

Eulogy for Cindy Labell by Elizabeth Berger MD

I first met Cindy, then my cousin Lyn's girlfriend, at Aunt Helen's and Uncle Nat's house on Overbrook Drive when Cindy was the same age that her daughter Jessie is right now. It was the night of a lunar eclipse, a natural wonder. We all poured out of the house after dinner to stare at the sky. Over the next thirty-odd years, Cindy and I never lived in the same city, but we fell into a pattern of running off to thrift stores together, the Goodwill, the flea market, the rummage sales. We spent ten thousand hours at the Goodwill. What were we looking for?

We came home with a dried-up bottle of ink from the Depression, a very interesting button, a table cloth with a hole but beautiful fernlike swirls on it, a little plastic ballerina that might have twirled around at one time on the top of a jewelry box. These things were wonders too, and they furnished a magic world. Cindy was an artist, and above all, what she found in Goodwill was always beautiful. Often I didn't see something as beautiful until I learned that she liked it.

Then my opinion of the thing magically changed. These things of beauty and wonder spoke of intimacy, and cozy corners in the home, of tender memories of Grandma and her set of juice glasses. Cindy and I put these things in special places in our houses. These things reminded us of each other, and of the fertility of the human imagination that shaped them, also, of the wonders of the natural world--a loyal dog's devoted sigh, a bird's nest, the curl of a leaf.

All of these humble things we collected spoke to me of Cindy's enormous depth and capacity for appreciation: for her family and its rich past, and her personal attunement to everything precious and lovely that this world offers, her willingness to get down into stuff. She had an artist's empathy for small things and their resonance with the eternal. This is why so many people have said, "Cindy is my best friend," and "Cindy is the most spiritually evolved person that I have ever known.

I ask then that these small spirits--the imp that resides in the old ink bottle, the very interesting button, the little plastic ballerina--carry our sister Lucinda Benbow Labell to their realm of natural magic. Carry her lovingly since she has known your secrets and honored them as your most loyal servant. I ask these spirits--large and small, wherever they may be, Adonai Eloheinu-- to comfort us too, we who mourn, and help us bear your mysteries with grace.