A THANK YOU TO BETSY

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I met Betsy twenty years ago almost to the day. It was a six week summer school at Harvard designed to prepare us mid-career folks for all the maths and economics and study which we were about to embark on as part of our post graduate degree.

Betsy was in my study group of four. She married one of our Canadian classmates and they have a beautiful twelve year old daughter. She died overnight from cancer.

I was sharing this with another friend today and telling him how I could not believe how sad I was, and he suggested that I write about it.

I attended Betsy’s wedding in Vail, holidayed with her at Cape Cod, partied with her and others in Boston to celebrate my own marriage, visited her with my pregnant wife in Toronto, chatted at alumni reunions at Harvard, dined in Melbourne with Corey her visiting husband, and exchanged many cards and emails especially about our daughters including over the past ten months when she discovered by accident that she had cancer.

The relevance for many of you who may be reading this is that we met and connected on a learning program. And Betsy was a natural leader, not just because of her talents and intelligence and strong commitment to social justice but because of her gracefulness. Betsy was gracefulness. Grace, above all else, is what she contributed to us all.

I vividly remember having a conversation with her once about grace and we agreed with each other that life is an act of grace, a gift given to each of us for free.

It is twenty years since we first met. We lived in different countries so we did not spend that much time together after our course. And yet, the bond is deep, the connection is close, and the sadness is great.

How easy it is to underestimate how much others matter to us and contribute to us, and to forget how much we can contribute to others.