

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

Double Blessing: Bostonian Pamela Post tells us about the magical transformation of her grandmother as daylight turned to night.

Tony Kahn: Hi, this is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of Morning Stories on WGBH in Boston. Actually, "on" is the broadcast term; this is from WGBH in Boston, because it's a podcast and that's how you got it and thanks for doing it. Anyway, today's story comes from Pamela Post. She's a writer in Boston, and she came to us a while ago, wanting to tell a story about her two grandmothers who were very important influences in her life. I said, "Great idea, but we might only have time for one grandmother." [chuckles] Could she choose one grandmother? Well, Pamela's a very fine writer and a very shrewd person, so she picked the one grandmother that, well, in a sense, really was two different people. And we'll let her tell the rest of the story.

Pamela Post: In the stories my grandmother told me I could fly. I could see things that others couldn't, and I was always saving helpless children. From mischievous monkeys who swung down from trees and stole their lunches. [laughs] And if it hadn't been for me, returning cartons of milk and sandwiches and apples, they would have starved.

I inherited a quiet reserve from my father, but in these stories I was fearless and brave, the force against injustice.

I was born in the winter and a complication following my birth almost killed my mother. We were separated for most of my childhood.

Grandmother was my first caretaker, and we spent most of our time in the kitchen, where the oven was always filled with something baking, and on the stove there was the crackle and spit of chicken frying, whatever else she was preparing for the meal. But at night, she would sit by my side on the bed, her dress and apron exchanged for a white satiny robe with full sleeves and bits of lace, hair let loose for sleep, and she would tell me these stories that would set me free.

We never left the house, as she couldn't. "I hear bells ringing every time," she told me once, and, and I was confused because I thought she heard church bells, and I wondered why that kept her inside. But as an adult I know that what she heard were sirens and, and warnings, the sounds of an agoraphobic's anxiety. Years later I learned she had lost everything during the Depression, and after that she remained housebound. Of all her stories, this was a story she never told.

You know, I think you're right. I, I think the stories she told me were a double blessing: telling them to me was a way of telling them to herself [laughs] and lifting her out of the four tight rooms into the realm of her imagination, way beyond her fears. And she lived to be 102 years old. [laughs]

Every night as she turned out the light, I'd say, "Bless you, grandmother." And she'd say, "Oh, bless you, child. Bless you, child," almost as if it were a prayer.

[sounds of a child giggling, church bells]

Tony Kahn: That was Pamela Post with today's Morning Story, and, if we're lucky maybe we can get her to come back and tell us about Grandmother 2. Next week, though, if everything works out and we get the time, we're gonna try to bring you a very familiar voice to podcasters, Dave Weiner. Dave visited with us here at WGBH a while ago and we got into the studio, Dave and I talked for about an hour and he went and put the entire conversation on his blog as an mp3 file, for which we're very grateful, if a little embarrassed. [laughs] However, he did give me permission to do my own version, my own edit, so, next week we're gonna hear the director's cut of Dave Weiner, one of podcasting's most influential and certainly its most mobile figure. So tune in for that next week on our podcast, and you can also visit our website at Morning Stories – that's www.wgbh.org/morningstories – to hear all of our broadcast stories live-stream, and if you would like to contact us, and you're always welcome to via email, you can reach us at morningstories@wgbh.org. Podcasts at WGBH's Morning Stories are made possible in part with support from Ipswitch, a leader in file transfer software. More information's available for you at www.ipswitch.com – that's Ipswitch, I-P-S-W-I-T-C-H. See you next week.