

## Eulogy for David J. Baldwin

David and I were married only twenty nine years in this lifetime, but it seemed we'd been married at least fifty or sixty lifetimes. Our song begins: *Perhaps Love is like a resting place, a shelter from the storm.*

David was that shelter for many of us. Not only as the creator and designer of the Safe House – that shelter for spies of all ages and nations – but for friends from law school, for veterans and their families, for gamers and geocachers; for his daughter Tracy; for writers and journalists of the Milwaukee Press Club ... for anyone who just needed to talk. Fellow veterans have called him brother, many young friends looked on him as an uncle, and many benefited from his non-judgmental love.

In a commonplace book where he recorded his educational journey, David wrote, “Fleas are trained for a circus by placing a glass bowl over them. When they jump and hit the glass, they “learn” their limitations. Once the glass is taken away, they have internalized the “truth” and attempt to jump no higher. Parents, friends, religions, and we ourselves” he wrote, “place glass bowls over our real potential. These bowls control our attitude.”

We discussed that becoming truly human means learning there is no glass bowl, and leaving the “Circus” behind. And, he wrote, it takes courage to sacrifice what we are for what we might become.

David removed the glass bowl I was under, helping me appreciate each person for his/her specialness as he did, and expanding my definition of the word family. We never intended to be more than friends. When we realized we cared for one another, he told me to go away and date younger men. I returned to Canada and tried to find a guy as suave, kind, widely-read, or interesting. But the guy with the blue eyes with whom I could discuss the universe was in Milwaukee. So I made a weekend trip and proposed to him.

On our way to New Orleans for our honeymoon we visited Mark Twain's home and I swear, every civil war battlefield. A list of his favorite travel memories includes three Presidential Inaugurations, the Trench of the Bayonets at Verdun, and a peace mission to Vietnam. We read aloud to one another on vacations in St. Thomas, Grand Caymans, and Jamaica. In Waterford Ireland, we visited Baldwin relatives and toured a coffin ship. In Berlin, he did the usual sights, but also went to the Stasi prison where a friend had been incarcerated. His souvenirs refused to fit in any suitcase. Nepali windows, a carved Chinese cabinet...everywhere, he collected objects that told a story.

We shared a passion for storytelling. David got a big kick out of writing Mr. Singh Baldwin on his nametag at my readings. He strained his back a few times, carrying my suitcases of books. In Pakistan we travelled through the Khyber Pass because David's schoolboy favorite adventure writer Richard Halliburton had done so back in 1930. Researching *The Tiger Claw* we visited the War museum in London, traipsed the streets of Suresnes, France; were dumped on a train platform in pitch dark in the tiny town of Pforzheim; and wept at Dachau. Back in MKE, I have a special memory of him in bed after cataract surgery with a pirate-patch over one eye and a black felt pen in hand, as first reader of the novel.

Over time, our home became a second Safe House, with multifunction cupboards and nooks, two way mirrors, a rotating door into my walk-in cupboard, split levels and hidden exits. He designed a rotating bangle rack for me, kitchen cabinets with sliding doors, headboards that raised and lowered using car window motors. While I was away on tour, he surprised me by adding a scalloped archway -- a Sikh design element -- to the entrance.

There were no sliding walls or hidden doors to his office at the square bar of the Safe House, where a brass plaque bears his code name, OH-OH-7. People brought him their stories, the better to understand them. He was a great listener and an excellent interviewer because he was so interested in others. He loved to pass on life lessons learned from people like the Packers in the sixties, J. Allen Hynek, John Denver, Dr. Victor Frankl, his landlord Margraff, his dry cleaner Jimmy, and many long-gone but well-remembered friends. He was respectful and protective of girls and women, and went out of his way to ensure our safety.

One of his specialties was salvaging -- using the old, the broken, the imperfect, finding a niche for each piece where its story could be intuited or showcased. His clubs – the Whiskey à Go Go, the Great Gatsby, Heritage on the Lake, Gary's American Bar and the Safe House were all built from beautiful remnants of old Milwaukee buildings. Portions of the old Blatz hotel were reborn at the Safehouse: a rose window, stained glass and a confessional from the Italian Pink Church; wrought iron chandeliers from the old John Ernst; the brass doors from the old federal building in Chicago.

In David's papers are designs for the early layouts of Summerfest, an idea called the Friend Connection – which sounds to me like FB years before the technology was available, and a story-based program called the Polo Tree for teaching accounting. He took to computers way back in 1982, typing his own emails, learning Excel and Autosketch. I just ran across a magazine article from the eighties describing his idea to dredge the Milwaukee River clean. He designed and minted a coin to physically represent that Responsibility is the other side of Liberty, and commissioned an artist to carve a Statue of Responsibility from bass wood. In the early nineties, he wanted to serve sandwiches to boaters via a pneumatic tube system, from the Safe house -- but the landlord for an intervening building objected.

In 1993 the head of MKE County parks remembered that Dave won a competition for the best idea on what to do with the Milwaukee Road Clock, and called. Yes, the clock had been stored in the Safe House basement for the past twenty-five years. Yes, David would donate it back to the City. The golden arms of the clock we christened Big Baldy now adorn the tower at O'Donnell Park.

David's last and most cherished design project became an experiential museum, The American Freedom Center. When built, it will help people learn how the American governance works. At his request, I plan to offer his design files under a Creative Commons license.

*Perhaps love is like the ocean, full of conflict, full of pain.*

David had blood transfusions for many years, and they worked very well – till they didn't. On Oct 27, 2015, he suddenly found he could barely walk. By Dec 2, he transitioned to home hospice. He started scheduling meetings, saying goodbyes.

One of his last goodbyes was to Greg Marcus, who bought the Safe House in June 2015. He gave Greg the ring he designed for Control, and wore for 49 years as Station Chief of the Safe House. Control's identity however, still remains Top Secret.

And he gave me a belated anniversary gift: 29 red roses, one for every year of our marriage.

On Dec 16 David said he was dizzy and asked to go to hospital hospice. I protested but he said, "I don't want to spoil our home for you by dying here." By Dec 20, he left us for the great Safe House in the sky.

I will miss his charm, the jokes – even the jokes I heard several times – his pranks, his devil-may-care grin. Most of all, I'll miss his wraparound love, his breath on my cheek. His absence will become his presence for me – for us.

Whether you were connected to David by love or blood, I thank you for your condolences, and return them to each and every one of you, with all my heart.

**Shauna Singh Baldwin**