 14. They weren't very self-supported so I actually supported them.

[His wife filled in that she and Melvin were teenage parents. They never received assistance, Melvin paid all the bills, even for the birth of their first child when they were seniors in high school.]

[We've been married] forty-five years.

[Melvin directed to me:] Did you play sports? That's what carries you on. That's what carried me through. Football in college. Baseball in high school and really got through it. Intramural football at [various colleges]. Intramural touch with these guys [The Pittsburgh Steeler's Steel Curtain with Mean Joe Green]. They were pretty good. They were really, really good.

They [the monks at one college he attended] were good. '73 started actually in '73. They treated me like a king up there in '73. So we stayed there in '73 through '73.

[About his time at another college:] I really didn't like it but I did it. I did it. It was an education. I didn't have a lot of the money to go to...so I had to go through it that way. Had to do it. [working and going to school]

She [Melvin's daughter] got through it, but she paid a lot of tickets.

[Melvin made the deans list in] Physics. I needed to get through something 'cause I was ready to get out of school. Need to get out of school. Needed to get out. And science and physics was the way to go. I made it through by luck. You had to get through it by luck. Especially to the dean's list, with her anyway.

I try to work it through with some pills.

We had a ball. One of them where ...

We made out. You made out pretty good if you did a good job. [But] That was hell--drive from Baltimore to Lancaster. Drove from Baltimore to Lancaster [everyday]. We got a trip...that was crazy. That was crazy. Baltimore to Lancaster. Then from Lancaster to Baltimore.

[I asked him about the Virgin Islands] That was tough [smiling] Housing. Department of Housing, which would have been nice. I would have liked to work in housing. But [expensive to live there...back to Georgia...back to Lancaster]

It was tough down there [Atlanta] people down there are cold blooded. They lived in another world down there. Well, when I say, they lived in another world, I say lived in another world because I thought it was quite risky living down there because you never knew what was gonna happen. You liked it down there [to his wife, but Melvin worked downtown Atlanta] Everyday. It was cold after a while.

So I came back with [a construction company]. My mom really took seriously ill. So I came back to be with her. Drove back and forth to Delaware. They drove me back and forth to Delaware, drove to New Jersey, back to Delaware.

[He wife mentioned that his brother had died when he was driving back and forth from Atlanta on weekends.] That was tough.

Played with Lancaster Police League. Golf up there [over 50 league for basketball, baseball. Baseball was life. People were not so nice with people of color. Called names. Threw chicken wings, mean and nasty things. Integrated league: Spanish, African American, White. Play baseball and do it with dignity. How to get along. Never any problem ] Spectators. [married at a time that was very dangerous]

[always provided and protected us. Times where it could have been bad for both of us. Learned a lot. Giving soul]

Nothing wrong with giving a guy a nickel here. A lot of fun [in the job with the college].  
Nice guy [the college president] Over in the living quarters [living room named after him]  
Ballfield, soccerfield. Soccerfield, ballfield [worked with the architects and the design team]  
[That family] put about \$4M. A lot of money. A lot of money.  
[love diversity, culture, given us travel & learning experiences, science museums, aquariums, cruises]

Took the whole family on a family getaway. The cruise was great!

[His wife mentioned he coached his daughter's grade school basketball team many years ago.] To states for basketball. They were pretty good. Got a chance to see what it is to play basketball on a college level. They really enjoyed it. Good to be with.

The [construction company] helped me put a new ceiling [at the community non-profit center assisting a diverse population]. They had a rough time trying to make it through [financially] They had a rough time.

[His wife mentioned the trouble a man in a wheelchair had getting through the non-profit building] Carried him down. Felt bad for the guy, nobody would help him. Tough time, really tough time.

[Family Picture naming children and grandchildren]

[Son came home from the Army to be with his dad]

Melvin: [do fun things] You gotta.

[People aren't accepting to diversity. Accept and overcome]

[her brother treated her like she was dead]

[Her brother: I think I missed out on a real opportunity...I could have had a sister. Because of my ignorance...I still don't agree]

[Family is important] Very important. It went a long way. Whenever you want to talk more, hey.

Really, My grandma was—she was something else. She lived through a hard time. She taught me about life. My grandmother was a *hard* worker. She had three jobs. She was a *hard* working lady. Got to give her that. My uncle or my grandfather was a really hard worker. Hard working guy. She was. My grandmother had three jobs. *Three* jobs working. My great-grandmother was a cook. Worked at [a local college]. She worked hard at the college. She was a *hard working* lady. Grandmom always gave me. No matter how hard it was. You had to move on and move on and work hard. One thing that she taught was no matter what it was hard. No matter how hard it was out there, there was always something to look forward to. You never, never, never, stop looking. You never, never stop. And she...It kept me going. Grandma was to the point she was cold, but yet, she was always frugal and looking forward. You always looked forward. Grandmom worked hard. She worked hard getting ahead. Grandmom really helped a lot of people. She owned homes, she helped families; she helped our family. That's what I liked about her. She always looked ahead. She didn't try to move people down. She was a trip. One of the things she always had [smiling] she carried a pot of food. [raised foster children] She was. I moved between her house, my house, my grandmom's. She kept us moving. Sit down and talk. Last thing I wanted to do [finish school]. Had to. Could have went for baseball. She made me go. Told me, nope, you're going back to school. Had to finish school first. So I had to go back to school. I don't know why. [laughing]. Yeah I know why. She made me finish school. She made

me finish school [with an associate's degree]. Any school right now is a good school. You gotta finish. You gotta do something. She is something else.

[Speaking about his son with kids] I don't know what he's gonna do now. He's gotta stick to it [golf]. Plays every Sunday now. Something else, but he's learning.

I've been trying. These pills are kicking in.

Thank you.

### **Melvin's Storytelling Session Two**

[During my second session with Melvin, he was even quieter than the first. It was evident that he was sleepy from medication. His wife was present and tried to get him to converse asking if he wanted to discuss his visit with the doctor when he was first diagnosed with breast cancer.

His story resumes from there:]

Not really.

[I asked if the U.S. Virgin Islands was one of his favorite places] *The Favorite*. [He gave a big grin]. I'm thinking. 5 or 6 years.

[I asked about his time working with the college] *Really* enjoyed it. It was totally different. It was...[he was fading off but his wife encouraged me to keep him active so I asked about the living room at the student residence that was named in his honor] Quite different.

From the standpoint of...

Very patient...

[I asked about the respect that he earned while working at the college] I'm hoping that's what I got. It was tough.

Some design. The design team was myself...and everytime, I'm sorry, I look up and...

[He motioned for something to drink. After sipping, he asked his wife for some home-made coleslaw, which she had in the refrigerator. She promised it for after I left.]

Yeah.

[Oldest daughter walked in. She tells me that her dad has lots of great stories—his whole life]

Yeah.

[Do you remember that time? Coaching your daughter to the championship?]

[He recalled names of players on his daughter's team]

One season. Joe Green. Steel Curtain. [His daughter threw away the card 16<sup>th</sup> birthday card he had signed by the Pittsburgh Steelers because she liked the Cowboys.]

Do me a favor. Is there any cole slaw in there? I was waiting.

[ He played for the first integrated baseball team in the county. It was his coach there that taught them to play as professionals in adversity.]

It was his [the coach] time to be upgraded. But uh. He got upgraded. Sparky.

Weren't really tough times. They were...Allison [the grandbaby] is talking more than I am. I'm trying to think of a word.

[His wife shared that they lived through the best of times and the worst of times. Acknowledging people's lack of acceptance of diversity, she said they would judge because of the color of your skin. We learn from those days.]

I'm sorry. I took some pills that knocked me out. When they knock you out, you go far. They are. They're great. They are a good family. They are close. I don't have to worry about going too far.

We called him Jelly. Uncle Jelly went before me. We all went to school in Pennsylvania. Man, he...



Well, somewhat. Jelly as we called him... He went to college before me...College...I think I did well. I did...I played football...My grades were good...and...I ran track in high school...

[His wife asked him for his famous saying] Never be a quitter. Don't be a quitter. You remember everything [addressing wife].

[Seeing that he was very tired and restless, I remarked, "I'll let you go so you can get some coleslaw." He responded with a big grin and immediately perked up. I thanked Melvin for spending time with me.] Don't worry about that. Well. I appreciate that.

We're going on a cruise. Southern Caribbean. In March. Just family. Quiet. Relaxing. It's not the idea about the beaches. The food is excellent. The best thing about it is--the quiet.

You're gonna work hard...Respect. You gotta respect someone.

[Again, I thanked him for his time] Not a problem. Thank You. Thank You.

Melvin and his family were gracious and sincere in the offer of another visit with him, despite the obvious side effects of the medication which made him fade out in the midst of a sentence. However, Melvin passed away before I was able to schedule a third visit—months before he was able to take the birthday cruise with his family to the Southern Caribbean. Nevertheless, I'm quite sure he did find some quiet.

### **Summary**

I am forever grateful to the men who agreed to participate in my research and the families that assisted. Hopefully, I have honored the men with the way in which I have presented their stories here and with the care I have taken to present them with honesty and dignity. The next chapter will dialogue with the stories and present a dialogical approach to interpretation and

analysis of the stories. This interpretation is also meant to give the stories the attention and respect that they deserve. The following chapter also details some implications of the study.

## CHAPTER 5

### INTERPRETATION, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND REFLECTION

The purpose of this dialogical research study was to gain insight into the process of storytelling with adults diagnosed with terminal illness as a way of making meaning of their experiences and lives. The four male participants shared stories and perceptions of the value of storytelling. This chapter intends to reveal the value of the stories, the storytelling, and the story listening through interpretation and analysis of the stories and discussion of the storytelling sessions,

This chapter focuses not only on the continuing interpretation of the stories, but on the study's impact on theoretical concepts and research related to adult education. Implications for practice are also be considered here. There is not a generalized conclusion based upon the stories of these four participants, but rather a discussion of the impact these stories may have on future research—specifically the development of dialogical research, the conceptual frameworks on which this study relied, and how the knowledge obtained in this study connects to the literature of adult education.

The study and the relationships built through it had and continue to have important and life-changing impacts on me. The final section of this chapter highlights some of those and looks forward to life with the stories.

#### **Interpretation and Analysis of the Stories**

In this dialogical research study, I acknowledge that interpretation and analysis of the stories is natural and inevitable as a listener to stories (Frank 2010). This section and its subsections detail some of that interpretation and outline the theoretical basis for this

interpretation and analysis in the dialogical research type and addresses it specifically for this study.

### **Background on Dialogical Interpretation of Stories**

Interpretation of the stories begins before the stories are even verbalized. The researcher's presence allows the participants to tell their stories, but also helps to set the tone of the stories (Frank, 2010). The teller gauges the worthiness of the listener and the stories are told with the listener in mind. In this manner, the interpretation begins with the teller's intent for the listener. The interpretation continues throughout the telling, in the case of this study, during the conversation. The listener must interpret the story during the telling and determine whether and how to listen, in what way to react (e.g. with tears or laughter), and the teller must determine what to tell next, partly by interpreting the reaction of the listener to the previous story (Frank, 2010).

Stories are complex things so interpretation is also complex (Frank, 2010). The immediate interpretive response to a story is likely not adequate and may cause the teller to reinterpret the next utterance—as each utterance is in response to the one before and in anticipation of the response to it (Bakhtin, 1981). This, in turn, directs the conversation and the storytelling.

Interpretation continues with my transcription of the stories and how the stories are portrayed in the recounting of the personal stories from chapter four. Exactly what to leave in or edit are choices of interpretation. Also, the inclusion or exclusion of biographical information of the participants as well as other field notes is part of interpreting the stories. Therefore, while I have included most of the stories in their entirety and in the four male participants' own words, it is not without interpretation that they were presented in chapter four.

Dialogical Research analyzes stories as actors (Frank, 2010). The study of the stories is not simply a way to get into the mind of the storyteller, but attends to the actions of the stories (Frank, 2010). The stories are never owned by an individual; the stories are pieced together from various other stories and certain utterances and pieces are borrowed from other stories. This perspective allows the ethical freedom to analyze the story and to add to it as it is not wholly owned by the teller in the first place.

Storytellers are like sailors who have to rebuild a ship on the open sea (Otto Neurath as referenced in Frank, 2010). The sailors are never able to completely dismantle the ship nor are they able to recreate it using the best of all possible components; they are limited in their choice of materials from that which is available to them. Likewise, storytellers must tell a story about a life that is still in progress utilizing elements of narratives as templates and parts of other stories that they have heard in order to create a new story that is specific to the storyteller. The listener also interprets the story in light of the stories and narratives that he or she has heard and can recall at the time. In this way, the stories are never completely new, as they are limited to the resources available to both the teller and listener (Frank, 2010).

In this chapter, the interpretation and powerful listening (Tyler, 2010) continues. The analysis in dialogical research does not follow any real method or prescribed set of steps for analysis (Frank, 2010). Rather, dialogical narrative analysis allows for various considerations such as: to pose problems and complexities for the stories, to consider various viewpoints, to consider how one ought to live or how things might have turned out differently (Frank, 2010). Stories depend on interpretation and interpretation depends on stories (Frank, 2010). An uninterpreted story may just as well go unheard and interpretation is useless without a story to interpret. Stories often leave things unsaid, which require interpretation to fill in. However,

“stories mock interpretations for inevitably saying less than the story conveys in the sum of its effects” (Frank, 2010, p. 87).

The interpretation in this chapter, therefore, continues my interpretation that started at the onset of the stories and will help to fill in where interpretation may be needed. However, in the dialogical tradition, this interpretation understands that only so much is added by its presence here and I, as researcher, claim no privilege of interpretive authority (Frank, 2010). Others are free to interpret the stories in their own way as the participants of the study are also free to continue to grow and develop, despite what is written here.

### **Non-Finalizable**

The stories of the participants go well beyond what is written and shared here. Indeed, the lives of the participants are much bigger than the stories that they shared for this research. As Sam stated, “I told the truth, but there is so much more in a life.” The interpretation in this chapter merely scratches the surface of these stories and the interpretation of them. It is uttered here as a response to the stories and in anticipation of the responses to it--from my doctoral committee and others who may read it. This interpretation is in no way intended to finalize the participants or their stories—they are able to continue to grow and develop (Frank, 2005, 2010). Even if the death of these adults with terminal illness has come to pass by the time of the writing of this interpretation, it is in no way final. The stories, now told, heard, and released are out of control. The interpretation presented here is meant to complicate belief and open up moral complexity, which stories are best at doing (Frank, 2010).

Max’s situation carries a caveat to anyone who attempts to put a monological spin on the stories of adults with terminal illness. Between my second and third visit with Max, he was removed from the hospice Medicare benefit because his physician no longer considered his

disease terminal. He shared with me that he may live another ten or twenty years, “I got the good news I might live to see another ten or twenty years. Who knows? And it turned out good. It had a good ending to it.” This fact adds significantly to the idea that monological determinations (such as a terminal diagnosis) are insufficient for these stories. The fact is, the new diagnosis did not add to his lifespan, but rather the monological view of the original diagnosis perhaps wrongly presumed the terminal length of Max’s lifespan.

George quit the experimental medication trial that he was on since my visits with him; it was reported to me that this change seemed to improve his health. At the time of this writing, I’m told he looks better and is eating much better.

Melvin had plans to celebrate his March birthday by going on a cruise with his family. A dialogical response to his illness would certainly not have prevented his family from preparing for the trip with great anticipation.

The dialogical imperative to not finalize the participants (Frank, 2005, 2010) certainly is not limited to the physical or medical as presented in these examples, but refers also to the life of the stories and their systemicity (Boje, 1991). As these stories are now out of the control of the teller and original listener, they will continue to do their work, calling on others to shift their horizons (Frank, 2010) bumping up against other stories, continually changing and growing with their energetic vitality (Tyler, 2007b).

### **McAdams’ Four Components of Life Story**

McAdams (1985) identifies four components that work together in a life story to help form one’s identity: nuclear episodes, imagoes, ideological setting, and generativity script. The use of these components in a life story can help add to the coherence or unity of the story (McAdams, 1985) and the narrative identifying (Frank, 2010) that takes place in the stories. The

participants in this study were not made aware of these components prior to or during our visits. Nor were the stories that were gathered in the sessions intended to be life stories, but simply stories from the experience of the participants that helped them gain meaning and values. The identification of these components of life story is not intended to quantify their use or to judge how coherent or unified and individual story may be. Rather, identifying certain components simply aids me in the further dialogical response to the stories by noticing these components.

All the participants in the study used nuclear episodes, or specific experiences that are particularly memorable or significant in their stories, certainly some more than others. The use of nuclear episodes in the stories seemed to allow meaning to be interpreted, rather than stated. For instance, Max discussed his mother at one point without the use of a nuclear episode, “There were things she taught us kids to live by like if you don't have anything nice to say don't say anything at all. Hard work, be a hard worker.” While Max shared some ideas or axioms that came across to him from his mother, the fact that they were stated rather than residing in the midst of a nuclear episode or two had an impact. Certainly, it is difficult to misinterpret the meaning that Max was stating in these utterances, but for me, they may be less memorable and perhaps less credible than if I had derived these axioms from a story. Less memorable because they are short phrases and don't give context and characters that we can spend time with. Less credible in that we really did not co-author the meaning—it was stated. I can't tell if his mother really lived out these morals or simply stated them. Sam, on the other hand, shared a nuclear episode in which his mother spends her entire paycheck, during the Great Depression, in order to buy a suit for her son, Sam. This nuclear episode seems to be more credible and memorable than to simply state that his mother sacrificed for him. Being present at the telling and being able to



see Sam's facial expressions and the intonation of the utterance added to the meaning and is absent from my transcription.

The nuclear episodes presented in these stories will not be pointed out, identified, and enumerated, but their presence here does help to give meaning to the stories and they will be relied on in further interpretation, analysis, and reflection in this chapter.

McAdams' (1985) imagoes are self images that define the character of the self in the story. A participant's story may carry with them multiple imagoes, identifying various selves within it. For instance, George certainly sets himself as a lover, as he draws a conclusion from reflection and his study of Scripture, "God put me on this earth to love." Elsewhere, George sets up another identity for himself, "I was more of an action person, an SP—'let's do it, even if it's wrong, let's do it.'" George also identifies himself as an ill person, not to the exclusion of other selves in which he identifies, but in addition to, "We just held each other and cried. To hear you have cancer just puts everything on hold. What does that mean?" It is important in the interpretation of the stories to recognize imagoes in the story and to understand that multiple imagoes can coexist in the stories.

Ideological setting in a life story is a framework of beliefs, assumptions, and values that help to form the meaning of the story (McAdams, 1985). Max clearly states an ideological setting in regards to his nursing career, "My attitude was if I walked in the room and you are laying in the bed, if I did anything less for you than I would for my dad, I didn't belong in nursing." An ideological setting need not be stated as Max does, in fact, if Max did not state this in so many words, we *may* still derive a similar ideological setting through the stories that are shared about nursing. The interpretation in this chapter relies on ideological settings both stated and implied throughout the stories of the individuals.

The fourth component of McAdams' model is the generativity script, which is the plan for the future or the individual's plan for a legacy for the next generation. Max clearly identified a generativity script in his story, "Well I tried to always live—the way it should be lived! And I want people to treat other people kindly." Other generativity scripts exist in his stories as well as in the other participants' stories. Some are clearly stated and some are implied or need interpreted. Some of these scripts are used in the analysis and are used by the stories to analyze us.

McAdams' (1985) Model of Narrative Identity can assist in the dialogical analysis of these stories. The components identified in the model are not included here to quantify the stories of the participants nor finalize them. The components may assist those who come in contact with the story to identify parts of the story in order to enlighten us on our journey of analysis.

### **Purpose of the Stories [and Life?]**

None of the men who participated in this study and shared their stories seemed to be telling stories in order to impress me or future readers by enumerating their accomplishments or for their own personal recognition. Each participant seemed to have at least one other goal in mind when sharing stories of their personal experiences.

Sam's overriding goal of telling stories seemed to be to acknowledge the sacrifice of others. One sacrifice that he recognized was that of parents for their children. He expressed this, in part, through the story of his mother who used her entire paycheck during the Great Depression to buy him a needed suit when he was about fourteen or fifteen. The sacrifice that he acknowledged included that of the pilots who gave of themselves in order to establish an airport in Lancaster; "it was due to sacrifice and hardships." The other sacrifices which Sam honored, with his tears, were that of the soldiers, primarily in World War II, with who he served. Many of

these soldiers sacrificed their lives in defense of freedom. “They probably thought, ‘Well I’ll die because my kids and my wife and my family are gonna be safe.’” Sam seemed intent on continuing the legacy of his friends and comrades. With genuine sincerity, Sam also acknowledged the sacrifice of the German soldiers who fought against his friends and comrades in World War II.

Max seemed to have two primary purposes in his storytelling. The first was to help me in my research. He was clear in the fact that he called me to offer his services toward my goal of writing my dissertation “if I can help in any way, shape, or form.” As his second purpose, Max seemed to want to be sure the good that he strove to do in his life continued. Max and I seemed to make a connection early on in our conversations and have many things in common. He stated that he saw a kind heart in me and asked that I help to continue the good that he had started in his life. At one point he urged, “So if you have a heart, use it! Use it! And don’t be afraid!” Another time, Max stated, “I want you to become the best you can be.” And yet again, “I don’t know too many people that want to do good to other people...you hang in there, you hear me? Don’t you give up! For me, okay?”

George wanted his story to continue with the purpose that he saw in his own life, namely, “to be a lover...God put me on this earth to love” He outlined various ways that he is able to do that in his life and expressed the desire that someone be able to continue some of his good works at the church “with me not being up to par.”

Melvin’s humility was clear within his story as he stated near the beginning of his story, “It’s not a very big story.” Melvin’s purpose for telling his stories for me was the least clear of all the participants, largely because of the limited speaking he did. Three things that stood out for me that he wanted me to understand were hard work, and family, and respect.

### **Analysis: Dialogue among Stories**

The analysis of stories from a dialogical perspective is not only about analyzing stories, but also about allowing the stories to analyze us (Frank, 2010). Dialogue requires multiple stories (Frank 2004a). Individuals begin to create identity when their stories come in contact with the stories of others. The morality of stories is evidenced only when in relation to others. A single story, according to Bakhtin (1984), would not have life; life begins in dialogue which requires another. Because of this dependency, these stories are analyzed through dialogue with other stories—my stories, other points of view within the stories, as well as a dialogue between the stories of the participants who have never met each other. Their stories, however, have now met and live within my systemicity and narrative habitus. The dialogue between these participants' stories has begun and continues, in part, in this analysis.

**Sam's dialogue with others.** One of the first things Sam said to me during my first visit was, "We just don't know what lies ahead of us." That was quite true at that moment, when I first met him, and at other times when he spoke these words. This was my first interview with my first participant and I truly didn't know what lie ahead. I was unsure as to how it would turn out—the interview, the process, my dissertation. Sam spoke these words as I was following him up to the second floor of his house—he on the stair lift as I walked the steps behind. I trusted as I followed, just as he trusted as he led me. We ended up in his den—the airplane room—where he builds and displays model airplanes and many pictures of planes and other airport paraphernalia.

I don't know exactly to what Sam was referring when he first uttered these words, "We just don't know what lies ahead of us." He may have been talking about our upcoming interview or his impending death or perhaps just life in general. At this point, the words have been interpreted with all these meanings. This utterance was spoken in response to my visit and in

anticipation of our interviews and my writing about them. Each time Sam spoke these words or similar words or utterances, they were unique—they carried new meaning in a new context, with different intonation and expression (Bakhtin, 1986; Shotter, 2005).

Sam spoke these or similar words, “you don’t know what’s going to be before you” several times during our visits. Each time I heard these words, I got what I believe to be a better understanding of the utterances. One time Sam was referencing the young fighter pilots from World War II that went into battle without knowing what lie ahead; thousands were killed. Another time, Sam was using this phrase in reference to his health and the fact that he never foresaw himself as getting old and ill. Another time he was referring to what will happen after we die: “We don’t know, we just don’t know.” Similarly, Max acknowledged this mystery of life and death, “And when it's my time it's my time. I mean, when it's your time it's your time. You could go out and get in your car and that's your time.” George also spoke of such mysteries of life, “To hear you have cancer just puts everything on hold. What does that mean?” And also, “I had to think, in God’s time and in God’s way.”

The better understanding of the utterances comes from the fact that what was gained was a broader understanding. I allowed the utterances to “shift my horizons” (Frank, 2010, p. 96). They caused me to think beyond the present moment and consider what is beyond. I allowed myself to briefly take on the character of the fighter pilots who went into battle without knowing their fate. Sam warned me, “You daresn’t think about it or you’ll start crying like I do...I cry, I cry, and I cry. For everybody I guess.” And he stated elsewhere, “But I cry over these people that died because I know they were human beings.” But if only for a moment I looked fate in the eye and accepted the challenge of the story. I considered the terror of going into battle and leaving the family behind. As the listener, I had the privilege of taking on the emotional risk, without the

physical risk and yet I was changed; my horizons shifted and my inner library broadened; and I cried. Sam stated, “You see the graves and the crosses as far as you can see; everyone worked and had a family; you had to go off to war. And maybe, just before he died, he said, ‘I died so my family is safe now.’”

Sam saw multiple sides to a story which opened moral complexity (Frank, 2010). He stated moral complexity when considering the German soldiers who fought against American soldiers, his own friends, in World War II, “Was I right or were they right? Just because we won, maybe we’re going to pay for it.” He considered the humanity of the Germans, the men who were soldiers and the jobs and families that they had to leave behind.

Sam’s stories recognize the need for similarity and difference in order to dialogue (Bahktin, 1986; Frank, 2010). For instance, he sees that the Germans and Americans in the war were quite different, with different goals at the national level. However, on the individual level, the men had similar desires and needs. They were similar in their humanity and their needs for family and safety. The similarity and difference is personal for Sam as well when discussing his finances, “I know what it was to be on top; now I know what it is to be on the very bottom.”

Sam’s ability to see the other side of stories was both a blessing and a curse. It was a blessing in that it allowed him to live well with stories—to view multiple perspectives, to broaden his horizons, and to question the boundaries of his story (Frank, 2010). This ability to view other sides of the story cursed him as well—gets him in trouble with his wife when he would see the humor in a serious story, and causes him distress, “I cry, I cry, and I cry...For everybody, I guess.” This distress is lasting a lifetime for Sam.

I’m not sure that Sam would use the word “spiritual” to describe himself, however, Sam’s story involves various spiritual or transpersonal (Smith, 1995) elements. The spirituality of his

story includes various connections with other people, other living creatures, places and things, and a holistic view of the lifecycle through connections with people that have gone before (Tisdell, 2006). Sam shared some of these connections in his story and some emotions that these connections elicit.

Sam's connection with nature could be considered spiritual. He shared his dream in which he, as a "rich man," bought a "mountain or a whole state" where the deer are free to roam. The baby deer spoke in this dream, "How come Mommy, nobody is shooting at us?" The mother deer answered, "Oh Sam now owns us. Nothing can happen to us." Sam connects with them, "I love them—all the little animals." He recalled this dream twice in our visits. He also shared his connection with his dog, Boomer, when he states, "So we get down on our knees ask God to keep us all enough that we can outlive him" so that his dog will not have to live alone or without the care that he and his wife have given the dog. Elsewhere in his story he expressed his care for nature, "I just have a feeling for everything, every ant. Why is that? Is it because I'm nearer to God and the Bible than I ever was before? Maybe that's it."

Sam also shared a connection with his higher power, "I'm interested in telling you how I met God through a woman." Sam went on to discuss how this woman explained to him that God saved him from crashing an airplane and that God loved him. He detailed how the people in the control tower stated with conviction, "They're dead! Nobody ever came through all that and ever lived!" Yet somehow, with God's protection, he came through.

Sam was spiritually connected to inanimate places and things. He would speak with his airplane, "Thank you; you brought me home again." He explained, "I said that to the plane, I said that all the time. Because somehow I believe it was talking to me." He was also connected with Ocean City, New Jersey, the fishing club, the airfield there, but he struggled explaining the

connection, “it was something to feel...that you had that feeling that you were really a part...you were just...I could never...I don’t know, did you ever...you feel like a big part of that.”

Sam’s recalling of stories allowed him to reconnect with people from the past in a special way. More than once he mentioned how he could hear others’ voices when recalling stories, “Sure, I might have forgotten it, I have brought things back. And all my friends, I can hear them talk. They’ve been dead a long time, and my father and mother. You’ll be able to take me a hundred years from now and you’ll be able to hear my voice. That’s a funny thing, isn’t it?”

In this manner and others, Sam’s spirituality was evidenced throughout his story, though not explicitly identified as “faith” or “spirituality” as George did many times in his story: “It really built a strong faith in me” and “it sort of built our spirituality and built the connectedness amongst the group” and “by having that purpose in life it strengthened my faith” and “I became more active in my spirituality” as well as other acknowledged instances. It seems Sam’s spirituality as exposed through his story is more closely related to that described by Tisdell (2006) in everyday occurrences.

Sam recalled seeing the other patients at the hospital for therapy, “I looked down the line I saw the wheelchairs and they looked [sad] no life, no living.” Sam was a bright spot in the days of those going for therapy in the hospital. He was able to bring his fellow patients some joy and laughter in a place where it does not usually exist. “Medicine encourages monadic bodies in many ways, Hospitals treat patients in close enough proximity to each other to obviate any meaningful privacy, but just enough distance to eliminate any meaningful contact” (Frank, 1997, p. 36). Sam brought the group of patients together through contact and dialogue between them. “I came I found out what they did for a living and who they were and they smiled we laughed and



every day I came in and we laughed. We looked for each other at the dinner table to sit with, and after a while everyone was up, knowin' each others' names.”

Sam's story jumps around quite a bit, and is not always easy to follow. Care must be taken to listen and let go of the “conventional” idea of what a story should be. A researcher might be tempted to put it together into a tidy story or simply sum it up with some “meaning of life.” However, a dialogic response to his story requests that we do not put it together or tidy it up (Frank, 2004a). The “ripped-off pieces of reality” (Bakhtin's words quoted in Frank, 2004a, p. 109) deserve to remain as different voices that converge in his story. The pieces remain distinct, yet help to form the story of this complex man, who, at the age of ninety-two continues to develop and continues to identify himself narratively (Frank, 2010). A powerful listener is able to journey through the fragments or utterances and gently, playfully, and yet fearlessly confront the story with care (Tyler, 2010) and dignity (Frank, 2010).

Sam's story also deals with forgiveness. Even though some men had taken money from him—from his business and from his investments in the stock market—he says he forgives them, “If I would see them again I would say... ‘don't worry about it you're forgiven.’” These men have caused him to go from “the very top” to “the very bottom” causing him to wait for the Social Security check in order to shop for groceries, and yet he forgives them.

**Max's dialogue with others.** Max's story, like Sam's story, was made up of many smaller stories. He selected various stories to link together in some way to form his story. Most of his stories seemed to be linked together through the moral code that he has formed (Frank, 2010). Some of the stories follow that moral code, while other butt up against it.

The morality of the story is the relation between the content and the process of the telling (Frank, 2010). Max's story about the note left underneath the young woman's body, “Eat My

Pussy” could have been told in various ways. The fact that Max ended the story with, “And all of them got fired. Which was good. Because this poor girl was only 17 years old and she didn't know you are there--didn't know anything” reflects the morality he imposes (or attempts to impose) onto the story. As a listener of the story, I accept the morality imbued by the particular teller. The nurses that performed the act that Max recalled in the story may well tell that story in a different fashion. They may tell the story in order to get a laugh from an audience of people such as they were at the time of the original act. They may tell the story in order to show the reaction of the administration of the facility as uptight or inflexible. They may tell the story in order to enlighten themselves or others on the ignorance of something originally mistaken as funny. Or they may choose not to tell the story at all. However, the story likely still resonates with all involved as well as new listeners such as me and perhaps those that read this document. Each listener will bring his or her own narrative habitus with them which will give them the resources to interpret the story in their own way (Frank, 2010). A narrative habitus is formed by the accumulation of stories which give individuals the means to make distinctions between new stories—which stories are good and bad for the individual—what stories are liked and what stories are disliked. Every new story adds something to the accumulation of stories and, therefore, to the narrative habitus.

The stories that individuals live with help to form boundaries for them (Frank, 2010). The boundaries are not are not necessarily barriers that cannot be crossed, but things with which individuals must live. Max has boundaries set that have certain rules. The story of the note under the young woman was a story that was disliked because of his narrative habitus. Others may like the story or see it from a different perspective based upon their narrative habitus.

Max's narrative habitus has not allowed him (so far) to read the book written by his uncle that details the family story. "Now, I didn't read the book. The reason I didn't read the book *yet* is I'm not brave enough to read it." This demonstrates the dislike that Max has for certain stories—formed, at least in part, by the accumulation of stories he's heard or experienced in the past. Frank (2010) sees the value of allowing stories to interact with us. Stories are seldom bad in and of themselves but the way in which we approach stories and react to them and interact with them can be either good or bad (Frank, 2010). Max might do well by reading the book in order to allow it to interact with his story and see in what ways he may choose to react to it.

Max knew "what it *didn't* take to raise kids." Recalling his stories from childhood and how he and his sisters were treated, he knew what stories were *not* going to be part of his story. There were certain experiences that were *not* going to be in his children's story. To the extent that he could form his children's story, it would follow a *new* narrative. For instance, Max refused to babysit for his son when he saw the possibility that his grandchildren would be exposed to the *old* narrative of alcoholism. Max stated, "But in a way it's a vicious cycle. 'Cause I saw what it does so I didn't do it; my son didn't see what it does 'cause I didn't do it, now he drinks and carries on. And that's what they mean when they say alcoholism is a vicious cycle. It skips every other generation." He was able to create a new narrative for his son and refused to participate in the old narrative. Max attempted to re-author (Randall, 1996) the story of his family's alcoholism.

Max is able to learn from his experiences throughout life. He learns from his own mistakes and those of others. He believes that things happen for a reason and that reviewing past experiences can help; he says, "It released some stress in my chest because I carry that with me" and "to have someone ask me about my childhood and my hard life that was sort of like

somebody caring about me, you know, like... And I know you're doing it for research but I know you're doing it for more than that. You're doing it 'cause you care" And about his learning from reviewing, "Yeah, most of the things that happened was sad, but they were, they were, they happen for a reason. They happen for me to be kind to my children they happen for me to be kind to my wife, there was a reason it happened. And it's like all coming together, why it happened. Why the experiences I had, I had. Like I would never, ever have my children wake up to me being drunk laying on the couch ever. Especially on Christmas morning. I would never do it. And you know why? 'Cause you and I are sitting here talking about it and I am seeing when I talk about it, I don't get to talk about it much, but when I do get to talk about it reminds me too of what I can do to be a human being."

Max was clear in his desire to keep improving in his ability to help others, "I try to improve on what I know is I don't want to stop at all. I don't care if it's my last day I want to continue to improve as far as how I treat you as you or anyone else I may look at. I want to treat others as I want to be treated" and also "we better use the time He gives us and use it to the best of our abilities." Another time Max said, "I've been trying to think about ways I can still help people try to get them to feel better about themselves." He didn't think he was done yet, "I'm not ready to die now, I'm not I'm not afraid to; but I'm not ready to. What it is I think I feel like I have more to do" and he also stated, "I wish I would have lived a full life because I'm 52 or 53 I could've been 63 or 73. I could've done another 15 or 20 years of doing good for people. That's how I look at my life. It's a waste. It's a shame. Because I don't know too many people that want to do good to other people." Max understood the theory of lifetime learning—that he could continue to learn even until his last day on earth. He also seemed to have a meaning in life as

Frankl (1984) might describe. The meaning he found in helping others seemed to carry him on and give him the desire to live.

Max had what could amount to the generativity script (McAdams, 1985) when he asked me to use my heart and not to be afraid. “So if you have a heart use it! Use it! And don't be afraid.” He wanted me to continue the good work he started in his life. “Well I tried to always live—the way it should be lived! And I want people to treat other people kindly. My attitude was if I walked in the room and you are laying in the bed, if I did anything less for you than I would for my dad, I didn't belong in nursing—same with my mom. There's too many mean people in the world; there's a heck of a lot of nice people, but there is a lot of mean people.” His stories clearly showed that stories can share how life ought to be lived (Frank, 2010).

**George's dialogue with others.** George began his story with the story of his family, “I would say I come from a pioneer family. My ancestor came over here in the 1700's...” George went on to tell the background of his family. At one point he stated, “So I think I have some of that pioneer spirit in me.” I've heard words like that before, usually from politicians or perhaps someone trying to get a job or searching for an investor. I normally would take those words with a grain of salt. However, George's story was different. When I asked if that spirit was born in him or if the stories of his pioneer ancestors helped create the spirit, he answered, “It's probably a little bit of both, but just seeing my family as doing that—being pioneers and going out to new areas—different areas that were opened up for homestead. Me moving to Lancaster County to come out and start that new community, that was a...really part of that spirit. And I guess I just took that for granted, it was just real natural.” Indeed, his family was a pioneer family and truly he carried on that spirit. He forged new ground in business and in forming the community of families that bought the farm and created a new way of living.

George was a great storyteller and our sessions were not completely new for him. He had been telling stories for years. As a deacon, he would “use stories to get the message across...That’s what I tried to do, more so in my earlier years than the later. I would put my homilies together in the form of a story and then I’d remember them. Rather than look at notes and so I’d try to keep things in story form.” He saw the value of the story to help him explain a point and for those listening to remember.

His family longed for his stories, “The younger kids wanted to hear stories. They wanted to hear about my younger days when I was in school and about my family out in the West, too. They seemed to be hungry for that.” This reminds me of the way I hungered for the stories of my aunt when she spent her last days with us.

George sees the storytelling and listening relationship (Frank, 2005), “It’s a reciprocal thing. When you open your heart to other people, they respond and open their heart to you.” He had spent some time as a hospital chaplain. He explained, “I was working with people who had cancer...and part was getting them to share their life story too; to get them to talk about that. So, I dealt with I don’t know how many cancer patients, but quite a few over a period of a year and a half, so...For some of them it was like cathartic, they got to clear things up in their mind, and by them being able to share their story with me, it was like a first time and then they could be more open when sharing it with their family.” Speaking of storytelling as a hospital chaplain, “Really, you can touch people’s lives and you’re touched by their lives, too.”

George understands that listening was not the same as hearing, “It’s funny how people hear things. Like even for a doctor, in one case I recall from the emergency room, telling the wife that her husband died and she’s saying, ‘Are you going to take him up to a room?’ or ‘When will he be able to come home?’ It completely went over her head.” It took a couple of times and

a couple ways for the doctor to state the fact that her husband had died for the woman to accept it. The story of his death did not fit into her library of stories at that point. George knew as a hospital chaplain he had to work with people to help them accept hard realities, “I tried to be conscious of that and let people grasp things at their own speed, because that’s a defensive mechanism so that they don’t have a breakdown. Gotta work through it.”

George sees life as a journey and understands that different people have different theories on how to approach that journey. “I’d like to point out the difference between a pastor—that includes protestant and Catholic—a pastor and a chaplain. A pastor is like a pilot for an airplane—that he has a destination that he is taking the people on the plane to, and he has a certain route and rules and regulations, that if you want to go with him, you follow that. Now, a chaplain is more like a travel agent, saying, ‘Where do you want to go?’ and ‘How do you want to get there?’” I tried to conduct my storytelling sessions in the spirit of the latter.

Perhaps he gained some understanding of this distinction from his contact with his father when he was young and learning catechism in Catholic school. “So, my father wasn’t a Catholic...I’d come home in the evening and talk to him about it. Trying to get him to convert. And so I think by having that purpose in life, it strengthened my Faith.” His father asked, “Do you want me to become a Catholic because you want me to or because I believe?” and his answer, “Because you believe!” And his father’s reply, “I don’t.” George said, “So I didn’t ask any more about that.” Perhaps George learned from this that his father needed to continue in his faith his own way. George could not set the path for his father—that was up to his father to do. Indeed, he later became a Catholic on his deathbed—not the way young George had originally intended.

George likely would consider himself a spiritual man. He referred to his faith-journey and many times to his reliance on Scripture and the Lord. He found his meaning in life (Frankl, 1984), “to be a lover” from reading Scripture and reflecting on it. He attempted to live out that purpose in various ways—in his family life and his work as a deacon and chaplain.

He also realized that his spirituality and faith does not make all life’s mysteries clear. Before his surgery, he felt the compassion of the people of his church who were praying for him and who touched him, “people...would reach over and put a hand on me. It felt like my feet weren’t touching the floor. It took all my strength just to stand there. Every time someone touched me it was like a wave coming over me.” He was hoping this would cause a physical cure, “I felt just so blessed that he” (the surgeon) “was going to come in and say I didn’t need it; it was gone. But that didn’t happen.” And recognizing his lack of knowledge in some mysteries he expressed, “So I had to think in God’s time and in God’s way.”

George encouraged me about my research when he stated, “I really appreciate it, too; it helped me to put things in perspective. Give me *another* perspective, some knowledge about myself that helped me interact with my family. It all helps.” Those were comforting words spoken to a novice from an experienced storyteller and listener.

**Melvin’s dialogue with others.** An individual’s utterance is in response to the utterances that precede it and in anticipation to the responses to it (Bakhtin, 1984). While the utterance is a one-time occurrence with meaning specific to the context in which it is made (Shotter, 2005), it is also formed by the voices of others that have helped to form the voice of the individual and are yet distinguishable in it (Bakhtin, 1984).

Melvin’s story is imbued with the voice of his grandmother. While he seemed somewhat stoic as an effect from his pain medication, Melvin produced a smile when discussing his



grandmother, “She taught me about life. My grandmother was a *hard* worker. She had three jobs. She was a *hard* working lady. Got to give her that.” He continued about his grandmother, “No matter how hard it was out there, there was always something to look forward to. You never, never, never, stop looking. You never, never stop...That’s what I liked about her. She always looked ahead.” Likewise, all the participants admired a mother figure. Max discussed his mom with a smile, “There were things she taught us to live by...Hard work. Be a hard worker.” Also remembering the hard work of his mother fondly was George, “My mother could do anything, I mean *anything*. She was a real pioneer woman.” And Sam recalled the sacrifice of his mother who spent her entire paycheck on a suit for him in the midst of the Great Depression. I recall his facial expression as he recalled that sacrifice—displaying the concern and appreciation of a young man beginning to understand the requirements of parenthood. Interestingly, each of these men had admiration for the women who raised them, not necessarily because of their gentle nature, but definitely because of their respect for hard work and the sense of accomplishment that comes with it.

Melvin seemed pleased with the hard work he put into his life. We can hear his grandmother’s voice in his utterances. He talked about tough times, but he persevered in adversity. His story included how he worked hard in school, sports, and family matters; he started working at the age of fourteen to help support the family. Melvin worked during high school to support his child. His wife recalled that they supported their child as teenage parents without assistance, rather through Melvin’s hard work.

Melvin’s education was important to him. It assisted him in his career. He recalled that his grandmother made sure he finished college and he joked that he didn’t understand why. He was insistent that everyone should finish school with some degree.

We also hear his grandmother's voice when we see Melvin always looking forward to something: rest, a family cruise, or coleslaw.

Along with his respect for hard work, Melvin enjoyed quiet. He said of the cruise he was planning, "In March. Just family. Quiet. Relaxing. It's not the idea about the beaches. The food is excellent. The best thing about it is--the quiet."

### **Implications for Theory**

This dialogical research study adds to the understanding of the concepts that are foundational to the study: story, storytelling, and story listening. The discussion in this chapter reveals the ongoing development of the power of stories to provide meaning to both the storyteller and the listener (Frank, 2010). The new or further developed meaning provided by this research also adds to the theory of narrative learning. Additionally, the understanding of Erikson's psychosocial crisis of the life stage of later adulthood: integrity versus despair is expanded (Newman & Newman, 1991).

The stories shared within this research clearly demonstrate that meaning is inherent in story and that meaning is not static. The stories also help demonstrate the concept of co-constructed story and socially constructed meaning. The understanding of the value of story listening is also broadened by this study as well as the understanding of the polyphony found within stories.

### **Stories as Instruments for Development of and Transmission of Meaning**

The discussion and interpretation of the stories of the participants in this research study show that stories are indeed great instruments for the transmission of and development of meaning. Stories are both memorable and credible acts of meaning. Stories told within a caring and personal listening space, which I attempted to provide to the participants, do create and

transmit meaning. This meaning is a co-construction—the work of both the teller and the listener. The stories are memorable in that they provide not merely facts or a historical accounting of events but a context, a plot, and characters in which we may place ourselves. The meanings derived from the stories are inherently credible because they are, indeed, co-created—they are not simply transferred from the teller to the listener. As the listener in this study, I have created new meaning and understanding of life. This new meaning is developed with the new stories in combination with all the stories I have heard prior and with the experiences that I have had previously. Had I simply asked for the meaning of life from the participants it may have been some expression of the formulation of meaning that was developed by the participants but would have lacked the context and depth that is gained in the storytelling relation. It would also lack the meaning that I bring as the listener. The co-constructed meaning is, therefore, credible for me in that I was involved and continue to be involved in its construction.

### **Storytelling and Story Listening as Power and Energy**

Stories have an energetic vitality and, in some way, a life of their own (Tyler, 2010). Stories have a way of getting themselves told when they are ready and holding back when they are not. There is a negotiation between the story and the teller as to when a story is to be told. The participants in this study shared rather personal and emotional stories with me as researcher. This is in part, I believe, because of the comfort felt with me as a listener. Max was comfortable enough to reach over and hold my hand during part of his story. He stated that much of what he told to me were things he told very few others. He expressed his trust in me. I believe the stories also found a time and a space in which they could be told. They negotiated with the teller and the listener for an appropriate telling. It is possible that the fact that these individuals were living with a terminal illness may have helped in the negotiation so that the stories would be told

because there may not be another chance. I am honored and humbled to have been entrusted with the stories and, therefore, attempt to treat them with care.

Listening to the stories and allowing them to breathe (Frank, 2010) was both a privilege and a profound experience. It was hard work. Listening involved not only hearing the words of the stories, but the meaning, as well as allowing the stories to do their work. This work includes not only asking what the story means from my standpoint, but perhaps more importantly, asking, “How does the story call on me to shift my horizons” (Frank 2010, p. 96)? Indeed, these stories have shifted my horizons. They have called on me to see things from different perspectives. The stories have also called out stories from me—stories that I have hidden away from everyone, even myself. They have negotiated with me and with stories that I have held and asked for them to be freed. The stories of the participants in this study have caused me to seek a caring and brave telling and listening space in which my stories can be set free and they have begun their negotiation and have begun to be heard.

By telling life stories, individuals affirm their experiences and claim them for themselves (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). The sharing of the stories in some cases seems to have helped the participants to recognize the narratives that have defining influence over their lives. Recognizing this influence allows one to either accept that narrative or create a new narrative—but either way power is given to the participant or storyteller. The boundaries that are recognized can then be either supported or moved. New meanings can be constructed and new relationships formed.

It seems of particular importance for adults with terminal illness to gain this power offered by the stories. Adults diagnosed with terminal illness are often cast aside by society (Puchalski, 2006). The power gained in the re-authoring (Randall, 1996) of the story may be a strong sense of authority over their lives that otherwise may seem to be controlled by disease and

medicine. Max took control of his story by considering how it may have turned out differently (Frank, 2010). He thought that if he had another fifteen or twenty years he could have used it to help others, in a world where few others do that. Melvin was able to consider the possibility of another cruise with his family which he enjoyed so much.

#### Narrative Identifying through Storytelling and Story Listening

Identity is a lifestory (Randall & McKim, 2008). Identity is formed through the interaction with others—the recognition of who one is in relation to another and how one fits in the world (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). This study expressed the identity of the storytellers through their stories. It demonstrated the ability of the story to help develop the identity of the teller not only in the eyes of the listener, but in the eyes of the teller by seeing things from a new perspective. The interpretation and discussion in this chapter continues that development from other perspectives as well. We can see in the stories, the narrative identifying that takes place in the storytelling relation. Through the stories, I form identities of the participants who were not previously known. These identities are constructed through the rich, descriptive stories of the participants.

Indeed, it is the dialogue that takes place in the storytelling sessions of this research as well as within the stories themselves that allows us to form the identities of the participants. Sam's identity as a spiritual man, for instance, is co-created by considering his interaction with other people, places, and things within his stories. His stories express his soul's connection to his flying, his plane, his comrades, his dog, Ocean City, and all of nature. Likewise, Max's stories allow us to see his care for his patients and his disgust for actions that devalue the dignity of individuals. The richness of the stories helps us to form these identities more than any

summation of identity could hope to do. The dialogue allows us to witness the sameness and difference between the participants and others, which assists us in the formation of the identities.

### **Narrative Learning**

Adult educators interested in narrative learning understand that content should be brought into direct relationship with the lived experience of the learner (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). These educators recognize the power of stories to enhance learning through both cognitive and affective processes. This research supports the theory of narrative learning in adulthood.

The storytelling relationship demonstrated in this study expands the idea that as learners, we do well by building a relationship with what we intend to know. Relationships were built between the tellers and me as the listener. Relationships were also built between the stories and the participants—including me. By constructing these relationships, the ability to learn was enhanced. The stories allowed for all involved to participate with the experiences under study. We were able to become characters in the stories and the stories became actors in our lives. These relationships proved to be powerful and energizing.

Stories used in learning require receptivity on the part of both the educator and the learner, regardless of who is telling or listening. Indeed, in such a setting, the parties may become indistinguishable as learner or educator. When one listens well to stories, the stories make connections with the stories and the knowledge of the listener. The meaning of the story is co-created and therefore, credible. Stories allow for that learning in a way that a lecture cannot.

The stories challenged our boundaries and assumptions and pushed us to consider how life might have and might yet turn out differently. Understanding the authorship one has with stories enhances the understanding of the power one has in life's choices. The ability to create and recreate characters is inspiring.

The use of storytelling in the practice of education is a natural position for those who believe in a narrative mode of development. Less apparent may be the meaningful use of storytelling by those that come to understand adult development in stages. However, a link between storytelling and resolve of the developmental crisis in the stage of later adulthood is considered next.

### **Integrity Versus Despair**

Erikson defined a psychosocial crisis at each of the developmental life stages of humans (Newman & Newman, 1991). These crises help to define the developmental stages. While the dialogical viewpoint and the concept of narrative learning tend to focus on the continued development of individuals in a story-like fashion, rather than a set of stages, a look at Erikson's crisis of the later adulthood stage and the central process for resolving the crisis may shed some light on this study, and this study may have implications for these psychosocial concepts.

The psychosocial crisis of later adulthood is integrity versus despair (Newman & Newman, 1991). The life stage of later adulthood is generally considered to be between the ages of sixty to seventy-five, however, it is acknowledged that individual adults develop at different rates and enter various stages at different ages. Certainly, a case can be made that younger adults facing a terminal illness, such as Max in this study, may progress to this crisis earlier in life than most people. While the crisis is rather individual, the term psychosocial adds another dimension to the concept (Newman & Newman, 1991). Cultural pressures and expectations result in the tensions that produce the crisis which sometimes prevent a positive experience of socialization and integration into society. The crisis is labeled by the polarities of integrity and despair; however, the crisis is usually experienced at both ends of the continuum and a positive outcome

of the crisis is often a balance or integration of the opposing forces rather than a complete shift toward integrity and away from despair (Newman & Newman, 1991).

At each successive life stage, the likelihood of a negative resolution increases as the development tasks become more complex and development is blocked by societal barriers (Newman & Newman, 1991). Therefore, the integrity versus despair crisis is a difficult struggle as it is generally toward the end of life. Developmental theory hypothesizes that the conflict and tension of the crisis is necessary in human development. While the negative pole of despair is uncomfortable, experiences in that area may foster clarification of ego positions, individuation, and moral integrity. Despair is experienced in part because of the changing roles of individuals entering and living in later adulthood. Parents' roles with their children change as the children move into adulthood themselves and the need for the parents' involvement is often reduced. The older adults are likely to have lost friends and other peers to death which may alienate them even more. Despair, it seems, would be natural under these tensions. Integrity, or "an ability to accept the facts of one's life and to face death without great fear," (Newman & Newman, 1991, p. 589) can be achieved or balanced with despair through the central process of introspection.

Introspection is deliberate self-evaluation and private thought that may help an individual achieve integrity (Newman & Newman, 1991). Introspection can take place through storytelling. When telling stories about life's experiences, an individual has the opportunity to view the past events in a new light. Contemporary events may also be reinterpreted to fit past memories. Integrity is gained when an individual attains an attitude of contentment or self-acceptance through introspection. Integrity can be achieved regardless of the balance of positive and negative events in one's life and often comes ultimately through consideration of personal worth.



This research study used storytelling with adults diagnosed with a terminal illness in order to help make meaning of life's experiences. These adults may have been experiencing despair because of the terminal illness. Recalling nuclear episodes, whether positive or negative, may have helped the individuals to set boundaries, gain values, and new images of self and others. This process of introspection, while facilitated by a caring listener, could have added to the contentment the participants and I had for our experiences and helped us to gain a degree of integrity. Listening well to stories allows the listener to participate in the story and co-create the story and its meaning. While the developmental theory focuses on introspection as an individual purposeful act, it became apparent through this research that storytelling and story listening, while social, were important forms of introspection. Indeed, the crisis of despair versus integrity is in part social; the process for resolve may have a social aspect to it as well.

### **Implications for Practice**

This research has many implications for practitioners of adult education and others. This section reflects on many of those implications and details considerations for practitioners. Implications are evident for educators that work directly with adults with terminal illness. They also extend to healthcare workers, clinical pastoral counselors, healthcare chaplains, and those that educate each of these groups. The implications of this research on these practitioners are discussed here.

### **Educating Adults with a Terminal Diagnosis**

Adult educators need to be concerned with lifelong learning which for many extends into the experience of living with a terminal diagnosis. This study has shown that there is value in working with adults diagnosed with a terminal illness. This value is evidenced, in part, in the appreciation that was displayed in the reactions of the participants. The value extends to the

educator who is able to co-construct meaning from the stories of adults diagnosed with a terminal illness. Adults living with a terminal diagnosis should be extended the right to participate in lifelong learning. Special care needs to be taken to accommodate the learners and their needs—physical, social, and emotional.

Adults diagnosed with terminal illness are often struggling with new realities that may cause them to question their identity and the meaning of their experiences. These can be shaken by the prospect of impending death. Frankl (1984) see the importance of finding a meaning in life. To die without a decent understanding of the meaning of life would be to die in an existential vacuum and would be considered not a good death by many. This research study was generous in its compassion and understanding extended to the adults at end-of-life. I believe that I demonstrated generosity through attentive listening and by being present. The dialogical form added to that generosity.

Adult education has as a purpose to put meaning into life (Lindeman, 1961). Some of the participants indicated that they realized new meaning by reviewing the life stories. Certainly, I as researcher have put new meaning in my life through this study. This research study stands to inform adult educators of the practical use of storytelling in educational settings to construct and reveal meaning for both learners and educators. The storytelling sessions and discussion can be developed into a model for adult educators who intend to use storytelling to achieve the goal of putting meaning into life for adult learners.

Meaningful learning for adults requires relationship among the learner, teacher, and content (Palmer, 1983). Stories shared in the educational setting allow a relationship to form between the educator and learner and the story or content (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). This relationship or dialogue that forms includes the co-constructed meaning of the story. This

research study has demonstrated the power of that relationship. The teller and the listener connect on various levels. The stories engage on both cognitive and affective aspects of learning which adds to their power (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). The living, local, and specific characteristics of a story (Frank, 2010) also add to the power. These characteristics allow both the teller and listener to fit into the plot of the story and take on the position of a character in the story. This penetration of the story allows the story to penetrate those in the relation and cause them to consider in what ways the story can change those involved. Consideration of how living out to be done is part of the analysis of the stories when those in the storytelling relation allow the stories to do their part.

### **Narrative Identifying as Education**

Stories are deeply imbued with meaning and identity. Eliciting stories from the adults in this research study allowed both the participants and me to gain a better understanding of both. The stories gave great insight into the identities of the individuals who I barely knew before listening to the stories. I was able to gain great insight into the values of the individuals. I could also see in the stories of past events chosen by the participants how some of the values developed in these individuals. For instance, I gained an understanding of Sam's respect for sacrifice in his story of his mother's use of her entire paycheck during the Great Depression to buy him a suit. His discussion of this event, his facial expression, and his intonation demonstrated the impact it had on him. His value of sacrifice was also evidenced in his stories of the soldiers that gave their lives during World War II. All these stories gave me more insight into Sam's value of sacrifice than any summation could have. These stories allowed me to identify Sam in the world in relation to others. They allowed me to place myself in his story and see where I fit in. In what ways could I place myself in the plot? What characters do I best relate to? How do I construct

meaning from what he said? The fact that I constructed the meaning made it credible for me—much more so than if Sam told me he values sacrifice. The story allowed me to see it for myself. The story itself says more than any interpretation and expression of the meaning that I could present (Frank, 2010).

Likewise, the storytellers in this research could gain insight into how they fit into the world—their identities. Adults continue to develop their identity in the world throughout their lives (McKenzie, 1991; Rossiter & Clark, 2007). The stories elicited from the participants of this study allowed the participants that were open to the co-constructed meaning of the stories to develop their sense of identities. Individuals may have multiple identities in various relations in their lives. The review of stories can promote self-reflection in individuals in order to help define these identities narratively. The identities developed are not stagnant, but still open to change as the participants are still able to grow and develop and continue to find new meaning in their stories, experiences, lives, and how they fit into the world. As George stated, “it helped me to put things in perspective. Give me another perspective, some knowledge about myself that helped me interact with my family.”

### **Listening within Adult Education**

Listening was an important part of this study as it is important in adult education (Cranton, 2003). This research demonstrated some aspects of authentic and powerful listening (Tyler, 2007a, 2010) that may be extended into the practice of adult education. Trust, care, respect, and courage are all necessary for authentic listening. A review of this study may reveal how the listener attends to the teller demonstrating these characteristics in order to provide a listening space appropriate for the telling of and interpretation of stories. This has implications for both educators and adult learners. An adult learning environment that involves the use of

storytelling and listening, necessitates a openness and trust on the part of all involved. The storyteller, whether the educator or learner, must trust the listener in order to feel free to tell the story. The listener, whether the educator or learner, must be open to the story and its possible effects. Without both the trust and the openness, the storytelling relation will not be complete and will lack the potential power of the learning experience. Also, the educator, whether telling or listening, must be open and realize that we are all learners when it comes to stories and their power.

### **Healthcare Workers**

Another impact of the study is on those that work with adults diagnosed with terminal illness. Hospice employees may see the study as an example of the power of the stories of the people that they serve. The stories have the ability to assist the ill person with their meaning making as well as help the caregiver find meaning. All those who work closely with adults diagnosed with terminal illness may find purpose in listening to the stories that are shared. Dialogue with these individuals and their stories may help to construct new meaning for all involved.

Other healthcare workers who care for the health of individuals not necessarily diagnosed with a terminal illness may also see the value of the stories of those they serve. The importance of the stories was evidenced in this study. The identifying that takes place in the storytelling relation may help individuals with illness to accept their changing identities in the world. Likewise, in listening to their stories, caregivers may better witness their own value in the health of others.

Educators of healthcare workers may use stories to enhance the empathy of their learners which can then result in better care of those they serve. This could be achieved by allowing

adults who have battled illness with the assistance of healthcare workers to offer their stories in an educational setting.

Care must be taken with those who work in healthcare so that they do not become overcome by the stories of those who are ill. Listening to emotionally moving stories may burden these workers so those involved must be prepared to assist them in their coming to terms with the stories.

### **Clinical Pastoral Counselors**

This research study may also reveal new ways in which clinical pastoral counselors may interact with their clients. Clinical pastoral counselors need to demonstrate trust and care in their listening to their clients. The care taken in this study to honor the stories may be a model to counselors. The manner in which interpretation of the stories and the viewing of the stories from multiple perspectives took place in this study could positively affect the practice of pastoral counseling. This counseling could extend not only to adults diagnosed with terminal illness, but to other adults seeking counseling.

Clinical pastoral counselors may seek with their clients to consider how the story might have turned out differently, as was considered in this research. When such considerations take place, it allows the storyteller to re-author the story and construct a new story requiring future action. Attention to stories of individuals such as was demonstrated in this research study could help these counselors demonstrate respect, courage, and trust to those in their care.

### **Healthcare Chaplains**

Educators of healthcare chaplains may also benefit from this study. Healthcare chaplains can utilize this research as a model for receiving stories from adults with chronic or terminal illness in order to help these adults find meaning in their experiences changed by the presence of

their diseases. The interpretations of the stories received may help to construct and shed light on their meaning. The investigation into the multiple voices and the origin of those voices within the stories may give power to the individuals with the illnesses. The chaplains themselves may co-construct the stories as well as meaning in their own lives and careers.

### **Summary**

Storytelling was found to be a useful means to gain new insight, understanding, and meaning. This is in part because of the ease of remembering stories and because the meaning is co-created. Stories are memorable because they have characters, plot, and movement. As tellers and listeners, we are active participants in the telling and are implicated in the story. Those in the storytelling relation may choose to place themselves in the stories and see things from the perspective of the characters in the story. Stories may also do this without the choice of those in the relation. Any meaning that is derived from the story is co-constructed by the teller and listener. This fact gives credence to any meaning that comes from the story. Adult education, therefore, would do well by incorporating storytelling in the teaching and learning process so that what is learned is not only memorable but credible as the knowledge can be derived through reflection and interpretation of the stories.

### **Limitations and Implications for Research**

The type of research known as dialogical research is expanded through this study. Dialogical research has as basic tenets the non-finalizability of the participants, the use of second person address, and no claim of privilege or interpretive authority of the researcher (Frank, 2010). While dialogical research seeks to create no conclusions on its participants and no final meaning to be interpreted from the stories, this dialogical research study does take responsibility

for its part in the shaping of the future of its participants and me as its researcher (Frank, 2005) and its role in the future of this type of research.

### **The Basic Tenets of Dialogical Research**

The first tenet of dialogical research is the non-finalizability of the participants (Frank, 2010). Indeed, all conversation or dialogue is unfinalizable (Bakhtin, 1986). The process is never-ending because the conversation or dialogue that takes place is now shared with others and the construction of meaning is started. The utterances of the conversation have prompted responses that will continue to prompt yet other responses. In this study, the participants shared stories with me and I construct meaning in the storytelling relation. This construction of meaning is not a onetime thing. The stories and the co-constructed meaning are now part of my inner library and will continue to be a voice recognizable in future utterances. The process of interpreting the stories and constructing meaning continues as well for all involved in the storytelling relation. As I share these stories with others, through conversation, reading of this dissertation and possible future publications, new relations begin and new meaning is co-constructed within that new relation with a new listener. The process is never-ending. In this research, I do not intend to come to a conclusion as to the meaning gained by the participants of this study because the construction of the meaning is not complete, nor will it be. The participants are free to and expected to continue in the meaning making process, at least until their death, in order to gain deeper and ever-changing understandings of their experiences and lives. This study, therefore, holds to and develops the first tenet of dialogical research (Frank, 2010).

The research study also held to the second tenet of dialogical research as outlined by Frank (2010) which is the use of second-person address. The participants of a dialogical research



study are viewed as individuals and the researcher speaks with the participants rather than about them (Frank 2010). This study spoke with the participants in various ways. First, when eliciting stories, I allowed great freedom for the participant to choose stories. There was little prompting other than asking for stories that helped the participant to form values in life. Their freedom kept the participants from becoming subjects of the study. Also, the participants participated in multiple sessions with me; multiple sessions allowed the participants to expand previously told stories and to continue with new stories after time for reflection. In addition, this study allowed the participants to discuss their new meaning found within their story. The study also represents the use of second-person address by presenting the stories as completely as possible in Chapter Four rather than selecting particular sections of stories or creating a meta-story. These demonstrate this study's attempt at holding to the second tenet of dialogical research.

Another basic tenet of dialogical research is that the researcher should claim no privilege of interpretive authority. I have held to that tenet in multiple ways. While acknowledging interpretation in Chapter Four during the transcription of the stories of the participants through the transcription and inclusion of bracketed comments such as field notes and other explanations, I have attempted to make this known and visible. Others reading this study can recognize my interpretation. I also make it clear in the present chapter that I do not intend to be an authority on the stories of these participants. While I may add to the stories by explaining the understanding that I, as listener, co-constructed from the stories, I make it clear that others can and will gain other understanding which are just as appropriate and valuable. I have no intention to summarize the meaning of the stories and in fact encourage and expect other readers to continue interpretation of the stories and to continue to gather new and useful meaning.

### **Research with Adults Diagnosed with a Terminal Illness**

This dialogical research study proved to be of particular importance for individuals diagnosed with terminal illness. These individuals are often dismissed by society for many reasons. These adults, as a result of their illness, are often not seen to be productive members of a capitalistic society; they are often prevented from earning a living because of their illness, and often are spending much money on treatment or palliation of their disease. The monological diagnosis of a terminal illness sets them apart from much of society. The dialogical nature of this study demonstrates the value of these adults and their ability to continue to learn and to help others. As primary researcher in this study and active participant in the storytelling relation, I gained knowledge about myself and others through the stories of the participants. A better understanding of my role in the world was gained. The participants also learned about themselves in the process.

### **Polyphony of Voices in Dialogical Research**

Furthermore, the dialogical process allows adults to recognize the voices of others within their stories. An individual's voice is a complex unity of others' voices (Bakhtin, 1986). Using self-reflection, instigated by the researcher, the participants can see the distinct voices that help to create their own voice. They can acknowledge the presence of those voices within their own. Once those other voices are recognized, the individual can re-author the story either accentuating or quieting voices of others.

### **The Vitality of Dialogue**

An idea begins to live only when it comes in contact with other ideas (Bakhtin, 1973). This research has allowed ideas to thrive. The ideas shared in the stories elicited by this research

are now in contact with other ideas and are embodied by others. These others include my committee, future readers of this study, me, and others with whom I share the stories and the meaning gained. This fact allows these ideas to continue to live.

Frank (2005) states, “The researcher, by specific questions, and even by his or her observing presence, instigates self-reflections that will lead the respondent not merely to report his or her life but to *change* that life” (p. 98, italics in original). This research has shown that the participants were able to change their lives—even at a time when individuals are often dismissed and finalized—during their coping with a terminal illness. Sam changed his life by looking at the other side of stories; Max’s life changed, “Inside my heart I’m gonna say somebody cared enough about me to want to know about me.” Even George, the participant who had arguably the most previous experience with life stories, telling and listening, remarked of the experience “it helped me to put things in perspective—give me another perspective—some knowledge about myself that helped me interact with my family.”

Certainly my life changed through the sharing of these stories and through my work as researcher in this study. I have come to a better understanding of myself and the meanings I associate with certain experiences. The experience as a listener has allowed me to become a better listener, I believe. In my listening, I seek to hear not only the words, but I have more of a focus on the meaning behind the words. I also have come to appreciate the presence of individuals in conversation. In this electronic age, people seem to miss out on the intimacy of face to face discussions and the different relationship that can form through them. When I read chapter four of this dissertation, I realize how much more difficult it would be to understand these stories if I had not been present. Indeed, when reading the stories, Patricia Cranton stated,

“I wish you could include photos...It felt like I was missing an important dimension of ‘getting to know’ the participants” (P. Cranton, personal correspondence, December 1, 2011).

### **Limitations of this Research**

This study was limited to two or three sessions with each participant. This was partly so that the participant would not be overly infringed upon with presumably little time left in life. This limitation, however, limited both the amount of stories that were gathered and the amount of time available to review both the stories and the storytelling process. More sessions together with the participant could have allowed for analysis of the stories together in order to continue the co-creation of meaning that began during the earlier sessions.

The study was also affected by the lack of preparation of the participants. In each case, the participants were offered to start storytelling in the second session and just to get to know me and the intentions of the study during the first session. However, each participant decided to begin telling stories right away during the first session. Allowing time for more consideration of what stories to tell and perhaps additional learning about narrative identifying before beginning to tell stories certainly would have had an effect on the telling. It is not clear, however, that more preparation would have had a positive effect on the study. Certainly, there could be negative effects from a lack of the spontaneity that was evidenced in the research study as conducted.

### **Possibilities for Future Research**

Despite these limitations, the study produced rich descriptive storytelling from adults diagnosed with terminal illness. These stories aided in the construction of the meaning of life experiences for the individuals involved in the study, including me. The study also provided insight into the process of storytelling and story listening by adults and demonstrated the value of that process.

Dialogical research is open ended in many respects. This includes the fact that there is no prescribed method to the analysis. This study may serve as an example of the dialogical research form for other researchers. The analysis conducted in this chapter may be viewed as a possible way to develop the dialogical form and to discover new meaning from multiple viewpoints of stories.

A possibility for future research would be to conduct more of the interpretation and dialogue that took place in this chapter in the presence of the teller. In this manner, the teller and listener could spend more time together in dialogue and in the co-creation of meaning. Much of the interpretation for this study took place after all the interviews took place and did not allow for the continued active participation of the participants. Continuing the dialogue in the presence of the teller would allow for further interpretation by the teller and more utterances in response to the verbal responses of the listener and in anticipation of future responses. This study limited the sessions for a variety of reasons, including time constraints for the participants and for me. It would have been unethical to begin deconstructing the stories which may create a state of struggling with identity and not have time to reconstruct a new story with the participant before death. Other research, with fewer time constraints, could allow for more deconstruction and reconstruction or re-narration of the story.

Another possibility for future research would be to allow the participants to study life story and the parts of life story and be prepared for narrative identifying in the story. This study did not actively engage the participants in the study of stories before the storytelling sessions. This perhaps allowed the stories to be more raw and unprepared. A study that prepared the participants for life storytelling could make them more actively aware of the choices of episodes

shared and identities revealed. The study at hand, however, certainly has some value with its spontaneity.

Still other research could allow for written stories for the participants to share. This may reduce some of the time constraints for the researcher so that part of the stories could be constructed at the participants' leisure. Written stories would not be the same as rather spontaneous stories from the storyteller. Written stories would also lack the same relationship that can form during face to face storytelling.

As stated in the literature (Tyler, 2007b), the listener has quite an impact on the storytelling. Indeed, the stories that are chosen are impacted by the presence of the listener and the trust or lack of trust that the teller has for the listener. Future research could have multiple choices of listeners. The present study had all male participants, not by my choice, however, but perhaps the fact that I am male prevented possible female participants from choosing to be part of the study. Having multiple researchers as listeners, perhaps with different genders and sexual orientations, may allow more participants that meet the qualifications of the study to consider joining the study.

This study's storytelling sessions were limited to the teller and me as listener, except in the case of Melvin, who had a family member present as a caregiver, but who also impacted the study. Another study could ask for the participation of other family members of the adult diagnosed with a terminal illness in order to allow the storyteller to direct the stories to the other individual(s) and allow them to be part of the storytelling relation. This would certainly have a very different outcome, but may allow for growth and narrative identifying for family members struggling with the effects of the illness as well.

Certainly, the design of this study which limited participants to adults diagnosed with terminal illness was intended in part to offer these individuals that were “on the brink” (Bakhtin, 1973, p. 51) power in their lives affected by illness. However, future research could be conducted viewing the process of storytelling with other adults in order to assist in the forming of identities through story. As was evidenced in this research, the participants as well as the researcher can benefit in the process of co-constructing identities.

### **Reflections and Aspirations**

We find our physical position in relation to other objects. When we get driving directions, we relate our movements in relation to other things. For example, “Make a right at the convenience store” or “If you get to the shopping center you’ve gone too far.” Likewise we can gain knowledge of our personality, identity, or spirituality in relation to others. Our similarity to others and difference from others (Frank, 2010) matters. We can learn about ourselves by considering the location of others. This study allowed me, as researcher, to use the stories of others to help position myself in the world—view myself in relation to others. The study has allowed me to consider how things might turn out differently and has helped me view the moral complexity of actions (Frank, 2010). It has allowed me to consider what makes life good and it has called on me to shift my horizons (Frank, 2010).

In addition to the three research questions developed in Chapter One that helped to drive this research, a fourth question had emerged. This fourth question seems as relevant as the others. How have the stories affected me, the researcher? The present section addresses that question.

### **How Life Might Turn Out Differently**

I find myself now considering how my life might turn out differently in light of my experience in this research study. I feel as though I have a new sense of openness to the possibilities of life. I have a broadened understanding of the value of stories. They have a way of clarifying the vivid details of experiences. These stories indeed broke into my inner library and added complexity to my considerations. I was impacted as other qualitative researchers have noted: “We also quickly discovered that our methodology had an important impact on us. Through our work, we were touched by the people who generously allowed us into their lives, and we were changed by them” (Barnard, et al., 2000, p. 407).

I have been an adult educator for many years, usually following a path in education that was somewhat convenient. This research has complicated my viewpoint and called upon me to consider other ways to help adults gain knowledge. The use of stories intrigues me and the lifestory in particular appeals to me. I must now continue my story in light of these stories that I have helped to release.

All the men who participated in the study have taught me in various ways about showing dignity in adversity. I hope to continue in my growth through their stories and continue to emulate them in the dignity that I show for myself and others when struggling with adversity in my life. I plan to continue my work with my own and others’ stories in order to help find our place in the world.

Now, I find that I want to be available to others; to be present as a “delighted listener” (Tyler, 2007b) so that the stories of others may be heard. I want to be sure that I am not so



caught up in my own story as to not be able to hear the stories of others. I want to be open to the stories in such a way that I may enter those stories in order to gain new perspective. I desire to enter into relationship with others and their stories that may not otherwise be able to be told. I want to be open to them as George was open to others as a hospital chaplain, “Really, you can touch people’s lives and you’re touched by their lives, too.”

Sam comes to mind whenever I hear a small airplane overhead. I usually look up and see Sam smiling as he told his stories of flying and of his love of airplanes. Sometimes, I recall his words of understanding when he discussed the German soldiers who fought against Sam’s friends in World War II. Other times I recall the forgiveness that he offered to those who stole from him. Whether I’ll *always* think of Sam when I hear the planes is unknown. However, I do know that Sam’s stories, now heard by me, will always be part of me in some way. I hope to evidence the dignity that he displays in his story through his acknowledgement of the sacrifice of others and the forgiveness that he offers to others as I continue my life story.

### **Restorying My Life**

I learned much from Max’s story. Something that really struck me about how Max authored his story was the way in which he developed the main character of his story. The main character in Max’s story could have been an abused and neglected kid. It was not. Rather, the main character of Max’s story is a loving and caring male nurse who happened to be abused as a child. He did not allow the abuse and neglect to define him, but authored a character who learned from his story.

While listening to and interpreting the stories of the participants, especially that of Max, I learned the value of the stories, of listening, and of interpreting. I realized that these men gave insight into not only their lives, but also into life in general. The stories were not simply a way of

getting into the mind of and understanding the identities of the teller, but were valuable in themselves. While I was accepting of the value of their stories, I realized that I had not possessed value for my own story—and was forced to face that dichotomy.

I was confronted with the fact that I was ignoring much of my own story. Through my choice and through perhaps natural psychological tendencies, I blocked out much of my history that had involved abuse by a “family friend” and “leader” from our church. I couldn’t stand to view the actions that were perpetrated upon me and the years of psychological discomfort that came from them. I had chosen to deal with it by not dealing with it—I hid it away out of sight. I had moved on and believed I could lead a productive life despite my “ugly” past; in many ways I did. However, seeing the value of others’ stories—even “ugly” ones—compelled me to look for the value in my own. I now realize that ignoring part of my own story was ignoring part of my identity. When ignoring part of my own identity, I was not whole. This had prevented me from being completely present in my life and prevented me from sharing fully with my wife, family, and friends.

Max’s ability to change the story seemed empowering to me. I realized that I could do something similar with my story. I could rewrite the main character in my own story. I have the ability to define my own character rather than allow others and past experiences to define me. Re-characterizing myself as an actor in a positive story rather than a character being acted upon gives me strength to re-author myself. I have begun a process in which I will tell my story and I will review the story in light of the person I have become. I will then be able to continue to re-author my story.

Max's care for people was demonstrated in his work and in the healing that he offered as a nurse. He was able to continue that care with the sharing of his stories during his final days.

The healing that he offered to me carries on after his death.

### **Revelations for "Ordinary Life"**

Max and I never met until my first visit with him for my research. However, in his capacity as a nurse and my capacity working at a pharmacy, we had contact prior to the start of the research. The research brought us together in a much deeper relationship. Almost immediately, Max seemed to see me as someone who cared; he was free to let his seldom heard stories free. One thing I learned in my visits with Max is that there are people on the other end of the phone with their own stories. People working at a pharmacy may sometimes forget the humanity of their position. It is easy to get frustrated with nursing staff who have demands on the pharmacy. Understanding that there is a story of both the nurse and the patient behind the demands could make the work easier to do.

Understanding the stories of others takes effort. My boss at the pharmacy has shared with me some stories that help to explain his love of his profession as a pharmacist; he seems to understand his role in the care of the patient. He told the story of the time he got called out on Thanksgiving morning to make a delivery of medication to a hospice patient to help ease the patient's pain. He willingly went. When he arrived, he found a family getting ready to sit down for their Thanksgiving meal. The man that opened the door was grateful to him for coming out on Thanksgiving in order to bring the medications. He invited my boss in to eat. Seeing genuine generosity in the offer, he accepted and sat down to eat with them—knowing that his own dinner at home would not be until sometime later in the afternoon. The family with whom he ate was happy to have him and they all ate off what appeared to be reused disposable aluminum plates.

What this and other stories provide is an understanding of and respect for others. Too often, it seems, we are caught up in our own story and don't have time for others. It seems appropriate to take time to consider what others may be going through before making any judgments or being quick to criticize or even being impatient with others. I hope to share some of these stories and the understandings I have gained with others at our pharmacy.

George's true pioneer spirit continues to rouse me. It gives me hope to know that individuals can forge new roads and that while we may be destined to make some "unchosen choices" (Frank, 2010, p. 51) we are still able to go beyond these boundaries and create new experiences and approach new frontiers.

### **The Loss of Newly Gained Relationships**

Melvin passed away not long after my second visit with him. I felt that I lost a friend. Seeing Melvin at the viewing at the church, I saw a man I knew well and a family with whom I could empathize for the loss.

Someone, who attended a presentation I was giving about the data gathered and analysis I had begun for this study, asked me how I handle the loss of the participants. Do I bracket it off from my life so that I don't get emotional? I tried to answer honestly that I understood getting into the study that it was likely participants would pass away during or shortly after my contact with them for the study. I also understood, however, that I was going to be a part of allowing their stories to live. While the physical presence of the participants is not available to me, the stories are now a part of me and would not have been if I didn't participate in the study and get to know them. There is a risk, yes, and I do get emotional. However, I am also pleased that I have been able to participate in setting some stories free—stories that may not otherwise find an appropriate place to be told. Others who conducted research with adults with terminal illness

have noted that “we experienced the risk in maintaining relationships with the dying, the risk of loss of closely formed bonds, and the risk that each encounter could challenge our own sense of self and well-being” (Barnard, et al., 2000, p. 407). Facing that risk has indeed challenged my own sense of self, and I have broadened my view because of it.

Nearly seven months had passed from the time that I had last visited Sam when I received a call that let me know that this research matters. Sam’s ninety-four year old widow called to invite me to his funeral. She wanted to be sure that I had seen the obituary that she had written that was in the Sunday newspaper which read, “Sam...took his flight to Heaven Friday morning...” I never expected a personal call from his widow. I cannot imagine what a woman must be going through after losing her husband of seventy-two years. I knew him for only several hours and came to love him. For her to call meant so much to me. She had found my phone number on my consent form among Sam’s things at the Veterans’ Administration Hospital, although I had never visited him there.

At the funeral, I met Sam’s daughter who said she had collected some things that she wanted to give to me and looked forward to getting a copy of my dissertation. It was evident that my work with Sam mattered, to Sam, his family, and to me.

The preacher at the service spoke about Sam whom he had apparently visited quite a bit, but didn’t know Sam the way that I know Sam. There seemed to be a lack of depth. Not that I am claiming any authority over Sam’s story, but perhaps the preacher was hearing but not listening. Certainly, it was evident that Sam told a different story to him than he did to me. We co-created a story with much meaning.

Sam’s grandson spoke at the service as well. He started by saying that his grandfather loved telling stories. He recalled the family vacations at Ocean City where Sam preferred to be

with the grandkids rather than with the other adults, so that he could tell his stories. He recalled stories in which his grandfather was a cowboy who fought off the Indians and other stories in which he was an Indian who fought off cowboys. Again, Sam knew the other side to the story well.

### **Reflections on the Purpose of the Study**

When I first began the study, I thought that I'd be conducting a study that would find "the meaning of life" from the perspective of adults living with a terminal diagnosis. I thought that it would be great to get an understanding of what individuals thought was the meaning of life and see if there were themes and perhaps nail down an overriding concept for this meaning. I believed that adults diagnosed with a terminal diagnosis would be valuable sources for various reasons—perhaps mostly because I thought that they may be considering the meaning of life because of their imposing struggle with death.

Surprisingly, my interests in and expectations of the study began to change as I read and studied about the conceptual frameworks that seemed to support the study. I turned my focus from "the meaning of life" toward the value of storytelling in the study and the lives of adults with terminal illness. My expectations continued to change and develop as I began meeting the participants and gathering their stories.

Having concluded the study, I realize that all of my concerns of the study have value and that the study helped to contribute not only to the value of storytelling (as discussed in the appropriate sections above), but indeed to a continued discovery of the meaning of life for me. This meaning, however, is not something that can be "nailed down." Indeed, this meaning must *not* be nailed down, but allowed the freedom to move, grow, and develop. The lives and the stories so lovingly shared with me have become part of me. Certainly, the sharing of these stories

continues to enlighten me. The meaning that the study has developed in me cannot be summed up in an utterance, paragraph, or thesis. The meaning may be, however, evidenced in the stories that I now am able to tell, having played a part in setting free the stories of others.

### **Final Thoughts**

While in the dialogical view this study has only begun and will continue with me and in the systemicity of those who view these stories and this dissertation, it is appropriate and necessary to end the dissertation. Offered here are a few thoughts and acknowledgements that help to pave the road for the continuation of the journey that this research plots.

Dialogue was essential for this research. Certainly, dialogue guided the interview sessions, but it was also necessary in order for me to complete the dissertation. I struggle getting my thoughts and ideas on paper and need the assistance, comments, reflections, and thoughts of others (family, friends, and committee) to bring out other ideas and to help my ideas form and grow. I am grateful to all who have helped in that process.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Aunt Rose. Her generosity in life and death was evident. Her gracious acceptance of assistance was humbling. My family has benefited from her time with us in various ways, some of which we have yet to experience. Our grandchildren have had her life and our response to her struggles as an example to form our history and story. Our experiences with Aunt Rose are part of our family's systemicity.

This study is changing my story and my life. I have a deeper understanding of the meaning in the irony contained in Jo Tyler's reaction to the analysis of her own story, "Already it feels as though this process is likely to make life more complicated for me, and simpler, in that I will be more astute, more understanding about the complications" (Tyler, 2010, p. 40). This process will likely improve my ability to reflect on stories—my own and others'. This reflection

may complicate things; perhaps illuminate choices that I would not otherwise have seen. At the same time it may simplify things—perhaps give clarity to my own identities which will assist in facing these choices.

The study continues for me, as the stories gathered in this study have been freed and will continue out of control. This study has opened a new chapter in my life story. The dialogical process will continue for me in these stories and others that will develop from them, but have yet to be voiced.

My work in the Adult Education program at Penn State guided by the faculty and in this study formed with the graciousness of the participants and their families has developed a more reflective nature in me—in my practice as an educator and in life in general. The gentle nature and committed patience of Patricia Cranton, in particular, has affected me. I believe that I have become a better educator, father, husband, and man. With the majority of my work on this dissertation behind me, I hope to have the time to prove it.



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**APPENDIX A**

1. Please tell a story that was told to you perhaps earlier in your life that seemed to be an important story at the time or some other time in your life.
2. Please tell a story from your own experiences that gives you insight into your values or the meaning of your experiences.
3. How does storytelling help you gain a better understanding of yourself?
4. What about storytelling helps you gain a better understanding of your experiences?
5. What is the relationship between the stories you heard and your own stories of your experiences?
6. How often do you share personal stories?
7. If you have shared personal stories with others, what do you believe you have learned from that experience?
8. Has storytelling between you and your family provided you with a meaningful experience or a learning opportunity?
9. Has the process of finding meaning in experience through storytelling influenced how you work with the public and/or colleagues in your professional and/or personal life? In what ways?
10. In what ways have your life experiences seemed to follow in the manner of the stories you have heard?
11. How have your life stories reflected the stories that you grew up with?
12. In what ways do your personal life stories contradict previously heard stories?
13. In what ways do your experiences seem to be formed by stories that you've heard?
14. How has storytelling influenced your spirituality?
15. How does storytelling connect you with your past or your future?
16. How does storytelling connect you with your family or ancestors?

## APPENDIX B



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The Pennsylvania State University  
 Institutional Review Board  
 Office for Research Protections  
 Approval Date:

**Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research**  
 The Pennsylvania State University

**Title of Project:** Storytelling By Adults with Terminal Illness:  
 Making Meaning through Re-storying

**Principal Investigator:** Michael Sauer  
 755 Barrcrest Lane  
 Lancaster PA 17603  
 717-286-6755  
 mps241@psu.edu

**Advisor:** Elizabeth J. Tisdell, Ed.D.  
 Penn State Harrisburg, Olmsted Bldg.  
 Middletown, PA 17057  
 717-948-6514  
 ejt11@psu.edu

**Other Investigator(s):**

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the role of storytelling used by adults with a terminal illness in order to understand the meaning of their experiences.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to participate in up to three private interviews with the researcher that will ask you to share stories regarding your life experiences and stories that you have heard that you consider meaningful. The interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription. Your name would not be part of the study results, and you would not be identified by name or in other ways that could identify you

3. **Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause you discomfort.
4. **Benefits:** The benefits to you include the possibility of gaining a deeper understanding of your life's experiences and the relationship between them and stories that surround your life.

The benefits to society include a deeper understanding of the use of storytelling in adult learning.

5. **Duration/Time:** You will be asked to participate in up to three interviews. The first would be expected to last approximately 15 minutes and the two follow-up interviews would be expected to last approximately one hour each.
6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections, the Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this research study. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses. Your name and contact information will be held simply for the purpose of contacting you by the principal researcher. That information will be kept safely in the researcher's locked office and separate from the recorded interviews and only the principal researcher and advisor will have access to that information.
7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Michael Sauer at (717) 286-6755 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Question about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

8. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

**9. Potential to Use Recordings for Educational Purposes**

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that segments of the recordings made of my participation in this research may be used for education and training of future researchers/practitioners.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not want segments of the recordings made of my participation in this research to be used for education and training of future researchers/practitioners. Recordings must be destroyed by June 2014.

*You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.*

*You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form for your records.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date





**Seeking Participants for Social Science Research**  
The Pennsylvania State University

## APPENDIX C

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The Pennsylvania State University

### Storytelling by Adults with Terminal Illness: Making Meaning through Re-storying

#### Looking for Adult Volunteers

#### willing to share stories:

life stories and other stories that have been important in  
understanding the meaning of life's experiences.

Volunteers should be willing to meet with the researcher for 3 private interview sessions approximately an hour in length to dialogue with the researcher and to tell stories that were meaningful to the participant. The information will be audio-recorded and kept strictly confidential. Your name will not be part of the study results.

A doctoral student in Adult Education at Penn State Harrisburg is seeking research participants to assist in a study to gain a better understanding of the role of storytelling and its effects on understanding the meaning of experiences with adults diagnosed with a terminal illness.

If you are interested in sharing stories for this research study, please contact the student researcher to discuss requirements and to schedule interviews:

Michael Sauer  
717-286-6755  
[mps241@psu.edu](mailto:mps241@psu.edu)

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the role of storytelling used by adults with a terminal illness in order to understand the meaning of their experiences.

**Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to participate in up to three private interviews with the researcher that will ask you to share stories regarding your life experiences and stories that you have heard that you consider meaningful. The interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription. Your name would not be part of the study results, and you would not be identified by name or in other ways that could identify you

**Benefits:** The benefits to you include the possibility of gaining a deeper understanding of your life's experiences and the relationship between them and stories that surround your life.

The benefits to society include a deeper understanding of the use of storytelling in adult learning.

**Duration/Time:** You will be asked to participate in up to three interviews. The first would be expected to last approximately 15 minutes and the two follow-up interviews would be expected to last approximately one hour each.

In order to participate, you must meet the following requirements:

- You must be 25 years of age or older and English-speaking to take part in this research study.
- You must have been diagnosed with a terminal illness.
- You must be willing to tell stories from your life in one-on-one interviews and discuss the stories' impact on your life. These interviews may last one hour each.
- You are free to discontinue participation at any time.

If you are interested, please contact the principal investigator for scheduling of interviews:

Michael Sauer

717-286-6755

mps241@psu.edu

## CIRRICULUM VITAE

**Michael Paul Sauer**

### **Education**

**MBA, Penn State University**, Harrisburg, PA, Business Administration, December, 2004

**BS, Albright College**, Reading, PA, Business Administration, December, 2002

### **Professional Experience**

**Adjunct Business Faculty**, Albright College, Reading, PA, 2005 - Present

**Technology Manager**, Williams Apothecary, Inc., Lancaster, PA, 1998 - Present

**Trainer, Presenter, and Installer** QS1 Data Systems, Spartanburg, SC, 1993 – 1998

### **Selected Presentations**

*Storytelling with Adults Diagnosed With Terminal Illness: Narrative Identifying through Dialogical Research*, oral presentation at the Sixth Annual Adult Education Doctoral Research Forum. Penn State Harrisburg, December, 2011.

*Motivating Adult Students in the Degree Completion Program at Albright College*, poster presentation at the Third Annual Adult Education Doctoral Research Forum. Penn State Harrisburg, December, 2008.

### **Service**

*Member, Business and Technology Committee*, Pennsylvania eHealth Initiative. 2005-Present

*Member, Finance Council*, St Philip Church, Lancaster PA. 2010-Present

*Member, Board of Directors*, Share Lancaster, Lancaster, PA 2011-Present