

## A Friend She Never Met

I was introduced to Laurel when *Walking Through the Fire* was published back in the 70s. I am just a few years younger than she was and part of the hitchhiking, vagabond (hippie if you will) generation. I could relate to her story. Our lives were similar in many ways, and I also had three small children and a new-found faith in Jesus. I absolutely fell in love with Laurel Lee and her simple, genuine life and faith in the Lord ... I checked each of her books out of the library as they became available.

After *Mourning into Dancing* I often wondered what happened to Laurel and her kids. I imagined her beating the cancer and traveling, as she alluded to at the end of the book. In the late 80s a friend of mine and I began a search for our own copies of all four books. (We discussed then dismissed the idea of swiping them from the Library.) We'd both discovered *Hitchhiking Home* at a book clearance sale. It took thirteen years of diligent searching through every antique and thrift store we came across but we finally, one by one, found our own copies of them all. We actually found Laurel Lee's whereabouts in Oregon a couple of years ago (thru the Internet) and wrote to her. She very graciously wrote back and we were thrilled to learn that she was, indeed, welltraveled and was doing well.

Then, a couple weeks ago I was on Amazon.com and punched in her name. Lo and behold she'd written a new book (Tapestry)! I ordered two books right away; one for me and one for my friend who also loves Laurel. I stayed up till 2:30 am reading the book. I had skipped to the back and saw that the last entry was 2003. I was elated to know Laurel was still alive, and I could finally find out where she'd been and what she'd been doing since *Mourning into Dancing*. Then I got to the end and the part that said she had pancreatic cancer and was not expected to live. I read thru my tears to the very end of the book then dashed out of bed to my computer to see how she was doing. Sadly, I read she'd passed on only a few days before. I never did go to sleep that night.

What a blessing her husband, children and grandchildren must have been to her in her last days. I am still weepy (very uncharacteristic of me) and don't understand why except that I felt such a kindred spirit in her and have talked about her books to friends thru all the years since I first read *Walking Through the Fire*. She will be sorely missed by people like me who never met her but felt like they had. And my life has been richer for it. I am so thankful for finding that first book and becoming acquainted with Laurel back many years ago. I'm sure Jesus met her at the gate with open arms and a resounding "well done, good and faithful servant!"

God bless Laurel's family. You are all in my thoughts and prayers. May God comfort and gladden your hearts as I know only He can ... and will.

Love,

Cathy Berthiaume  
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