

1999 Memorial Service

Written by Judy Bessinger

Choir "I Believe"

Narrator: what do you believe? What do you really believe? I believe in life. I believe life is a precious gift that should be savored every, single day. I believe life should be a constant learning and growing, and experiencing time; a time of wonder and questioning. Sometimes life seems all too short to include everything we'd like to do and say. Everything we'd like to say to those closest to us. But we know that death comes to all of us. No one is immune. No one can escape. We all know of Sisters and Brothers, relatives and friends who shared our life in the past year, but who are now gone from our sight. And we wonder at the meaning of life. Day to day we struggle to discover who we are, what we are to do in life; what is our meaning and purpose and what waits for us after death. Some of us have a lifelong struggle with these questions.

To help in our struggle, I'd like to share with you a simple, yet not so simple story about a caterpillar named Stripe who also had trouble becoming what she was meant to be.



Narrator: Once upon a time, a tiny striped caterpillar burst from the egg which had been home for so long.

Stripe: Hello world. It sure is bright out here in the sun. I'm hungry.

Narrator: And straight away she began to eat the leaf she was born on. And she ate another leaf...and another...and another. And got bigger...and bigger...and bigger, until one day she stopped eating and thought:

Stripe: There must be more to life than eating and getting bigger. It's getting dull.

Narrator: So Stripe crawled down from the friendly tree that had shaded and fed her. She was seeking more. There were all sorts of new things to find - grass and dirt and holes and tiny bugs. Each fascinated her, but nothing satisfied. Then, one day Stripe found other caterpillars all heading to a single destination, a very tall pillar made up of other caterpillars all climbing. She can't see the top that is obscured by clouds, but she figures if everyone else is doing it, she doesn't want to be left out. She jumps into the pile and with others she pushes and shoves and struggles slowly but surely to inch her way to the top. The going is tough, but she perseveres even when others lose their grip and fall. When she finally reaches the top she finds nothing. No joy, no sense of accomplishment, no inner peace, only the feeling that there must be something more.

Stripe makes her way down the pile trying to tell others there is nothing for them at the top, but they ignore her, each intent on her own climb. Once more at the bottom of the pile, Stripe agonized.

Stripe: What in the world do I really want? It seems to be different every few minutes. But I know there must be more.

Narrator: One day a gray-haired caterpillar on a branch surprised her. He seemed caught in some hairy stuff.

Stripe: You seem in trouble, can I help?

Gray: No, my dear. I have to do this to become a butterfly.

Stripe: Tell me, Sir, what is a butterfly?

Gray: It is what you are meant to become. It flies with beautiful wings and joins the earth to heaven.

Stripe: It can't be true! How can I believe there's a butterfly inside you or me when all I see is a fuzzy worm? How does one become a butterfly?

Gray: You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar.

Stripe: You mean to die?

Gray: Yes and no. What looks like you will die, but what's really you will still live. Life is changed, not taken away. Isn't that different from those who die without ever becoming a butterfly?

Stripe: And if I decide to become a butterfly, what do I do?

Gray: Watch me. I'm making a cocoon. It looks like I'm hiding. I know, but a cocoon is no escape. It's an in between house where the change takes place. It's a big step since you can never return to the caterpillar life. During the change it will seem to you or to anyone who may peek that nothing is happening. But, the butterfly is already becoming. It just takes time.

Narrator: How could she risk the only life she knew, when it seemed so unlikely she could become a glorious winged creature. The gray-haired caterpillar continued to cover himself with silky threads. As he rolled the last bit around his head he called:

Gray: You'll be a beautiful butterfly. We're all waiting for you.

Narrator: And Stripe decided to risk for a butterfly. For courage she hung right beside the other cocoon and began to spin her own.

Stripe: Imagine I didn't even know I could do this. That's some encouragement that I'm on the right track. If I have inside me the stuff to make cocoons, maybe the stuff of butterflies is there to.

Narrator: It got darker and darker and she was afraid. She felt she had to let go of everything and then wait and wait.

Choir: Hymn of Promise

Narrator: And then one day...(Butterflies emerge from their cocoons). The end...Or is it the beginning?