

# Peace to you

About evil and good, remorse and forgiveness

My friendship with  
Robert Power/Casper  
on death row in Raiford, Florida



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By Florian Blumer (Text) and Priska Wenger (Illustrations) and Janet Brot (Translation into English)



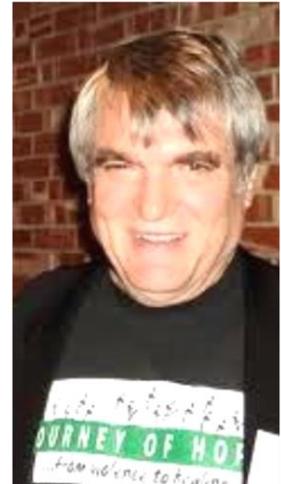
## **Preface by Bill Pelke – President of Journey of Hope**

May 14, 2015

Let me say, Ines, that I am amazed by the journey that you are on.

I am so impressed with the person that Casper became. God did a real work on him. The only thing he wanted to do was to say that God changes people. He could not take back what he did, but he could spend the rest of his life showing God's power, the power that made his transformation possible, and he knew he would proclaim that until his death.

He wanted us to have an understanding of how God's sincere and unconditional love can transform lives. It was the only good thing that he could do. And thank you, Ines, for helping him to be able to do so.



Pastor Klaus Bäumlín says it so well: "...He is God, also love and compassion. Mercy and compassion have the last word in His judgement". Pastor Klaus knows forgiveness well. Readers can acquire a lot of tidbits on forgiveness when they read your interview with him.

I have known Lisa Rea with Restorative Justice International for many years. I have a great respect for Lisa and her work at putting victims at the center of the restorative process.

My heart was so touched by Debbie. She is a true example of what forgiveness is all about.

Debbie says that it is still her prayer that God will use her in a powerful way. She is a remarkable woman, and you are helping her to tell her story to those who need to hear it.

Ines, you have truly met some remarkable people, and you are a remarkable person, too. Your friendship and commitment to Casper has had to have taken an emotional toll on you. I'm glad you have other people supporting you in this.

Love and Peace  
Bill

PS: Today is a very memorable Day. All my talks begin with "On May 14, 1985..." Thirty years ago. A generation!

This post gave honor to Ruth Pelke: [The Ruth Pelke Story – How Her Grandson Forgave Her Killer](#)

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## Casper's handwritten apology to all his victims

To All Victims :

1

My name is Robert Power.

I am at Swiss Correctional Institution, with multiple life sentences and a death sentence, on Florida's deathrow.

I have been here for twenty years now.

I lived twenty-seven years before I was arrested for murder.

In that time I offended alot of people. Murder, rape, robbery, assault, adultery, burglary, autotheft, forgery, pandering - many people have been harmed by the things I have done. Looking back with great regret for the harm I have done, I would undo it all, and insted be the help I should have been.

Of course, no one can go back and change what has been done.

Now, I do apologize to all victims, some whose names I do not even know, for the harm my brutality caused you. Many victims will not care about this apology, and I understand that, but for those of you who feel you are owed that apology - at a minimum, I sincerely give it.

Anything you may want to say to your offender, I will hear you.

Sincerely, Robert Power.

## **About this brochure**

This is a summary of my journey, told through interviews, articles and short narratives.

The journey of my friendship with Robert Power, whom I called Casper, was a very rich one that took me many places. Overall, meeting Casper was the most challenging encounter of my life.

During the mere three years of our pen pal-ship, which quickly turned into a friendship, Casper and I – as I felt it – travelled around the world. I was forced to delve into the topics of evil and good, guilt and remorse, revenge and forgiveness.

Maybe, no, I was not “forced”. I could have denied becoming part of the story. It was my decision to say “yes” to the challenge. I could have stepped back at any given moment and Casper would have understood.

## **How Casper and I met**

I came to know Casper when he was still on our lifespark waiting list, waiting to be connected with a member. For a theater project – a group was playing “Dead Man Walking” in Basel – to which lifespark was asked to contribute, I was looking for texts from inmates who would write something for the information stand and the exhibition about death row that we had each time after the play was performed.

I wrote to a dozen inmates on our waiting list and asked them whether they wanted to take part in the project even before they were connected with a member. Casper did so and we exchanged a few “business” letters.

A bit later, after we had visited a Swiss prison, we looked for a death row inmate who wanted to write to a Swiss prisoner. A young prisoner of the above-mentioned prison had asked me whether he could become the pen pal of a death row inmate. The prison was an open institution that allowed this prisoner all kinds of activities outside of his building. Still, we didn’t just want to connect him with an inmate on our waiting list because we weren’t sure whether they would want to write another prisoner instead of a free person. So again, I asked the 10 inmates on our waiting list who were next to be connected with someone, but no one responded positively. So I didn’t know what to do with the Swiss inmate whose supervisor supported his wish to become a pen pal.

That’s when I thought of Casper; I decided to write to him and ask him. He answered that he would be honored to write to the young man if it helped us. In the next weeks, Casper and I again exchanged a couple of letters. When the young Swiss prisoner was moved back into a closed facility due to misbehavior and stopped writing to Casper, Casper asked whether I wanted to go on writing to him. I hadn’t actually been looking for another pen pal, but I felt I had to agree.

Casper’s and my pen pal-ship became intense very quickly as if he knew he didn’t have a lot of time left.

## **Casper’s death**

Casper died unexpectedly at the age of 53 from liver cancer in December 2010. We had been writing each other for less than three years.

Casper had always wanted to apologize to his many surviving victims and to the family of the dead victim, although he wasn’t able to find anybody to help him accomplish his wish. Casper died at a

point in his life at which he had great hopes of finally being able to reach out to his many victims in apology.

### **The pendulum dialogues**

Casper and I used to write “pendulum dialogues”. These are written talks about topics that were important to us. Both Casper and I wanted to share our thoughts through these dialogues.

The symbol of the pendulum arose when Casper once asked me about how I see him. I told him that his way of having been a man who could be called “evil” in the past and then having changed into someone who could be called “good” reminded me of a pendulum that swings from one extreme to the other. I told him that I thought he knew more about humanity than other people did because he had lived both extremes.

## **The pendulum dialogue**

### **Talk between Casper and Ines about good and evil and the symbol of the pendulum.**

Posted by Ines Aubert and Robert Power/Casper in the lifespark newsletter, October 2008

#### **Introduction:**

Some members never learn about the crime of their pen pals. Some mention it briefly in their correspondence while others just write about forgiveness in a general way, but I never heard an inmate talking about it like my pen pal Casper does.

I haven't written Casper for a long time yet; but it's obvious that one of several common features he and I have is a very pronounced directness and openness. In that we recognized each other quickly. Casper did horrible things in his past, but he then found peace in a profound spirituality and in his wish to help other people, which he's able to do regularly.

We both like to delve to the ground of things and we love to learn as much as possible from and about the other. So, no wonder that in short we ended up talking about his past.

Casper encouraged me from the start to ask him whatever I wanted to know, and so I did as he had invited me to do: I asked questions and he responded to each of them.

Soon after we had started to correspond, we began a second dialogue which should outline the gist of all of our discussions. A short version, so to speak, of our talk about guilt, self-examination and forgiveness, which is still going on in our letters.

Casper referred to the internet for me to read more about his crime. I read what is written there. I believe that most of it describes what really happened, but it doesn't describe the man that looks at me through Casper's eyes today.

I know he did these things. He was a man capable of committing such heinous offenses, and even though he has changed greatly, the past is part of his life.

For me dealing with that knowledge is immensely harder than not having known about it when I first wrote to Casper. It doesn't, however, prevent our closeness from growing nor the continuous sharing of our inside with each other.

During the past months I exposed myself and Casper to some very hard questions which to me was a battle I had to fight for a way to accept and deal with S.'s past crimes.

I'm not sure whether I'm there already or not, but I've gone a part of the way I'm called to go, the way to bring together, in my heart, the two men Casper consists of.

I realize: I entered Casper's biography some time ago and by doing so there is no other way for me but to learn what I'm supposed to learn as everything happens for a reason. I couldn't step out any more, even if I wanted to. Because Casper has in turn done the same; he has entered my biography as well.

Please read and make up your opinion yourself.

**Ines:** Casper, never before have I met a person who has touched both ends of the pendulum's swing like you did. I perceive you today as full of spirituality and knowledge.

**Casper:** Your „pendulum swing“ analogy fits in two different ways. Yes, I have both suffered violent experiences and caused others to suffer such experiences.

Whether you are receiving or giving violent experience, violence is traumatizing. In this regard yes, I have much knowledge.

The pendulum can also illustrate an important aspect of truth, relative to perspective.

When you consider the pendulum to be the point of one's view of an experience, it is very difficult to examine any traumatic experience when you are directly over the top of it. However, when the pendulum swings far enough away in time and space, you gain a broader view. Thus, you are able to examine traumatic experiences for any spiritually oriented objective lessons, if one's spirit is moved toward self-examination.

**Ines:** Casper, tell me, what are your thoughts about women today? What is left of the man who hurt women and children? How can you comfort me?

When I first read about your crimes after having got to know you a little through the first letters – it was only three or four lines – my very first and spontaneous thought was: “How dare he appear so friendly?”

I want to ask you in the name of all women, girls and mothers: “How dare you touch us and our children?” I need to ask you that because I want to hear your voice to that.

**Casper:** You gave me the impression you desire to understand how I came to be so emotionally and mentally disconnected from other people that I could violently dominate innocent men, women and children.

You ask heavy questions. I give heavy answers because I believe you ask with a sincere desire to understand.

You cannot help me to get rid of my guilt. To the extent I have offended you, and feel contrition for that offense, you can forgive me if your spirit has that capacity of heart and mind. Forgiveness of self and others can calm the effects of guilt, but even when sincerely given and received forgiveness can't eliminate guilt.

You ask what remains of the man I was when I was violent.

Nothing.

I understand your first impression, and the indignation of your question. You are part of the “world” I harmed, thus I harmed you personally by contributing to the violent world you live in and suffer through every moment of each day.

For the harm I have caused I am guilty, and do not seek to deny or justify my guilt. I cannot change the harm I have caused, though I would

willingly give my life to change it. I have agonized over my guilt and given a great deal of thought to the harm I have caused people personally and collectively. Thus nothing remains of the man I was except this body, which will soon return to dust.

I sincerely ask you to forgive the offense of my former violence against your spirit, as you considered with righteous indignation the true nature of the spirit who once occupied my heart, mind and body. Only you can judge my present spirit and decide if or not you will forgive my offense. I hope you will.

**Ines:** In one of your letters you described your past behavior with these words: *I have killed, raped, robbed and beaten, stole, cheated in every kind of trickery, pimped prostitutes, sold drugs, and generally dominated every person unfortunate enough to cross my evil path.*

I've never heard anybody talking like that about themselves. Usually it is spoken in such terms about a third party, which in turn becomes silent when these actions are discussed.

However, in all the letters we've exchanged I only experienced you as loving, patient, spiritually oriented and supportive. I'm impressed by the big change you managed to achieve in your life. I'm still puzzled about the

fact that your past and your present are that much different. How could you manage that change while others can't?

**Casper:** In my mind, "evil" is defined as any deviation from true goodness. My values were a deviation from true goodness, my judgements were a deviation, and my justice was the same.

I view "justice" as any behavior that is considered by one's spirit to be justified generally, and in response to specific offenses perceived.

I had to look at my behavior and call it what it was, evil.

If I refuse, or fail, to acknowledge the truth about my values, judgement, and justice, I deceive myself and remain the same.

The difference between my past and present began with a glimpse of the truth about love, who and what love is in truth. From there, I moved to diligent study and self-examination of past and present. Then, years later, I began to imagine a future wherein my spirit is able to cooperate in love's goodness.

There is no one who cannot be changed by love, my present spirit is certain proof of that.

## Casper's biography

Because of a book project invitation, Casper, his pastor and friend Brian Pleasants and I started thinking about how to share the story of Casper's change in prison with future readers. It was Casper's big wish to lay everything about his past bare and describe the man he used to be.

Casper decided to re-write his biography in a more detailed and thorough way than he had already done a couple of years ago.

Soon he started sending me the handwritten pages of what was planned to become his autobiography. From time to time he sent me an envelope with as many sheets as the postage allowed.

Over a period of several months, I received and read many dozens of such pages.

It turned out that Casper wrote in much more detail and about many more crimes than I had expected. Because many of his crimes were of a violent sexual nature, it was very hard for me to read and digest everything.

“Very hard” is actually an understatement. There were times when I thought I couldn’t handle it anymore.

It had soon become clear that Casper’s biography wouldn’t be shared with anybody and he agreed with that. Still, he went on writing until he died.

The last handwritten page of his biography that he sent to me ended in the middle of a sentence and even in the middle of a word. Casper had certainly written the continuation of the sentence and paragraph and he must have planned to send it in the next mailing. The unfinished sentence and word were part of a description how, in the jail cell, Casper got ready to pray.

In my eyes, it’s beautiful that Casper was interrupted in his writing or more “sending” – right when he was praying.

### **Talk with a Swiss pastor**

Because the topic of forgiveness challenged me so much, I met with a retired Swiss pastor to discuss some aspects of forgiveness. Hearing his opinion and learning about his views on forgiveness helped me to see it more clearly.

## **Talk about forgiveness with Klaus Bäumlín - A conversation with a retired Swiss pastor**

**A talk about difficult questions like: What is forgiveness? Who can forgive?**

Posted by Ines Aubert in the lifespark newsletter, June 2010



**Ines:** My pen pal Casper is one of the greatest challenges in my life. In addition to murder, he has committed various criminal acts on random individuals and has told me about them in detail. Casper traumatized entire communities with his vile acts and robbed many people of their belief in their own or their children’s safety.

I feel very close to my pen pal, but the knowledge of his past and the extent of his crimes weigh heavily on me. I realize that it is not possible for me to forgive him for these crimes, and this is another burden for me.

Casper understands that his crimes have caused my world to be unsafe. At the beginning of our correspondence he asked me to forgive him with the following words: "I was part of the real

dangers that always exist in the world you live in, and that threat you are continually aware of, thus feel personally. The emotional, mental, and physical effects of my guilt remain. Even though I feel contrition and have asked for, and I believe have received, God's forgiveness, you continue to feel the effects of my guilt. For causing you to feel this, I sincerely apologize, and ask your forgiveness of my offense against your spirit."

I ask myself, am I even in a position to forgive him?

**Klaus:** Casper asked you to forgive him for telling you in detail about his terrible deeds, thereby troubling and hurting you. And, as you yourself write, this is true. Through his evil deeds, using Casper's own words, you became aware of the threats that can face us at any time in today's world. Especially as a woman, such knowledge must frighten you. You can forgive the fact that Casper hurt you by sharing his guilt with you. That is something between the two of you.

If I understand his words correctly, then he didn't ask you to forgive him for his deeds. He believes that God has forgiven him.

You cannot forgive him for his crimes, you have realized this yourself. That is between him and the victims of his acts - and between him and God.

**Ines:** That means that I don't have to forgive him for his deeds, but only for telling me about them. Then I would be burdening myself unnecessarily. That would make things a lot easier.

**Klaus:** Only God can forgive him for his crimes, not you. In the end, forgiving a sin means getting rid of it. According to the Prophet Micah "and thou shalt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea "(Micah 7,19). Damage that people do can often be compensated or healed. There is evil which is in our power to get rid of. However throwing a

murder into the depths of the sea is beyond our power. Only God can do that, if he so wishes.

We will certainly come back to the topic of what it means when and how God forgives sin. But since you know about Casper's sins, and also that he is contrite and has asked God for forgiveness, by letting him feel your friendship, you have shown him solidarity, not with his deeds, but with him as a human being, who is more than the crimes he has committed. And that is already a heavy burden. Your knowledge, your solidarity with him, can be a sign of God's forgiveness.

**Ines:** So you think that my friendship with Casper can be interpreted as a sign of God's forgiveness, even though I am not aware of it? Hm. I want to be sure I really understand you.

What I can do is to forgive Casper for the things that affect me directly, namely confronting me with his past. I can't forgive his deeds, but my solidarity with him is a sign of forgiveness of the only one who can forgive him, God. Is that right?

**Klaus:** Exactly, that's how I meant it. You can see Casper in the light of God's forgiveness.

**Ines:** What does God's forgiveness mean? What does it mean for Casper and for his victims? Under what conditions does God forgive?

**Klaus:** Now I have to divert a bit. In the Bible, in both the Old and the New Testaments, the Last Judgment is mentioned. At the end of the present time, God will sit in judgment of world history and of each individual. „For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad“ writes the Apostle Paul in the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians (5.10).

According to Christian belief, Jesus Christ will return at the end of time to "judge the living and the dead". Everything we have done or failed to do will come to light in God's truth.

That is true for all of us, also for Casper and the victims of his crimes. The judge who will sit in judgment on the Last Day is no one other than Jesus Christ, who Himself became the victim of injustice and violence. And Paul wrote about Christ in the same Epistle "in Him was not yea or nay, but in Him was yea."

God doesn't remain unmoved by our misdeeds, like a weak father, who may react to his son's pranks with a comment like, oh it's not really so bad. God takes our sins seriously. But He is God, and also love and compassion. Mercy and compassion have the last word in His judgment.

We are unable to combine judgment and mercy, punishment and forgiveness. For us they are contradictions. What falls apart for us, remains connected and whole for God and belongs together.

The final verdict concerning Casper and the victims of his crimes, has not yet been spoken, or at least not to our knowledge. It will be different from what we can imagine. It will be a wonderful, creative judgment, one of resurrection. And in the light of resurrection, the fate of the people who Casper harmed, will appear in an entirely new light.

I cannot answer the question under what conditions God forgives. We are too attached to our calculating way of thinking: what must I give and do so that you (for)give me (for)something? This too is different with God. I would like to return the Last Judgment again. I imagine (although we can't really imagine this, it's just to stimulate our thinking) that in the Last Judgment, even those people who in their lives neither acknowledged nor repented their misdeeds will have shock and intense contrition overwhelm them, because they will then recognize God's truth. A person, like Casper, who feels contrition for his deeds, has already put his life under God's Judgment and most probably won't repeat them. And something else: God knows us better than we know ourselves, better than others know us. He

sees our entire lives, our deeds and suffering; he sees who we are in a way no earthly court can know or judge us. Therefore God's judgment is harsher than any earthly court, but also infinitely more merciful - creating something new. "For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known (by God)" (1. Cor. 13,12) to quote Paul once again.

**Ines:** Yes, God's forgiveness is a mystery to me. The fact that, in contrast to God, things within us fall apart, I recognize. That's the way I feel when I think about the two different sides, which make up Casper. I feel an intense affection for the person he is today, and on the other side a great aversion to the man who could perpetrate such horrible acts. This situation of inner conflict is very disturbing for me.

I ask myself about the forgiveness which we human beings can give. What do you think would happen if one of Casper's surviving victims forgave him?

**Klaus:** Forgiveness is a creative thing. As in the Biblical story of creation where God puts the darkness aside when he says „Let there be light!“ and makes it possible for life to begin, so does his forgiveness create a new being out of a guilty person: „he is a new creature: old things are passed away.“ (2. Cor. 5,17). Therefore the signs of forgiveness which we give to someone can work creatively, giving new understanding, new strength, hope, encouragement, and courage too, to bear a difficult fate, even perhaps happiness, as you said.

**Ines:** Dear Klaus, in your answers there was a lot of talk about light: light in God's forgiveness, light in God's mercy, in the light of life. In your last answer you quoted the Bible „Let there be light!“ That's exactly how I feel about my initial question: talking to you has brought a lot of light into my difficult situation.

For that and for your willingness to participate in this talk, I thank you most sincerely.

I wish you all the best for your future projects.

Klaus Bäumlín, 1938, Protestant minister; active in various fields and projects, 20 years as a writer for church publications, most recently minister of the Nydegg Church in Berne. Klaus Bäumlín is married, has two children and four grandchildren.

### **The last visit with Casper in August 2010**

In August 2010 I visited Casper for the third time and for the first time after knowing the details of his past.

I was afraid to see him. Not because I anticipated anything bad from his side, not at all. Casper had always been friendly and respectful to me. No, I rather was afraid of myself; of the feelings I might have after I knew what he had done to others in the past.

I was afraid of seeing in him... the man he used to be. Learning about Casper's past was so horrifying that I just didn't know whether I would have the capacity to look at him and see who he had become.

I have beautiful memories of that visit and I'm happy that it took place.

I didn't see the man Casper used to be but only the one he had become. We had deep discussion and a lot of fun at that visit. I remember moments of that visit that still make me smile today when I think of them.

As we later learned, it was our last visit and Casper died four months later. Nobody anticipated that when we visited.

Some aspects of the last visit went into another dialogue Casper and I were in the process of writing: The big challenge.



Photo by Casper's friend Roy Albers

## **The big challenge – I appreciate you see the man I am today**

**About being friends with a man who committed horrible crimes. Included a talk between Casper and Ines about the impact Casper's past had on their friendship.**

Posted by Ines Aubert in the lifespark newsletter, August 2010

My closest pen pal Casper is the biggest challenge I've encountered in my life. By writing and sending me his biography for last year's book project – which, by the way, was cancelled, or rather delayed – he confronted me with a story that I had not imagined I would ever have to digest in my life.

During the past year, learning about Casper's past and his crimes, was one big struggle for a way to firstly staying sane myself and secondly not seeing the former man in Casper, but the man he is today. There were times when I was looking for spiritual guidance which helped me to deal with the details of the heinous crimes that Casper committed.

There were also moments when I felt that my conviction against the death penalty was challenged. I've never been personally confronted with something as cruel as Casper's many crimes and my heart went out to the many surviving victims as well as to the dead victim and her family.

I believe that I now have the biggest part of the struggle behind me and I'm relieved about that. Never have I regretted, not even in the most difficult time, that I was confronted with Casper's past. Not knowing about it wouldn't have made any difference for its reality, but me having gone through all of that makes me more understanding and knowledgeable of the healing process. I feel that I'm better prepared to talk to victims now.

Casper and I have always, in addition to the letters, written texts and dialogues which would help readers to understand better and to not judge too quickly. We have given them to all kinds of people but not yet to a bigger audience. During the difficult times when our friendship was really challenged, we still went on dialoguing and trying to not ignore what happened between us but to work on it and transform it.

Because Casper understands how important his apology could be for his victims' healing, he has already tried to find and contact them, yet all in vain. Still, we tried once more. It again turned out to be very difficult and the letters I wrote to various places, groups and offices remained unanswered or with no result.

Through additional Internet research, however, we found one involved person and she even started writing to Casper. That was an eye-opening experience for both of them.

We're still trying to find more of Casper's victims. I strongly believe that it could be of great help for some of them to hear Casper's apology, or to even contact him.

Finding these without disturbing those who don't want to be reminded of the past is the big difficulty. The last thing we want is to cause more damage.

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### **To All Victims:**

My name is Robert Power.

I am at Union Correctional Institution, with multiple life sentences and a death sentence, on Florida's death row. I have been here for twenty years now.

I lived twenty-seven years before I was arrested for murder.

In that time I offended a lot of people. Murder, rape, robbery, assault, adultery, burglary, auto theft, forgery, pandering – many people have been harmed by the things I have done. Looking back with great regret for the harm I have done, I would undo it all, and instead be the help I should have been.

Of course, no one can go back and change what has been done.

Now, I do apologize to all victims, some whose names I do not even know, for the harm my brutality caused you. Many victims will not care about this apology, and I understand that, but for those of you who feel you are owed that apology – at a minimum, I sincerely give it.

Anything you may want to say to your offender, I will hear you.

Sincerely, Robert Power

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In our many letters Casper – I'm calling him by his prison nickname – and I have covered many topics and I will provide a glimpse into our exchange by quoting some paragraphs from our dialogues. Please note that all quotations are only small parts of our texts.

Casper explains why he wrote about his past in such detail:

**Casper:** Something else I want to point out to you. Without the detail of the evil I did - you wouldn't be able to see for yourself how bad my feelings, thoughts, and behaviors were at that time. Nor how that evil progressed. Nor understand the change between then and now.

Thus, how far I have yet to go to get even close to right minded.

I wanted to be perfectly honest with you about my past, my present change in spirit, and my future hopes that some good could come of conveying an understanding of how sincere and unconditional love can transform lives.

In the many letters following my reading his biography I had a great need to talk about Casper's victims. This caused intense discussion.

**Casper:** You seem to be bogged down in the past and focused exclusively on victims. I'm focused on doing something positive in the present and addressing helpful influences to both future victims and offenders. I have no problem with apologies, because I am sincerely sorry that I have caused the pain I have caused.

You may "feel" I have no right to speak for victims. I was a victim long before I ever offended anyone. I know well what I speak of.

You are seemingly focused in my past, whereas I believe the good my story can do is in the present and future. Yes, the past must be dealt with rightly to move into the present and future in a way that brings people forward in understanding of love's transformative power - how do you propose to balance the past, present, and future?

**Ines:** Your letter was very emotional although you didn't talk about your feelings really. I see that you were very discontent with me and that you wanted me to know that. Okay, I understood.

You agreed in one of your last letters that I add the feelings to your past. However, I'm not caught in them, but try to transform them. I need you for that and I need a discussion with you to reach that goal. Being caught in something would mean to become stiff and lifeless. I'm not that.

You feel that the victims get too much attention now and that I only look at them. And that you perceive as imbalance. Fact is that they, for the first time, get some attention. I don't write them, haven't supported them financially or by sending stamps, sent them photos or showed them I'm their friend in any ways.

I believe that in none of your correspondences they have ever been a real topic. By the way, you being the victim in your childhood was only briefly mentioned in your biography and not elaborated too. You were treated very cruelly as a child and then you were abused by Grady. I believe it's important to hear more about that too.

Casper had tried to find and contact his victims before, with the help of his old friend Roy Albers, a former pastor who died last year at the age of 84. I wasn't aware of this and was under the impression that he hadn't really tried. This misconception caused me to write something that was not fully appropriate.

**Casper:** Sometimes I don't believe I did what I did. It is "offensive" to you, I don't know what you want to call it, but it definitely offends your sense of justice to know of such things. It was an offense against all that is good and right. The question is what in your heart and mind can/should be done to constitute a just resolution. What do you feel/think I can do to contribute to a real and significant resolution?

What if what you feel/think it just isn't possible - no matter what effort is placed into achieving that resolution?

Ines, there came a time when I found myself completely disconnected from everyone and everything. A very real darkness dominated my every feeling, thought, and behavior. There seemed to me to be no way out of that darkness. I pulled innocent people into the darkness and held them there with me for a time.

I believe God preserved my life and brought me to a place where I could see the light of love. Since that moment of perceiving that light I have examined myself, my past and my present to correct those things I found wrong in my heart, mind, and relationships.

I now stand in spirit at a place which allows me to sincerely appreciate the goodness of love. This place is brilliant in comparison to where I was standing in spirit when God began to draw me in mercy and grace toward the light of love. Should I not stand and advance in light?

Should I not move forward toward the hope I have in God's love? Should I retreat back into the darkness because I can't undo what I did in ignorance of God's love for me and for those people I harmed? If there is anything good that I can do to help anyone I have harmed, I will do it.

I hope that whatever you and I do together include some progress toward that possibility."

**Ines:** I'm very glad that you asked me, Casper, what I thought you could do to contribute to a real significant resolution. I've thought a lot about that.

One thing occupies me most. It is about honoring the victims' pain. I got the impression that you aren't enough aware of what you did. Your first angry reaction on me reacting that strongly on your past, made me think that you didn't understand what I reacted on. My focus was not on your development or change, my whole focus was on the victims and their past and present and also on their future.

Your change and your place in my heart and in my life are already clear; I don't need anything more to give you a value in my life. I really would love to hear in detail what happened after you were locked up, but I don't think it could ever touch me as much as it did when I learnt about your victims.

I honestly couldn't understand why you couldn't understand me. You seemed to think that what you told me would only reveal what you were going through while I immediately reacted on what the victims were going through.

Knowing you personally makes it easier for me to think you'll be cared for; I can always contribute to that myself and help you to feel good. I can't do any of that for the victims until I know them.

There is another thing that irritated me very much. I once asked you whether you cry. And you answered yes; about things that go wrong in the world. I don't remember exactly what it was. I wondered why you don't cry about your victims. I think you could leave the crying

about the world to other people and do it about what you're responsible for.

Some of my friends say that I'm too much involved, to the point that it started burdening my own life. That is true and still, I don't want to get rid of the burden under all circumstances. I probably have to feel so strongly until you do that yourself to the full extent. And no, I don't mean you shouldn't have a good life or you shouldn't feel good or know you are forgiven. I

wish you all the best from the bottom of my heart. I just think your victims should take up more of your time and efforts in that way that you try to reach them and help them. Do you pray for them?

I feel that you should invest as much time into reaching out to the victims as you did into reaching God. If you felt for them today like I do, I could give that responsibility back to you and be released.

Today I think that Casper did everything within his ability to find his victims so that he could express his remorse.

**Ines:** How do you feel about another person knowing the details of your life?

**Casper:** Roy knew all the details that you now do, and so did my Mom. Most of them anyway. It took me five hours visiting time to explain it all to Roy, then to pray about it. I hate all that I went through, and all that I made other people go through. Telling Roy everything for the first time felt like I was placing a great burden on my dearest friend, but after hearing his prayer

for me I felt he was not only spiritually mature enough to carry that burden but also capable of allowing God to take that negative energy from him.

Mom was a different story, it took her several years to get where Roy immediately went to unload the negative energy.

I felt concerned for both Roy and Mom before I told them, but we all worked through it.

After Casper and I visited in August 2010, we wrote:

**Ines:** It was a painful struggle for the both of us to overcome everything that could have cut off our dialogue and our feeling of closeness. We both suffered from having to go through that struggle, but there seemed no other way than to tackle it.

We just met a couple of days ago. I've visited you before; however, it was the first time after learning about the crimes you committed in detail. I had feared a little that instead of the loving man that you are today, I'd see in you who you were earlier and that I'd be scared by the person who caused so much damage and pain to other people.

This hasn't happened and I only saw the loving and totally changed man of today. This I consider another mile stone in our relationship which makes me very happy.

Not being burdened like I was any more doesn't mean that I don't feel with your victims or that I devalue what they were exposed to. My empathy for them has not changed and I will go on trying to find some of them so that your apology would reach them and so that they would get the chance to talk to you and to be heard by you. I don't know how they could go on with their lives after they became your victims, and I have great hope that hearing your

apology would help them to come to some additional closure.

**Casper:** Yes, I wasn't sure our connection would survive your consideration of the details of my past either. There was a point when I thought we would disconnect. I know that you have never struggled more with anything.

I know too that you feel most acutely the emotional trauma some of my victims suffered through, and may yet suffer.

I believe it's very important to give each victim an opportunity to speak, if they choose to. The

problem is letting each one know they have that opportunity, should they choose to be heard.

So far we have only been able to contact one person, and though there was no hostility, there was also no desire to engage in a helpful dialogue.

Hopefully someone will choose to engage in dialogue that will be beneficial to him/her, and to anyone else who follows this dialogue.

I wasn't aware you would be looking for the man I was, but I do appreciate that you care to look carefully enough to see the difference between the man I was and the man I am today.

### **Casper's death in December 2010**

Only a couple of months before his death, Casper was diagnosed with liver cancer. While he hoped there would be some time left, it turned out it progressed much quicker than anybody had thought.

Casper was aware he would be dying from cancer.

After his physical shape deteriorated, Casper was first transferred into the prison hospital and later in a public hospital. When he was in the prison hospital, his friend Brian, because he was a pastor, was still allowed to visit him.

Brian lives in North Carolina but has a sister in Florida. At the time when Casper was in such bad shape that he had to be transferred to the prison hospital, Brian was visiting his sister and therefore was in the state of Florida.

Brian was able to keep me updated on Casper's situation and, for the last time, could offer Casper spiritual support. Knowing Casper and helping him in his transformation had had a huge effect on Brian as well and he was happy that he could reach out to him a last time in Casper's last days.

During the several days it looked like Casper would die, lifespark member Elisabeth Deutscher made a written interview with me. It helped me greatly to sort out my thoughts and feelings and to be able to share it with her.

## Peace to you – An interview with Ines Aubert

### A written interview with Ines during the days when Casper is dying.

Posted by Elisabeth Deutscher in the lifespark newsletter, December 2010

It was a snowy evening when I received Ines' mail. She told me her close pen pal Casper was in a really critical state and would most probably die soon. Casper had been diagnosed with advanced liver cancer about a month earlier and had serious symptoms. She was overwhelmed by everything happening around Casper and would like to share that with lifespark. So, after she mentioned in short her current state and her fears, we started with the interview that went on over several days.

**Elisabeth:** According to recent information, how is Casper's present situation in the hospital? Is he alone or with company?

**Ines:** It's 5am now. I got up a few times at night to check my e-mails because I was awaiting news from Casper's friend, Brian, who lives in North Carolina, but is presently in Florida for a few days visiting his sister. Because of this, he was able to visit Casper at the prison hospital a couple of days ago. He also made a lot of phone calls to all kinds of people and institutions on Casper's behalf. I don't think it's a coincidence that Brian is around right when Casper is in such a state. Brian has now told me that yesterday Casper's sister, Fay, visited him after not having done so for many years. Her behavior toward him has been one of his great concerns, as he has suffered from her withdrawal. He has no other family members still living or in contact with him.

On the other hand, Fay suffered from devastating consequences that his past actions had on her life. His crimes destroyed his family members' lives, as well. Her visiting him is a wonder that I truly appreciate.

There was no conversation possible, but Fay told Brian that Casper squeezed her hand and so this is taken as a sign that he recognized her.

Referring to her description of Casper's state, Brian says that it's unimaginable that Casper is still alive. However, his death has not been confirmed.

**Elisabeth:** You said that it is a fear of you that you will be occupied with something insignificant at the moment Casper dies? Is there anything you would have to blame yourself for?

**Ines:** I was surprised myself to realize I was having these thoughts. I guess it is because Casper and I had such an intense and challenging friendship, although not a romantic one.

I believe that dying is an important transition, and it is helpful when a loved one is present with their thoughts and prayers. My being so far away and the ability to receive news about Casper's state so primitive, it can easily happen that by the time I learn about it, Casper has already died many hours before. So, I don't know if he's right now drawing his last breath, already dead, or even improving.

I have to go to work and perform my everyday tasks, and that is very hard to deal with. That's why I started fearing I'd be doing something very mundane like washing my hair right when Casper dies. But then, how would I find out exactly when it occurred and what exactly I had been doing? My fear, although still present, is unreal and certainly nothing that Casper would want me to be afraid of.

**Elisabeth:** Is there anything you would like to do or that you think you have to accomplish before he dies? With regard to what do you feel like you have run out of time?

**Ines:** I'm immensely relieved that I don't feel I failed to do or say something when there was still the time to do so. We both made sure to always immediately say to each other what we thought important. How much we valued our friendship and all that we gained from it was a constant topic between us.

I'm very sad that there seemed to be no more time to go on with our project which I thought was a very important one. Casper wanted to apologize to his victims, and after many months of trying to get official people to help him with his wish, we finally had somebody interested in becoming active on his behalf. That was right when he was diagnosed with liver cancer.

It is nothing in particular I wanted to accomplish, I just have a great feeling of unfairness that Casper has to go right now: not only for him, but also for victims who would possibly have profited from the project.

**Elisabeth:** What was the topic of the comic that you desperately wanted him to see?

**Ines:** I used to draw comics about him and I, and Casper did so every now and then, too. It turned out that these comics often showed more than what we had actually wanted to express with them. I never made a sketch, but drew, made a copy for myself and put it in the envelope for Casper. Sometimes my own comics made me laugh a lot because after finalizing I could see things I hadn't planned to draw.

That particular one was a comforting comic. I had drawn it without knowing that by the time Casper would receive it, his health would be in a most critical state. So, after he was transferred to the hospital where he lost consciousness, I checked my log book to see what letter he might have received as his last. I was not sure whether or not he had received this particular letter and comic. But yesterday I received a letter from him that he had written while still in the prison cell, in which he told me how much that comic had comforted him.

**Elisabeth:** What is it you still want him to know?

**Ines:** Fortunately, there is nothing in particular that I failed to tell him. That is a great comfort to me now. It's just that I don't want to let him go.

**Elisabeth:** In all of your debates about forgiveness, what is your impression about him being able to forgive himself? What did he have to say about his dying?

Casper has forgiven himself due to finding faith in God many years ago. He had two spiritual advisors who became his friends: first, Roy Albers, who died at the age of 84 last year, and then Brian Pleasant, who is still around. That two official spiritual advisors chose to become his personal friends after they quit their job at the prison says a lot too, I think. Casper was certain that God had forgiven him and that was the source of his strength and his care for others. When we discussed matters of his or my life, he always took a position for love, meaning that he suggested an understanding and loving point of view.

Casper has not ignored his past actions; on the contrary, he has worked through all of them very intensely by asking God for forgiveness for each one of them. He was very strict toward himself, saying that self-examination was critical.

I realize that I definitely say "Casper was" in the sense of believing Brian that Casper must be dead by now.

Casper was not afraid of dying. He accepted to be executed for his crimes. He also knew that he would be dying from his cancer now. However, he thought he'd have more time left and he expressed several times his wish to "hang around" a little longer so we could go on having our discussions and preparing the project with his victims. He also enjoyed his friendship with me very much, and wished to learn more about my life and my views. I've perceived Casper to be a very mature

person. His earlier state of "out-of-mindness" was exceptional, but so was his spiritual journey when he changed his way of thinking and behaving in prison. For his two spiritual advisors, he is an example of a man being transformed by God and living proof of what God is able to accomplish.

**Elisabeth:** You said you have to go to work and do your everyday tasks, which is very hard for you to deal with. What would you wish to do instead?

**Ines:** Of course I would have wished to be at the place of the events happening: in Florida near the hospital where I could visit Casper every day. But me not being a family member, I wouldn't have been able to do that anyway. There was no really good place I could have been. So, being at home was still best because here I could care about myself best.

Nobody wants to go to work when a dear person is dying. Still, it's helpful because it keeps you from remaining in a state of sorrow all the time.

If it is confirmed that Casper is dead, I will sleep for a long time as soon as I have the opportunity.

Brian ended his last e-mail about Casper's most probable death with the greeting: "With that, I say goodnight. Peace to you, dear lady!" Indeed, "peace" and "a good night" is what I need now.

**Elisabeth:** Fay's visiting her brother after many years seems to be a meaningful act - do you think it could be a step of reconciliation and forgiveness?

**Ines:** In the best case, yes. I have asked her in an e-mail how the visit was for her, but haven't heard back from her yet. Years ago, Casper didn't admit having killed his last victim and was also advised by his lawyer not to do so.

When I got to know him, he had passed that phase and talked openly about his guilt. That's why I got to hear the truth from the start.

Because of the difficult relationship Casper had with Fay, he failed to put things right with her after he decided to take responsibility for what he had done. When I had a long phone call with her last year, she repeatedly said that he hadn't even told her whether or not he was guilty of the murder.

So, I hinted to him that it was probably helpful to disclose the truth to her, which he immediately did. But Fay still didn't resume communication with him.

So, yes, her visiting Casper was a very meaningful act.

**Elisabeth:** What a miracle Casper himself seems to be - and what a gift for you, being able to get to know him, to accompany him for some time and to witness his transformation by God...

**Ines:** From the first letter on, I knew it was a gift to be corresponding with Casper. The very difficult times that followed later in our friendship I also consider a blessing, although it was very, very hard to deal with. That was when Casper wrote about the details of his crimes.

The transformation: I did not witness that. When I got to know Casper, he was already the transformed man. Brian witnessed it, though, in the 17 years of his friendship with Casper and he feels greatly blessed by having had the chance to even help that change to happen.

**Elisabeth:** How did Casper look at the loss of "earthly life" or the hope for an afterlife? What do you think/hope?

**Ines:** Casper was sure that - oh, let me correct that!!!

Despite the doctors who said that Casper would not survive more than two hours after they removed IVs and other medication which were sustaining his bodily functions yesterday, he's still alive today! He's not dead!

So: Casper is sure that he'll be united with God after his death.

I know that Casper is in good care after he died. I think though that we will be born again into another life here on earth. Casper and I did not agree on this. I guess we are both thinking: "Well, just wait and see!"

**Elisabeth:** If you were drawing a comic now - what would it be?

**Ines:** I drew one as soon as I heard he was moved from his cell to the prison hospital. Helpful people in Florida printed it out and sent it to Casper. This way it went much quicker than if I had sent it from Switzerland.

Basically the comic showed me looking at Casper, saying "Casper! You look so beautiful! What happened?" And Casper standing there with a big smile on his face and wings at his back, saying: "I'm home!" Then there are two other little creatures that put in their two cents in most of the comics, saying "Wow!" and "Cool!"

Most of the times these creatures want to do what we do and to have what we have, so it's only logical they want to have wings too. I'm sure that if Casper got or gets to see the comic, he'll smile.

**Elisabeth:** Over the past few days, you seem to have been experiencing a time filled with seesaw-changes: constantly awaiting and receiving surprising news, getting letters from Casper in which he has no idea yet about the state he is presently in, adapting yourself to the news that he may most probably be gone, only to learn later that he is still alive... how can you deal with or bear this permanent suspense?

**Ines:** I find myself not eating much, not sleeping much, and still being fully alert and ready to react to whatever message I would receive. I will sleep and eat again - later.

When I observe myself these days, I believe it matches the friendship I had with Casper. Why should it end easily?

In many ways, despite the horror of the situation, there is also beauty in it.

**Elisabeth:** Brian, being a close friend of Casper for a long time in these days...

**Ines:** I'm very glad that Brian is over there and coordinating things for Casper. This job belongs to him because he's the longest standing friend of Casper's who is still alive. All the honor of offering Casper a last prayer with a friend, helping his sister to go for a visit, and coordinating communication between different people belongs to him.

I believe there is an order in things, and if this order is adhered to, beauty lies within it. There is also beauty in Casper's sister being the one to visit him in hospital regardless of the difficulty in their relationship. I was not present when the story began, so my place in the order is somewhere else.

I know from other lifespark members who felt pain at the end - shortly before the execution of their pen pal - when all of a sudden his family became immensely important although they hadn't cared about him for years. That's hard to see for a pen pal who has faithfully supported the inmate. But family binds have a high priority in that order and so it's only natural that they light up at the end. I believe that taking a step back and giving them precedence is the right thing for us to do in that moment.

**Elisabeth:** You say taking a step back compared with Casper's family or Brian is the right thing for you to do in that moment - where do you suppose your place in the order now to be?

**Ines:** I don't think there is a fixed place to occupy. It's more a move than a position; a yielding to family members and other important people. In Casper's case, we were only three people who really cared at that moment: his friend and spiritual advisor Brian, his sister Fay and me. This might be very different in cases of

unnatural death – execution - where families and friends gather.

I believe that I've had the best part of Casper anyway; his ongoing care and interest and his friendship, so I can, without any bitterness, step aside. For others, the last hours of a person's life might be the most crucial and important moment to show their care; for me, there had been plenty of moments to be a good friend.

**Elisabeth:** If you want to, tell me more about Casper and who he was for you as a friend and dialog partner, about the time you have been sharing, experiences you both have had....

**Ines:** Casper is a very intelligent and open-minded person. He has always wanted to know everything and has commented on whatever I told him. He has advised me in many everyday matters, also with regard to lifespark. He was not always consequent, though, and sometimes failed to realize things which are hard to realize without a counterpart. I then was that counterpart for him and so we've had some struggles, too. Many, in fact.

I love to put down my thoughts and ideas and have always written much since I was a small child. So, keeping Casper updated about my life in my letters was natural and a pleasure for me. I do the same with my other pen pals, but not that intensely and with not so much detail.

From his past and his earlier lifestyle, but also from his current situation on death row, it isn't possible find a much bigger opposite from me than Casper. His childhood is totally different from mine; his adult life on the streets bears no similarity to my life; his earlier values are horrible in my judgment and his current life in prison shares not many common features with my life.

What impresses me, though, is the fact that at the core, where all externals are nonexistent, we are all basically the same: human beings on their journey in seeking answers for the big

questions of life. In that, Casper and I were alike.

So, we went from "I can't understand you at all" to "I can fully understand you" and vice-versa.

**Elisabeth:** Casper will most likely be "going home with a big smile", as you depicted in your comic. How are you parting with Casper? What does the burning candle mean for you?

**Ines:** The burning candle is a symbol for the light and love I send to the person I'm lighting it for. Many people find comfort in lighting a candle. I guess it stands for the love that goes to that particular person even when we don't think of them constantly. The candle burns nonetheless and keeps our wish alive. I use the same candle for all kinds of situations.

Because there is so much happening around Casper, he's still very present. I know this will stop when he draws his last breath and when, after a while, everything is said and done.

My wish it that I can transfer all I have learned from and with Casper into something new, a new project maybe on a higher level of understanding.

**Elisabeth:** "As long as he is breathing, I'll be writing". What are things you are telling him in your last letters?

**Ines:** I write only short messages and make sure they sound familiar to him, meaning I use the expressions I've always used so that he can recognize my style of writing and wording. I confirm my love for him, that I'm thinking of him and that I will write soon again. I mention light subjects of my everyday life like that it has snowed. The past days I also talked about Brian coordinating everything and about his sister, Fay, visiting him.

I want Casper to know that I accept the fact that he will most probably die soon, but I don't make it sound as if that was now my final letter. I want to know which one was indeed my last letter only in retrospect but not while I'm

writing it. So, today I wrote him another message and will maybe do so again tomorrow.

**Elisabeth:** Is it possible to find words describing aspects of the horror and the beauty in this current situation?

**Ines:** Casper died this morning, December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

To me, a horror is, for example, that Casper received CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) when his heart stopped, although he had no chance of surviving his illness. And that it was not possible for Brian to visit him also in the public hospital and that guards stood in front of the door of his hospital room.

When I learned about the exact time of Casper's death, I reflected on what I had been doing right then. I work as a remedial teacher in team-work with a first grade teacher. At the time when Casper died, we were working on an advent window decoration which will cover a large part of the windows in the classroom. Each child was working on a star which will shine brightly at night when we leave the lights on in the classroom until Christmas.

Somebody dies while others work on shining stars: that I consider beauty.

The big candle that had been burning constantly the past few days and nights, except when I was at work, having burnt down and extinguished exactly two hours after I received the message of Casper's death I consider beauty, too.

**Elisabeth:** What was not easy in your friendship with Casper and what were struggles shaping your friendship?

**Ines:** Casper sometimes wanted to teach me things that he thought I should know and also consider to be important. Then, he would become real "preachy", as I called it. In fact, he often wanted to teach me the wisdom of the Bible. When he did so during a visit, I grabbed his hand and said to him: Stop preaching, please! He didn't appreciate that very much.

When we started talking about his crimes, Casper had, at the beginning, a very hard time with me identifying with his victims. He said things like, I hadn't read the whole of his biography yet and therefore wasn't capable of judging the whole. But for me, as soon as I had read about the pain and horror of the victims, I couldn't help but feel with them. For a while, Casper was really mad about that.

Later he understood that actually we together made his memories a whole; he had the information about the details and I added the feelings. At first he didn't agree with that theory, but later admitted that it was true.

Casper was a heavily abused child and the result of a rape himself. This part he left out in his biography, though, and only when I insisted in him writing down his childhood experiences too, he did.

In his letter of November 14<sup>th</sup> – 3 weeks ago - Casper wrote about him not elaborating upon his childhood in the biography: "Me being a victim I saw as a moment of time sealed off in the darker depths of my mind." I wrote him back that I thought unsealing it would be healing as he had, together with the memories, sealed off a part of his feelings as well. It was too late for Casper to answer my suggestion.

**Elisabeth:** It sounds like your friendship is so unique not just despite of the struggles, but maybe even *because* of the disagreements and differences you had?

What does it take or need to keep on finding something connecting behind separating aspects?

**Ines:** I believe that there are many aspects in our friendship which are not unique at all. The appreciation and love for the other, the shared stories, the support...

It might be unique that I share my experiences with readers. I believe that you could interview any of our 300 members and you would find

unique aspects in all their friendships. But usually we don't get to read about them.

However, I think that in some aspects Casper was indeed unique.

I have never heard or read about another inmate who talked so openly about his guilt and who wanted to apologize for that urgently. Both of us being open and provocative intensified our discussions, of course. We used to call it "cut the diamond" when we struggled to find a common point of view or consent in something we disagreed on.

The two of us having met, we considered a diamond, but there were some things we had to clarify/cut. Casper didn't like that reality very much, he rather longed for harmony.

But yes, confrontation, if you get past it, strengthens a bond immensely. For Casper and I, it was crucial that we never stopped communicating, even when we were mad at each other. There was one moment when I

wrote him a postcard, telling him that after reading a particular part of his biography, I felt like I wasn't capable of writing him anymore. However, I went on writing in our usual intervals because I just wanted to tell him about my strong reaction. For Casper, this postcard was traumatic and he spoke about it for many months afterwards.

When I look back at the three years with Casper, it seems like a big adventure to me. It's like my whole being had been challenged and activated.

That I had so much time to prepare for his final breath these past days was helpful for me. I went through many emotions while he was still alive, talking to Brian and other people about it. A tiny glimmer of hope warmed my heart while I became familiar with the thought that Casper would soon not be there anymore.

I have yet to live to see my everyday life without the constant discussions with Casper.

## **Getting in contact with Debbie**

If meeting Casper was the most challenging encounter in my life, getting to know Debbie, one of his rape victims, was the most miraculous and unbelievable encounter. In the introduction of the interview I made with Debbie is an explanation about how we found each other. "Forgiveness" is the key word...

## **Interview with Debbie – a rape victim of Robert Power/Casper**

**Talk between Casper's rape victim Debbie and Ines shortly after they met through an online comment section.**

Posted by Ines and Debbie in the lifespark newsletter, January 2011

### **Introduction**

After having committed a long row of various crimes in different states, Robert Power was arrested in 1987 and later given a death sentence. In his last three weeks on the streets, he raped five girls and a young woman. The last rape victim, a girl of 12 years named Angeli, was killed during the rape.

Through lifespark, Ines became Robert's pen pal three years ago, and they soon began a very intense and lively discussion about all kinds of topics. Robert talked in detail about his former life and about his crimes. In prison, he became a Christian and wished to apologize to all of his victims. Unfortunately, Robert didn't manage to find an official person who would help him to locate and address them. It is almost impossible to find victims as a private person. Restorative Justice tried to help, but it was too late. So, Robert's wish remained unfulfilled until his death.

Together with Robert, Ines wrote many dialogues and texts because both wanted to share their thoughts and show the public that people can change, and that it is possible to be friends with a person who committed such heinous crimes.

Robert died of cancer on December 3, and the same day an article about him appeared in the Floridian newspaper, Orlando Sentinel.

In the comment section below the article in the online version of the newspaper, readers posted comments. The comments were mostly mean, but some writers were obviously familiar with the case and even knew Angeli's family. One of the comments was written under the name "Forgiven" by someone who wrote she had been a victim of Robert and had forgiven him.

After reading this, Ines posted a short comment, as well, saying she had been a pen pal of Robert and that he had wanted to apologize to his victims. She asked "Forgiven" to please get in contact with her.

Ines left a trace so that "Forgiven"/Debbie and other people could find the article "The Big Challenge" she had written with Robert and also her e-mail address on the lifespark homepage. "The Big Challenge" included Robert's apology.

Debbie did so, and on December 8, five days after Robert's death, she contacted Ines by e-mail. Since then, they have remained in contact.

**Ines:** Debbie, it appears to be a wonder that I found you and I'm very happy that you agreed to be interviewed. Before we begin with the interview, can you tell us how you feel about the past four weeks?

**Debbie:** These past four weeks have been surreal. When I received the call on December 3, 2010 that Robert Power was deceased, it started out a day like any other day, but would soon become like a day I had never experienced nor ever thought I would this side of heaven.

It was 7:43 in the morning and my first class was due to start at 8:00 am. I am in community college; aspiring to be a faith-based counselor. Time stood still in that moment, and I can assure you my reaction was certainly not one that I expected (at one time I would have broken out in song and dance and celebrated). As I listened to the pre-recorded message that

would spur on the events to come, I shed a tear. I did not heave or sob, but simply shed a tear for a life that once was.

The tear was a gift from the Lord to prove to me once and for all that I have truly forgiven Robert (despite the many attempts of Satan to prove otherwise) for all the havoc he wreaked in our lives. At that moment, I said a prayer and asked God to reveal to me whether or not he was saved.

You see, prior to this day, I had tried several times to reach out to him to let him know that I forgave him, and that he could also receive the ultimate gift of forgiveness from Jesus himself. Each attempt resulted in a closed door.

I was out of time Friday as I had to get to work, but I continued my search on Monday in my free time. It was exactly three days later, December 6, that I not only found the proof that

he was saved, but also a letter of apology to his victims when I read the article “The Big Challenge”.

On that day, God reminded me that He is in control and that His timing is everything. I was upset about not being able to let Robert know of my forgiveness, but then the Lord reminded me of this scripture in John 12:24 which says that unless the seed falls to the ground and dies it will not produce fruit. I believe that many will be healed from his death and this powerful story of forgiveness.

**Ines:** Wow, Debbie! That was the most fulminating beginning of an interview I’ve ever made!

It was a surreal time for me, too. Talking to you is something I had long been wishing for. I wish to talk to all of Robert’s victims, but in an article which appeared around the time of the trial which I had bought from the Orlando Sentinel archive, you were quoted saying you wanted to become a counselor. So I had the hope to at least find you because counseling people always also means informing the public and wanting to be heard.

It kind of shocked me to find in the comment section below the newspaper article about Robert a person who named herself “forgiven”, and who spoke about forgiving Robert in the midst of many mean comments about him. Can I call him “Casper” in the interview, Debbie? He was never “Robert” for me.

Four questions run through my mind after reading your answer.

1. Do you think it is necessary to tell our readers what exactly happened to you when Casper kidnapped you and your sister and raped you? You were 16 and 12 years old at that time. He sent me a document that described what he did, and it was most sickening to read for me. Never should anything like that happen to any girl or woman!

2. How did you manage to forgive Casper? What were the important steps in that journey?

3. Who called you on December 3? Somebody seemed to have kept track of your phone number and that gives me hope that this office could be helpful in finding other victims as well.

What do you think about trying to let them know that Casper wanted to apologize?

4. How did your attempts to reach out to Casper and let him know you forgave him result in a closed door?

**Debbie:** Ines, yes, we can call him Casper. (How did he come up with that name anyway?)

1. I’m not sure what details need to be revealed. I certainly would not want to be graphic.

You are right: there are some things that even the jury shouldn’t have had to hear. I am not afraid to talk about these things, and I believe that I will have to tell people whom I try to help in the future certain details so they know that I’ve been where they are now.

Would it help if I did a synopsis of that night and you decide what is best (leaving out the gory details, of course)?

2. Forgiveness was the key to my healing. When the incident with Casper occurred, I was attending a small private Christian school. I had actually just finished my first week of my senior year (I was going to graduate a year early). We were mandated to go to church as long as we went there. I was not a Christian at the time, but was well-indoctrinated in the faith.

While I was being raped, I cried out to God and said you get me out of this and whatever you want I will do. I guess you could say I was throwing God a “Hail Mary”, as so many of us do in dire circumstances. Well, I believe that prayer saved my life.

A few months later, I was sitting in church and the Holy Spirit tapped me on the shoulder and reminded me of my promise; I call this “God

calling my bluff.” I walked the aisle and said a prayer and really meant it, but like the Bible says, when persecution came, I ran.

You see, my Christian counselor at the time told me if I didn’t forgive him right then and there that I would burn in hell. That was a little too much for me to take. I hadn’t even testified against him in court yet.

So I did what I was best at doing, and that was running. I never ran from God, but I ran from the people of God and all of their “foolish nonsense.” Needless to say, I never committed my life to Him and very quickly the ways of the world engulfed me.

It wasn’t until December 27, 2004 that I quit running from the Lord and the purpose (helping others) that He had for me, and gave my life 100% to Jesus: everything that I was and am and will ever be.

I decided to play by His rules and that ultimately led to forgiveness. I don’t remember the exact date that I forgave. I actually had to forgive over and over to make sure that I truly had. I would take it back to the Lord and remind Him that I forgave Casper and ask Him to soften my heart that much more. I prayed for him and even asked others that I met along the way to do the same.

4. It was about three months later that I went to my pastors in Baton Rouge and asked them if they could send their prison minister to Casper and tell him that I forgave him and witness to him in the hopes that he would receive the ultimate forgiveness that I had received from the ultimate forgiver, Jesus. They were not too keen on the idea so I let it go.

Another time when Satan was trying to convince me that I hadn’t forgiven him, I contacted VINE (Victim Information and Notification Everyday – a website that helps people keep track of inmates. They contact victims when there is an escape or any kind of change in their status), and I told them of my

forgiveness and my desire to let this man know about Jesus. They politely told me that this was not a good idea that Casper could either try to hurt me again, or attempt to use me to try and get him off the charges somehow.

The final time I tried, only to have the door slammed in my face, was about two years ago. I went to my new pastor in Mississippi and shared my testimony and asked if she thought that I should provide him with a copy of my testimony through a third-party. She told me that God knew my heart, and that just knowing I was willing to do this was enough.

3. Years ago before I forgave Casper, I found VINE. It was through them that I learned about Robert’s death. My original intent (I’m happy to say that it is no longer the case) was when I got the call that they would be executing him, I would take a week off from work and get drunk on the steps of the prison that would end his life, and I would celebrate as they put to death the most evil person I had ever come in contact with.

My parents also received a letter in the mail, but I got the call that morning as soon as it happened. I do believe that these people could help in reaching other victims. I can also relate to these victims and not wanting to be found. I was terrified for many years that Casper would keep his promise and kill us even if he had to get someone else to do it. Even now as I unveil my identity, “I” in my mind take a risk.

I’m not sure if VINE would be willing to help. They are so engrossed in the victims that I don’t think they could see the possibility of an apology as healing.

OOPS! I kind of answered the forgiveness question with the doors slammed answer. Sorry, this is my first interview and I’m extremely new to this. I am just pouring out all of this information hoping that it takes shape and form as we proceed. I haven’t written for a very long time, and it is like a beautiful liquid pouring fourth on the paper. Thank you for convincing

me that I need to do this. I can't imagine how you ever embarked on this journey. You chose it; I was thrust into it.

When you said you were shocked to see "Forgiven" out there amidst all of the "hate mail", I just wanted to let you know that was a very bold thing I did and I felt like God was saying, "you don't expect me to do all the work; you have to take a chance if you want the answers."

That being said, I probably never would have posted a thing if NOT for your previous post of being a pen pal. When I posted that "Forgiven" alias, I tried to be sensitive to the obvious pain that others were experiencing. I could genuinely feel their pain. I also wanted to come to your defense, and felt that revealing myself as a victim gave me a right to do so.

**Ines:** Oh, I didn't mean to suggest you should call him "Casper", too. You can go on calling him "Robert Power". I think it would match reality and the two sides of this man that existed. "Casper" was his prison nickname. I don't know why he received that name.

Don't worry about a probable lack of order in your answers, Debbie. I marked the paragraphs with the numbers of my questions, so it's easy to find your answers to my four questions.

I suggest that we don't elaborate the crime in this interview. What I find incredible is the fact that several people kept you back from reaching out to Casper. I wish that many people would read this interview and understand that a contact between an offender and a victim could bring healing.

Debbie, you made me smile a little with what you wrote about God talking to you. First he "tapped you on the shoulder" and then he even said to you: "You don't expect me to do all the work..." I guess he did right and you can stand up for yourself.

I was very moved to read that you "wanted to come to my defense" in that online comment

section of the newspaper. Isn't that a twisted world when the victim comes to the defense of the offender's friend?

Yes, you were bold to write the comment you wrote, and it has brought only good. In fact, you didn't let God do all the work.

What do you think about me having been a close friend of a man you once considered "the most evil person you had ever come in contact with"?

**Debbie:** It makes total sense for you to call him Casper, the man that he became, and I call him Robert Power, the only man I ever knew him to be. It tells of two people that knew one man in two different phases of his life: these are perfect bookends.

When I first thought of the prospect that Robert had a pen pal, I thought of these "nut jobs" that fall in love with prison inmates. Although I had forgiven him, I couldn't see how or why someone would want to call him a friend. Even now as I sit and write this, I can't wrap my brain around being his friend, but I was never given that opportunity either.

We as humans are very curious creatures, so I decided to investigate. I followed the bread crumbs that you left and prayed for God to reveal the truth. As Christians, we are to be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves.

The human part of me, my mind, will, and emotions were saying, "How can this be?"; the spiritual side of me was saying, "With man this is impossible, but with God ALL things are possible."

The first thing I read was the interview, "The Big Challenge" that you did with Casper. When I came to the part about him being a Christian, a smile came over my face, and when I read the letter of apology, tears streamed down my face. I was overjoyed to have come to know that Robert would indeed be in heaven with me.

I even slapped God a high five and said, "You go God!"

I can honestly say there was a bounce in my step again.

I realize that the start of this answer was a bit harsh, but that was in fact my first reaction. As I began to correspond with you and ask questions and hear your answers that you had children and that you grappled with the idea of being able to forgive knowing what he did, I then saw a different side of Robert through you. I saw that for you two to spend so much time together to enable him to reach his victims for no other reason than to say I'm sorry is huge.

Honestly, this is really just nothing short of a miracle. If anyone thinks that God is NOT still in the miracle working business, we are living proof that shows otherwise.

The more I come to know you, the happier I am that he had friends like you who were there for him. If not for your tenacity and the gift that God gave you of being able to see a person through the eyes of Christ, then we would not be having this conversation. I would have known that he died, and would have still been praying and asking God to reveal whether he was saved. You are a direct answer to my prayer, and it would seem Robert's prayers, as well.

**Ines:** You appeared like a miracle in my life, as well, so we both feel the same.

Now that we elaborated a little upon our connection, let me go back 23 years in my next question: Can you tell me a little about the impact the rape had on you and on your family's life both at the time it happened and in all the years following?

**Debbie:** I hope that my sister Cindy will one day be ready, as well. Mom has mixed feelings because of how this has affected Cindy. She knows about the interview, and she has forgiven Robert. She is excited about the possibility of helping other victims heal through our story. It breaks her heart to see the

downward spiral that her baby is on. Daddy has also forgiven Robert.

After Robert was through with us, he tied us up with our clothing and gagged us with toilet paper. He told us that we weren't tied very tight and that we could go home in thirty minutes. He instructed us to go home and take a shower, and if our parents woke up we were to say that a big black man took us. Before leaving that night, Robert said something so profound which has stuck with me ever since. He said, "You two have just been through a really horrific ordeal, but you are lucky that you have each other. I want you to stay that way forever." At that moment, I felt something similar must have happened to him, but he was alone.

When we got home, we woke our parents, terrified that he was watching and was going to make good on his promise to kill us for telling. The police came and took us to the hospital for tests and then to the precinct for questioning.

The first major change was that neither my sister nor I would go back to the house that we called "home" for five years. We were terrified of the memories this house now held. For about the first month, we were shuffled from house to house staying with different families in our church until our parents could rent an apartment. Sadly, they couldn't afford the mortgage and the rent, and they lost the house.

My Dad had to deal with the fact that while he was sleeping, a man came in and robbed him of his girls. That is a hard pill to swallow for any man, especially one who was in the military for almost thirty years.

Mom had the toughest part in dealing with not only one, but two of her daughters acting like rabid animals for years to follow. She was very strong, and whenever we would act out she would tell us, "Stop that! Every time you act out, you are letting him win." She did not want Robert to have any more control over our lives.

Robert terrorized our community. The police put in overtime trying to crack this case. They were even looking during their off time, too. Whenever they would arrest someone fitting his description, they would put him in a holding cell and come to our school or home and show us pictures to see if we could identify him. They would come to school sometimes two and three times a day.

I suffered from flashbacks. Any time anyone would touch my throat or wrists, I would turn and see Robert and not the actual person that touched me.

I have spent many years depressed to the point of not being able to get out of bed. I always worked and I guess I looked like I had it together, but inside I was a mess. It was not until I got saved in December of 2004 that I was finally free from all of this horror.

**Ines:** Your answer shows so clearly the trauma the rape caused to all of your family members and even to the whole community. You not wanting to even call “home” your house anymore, you having been depressed for many years, your father feeling that he had not protected his girls enough and your mother having to deal with two daughters who behaved like “rabid animals”. Your community terrorized... I wonder if anything remained the same?

**Debbie:** I know that we are not supposed to live in our past. I don't live there anymore. A few years ago, I asked God to give me amnesia, because I didn't want to remember those things anymore. He said to me, “Debbie, I can give you amnesia and I will do that for you, but then all of this that you've been through will be in vain. I will use you to help others.” I believe that is my calling in life. In His word, God says He will take what Satan meant for evil and use it for His good. Just like Jesus laid down His life for us, I am in a sense laying down mine for others.

**Ines:** Some people say that for the victims to talk about what they went through is harmful for them. Is it harmful for you now?

**Debbie:** You know I think that EVERYTHING is hard for victims. Forgiveness has set me free! Talking about what Robert did to me and how it has affected me is not harmful for me. For others perhaps it is, but I don't see myself as a victim anymore. I do still have the ability to empathize with those that suffer in similar ways.

**Ines:** I hope that you will go on helping other people to understand and to share your story. Thank you very much for answering my questions, Debbie. I wish you all the best and much success in all you do.

## **Restorative Justice**

I learned about the great work of Restorative Justice when I was looking for ways to locate Casper's victims and contacted them.

Lisa Rea from Restorative Justice showed interest in Casper's case and patiently answered my many questions. She tried to help him to find some of his victims which gave Casper great hope. But it was too late.



### Restorative Justice

**Shortly before Casper died, it looked as if Lisa Rea from Restorative Justice would be able to give a helping hand in finding some of Casper's victims so he could apologize to them.**

[Link to this text and comments](#)

Posted by Lisa Rea on their homepage, Dec 13, 2010

A death row inmate in Florida recently died in prison before the state could execute him. I became aware of Robert's case because I met his pen pal, Ines, a woman from Switzerland who had befriended him through a pen pal organization, Lifespark, based in that country. After being interviewed by Ines for her organization's newsletter on the subject of forgiveness and restorative justice I learned more about the man she wrote in a Florida prison who had served some 20 years on death row. The story came to an end on December 3rd, 2010 when Robert unexpectedly died of cancer. But what I learned from my encounter with Ines was the real need to open doors more fully for all victims of violent crime wherever their offenders live and wherever their victims live (if they are still alive). I learned through Ines that her pen pal, once a very violent offender, was ready to attempt to make things right, as much as possible, with the victims or victim's family members that he had injured. The rap sheet on this man was very violent and longer than I'd ever seen.

I often learn things about restorative justice and how to apply it seemingly coincidentally. When cases draw me, or more likely the people behind the cases, I have a hard time saying no.

Many encounters like this end up having an important effect on the work I do. Ines began sharing with me information about the inmate including the fact that he had committed vile acts of violence. He had raped and murdered a 12-year old girl. He had also raped numerous women, so numerous he had forgotten how many and where the sexual assaults had occurred. Ines asked me if there was a way to somehow reach the victims or the victim's families in Robert's case. Ines explained that she had been having lengthy discussions, via letter, with Robert about his victims. She felt that he was prepared to apologize in some way and take full responsibility for his actions. I learned that his appeals on death row had been exhausted.

I attempted to advise and counsel Ines about this process warning her that it would be very tough to contact his victims. But at the same time, I thought long and hard about how it might happen. It occurred to me how important it might be to the victims or their families to have this apology, this expression of remorse. I was not suggesting victim offender dialogue, which is a face-to-face meeting, but at the same time I did not want to exclude that from happening. In the restorative justice field I had seen amazing and even miraculous things happen which I never would have predicted.

I made contacts with two colleagues in Florida who I thought might be interested in this case. I also was looking for someone to be, in essence, Robert's spiritual advisor since I was told he had become a Christian while serving time. I had no way of confirming this but did read some of his writings which were shared with me by Ines. We did not get too far in the restorative justice process, though Ines had

many talks with Robert about his victims. I felt that one important step would be to have Robert compose a list of those he had injured and attempt to explain how he could take responsibility for each action. This was a process I had learned when directing the Sycamore Tree Project, an innovative in-prison restorative justice programme, for Prison Fellowship/Prison Fellowship International in 1998 used in a Texas medium security prison.

By taking steps towards accountability it helps the offender prepare for perhaps someday meeting his victim/victims or their families or at the very least expressing those feelings via letter. The question in Robert's case was would any victim of his or their families receive such communication from him? I thought it would be unlikely. But then again since I have focused much of my work on crime victims and how to educate and organize them about restorative justice in the last 10 years I thought about the victims. How would a victim whose offender is on death row ever have contact? I know that it would generally never occur unless the victim initiates the contact. This is the traditional response by the justice system.

Most correctional institutions in the U.S. are not particularly supportive of contact between victims and offenders in prison. Yet there are victims who want to meet their offenders through a mediated victim offender dialogue in states like Texas. In fact, there is a long waiting list for victims who want to explore restorative justice in their own cases (i.e. at one time 400 victims were on such a list in Texas). All this left me feeling that someone has to let victims know that "IF" they are willing there is something called restorative justice and it could possibly lead them to a place of healing or more healing than they have previously experienced. But who lets the victims know? Where do crime victims go? Who or what could be the conduit between the victims and the offenders in violent or severely violent cases? Who would fund this work, always a question in the field of restorative justice?

We never got the chance to move forward in this process. Robert died. But Ines courageously continues to push forward to attempt to reach the victims Robert injured (or their families) to communicate that he deeply desired to apologize to each one for his vile actions. The following is a copy of Ines' letter to the editor to a Florida newspaper which first ran the story of Robert's death on death row. It leaves me with a feeling that we must do more to open doors for victims and their offenders to allow accountability to take place and healing in the lives of those injured by crime. I applaud Ines in her pursuit to understand how to apply restorative justice to the wounds of crime caring first for an offender and now for the victims he injured.

As we push for cutting edge change in public policies affecting all those injured by crime we must look beyond where we are today to expand the numbers of victims and offenders, and their families, who experience restorative justice processes for themselves.

The following is the letter to the editor written by Ines Aubert, pen pal of Robert. I re-print this letter with Ines' permission. Ines hoped to have this letter published in Florida but thus far the letter goes unpublished.

#### **Letter to the editor:**

Today it was announced that former death row inmate Robert Power has died of cancer. I have been a pen pal of Robert's for several years and I have been in contact with him until the end. Robert has told me about the crimes he committed and he has felt great remorse over them. His biggest wish was to let the family of the murder victim and the surviving victims and their families know that he desired to

send his apologies to them. He also wanted to express his remorse to each victim he injured over many years. However, without the help of some in the justice system he was not able to pursue with it.

I tried to help him with this process by working with a couple restorative justice experts. Robert did the best he could to take stock and take into account each victim he harmed. He hoped that some of the people he damaged would gain some healing in asking him questions which he was ready to answer honestly. He and I have shared many letters about this topic and I believe he was sincere in this wish. Since I got to know him 3 years ago he has not one time tried to defend himself or to blame anybody else than himself for the damage he caused. I believe that besides the punishment of the death sentence realizing what he did was an additional punishment that weighed as heavily on him as the imprisonment.

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### **Writing to an inmate who committed horrible crimes**

With Casper I experienced that it's possible to become friends with someone that some people might not consider human because of their horrific past.

### **“I will write to a death row inmate, but not to one who committed a crime against a child or who raped a woman...”**

#### **Thoughts about writing to a death row inmate who committed a horrible crime and about becoming a friend of his.**

Posted by Ines Aubert in the lifespark newsletter, December 2010

Quite a few times I've heard people say that they can write to a death row inmate, but that they couldn't write to one who has committed a crime against a child or who has raped a woman. I can understand the feeling of reluctance to do good to someone who has done so much bad.

However, I would like to make you think about the statement a little more. I feel I have the right to do so as I had been very close to Casper, a man who raped women and children and who killed a 12 year old girl during his last rape before he was locked up.

There can be no doubt that finding out about Casper's crimes was very hard for me. Especially since he told me about them in detail because he wanted to be totally open to me. Today I assume that Casper wanted to experience that a person who was not his mother or his pastor, after having heard about his crimes, would still consider him worthy of love and friendship.

Casper's wish was fulfilled and I saw him as a human being and even as a very close friend.

I believe that without condoning the crime our pen pal committed, we can still be his friend. Lifespark provides death row inmates with people who are willing to write and to listen. The inmates are condemned already and they have received a very harsh punishment, namely a death sentence. So, there's no need to add more punishment by telling them we won't write to them because they are so bad, although we had wanted to start a pen pal-ship.

I believe that our task is to still see a human being in the inmate and to address that human being in our letters. I know another death row inmate who has committed a crime against a child and I see much humanity in him as well. We have to be open and not focus on our prejudices. The fact is that we can't change the past, and the cruel crimes that our pen pals committed remain cruel crimes. We are not responsible for these crimes, but for how we treat the people we meet in our lives.

I consider statements like the one at the top dangerous because they evoke two illusions: Firstly, that our members can choose their future pen pal according to the crime he committed and secondly that the quality of the pen pal-ship would be dependent on that crime.

This is not accurate.

We hand out addresses of inmates to new members without even checking what crime a particular inmate committed. This means, a new member should be ready to write to a person who has killed a child. We can provide our members with support if it turns out they write to such a person and if they have difficulty dealing with that knowledge. But it's most unusual to ask for a new address and to return the previous inmate when one can't deal with his crime.

What I have learned through my experience is that the crime committed is no indicator for the quality of the pen pal-ship. I know about not very close pen pal-ships with inmates who have committed less crimes. On the other hand, not only my friendship with Casper was very enriching, but also the friendship between the other inmate who killed a child and his pen pal is exceptionally close.

I believe that we receive what is due in our lives, which is not always what we would have chosen in the first place. Facing a challenge could turn out to be a great opportunity to grow and to mature.

**Please note:** I'm not suggesting that our members have to deal with ugly behavior of our pen pals! If your pen pal constantly approaches you in a way you can't accept, this could be a reason to end a pen pal-ship, after you have tried to make him understand he has to change his attitude,

What I mean is that learning about our pen pal's case should not be the reason for the termination of contact.

Maybe you find it hard to see any humanity in someone like Casper. His past crimes are most repelling and shocking. Still, I got to know him as a human being who longed to be treated humanely. Casper had a mother whom he loved dearly. Another inmate wrote me after his death that Casper had spoken to him about his longing to meet his mother in a better place after he died.

Unfortunately I didn't get to meet Casper's mother as she had already passed away before I got to know him. I would have loved to tell her that I was a friend of Casper's and to relieve her a little in her immense sorrow about her son and the damage he had caused. I imagine that being the mother of a son who has committed crimes like Casper's must be devastating.

However, being the man who is the reason for all the pain must be even harder than being the mother. In Casper's case it was like a big "wake up" sometime after he was arrested. There came a time when he started to understand: What he had done, who he had been and what damage he had caused not only to the victims, but to the world. From then on, being Casper must have been very heavy.

I encourage everybody not to give up writing to inmates who have committed the worst crimes, but to try to find a way of dealing with them.

I'm ready to talk to you if it helps, or to interview you if you want to share the difficulties you have with your pen pal's crime. In my experience, coming to terms with Casper's crimes was a journey and

not a sudden flash of inspiration; so, please be patient, look for somebody to accompany you on the journey and accept the challenge. Peace to you!

### **Debbie gets active too**

Debbie tried to help me to find more victims and also investigated in the net. She contacted Shanna Flowers, a journalist who covered the rape case for Orlando Sentinel years ago.

Shanna was so impressed by Debbie's story that she wrote about it in her blog.



### **The incredible power of forgiveness**

**A former journalist of the “Orlando Sentinel“ writes a post in her blog after Debbie contacted her with this question: “Are you the same Shanna Flowers who covered the Kissimmee rapist Robert Power for The Orlando Sentinel in the late '80s?”**

Posted by Shanna Flowers in her [blog](#) on February 26, 2011

Robert Power.

The name of that monster of a man stared back at me from my computer screen. I hadn't thought of him in more than 20 years.

“Are you the same Shanna Flowers who covered the Kissimmee rapist Robert Power for The Orlando Sentinel in the late '80s?” the blog post wanted to know.

The question recalling my days as a young reporter was cryptic enough. But the final sentence of the short missive was infinitely more intriguing as I debated whether to unravel its mystery.

“A prayer is attached to this email,” it read. “Please reply as soon as possible.”

I did, and the gift awaiting me was an incredible lesson in forgiveness.

The correspondence was sent by one of Power's victims, a teenage girl in 1987 when I covered the case but now an adult mother and born-again Christian studying to be a faith counselor. Power, she told me, had died of cancer in prison in Dec. 2010.

But she had forgiven him six years earlier.

To understand the capacity for which God enables us to forgive, you have to understand the horror of what she endured and to recognize the courage God gave her to rise above it.

She was 16 when Power broke into her family's Kissimmee, Fla., home on a Saturday night. He put a gun to her 12-year-old sister's head and kidnapped them. Their parents were asleep. As teens are apt to do, the girls were still up, milling around the house. Power watched them through the window.

He took them to a nearby house under construction and raped them. He then tied them up, stuffed toilet tissue in their mouths and told them to wait 30 minutes before they moved. The terrified sisters counted aloud to 60 some 30 times before they unloosed themselves, ran home and awoke their parents.

In a three-week span, Power raped the woman and her sister, two other young sisters and raped, hog-tied and stabbed to death a 12-year-old Orlando girl.

The woman also sent me a copy of an interview he did, in which he said he accepted Christ in prison. As a society, we have become jaded by jailhouse conversions. But as she noted in her testimony, "no one is deserving of salvation, but everyone is eligible."

Power's confessed salvation was something for which the woman had prayed. She never wanted him released from prison. But his transformation was, she noted, the completion of her own healing.

In her testimony, she wrote:

*In Colossians, the Bible says, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." I did not forgive by emotions, but by obedience. The supernatural love of God kicked in after I made the choice to forgive.*

Our correspondences back and forth made me rethink forgiveness. With the power and grace of God, this woman summoned the ability to forgive a man who unmercifully violated her and her sister in ways many of us can't imagine. Her message put in perspective the petty grudges we hold onto — someone looked at us askance or falsely accused us or didn't speak to us.

Her message was one I needed.

## Meeting with Debbie

After we had e-mailed, talked on the phone and written the interview for the newsletter, Debbie and I made plans to meet when I would be visiting my pen pals in summer 2011.

The meeting was wonderful for the both of us although we were both nervous and unsure what to expect.

## I am delighted to have met you – dialogue with Debbie and Ines

**In summer 2011 Ines met Debbie in her home town in Mississippi. For the lifespark newsletter they made a short interview, talking about their meeting.**

Posted by Ines Aubert and Debbie in the lifespark newsletter, September 2011



**Ines:** Debbie you read the text I wrote. How was it for you to meet with me?

**Debbie:** Ines, I am delighted to have finally met you. Like you there were butterflies welling up within me. I absolutely was filled with uncertainty, and yes even doubt. It wasn't that I doubted in you or your truthfulness of who are. More like one of those pinch me I must be dreaming scenarios.

In America we have a saying, "Careful what you ask for." I asked to be used mightily of the Lord and that he would use my hurt to heal others. Now, of course I can't heal anyone, but the Lord works through me. Anyway, that Tuesday when we first met, I was so excited to wrap my arms around the woman that was so filled with compassion for another human being and that she could look past his past deeds that labeled him "a man beyond reach."

What a gift you gave him. Knowing who he was you still chose to love him. Much the way our Savior, Jesus is with us knowing who we are still He died for us.

I praise the Lord and give Him all the glory for this miracle that he has done in our lives.

I had a blast hanging with you and your husband, Kurt. It almost seemed as those we were long lost school chums.

I know that had I not allowed the Lord to soften my heart that things could've been much differently. I could have taken the pain and hurt that Robert inflicted on me and lashed out at you as I know some have done. I pray that the Lord will soften their hearts and teach them how to love and forgive.

It is still my prayer to be used mightily of the Lord and I can't wait to see all of the many lives that he changes from this powerful story of forgiveness, love and mercy.

**Ines:** I'm so happy and grateful about the outcome of our common story! The primary reason which, after more than 20 years, led to you and I meeting is a horrible crime. I perceive it as a wonder that anything good could have come out of it!

Let me still ask a few questions in order to understand better what would have prevented the good outcome:

What do you think would be a major mistake in a similar situation; - when the friend of an offender approaches his/her victim? What would be wrong to do or to say?

**Debbie:** Your questions are difficult ones. I think it would depend on where the victim is at that point in their lives, and how much if any healing has taken place.

I think that most victims are hand shy, meaning don't crowd or smother them.

Patience is the key in encountering them and you should probably prepare for the worst.

To me it is important to pray about these things and allow the Lord to open the doors. That way

HE gets all of the glory. Without Him and His strength within me I would not be able to forgive and extend mercy, but we are to give grace just as the Lord has given us grace.

I believe the best way to address a victim is to go low and go slow. Be very humble and patient. Give them the utmost respect and be willing to be beaten emotionally for these individuals. Show them love and compassion, but NOT pity. Pity is a horrible substitute for compassion a counterfeit if you will. When you pity someone you offer no solution, but compassion extends a hand.



Because I was so moved about meeting Debbie and also her mother I wrote another article for our newsletter:

## **Stretch your hand out**

**About the meeting with Debbie, who forgave the man who raped her and about forgiving people in our own lives.**

Posted by Ines Aubert in the lifespark newsletter, October 2011

Our members might remember that after the death of my closest pen pal Casper at the end of last year, I got into contact with one of his rape victims. It was Debbie, who he had kidnapped and raped when she was 16, together with her 12-year old sister. Finding Debbie and then talking to her via e-mail was an outstanding event in my life. Also for her, being in contact with her offender's friend wasn't something she had ever imagined she would live to see.

This summer now, Debbie and I met for the first time face to face in the little town she lives in. It's hard to describe what just the prospect of such a meeting happening triggered in me. I was both very happy to have the chance to see her and nervous because of some abstruse fears. It was a "what will happen to me-feeling". What will she say? How will she react, or even more, "how will I react?"

Debbie and I had exchanged photos and so, when I saw her getting out of her car, I immediately recognized her. Seconds later we embraced each other. It was an intense hug, as if we had to bridge the gap between the extremely different sides we were coming from: she being the victim of a horrible crime and me being the best friend of that very offender.

The meeting with Debbie was great. Because we got along so well, we met several times over the period of two days and even went on boat ride together. There was no problem talking about all sorts of things, the crime and Casper included. We also had some fun together and took photos.

Debbie, obviously, has found peace by forgiving Casper. It has set her free, so much so, that she was able to laugh and talk with me. She even expressed satisfaction about the fact that Casper had had someone in his life who cared and who was his friend.

Sadly, all of this doesn't apply to her sister, who's still suffering from the devastation that the crime had on her life. Debbie doesn't talk to her sister about forgiving Casper or about me because she fears that she would cut all contact after hearing that.

Debbie loves her sister and doesn't want to lose her.

This was also the reason why her mother, who approved of Debbie being in contact with me, at first didn't want to get to know me. Because of loyalty to her younger daughter she thought she shouldn't talk to me.

However, after Debbie and I had met, she changed her mind, and so I got to know her as well. She too was nervous about the meeting, but it was a very good encounter.

Debbie and her mother told me about the time of the trial and how much it had burdened them in addition to the crime itself. We outsiders might never understand what it means to be a victim of such a crime.

Debbie's mother also said something that I will never forget. She described how, during the trial, she had looked at Casper's mother and how she had felt sorry for her. I think that such a statement out of the mouth of the mother of the two young victims is outstanding.

I saw that Debbie's mother has found peace too. I admire both women.

I told them that the story about Debbie having forgiven has reached several prisons already. I have shared the story with my pen pals and with some of Casper's friends on death row, who, after his death wrote to me to say they were sorry about my loss.

Several of them expressed their admiration for Casper's change and gratitude for the man he had become and who had been their friend. They were impressed to learn that Debbie had forgiven him.

Debbie and her mother in turn were moved to hear that their forgiveness had touched other inmates and they liked the idea that their action brought hope to other people in prison.

I told Debbie about Mark, Casper's best friend on death row, who has now become my pen pal and I also told Mark about Debbie.

Mark worries a lot about victims in general and he would do everything to help any victim that would have use for his help. He isn't sure though in what ways he could be helpful.

I believe that even just the wish to be helpful is important and can create an atmosphere where help can be given and received.

Casper's desire to apologize and Debbie's capability to forgive have already resulted in a lot of good; and the journey will probably go on.

Apologizing and forgiving and the love that engenders both movements – aren't they part of what makes the world turn? And can't we all multiply these values actively if only we decide to do so?

Please consider being part of that movement by stretching out your hand as well; - you will know to whom in your life.

### **Casper's friends and a new pen pal**

Several of Casper's friends on death row wrote to me to express their empathy after the death of Casper, one of them was Mark. Casper had written about Mark in his letters and so I knew they were friends.

Mark and I both found comfort in becoming pen pals.

For our lifeshare brochure, Mark wrote a text.

### **You came into my life out of the blue - To befriend me is to risk another loss**

**Casper's friend Mark on death row in Florida talks about the value of pen pal-ships for those in prison. Mark has become Ines' pen friend after Casper's death.**

Posted by Mark Gerald in the lifeshare brochure, October 2011

My name is Mark, I've been incarcerated since March 1989. I met my lifespark friend Ines through somewhat difficult circumstances. Late in 2010 I heard through the prison grapevine that my friend Casper might be seriously ill with cancer. We were on different wings of the prison, I tried to get in to touch with him but before I could Casper died.

I remembered Casper had told me about his lifespark friend Ines, how important her friendship had been. I regretted very much not being able to communicate some parting thoughts, some expression of gratitude. I wondered if Ines and Casper had had a chance to say all they wanted to say. Since Casper had related to me how he felt about Ines, I wrote and told her what he said.

I did not want Ines to experience what I had experienced when my friend Patricia died and we didn't have the time to express our feelings. And, if I am honest, I wrote Ines in part because I felt bad about not getting a letter to Casper.

Ines' response was kind, sort of familiar. I asked her if she would continue to write to me, she agreed.

I was struck by this. It is remarkable to me, remember I am 22+ years on death row, to befriend me is to risk another loss. That she would do so for me, for the benefit of a stranger, I see this as an extraordinary act of kindness. She will say there is nothing extraordinary about it. It seems many lifespark members believe that there is nothing special in befriending a death row prisoner. You are all wrong! 😊

We here live in an uncommon circumstance, the far end of the spectrum. In our society we are disposable, despised, disregarded. You view us as human, give us opportunity to demonstrate our humanity, enable us to love. You people are special, you are exceptional, and I speak for many when I say "Thank you!"

I considered Ines a friend from the start, it was easy, as if it was supposed to be.

Recently I enjoyed 3 days of visitation with her and I am left with the feeling that I am privileged to have been given another true and lasting friendship. I say "given" because I believe God has entrusted

me with her friendship. I accept no other explanation for her presence in my life, and I am grateful beyond words.

I wonder if any writer could take up pen and convey any true sense of what friendship means to a man who has lived a life such as mine. I lived for a long time in the absence of love, now I have lived a long time in the presence of love. The difference is so great that it defies description. I thought I might describe it, maybe create this masterpiece of connection that would allow you to feel as I feel, but I cannot. Some things become so meaningful they transcend words. For me, friendship has become greater than words. I once described friendship as a freedom of sorts. The freedom to be yourself without fear of judgment or ridicule. Just for a moment try to imagine how important any sort of freedom is to a man who will never get out of a cage.

## Interview with Brian Pleasants, spiritual advisor and friend of Robert Power/Casper

By Ines Aubert, March 2015

**Ines:** Brian, you are the man who knew Robert Power/Casper best. Can you tell us when and how you first met him?

**Brian:** How I met Robert is mostly a fact-based answer. The preamble to the question, about "knowing him best" actually sparks my need to respond more...and I will get to that in due time. Firstly how I met Robert.

It was all circumstance and coincidence. No planning on my part. I was a young pastor just out of seminary and my church was located closest to the State prison where Death Row was housed. In the summer of 1993, Roy Albers, the pastor who had baptized Robert during the trial that would ultimately send him to Death Row, sought me out and let me know of Casper's transfer to my area. He requested that I begin to follow up.

I had never visited an inmate. I went on that first visit as a "one time" task, mainly to be able tell Pastor Albers that I'd followed up on his request. Not the highest of motivations. That one visit turned into a seventeen-year journey.

It took a series of seven locked gates to get from the parking lot to the visiting room. I could "retreat" through none of those doors without the consent of a guard. I was as locked in as any inmate.

I met Robert for most of the seventeen years in a small room where inmates usually met with lawyers. Two chairs. One table. Nothing else. On that first visit Robert's hands were not cuffed; I do think he had ankle chains on, but I can't remember for sure.

It's been 22 years since that first visit and the one thing I remember from that is looking, or trying not to look and yet looking, at Robert's



hands resting on the table. What had they done? Who had he harmed with them? I wasn't preoccupied with the thought. But it was the start of my journey of trying to see Robert as a man for whom Christ died while also understanding that this man was a convicted killer and guilty of much more than that, as I would come to know over time.

Somewhere in the course of that first hour-long visit, I must have come to the conclusion that this man was taking his faith in God seriously because I chose to make the promise to come back the next month. And so our relationship began.

Now to that idea that I "knew him best." The most I can say is that I knew him the longest. He left home in his mid-teens and never had any real ongoing contact with any of his family. I don't think he ever lived anywhere for more than a few years...usually months...at a time. He spent well over half his life in prison! For someone to commit to a relationship that would end up spanning 17 years must have seemed totally foreign to Robert. Certainly it was this theme of "commitment" for which he would thank me most over the years. But I did that because I "knew" Jesus, and that Jesus would make that commitment. As for knowing Robert? The final few years of Robert's life ended up convincing me that only Robert's Creator and Redeemer could ever truly know

Robert. Robert's pain and sorrow was too deep. No one, no matter how caring, could comprehend his life as perpetrator...or as victim...for he was both.

**Ines:** I see you decided to call him "Robert" here. I stick to naming him "Casper". We know we are talking about the same man. Can you say a little more about Casper's pain and sorrow?

**Brian:** Robert didn't often give emotional expression to his feelings during our visits. Some of that must have been due to the setting; guards walking past every few minutes to observe and just the austere nature of the cement blocks and mental doors. A stern place.

He would, however, describe in detail (after months and years of building a relationship of credibility with him) the horrific details of his childhood. The abuse he suffered at the hands of family and close friends of older family members was a mirror image of the kind of actions he would later inflict on others... everything short of murder.

So I was aware of the "facts" of Robert's pain and sorrow but not a recipient of the "current evidence/expression" of those feelings.

At the time of Robert's mother's death and then of his brother's, also we exchanged letters about that prior to one of our monthly meetings. Here too he could put into print thoughts of sadness and regret, but also of forgiveness and acceptance. By the time our face-to-face visit came, Robert had his emotions pretty well in check. In 17 years, I can't remember seeing Robert ever break down and cry. Misty eyes? Yes...but never would that be the limit.

**Ines:** After some years, you had become Casper's friend as well as his spiritual advisor, right? When you look back: What does having known Casper mean to you?

**Brian:** Robert made the possibility of salvation and transformation real to me. Too much of religion resides in the realm of theory. Robert was real. His past and the horrors it contained were real. That made his ability to have any kind of civilized interaction all the more amazing. I witnessed Robert try to love. He did so imperfectly, as do we all. He tried to interact (by letter) with his troubled family and to make a positive contribution to their lives. None of that worked out too well; but again this could be said of those who haven't murdered and been sent to death row. Robert revealed to me that everyone remains human regardless of his actions. That being the case, I have...have to (!)...judge less. Because the only thing we can judge is actions. The human being is too complex and preciously unique to be judged. I would not have thought these thoughts without having known Robert.

**Ines:** You wrote, "Robert revealed to me that everyone remains human regardless of their actions." I conclude that this truth you had not yet witnessed to be true before you met Casper. Is that correct?

**Brian:** Prior to meeting Robert I would say the principle "loving your enemy" would have invited me to consider the need to make a distinction between deeds and the dignity of simple existence. But my friendship with Robert was the "laboratory" where that "experimental theory" became reality.

**Ines:** You did a lot of good for Casper by helping him to transform. Did he help you to transform as well?

**Brian:** I did "a lot to help Robert transform..." I can hear him objecting to that now. I say that with a smile. Robert gave all the glory to his Creator and Redeemer. And I must too.

*All either of us ever did was take Jesus up on His promise to teach us to love.*

We were slow students. But we remained open to letting the Spirit of God shape our visits from hour to hour as the months rolled on. And there were letters in between those visits that were filled with themes of divine love, forgiveness, and promises of healing. To see that unfold in the life of such a broken man gave me hope to believe in my God.

It's one thing to be paid to believe in God... what else can you say about "professional" clergy? But the real transformation in my ministry came when I saw the actual changes

unfold in Robert's heart. I could never doubt the power of God after knowing Robert and his struggle.

**Ines:** At the very end of Casper's life, you again played a big role as his friend and spiritual advisor because you were the last one to visit Robert in the prison hospital.

I'm very happy that you could be there for him one last time. I thank you for everything you did for Casper.

Peace to you, Brian!

## **Attachments**

**Page 49: Article in the street magazine Surprise, November 2014**

**By Florian Blumer (Text) and Priska Wenger (Illustrations) and Janet Brot (Translation into English)**

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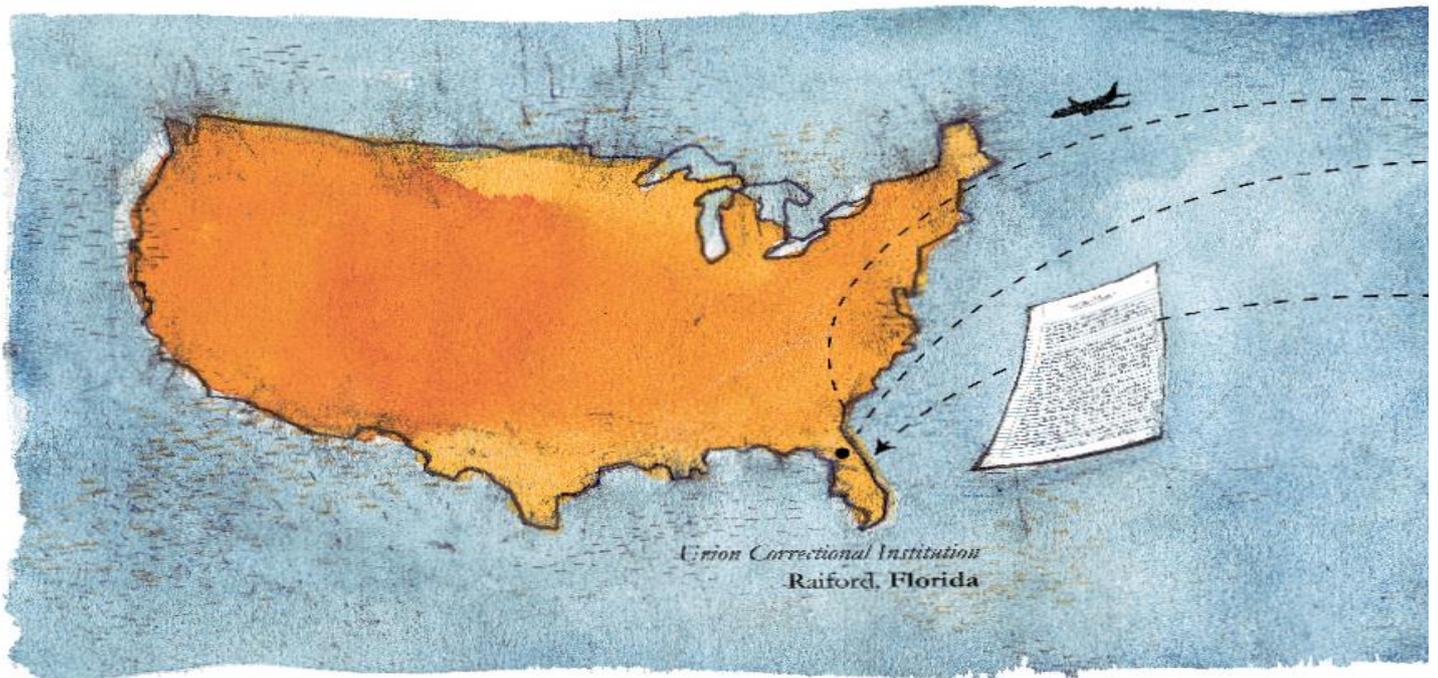
# SURPRISE

STRASSENMAGAZIN



## Liebe Ines

Briefe aus dem Todestrakt



## Friendship

## Good and Evil

**Ines is a teacher, wife and mother and lives with her family in a house in the Zurich Oberland. Robert Power / Casper was a swindler, rapist and murderer and lived on Death Row in Raiford, Florida. These two connect the story of an unusual friendship.**

BY FLORIAN BLUMER (TEXT) AND PRISKA WENGER (ILLUSTRATIONS)

TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH BY JANET BROT

Ines flew this past summer to the USA again to visit her friend. For twelve years she has travelled overseas once a year, and in the past few years her husband has accompanied her, as well. The 53-year-old teacher/remedial teacher from Zurich gladly took on these trips although each visit only lasted a few hours. And none of these men ever came to Switzerland because Ines' American pen pals sit behind bars on Death Row.

A very special friendship evolved with Casper, who was imprisoned in Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida for robbery, fraud, rape and murder. Although it only lasted three years and consisted mainly of exchanging letters, it had everything that makes a deep friendship: sharing thoughts with each other, being there for each other, making conversation over deep themes and engaging in fierce debates.

Since childhood, Ines has loved exchanging letters, has always been interested in people and in humanness. In prisoners she found people who also wanted to regularly exchange letters. Casper looked for someone with whom he could share an in-depth exchange. These exchanges brought both of them to their human limits and beyond, and after Casper's death brought Ines the desired contact to one of his victims.

The story of an unusual friendship began in early 2008 when Casper contributed a text to a theater project about "Dead Man Walking", a Hollywood blockbuster about a man sentenced to death. He exchanged letters with Ines about this project, in which she participated. She is a member of Lifespark, an organization which coordinates letter exchange with prisoners on Death Row in the USA. Casper, who was on Lifespark's waiting list, asked Ines if she could write him regularly. Although Ines already had several pen pals in various prisons, she agreed.



On March 17, 2008 Casper wrote:

*Dear Ines*

*I appreciate your willingness to write to me on a regular basis, my terrible crimes notwithstanding.*

*As you can see from doing the math on the D.O.C. (Department of Corrections) website I've spent about 29 of my 47 years in prison for robbery, auto-theft, and forgery – before the present charges. I went to prison at age 18 and other than three releases from prison I've spent almost my entire adult life behind bars. This is the gist of things, if you have any specific questions please feel free to ask. I have no problem speaking with someone on any aspect of myself or on any other subject, so speak your heart and mind.*

*Casper is my nickname. I'm quiet but friendly.*

The letter exchange suddenly became more intensive. Casper taught Ines using theoretical treatises regarding the functioning of the human spirit, quoting and preaching from the Bible. Ines was challenged by his dominant manner, defended herself from and countered this indoctrination.

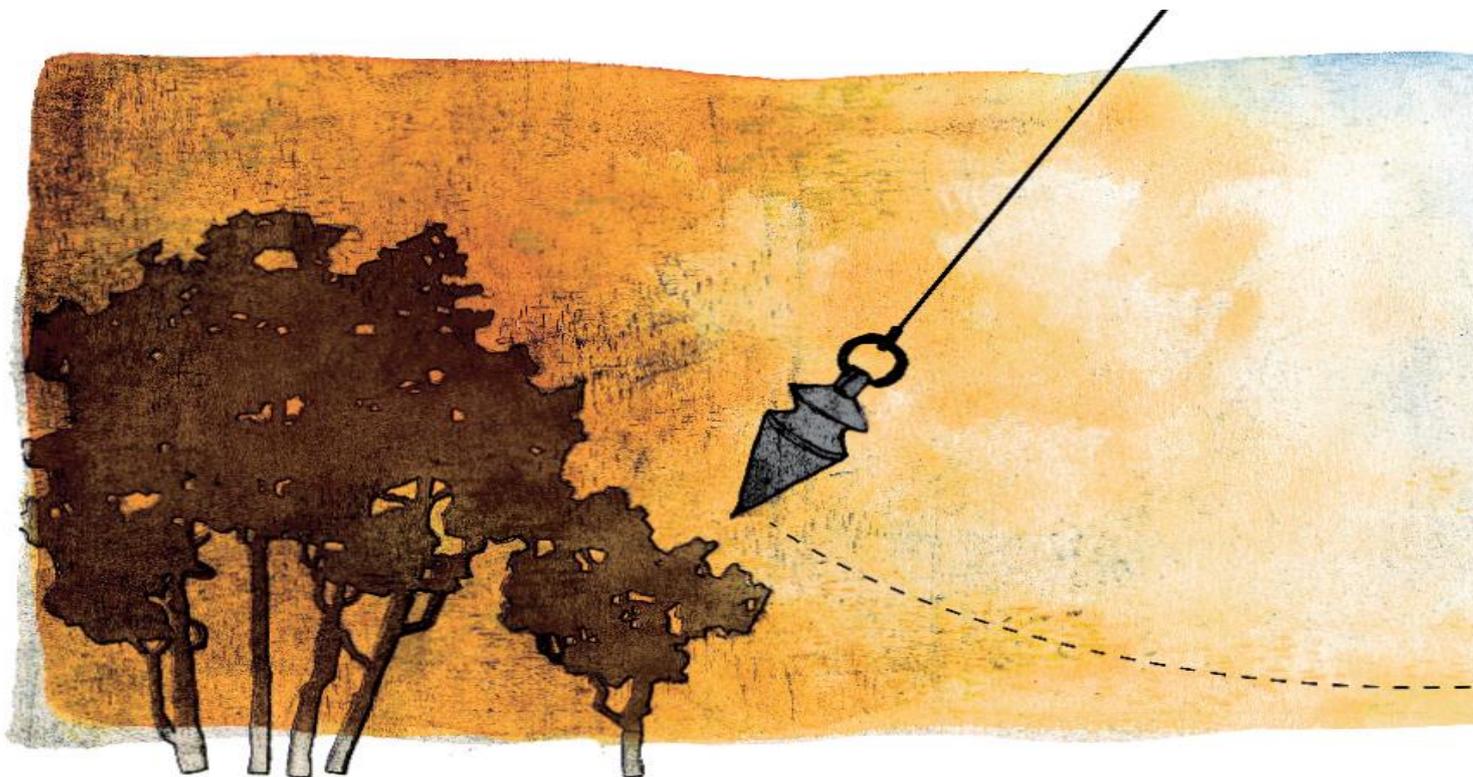
Ines and Casper wrote each other every week. Casper told a lot about himself, Ines explained about the challenges in her everyday life. Casper participated in her experiences and gave his opinion. In a difficult decision at her workplace, he encouraged her to follow her intuition. He asked her how she would define the meaning of life, but also what she had planted in her garden. He enjoyed the photographs of her everyday life which she sent him. He got to know her life more and more, and sent greetings through her to her other pen pals.

In October of 2008 Ines flew to the USA to visit her pen pals, and Casper for the first time. When he came into the visitor's room, she immediately recognized him. Through all of the letters they had exchanged, they felt comfortable with each other and it did not take long for them to continue their intensive exchange face-to-face. She would visit him two more times, the last time being in August of 2010, four months before his death. During these short face-to-face meetings, they philosophized and laughed, talked about what they were thinking about, and ate together. They played the strategy game "Connect Four", which Ines almost always won. This aggravated Casper, as he always described himself in his letters as an analytical person and Ines as an emotional type.

Casper's crimes were hardly a theme at the beginning of their friendship. This changed when Ines offered to assist him with the revision of his biography, in which she typed up his handwritten manuscripts. Casper also sent Ines police reports about his crime against the then-16-year-old Debbie and her twelve-year-old sister. In the report everything was described that he did to these two girls when they were victims of his violence: how he played with them, tortured them, and raped them. Ines was literally sickened upon reading it.

On January 1, 2010 she sent Casper a dark card with a picture of monstrous-looking deep sea fish and the words:

*I fell in a big hole and I want you to know that. There is no other way than that you go on sending me your bio pages, but know that right now I feel as if I would never want to go on working on our project or to invest more into it. And not even to write you again. That has never happened before, so I'm surprised myself. I don't know what else to say; - I just need peace and comfort.*



Casper reacted strongly. On January 10, 2010 he wrote:

*I have loved you, do love you, and will continuously pray that peace returns to your heart and mind. Even so, you say you feel that you don't want to write to me again. I understand that, you see only my past without any true faith in my present spirit. I will not write again.*

He wrote again on the next day, January 11, 2010:

*Was that card necessary? The specific words in it? We need to talk now about how you are feeling and what you are thinking concerning my former and present spirit.*

Due to the geographical distance, letters often crossed – shortly after sending one card, Ines wrote Casper her next letter, the exchange resumed its regular rhythm. Ines struggled with herself. She fought to again see the person in Casper whom she had grown to like. Her conviction was that there are no monsters, only people. But the description of Casper's criminal acts brought her to her limits. She did not want to show anyone the text because she did not want to involve anyone else in it. But she sensed that she must do something to protect herself from this negative energy. Although she did not share Casper's enthusiasm for the Bible and faith, she decided to go to church to be blessed.

And Ines feared becoming a victim herself. On January 17, 2010 she wrote Casper a long letter.

*There is one single question that I need to ask you today, Casper. It is the main question with regards to our relationship.*

*Your - often random - victims were forced to do and to endure whatever came to your mind. Mercilessly you forced*

*everybody to perform exactly and in every detail what you desired. A thought about your victims' wellbeing or situation doesn't seem to have ever crossed your mind. You didn't even consider them real persons with real feelings and enduring real pain. Shortly after it began weighing heavily on me to type out your many pages, I started wondering if the same manipulation was taking place again: A woman - me - has to endure all that you felt was due to happen.*

*This is my only question that I have for you right now and I ask you to please answer it as open as you talked about everything:*

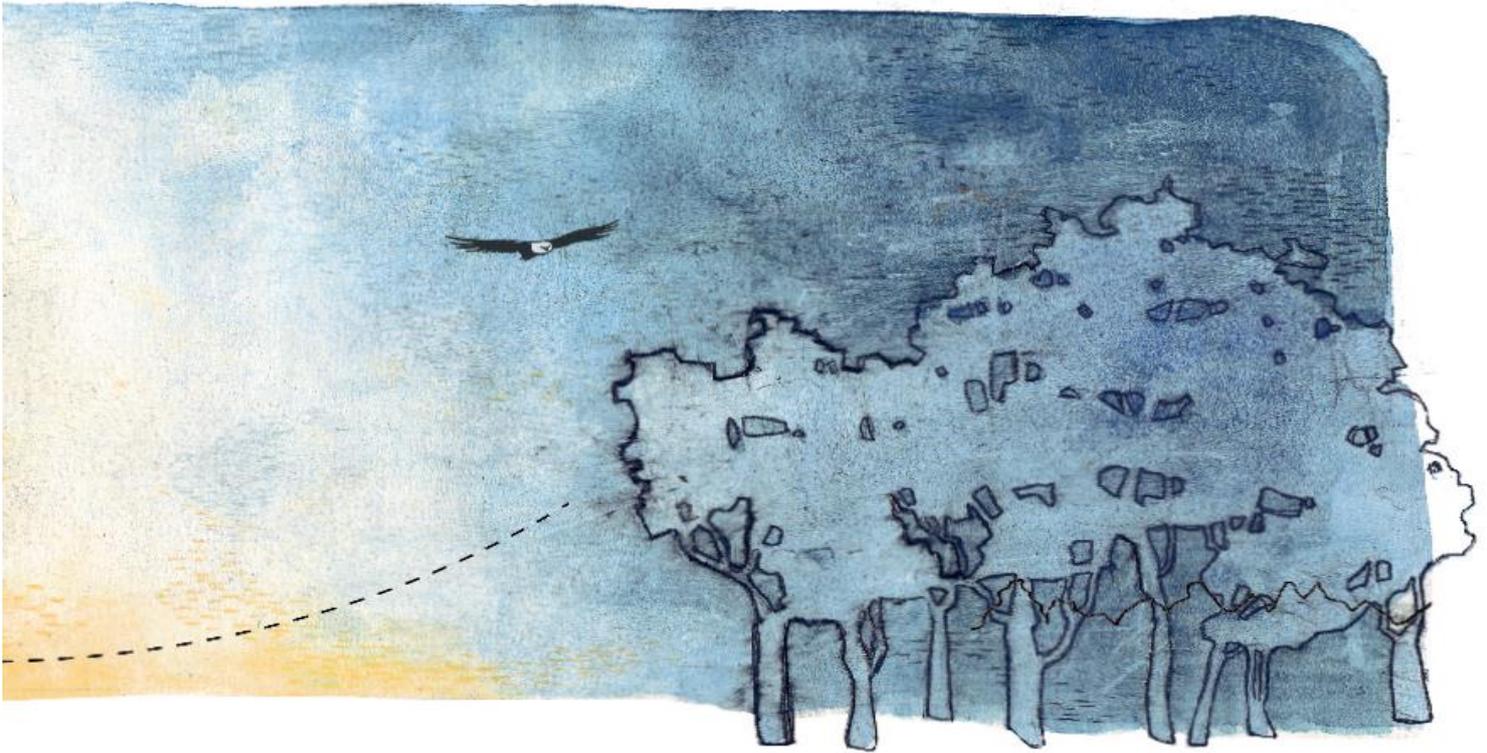
*Did it excite you to relive and put down your memories in such great detail and to have a woman being exposed to them?*

Casper wrote on February 28, 2010 that he wanted to confront her with the whole truth. And:

*That did anger me, because it's a hurtful thing to say to someone who has had only love for you, and has neither thought to do or done any malicious thing to you.*

*I don't see how you can truly say I'm "dear" to you and you believe I have a good spirit presently out of one side of your mouth while at the same time you say I victimized and manipulated you out of the other side of your mouth. Both cannot be true. If you think both can be true, please explain to me how.*

In a self-study over several years, Casper tried to explain how evil can take hold of a person, and this was what caused him to do what he did. He read the Bible and had long conversations with the prison chaplain and his successor, both of whom became his friends. With the analysis of the human spirit and Bible study, Casper found a way to bring closure to his past.



But Ines reacted emotionally to the details from Casper's past. She charged him with the fact that his victims were people with feelings, daughters of mothers like herself, that she herself could have been one of the women whom Casper raped.

On June 24, 2010, Casper wrote retrospectively:

*First, I will say, I agree with your impression that our connection has been good for my spirit – because it has caused me to feel and think deeper about serious things.*

*I hope the same is true for you. I also agree that I am more “tender” and “open” for having been connected to you – because a couple of years ago and prior to that connection we have established I would not have tried to explain how someone had mistaken impressions of me. I would maybe have had the patience to explain it once, but certainly not multiple times.*

*Now though, I want to point out several things for your consideration. Seeing “remnants” of my former spirit in my current attitudes toward you is possible to “see” if you expect to see remnants of those attitudes. If you had experienced my former attitudes personally, you would not now believe you “saw” any remnant of my former spirit. You would be amazed at the difference you see between my former and present spirit. I am sometimes surprised by my present feelings and thoughts, and no one except God knows me better than I know me. Yes, I can still be aggressive – and even a smartass in some of my comments, but I value you very highly – as I do people in general, and this value I did not have in my previous spirit's estate.*

Casper wrote Ines that he was at that time totally disconnected from love, which has meaning in life above everything else. He wrote further that he was himself conceived by rape (letter from October 2010, exact date unknown):

*I believe the combination of Dad's unjust punishment in my childhood, his abandonment of our family, my neighbor Grady's sexual assault of me, and the other neighbor Gwyn's sexual molestation of me, my wife's cheating on me and the subsequent loss of my daughter in my life, then the armed robbery conviction, my wife's friend got me into – all contributed to a pattern of feeling and thinking which caused me to desire a destructive level of control over other people, and directly lead to my justification (on a subconscious level) of the patterns of behaviors which ultimately resulted in this death sentence.*

*Even so, I was fully responsible for every single hurtful thing I did to myself and other people.*

*I do have much to apologize for, and many to apologize to. Yes, I would like to contact everyone I have ever offended and apologize for the offense – but most of them are impossible to contact, because I don't know their names.*

Ines concluded to support Casper in his long-standing wish to apologize to his victims – for her own healing, as well. In her letter of January 17 she wrote:

*The prospect of having a chance to possibly help some of the victims to heal is like balm for my own heart and mind. It would relieve me immensely if some of them would react and talk about how they are by connecting with us or; with me.*



The search for victims turned out to be almost hopeless. It was only successful in one case: the woman who, as a 12-year-old, he used as a prostitute for himself. He did not know the names of the other victims, as they were not given. The sources of information for contact information blocked it in his case. After several unsuccessful efforts, Ines encouraged Casper to write his apology in order to publish it on the Lifespark website.

On October 18, 2010 Casper reported that he had stomach problems.

On November 6, 2010 he wrote:

*I got back from the hospital Jacksonville Memorial yesterday and this won't go out until Sunday evening. I left so quickly I couldn't give anyone your e-mail address. They just walked up and said get dressed, after I showed the nurse my stomach – swollen, big time. I looked eight months pregnant (according to what the nurses were saying.)*

*It seems like some of our long range plans to help victims will be up to you. Actually, they wouldn't/couldn't tell me how much time I have left. They say it's cancer, because there are dark spots on my liver images, but it didn't sound like they knew what was causing it.*

*God is in control of all things, so we will do what we can while we can do it, then leave the rest to our loving creator.*

After that, it went very quickly. On November 9, 2010 Casper wrote:

*I just don't know how many days I have left, so we can't lose any time. I will probably pass away not by lethal injection, but natural causes – you have my permission to put anything I've written into any medium you want to.*

On November 21, 2010:

*You are the last person alive on earth who truly cares about me, and I don't like seeing you unhappy or frowning.*

*Sometimes no pain at all, at other times I have pain like you can't imagine – nearly unbearable.*

On November 23, 2010 Ines received the last letter from Casper:

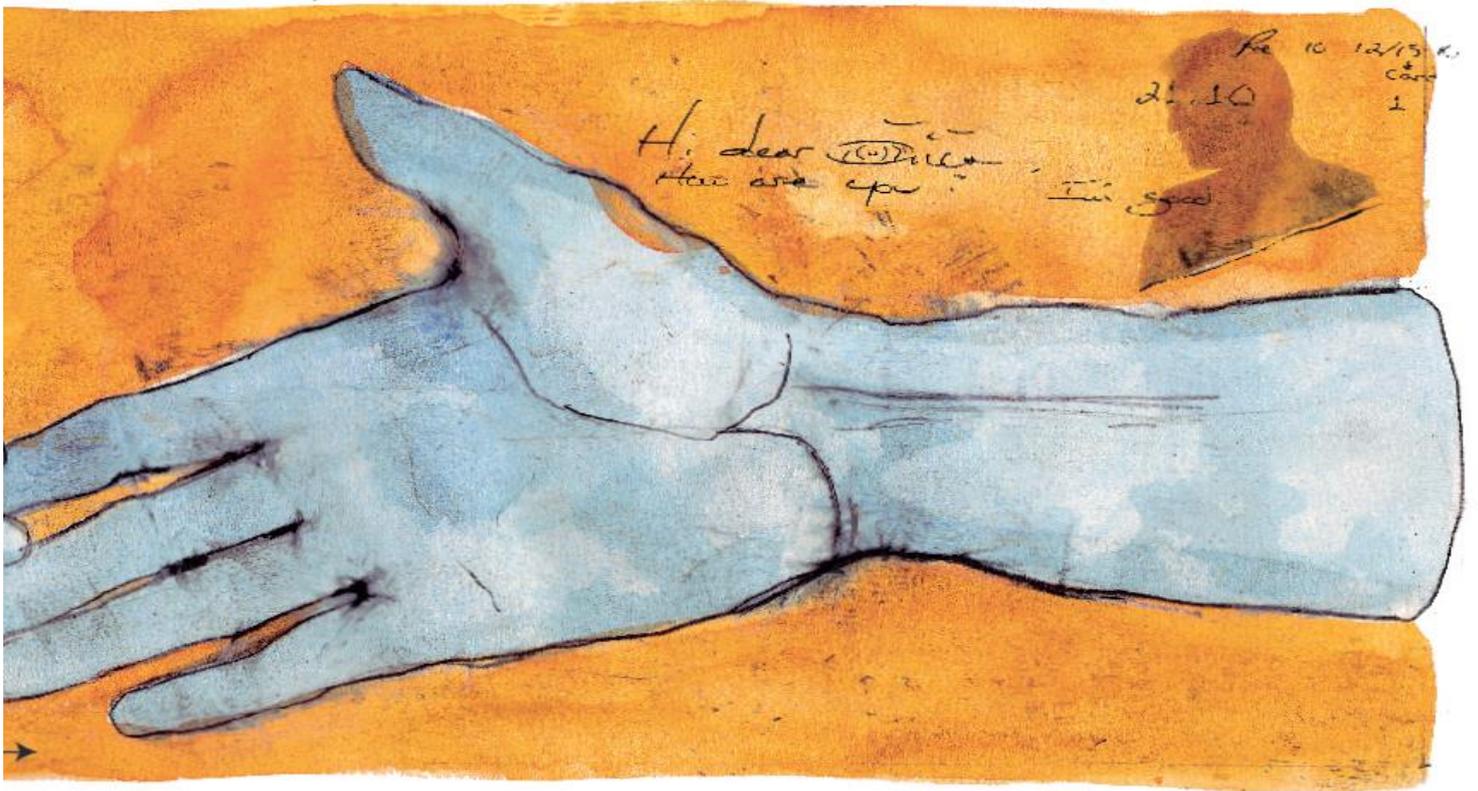
*I know it isn't easy for you to hear / consider – I love you and greatly value our connection – always.*

*I can't keep my eyes open any longer. Sorry. You will come out good Ines because you give sincere love.*

*Love and prayers*

*Casper*

Ines was informed of Casper's death by a telephone call from a prison employee, who was prohibited from giving out information, but pursuant to Ines' suggestion, she was able to give "yes" and "no" answers Ines' questions. In this manner, Ines found out that Casper died on December 3, 2010 at 4am Florida time, at the exact time that she was cutting out stars with her students for a window decoration.



On the same day Ines found a report about Casper on the website of the daily newspaper "Orlando Sentinel". She scrolled down to the commentaries where most of them copiously welcomed Casper's death. In the midst of these commentaries, though, she found one person's entry entitled "Forgiveness". She wrote that she was one of Casper's victims and that she had forgiven him. Ines responded with a commentary: She does not know why Casper committed these crimes, but she did know how he lived with them because she had known him. She mentioned Lifespark and the website of the organization. "Forgiveness" followed the trail: on the Lifespark website she found Casper's apology and Ines' e-mail address.

An e-mail from Debbie a short while later took Ines' breath away. The name Debbie is for her a kind of symbol for all of Casper's victims. A brisk e-mail exchange ensued, and Ines interviewed Debbie for the Lifespark website. As summer drew near, Ines wrote that she would be travelling again to the US, and asked if Debbie would like to meet with her. Debbie agreed. Ines and her husband drove to a restaurant in a small town in Mississippi to meet Debbie. Ines was tense, afraid of her own feelings.

This fear was unfounded. The two women greeted each other with a hug. In the following days, they spent a lot of time together, went on a boat tour, laughed and talked a lot. Debbie wanted to know what kind of a person Casper was. She said that she was glad that he had someone to talk to. And that he had found faith. She, too, had turned to faith; in her local church she had found comfort and support. Debbie explained to Ines that she had attempted many times to write Casper to let him know that she had forgiven

him. When she did not find the energy herself to do this, she turned to several pastors, but they advised against it.

"I learned from Casper what a person is capable of", said Ines retrospectively. "I do not know if he was healed at the end. But Casper made enormous progress, which is not possible without a counterpart. I received a lot of support and caring suggestions from him. I miss him."



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