

This month's Circle Tale is written by PeerSpirit colleague Ruth Pittard. Ruth is an educator, political, environmental and spiritual activist, who has dedicated her life to helping others access and build their talents and skills for the good of the world. A grandmother of four, Ruth now seeks to share her life experience to promote enhanced consciousness and personal growth as preventive medicine for those ills that threaten our well-being. A native Southerner, she incorporates her experience, ancient wisdom, current theory, and story to move participants into loving action which, Ruth believes, literally can change the world.

Thank you Ruth, for sharing this story.

## Circle Tale: February 2015 Tears Above a Smile

by Ruth Pittard

My mother, almost 95 years old, moved into her local hospital in Boone, North Carolina on Dec. 12, 2014 after her descending aorta began to rupture. She moved instantly from three Tylenol per day to enough morphine and Ativan to stun her pain into absolute submission. I moved with her, holding her hand off and on for the next two days until she quietly slipped away. Peace. For both of us.

This last journey for my mother and me began almost four years ago on the [Cascadia Quest](#), led annually in the Washington Cascade range by Ann Linnea, Christina Baldwin, and Deborah Greene-Jacobi. The week, base-camped at Skalitude and soloing in the adjoining valley, was my 65th birthday present to myself. After several days acclimating and learning the ceremonies of the quest, we chose a sacred spot where we would live alone outdoors for 48 hours. One of the questing ceremonies is called "the Death Lodge," and provides a chance to invite unfinished business or incomplete relationships to come visit and renegotiate toward wholeness.



*Ruth & Ann during the Cascadia Quest*

When I looked into my constructed death lodge, only my mother's spirit occupied the space. I knew our lives together had been difficult; now her sole presence in conflicted space shook my consciousness into acknowledgment. In the dark, she stared at me, confused, and I stared back. By dawn, I had accepted we had work to do on our relationship before our time together ended - and I knew I would be the one to begin. That chilly morning, backpack bulging, I emerged from solitary thought to focused, dedicated, joyous action.

Those forty-eight hours alone not only laid my daughter-mother relationship bare, it also clarified for me that I only had power to change my own heart, to purify my own feelings, to change my own course. I could choose to move toward resolution. Mother could make her own choices. I asked her to help me create new, positive stories together, to rid ourselves of the old, worn-out negative plots in favor of fun, energetic, non-judgmental experiences. To my amazement, she accepted!

So, I moved back to North Carolina, and spent the next four years caring for my mother every week in a journey from confusion and resentment to forgiveness and love. This last, most difficult time with her provided an understanding and opportunity for both of us to realize a final honesty and resolution to our joint lives. We spoke through our hearts; we forgot in order to forgive. We laughed and cried. We touched. We remembered healing stories and lived new and different ones. We talked frankly and listened attentively. We fell into open-hearted love.

I will truly mourn her passage, grateful for all the time we had to figure out how to love one another and truly to become mother and daughter. I moved back home for that relationship to emerge and it did. The Death Lodge of my 65th birthday quest with Ann, Christina and Deb held only my mother as "unfinished" business. This Sunday it was empty. Full of gratitude, I can now move into the elder space she vacated, humble and much wiser, with tears above a smile.



*If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it. For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at [www.peerspirit.com](http://www.peerspirit.com) and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*