

# The Renaissance



## The Hekman Group

*Medical Management Ingenuity*

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by Ken Hekman

***There are unmistakable divine interventions that are too coincidental to chalk up to luck.***

*But, now I live without fear...I fear no death for I have already died.*

*It is as though my thoughts can be read on the lines of my face.*

*September 11th was a different wake up call for me.*

*I realized that I had something in common with the terrorists themselves, for they were not afraid to die.... They died for hate. I will die for love.*

I'd like to share some thoughts about the renaissance that I think I've experienced. As I look back on the 5 years since Carla's death, I am in awe of what has happened to me. As I look back there are unmistakable divine interventions that are too coincidental to chalk up to luck. I see myself as a passive player in the healing process. I can't call myself patient for there were many times when I was not patient. In fact, much of the healing had to come to overcome my impatience.

Let me tell you where I am now in my journey and then let's walk backwards to see how I got here. As I approach my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, I feel that I am the healthiest I've ever been in my life. My health reflects all aspects...this is health in the fullest sense...spiritual, emotional, physical. I'm much healthier now than I was before Carla died—strange as that may be, for I was five years younger then. But now I live without fear. I live with a passion for life that is unlimited by a fear of death. I fear no death for I have already died. My second death will be a piece of cake compared to the first one. It is as though I am living on borrowed time, living beyond what I have a right to expect. This is such a contrast to that which was my outlook before losing Carla. I had a great passion for life, to be sure, but it was always shaded by the eventuality – the fear – of a profound illness, or of a life shortening incident that might destroy the passion. Well now I've lived through that incident and I've learned about a new passion, a passion that is impossible to understand before facing that kind of a life threatening condition. I live now with a transparency that transcends even the tactful honesty that shaped my philosophy of life before.

I talk about the day Carla died as the day I lost my skin. I came inside out. It's as if nothing could protect me, nor could I protect those I loved...even my children, which is a Daddy's first duty. Such defenselessness gave me both vulnerability and a freedom to live not as others expect me to live, but to live *as I am* at the deepest part of my being. It is as though my heart beats in full view for others to see. It is as though my thoughts can be read on the lines in my face. It is as though I have no secrets, nothing to hide, nothing to protect anymore. Nothing can hurt me...not even death. Certainly, I would grieve if I were to lose another loved one, but I fear not for my own death, for it will be a welcome transition. It is not so welcome that I need to hasten it, but neither do I dread it. It is as free to come as my next breath.

September 11<sup>th</sup> was a wake up call to the world, a wake up call that terrorism can reach anywhere at any time. But it was a different kind of wake up call for me. As I processed the news in the first few minutes of hearing about the attack on the World Trade Center, I came in touch with several astounding discoveries. First, although the world was in terror, I was not afraid. I had no fear for myself. Sorrow, yes, but no fear. In the next moment, I realized that I had something in common with the terrorists themselves, for they were not afraid to die. But the distinguishing feature jumped out at me. Neither of us was afraid to die, but their cause was without conscience. My fearlessness comes *with* conscience and with purpose that transcends nefarious outcomes. They died for hate. I will die for love.

How did I get here? I can't easily identify the steps. All I can see looking back are a few footprints here and there interspersed with long stretches of drifting sand. I can see the conversation with Jill about ten days after Carla's loss in which my rage

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*I'm letting God borrow my voice; and in the letting there is healing.*

evaporated when Jill said she realized she could have been in that car; when Jill said, "I'm a Christian now because of Carla's death." She realized she could have been in the car if she had rendezvoused with Carla just twenty minutes earlier. And she would have been in the direct path of impact. Suddenly, I realized I could have lost two daughters instead of just one.

Then there was another moment about a month later. As I walked through the parking lot on the way to my car at church, my legs grew so heavy; it was as though they could not walk on their own. Then suddenly—miraculously—my legs gained strength, the vitality of a young man's legs. I knew immediately, they were Jesus' legs. He was letting me borrow them, just enough to get me to the car. He gave grace that was just sufficient for the moment.

Then there was another moment at about six months when I experienced God's voice in the speaking in tongues of a friend. The message was so remarkable. The essential message was "I give you the treasures of darkness, the riches stored in secret places so that you will know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name." The verse from Isaiah found new words, new expressions, that they came for my benefit when I needed to hear them most.

And, how can I forget the moment when I reached my deepest despair. When I was experiencing suicidal thoughts after several weeks of extraordinary pressure I finally had a moment to come to grips with what I feared most...the fear of losing another child. I experienced such a profound sense of the loss of control and the fear of my own death. The convergence of these three thoughts was ready to drive me mad, and to find a tree that I could crash into. The day those thoughts converged was the day I met a man, a doctor, who had lost four of his five children, and who was waiting as his fifth and final surviving child (a twenty-nine year old son) was waiting for a heart transplant. This man continued to serve and continued to live through all that sorrow. He had faced what I feared most, and continued to express compassion through his doctoring skills. Why did God place that man in my path at that moment? There's no explanation except that this was again divine intervention.

Then there were the experiences that began to draw me into the lives of people who suffer in other places like Romania, Kyrgyzstan, Honduras, and Suriname. My own suffering became a badge that allowed me to be effective in places that I would not have thought possible, and with a humility that was only achievable for someone who has lost their skin.

I no longer have a desire or intention to be a hotshot international health guy. No, I am just one broken soul using the talents that I was given to help other broken souls. There is no honor, no glory in that...there's just obedience. There's just doing what I can to make meaning for my own life and to add meaning to the lives of others; a few small efforts to make sense out of a senseless loss.

Then there's the writing. Poetry became a method of expressing the inexpressible. But it flowed easily as essays and journal tidbits that turned feelings into words and words into feelings. And as the writings began to hit the ground, touching the lives of others, waves of feedback affirmed, supported, encouraged, drew out the best in me, and stimulated more writing. They are not my words. I'm only obedient to the voices of those within me and around me, to the voice of God who speaks with my tongue, my mouth. I'm letting God borrow my voice; and in the letting, there is healing. I am obedient, subservient to a voice that is far more powerful than my own. It's not even a fair battle if I were to try to resist it. A skinless man has no resistance at all. And, so I listen. I listen with my whole being so that when words come, they attempt to capture the wholeness of that being, the wonder of and color of its richness. When words come, they come from the deepest of my soul to reach to the deepest, darkest corners in the souls of my readers and listeners. So now I live in a freedom that I did not know before, a freedom I didn't know was possible.

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live in a freedom from fear, a freedom to live and to die, as I will surely do, for both are surely in my path. I wish I could convey this kind of freedom to everyone that I encounter. I wish every man, woman and child could live with the freedom of skinless-ness, without having to lose their skin as traumatically and tragically as I have. I wish everyone could embrace sorrow, conflict, and tragedy with equal verve as they embrace life. I think about how different the world would be if we did not fear death, if we lived as though each moment is precious beyond belief but that dying for love is even more precious. I wish we could all love each other to death, for then we would all be able to do extraordinary things – as extraordinary as terrorists, but far more beneficial to each other, to our world, and to ourselves.