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## Unbidden Joy

The moment is past but the memory of it stays with me.

Vince, the recipient of the 2017 Luellen Ramey Humanistic Counseling Scholarship, looks at me and smiles, and we walk back to our seats.

For 32 years the campus of Oakland University was the setting of my work life. I taught classes, served on committees, and carried out a research program. I was tenured and promoted and later became the Chair of the Department of Counseling. Thirteen years rolled by as chair of a large department with 7 specialization areas and a counseling center.

There were highs and lows: wonderful intellectually curious students and students who just wanted a degree; colleagues that amazed me with their knowledge and enhanced my life and others that were a pain to work with; the ever present university politics.

Fast forward. It is now late October, 2017. I'm returning to campus from Boulder, Colorado, which has been my home since retirement. I'm here to attend a university leadership event, the awarding of scholarships which will bring together donors and recipients. The event is being held at Meadowbrook Hall - the old Dodge mansion built in 1918 with architecture that rivals English mansions.

It's a beautiful Michigan fall day. The sun is shining and the sky is that deep October blue. Leaves are at their peak of color - oranges, yellows and reds.

Eager to see old friends and colleagues and to meet the recipient of the scholarship, I'm in my rental car and the thought comes to me: I'm driving into my past.

Approaching Meadowbrook Hall, it's all so familiar. It's as though I haven't been away at all. Entering the great hall I have this fleeting momentary flashback to my first time in this building - orientation for new assistant professors. I'm greeted by a person who directs me to the huge semi-permanent white tent that's used for wedding receptions and large events.

Here with no agenda other than to experience whatever occurs, I feel very much in the moment. Entering the tent I'm greeted with hugs and "how-are-yous" from former colleagues and friends. I'm shown to my seat and meet Vince, the gracious recipient of the scholarship. I chat with him and his wife and we find that we quickly develop a warm rapport. The Dean announces that since it's such a gorgeous evening, photos will be taken outside before the dinner and program.

Vince and I and other pairs make our way out to the photo site. It's very early evening, the sun is low, peaking through the trees at the far side of the manicured green golf course. Deer graze at the edge of the woods. The warm day is giving way to a cool crispness. Vince and I stand side-by-side for pictures.

Vince looks at me and smiles and we turn to make our way back to the tent. And then there is this moment. All surroundings merge into one. It's as though the sun, the sky, the ground, the deer, Vince, the people around me, and myself are merged into one. There is only this inexplicable moment of utter oneness and joy. The experience is fleeting. I feel as though I have peeked behind some curtain into another world of pure bliss. And in that moment all of the years, the times of stress and the times of satisfaction, have come together into this deep feeling of gratitude that all is well and happened as it should have. It's a peaceful feeling of deep contentment.