

## MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

*Cold Call*: Pastor Anne Robertson meets up with her father's ghost in Scotland.

TONY KAHN:

Hi, everybody! This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* from WGBH in Boston.

Pastor Anne Robertson's father, who was a high school counselor, was a most unconventional man. He treated every day like a holiday. And as for the holidays, [laughs] well ...

(Music)

PASTOR ANNE ROBERTSON:

Easters at Burger King, we brought formal table linens and china and candles and classical music, and the Burger King people came out and waited on us, and we dumped our fries on the china, lit the candles, watching the people coming in trying to pretend that nothing was different in Burger King with these people in gowns and tuxedos and formal settings, with their hamburgers and fries in the back.

TONY KAHN:

When he died suddenly at age forty-seven, everyone in town felt the loss. Over 600 of his former students showed up for the funeral. And Anne felt that she could never take his place. Well, we pick up her story twenty-five years later, when in a most unexpected way, she heard from her father again. We call Anne's Morning Story, *Cold Call*.

PASTOR ANNE ROBERTSON:

The card that fell out of the book was in my father's handwriting. He'd been gone more than twenty-five years, and it felt almost like a touch. I kept turning it over. "46 Cessnock Avenue, Hurlford, Scotland." Above the address, he had written, "Robertson" – our last name – and underneath, two names not familiar to me. Nothing else. I searched online. Nothing. I was flying to Scotland for a six-week trip. I packed the card and boarded the plane.

(Sounds of plane taking off)

During the next six weeks, I looked at the card frequently, but I always had an excuse to go someplace else. "Who knows if the house would even be there?" "I might drive for three hours and it's a parking lot!" And to say what? "I got an index card with your address on it." Even as a pastor, I did not do "cold calling." I only go to homes where I'm expected.

My father wrote down that information because someday he wanted to make that connection. Go find out if this person is related to us – go find the rest of the story. But that wasn't me. The last day of my rental car, the last possible day I could do it, I got a

map and headed for Hurlford, doing what I hate most, going up to strangers and asking for directions. Cessnock Avenue, Number 46 turned out to be a house like all the others. A woman in her mid- to late-sixties came to the door. "I'm an American," I stammered. "I found this card at my house with your address on it. You know these men listed at the bottom?"

"Yes! Oh, yes! The boys from the band!" She invited me in. Her name was Margaret Robertson. Years before, in high school, her son Alex had gone to my home state of Rhode Island on a band exchange. The two names on my card were the two American band members who had come to Scotland in return and stayed with Margaret and her husband Ian. They weren't from my high school, but my father had ministered a regional high school vocational program. And I figured that one of the boys met him, learned his last name, and said, "Oh, hey! I stayed with a Robertson in Scotland. Are you related?" And my father wrote the information down.

Not much of a connection, really. Except for this: Ian, Margaret told me, had died two months before. And since then, she had barely left the house. Her only comfort was her little dog, "Holly" who'd been dropping pool toys at my feet since my arrival. Now that I was there, she was thrilled to remember the band trip and went dashing up to a storage room, rummaging through old things 'til she found souvenirs that the American boys had brought from their high school, and a picture of her son. She had a Robertson key ring for her keys, and she took it off and gave it to me, continuing to run around the house like a child showing off new Christmas toys.

I was living in Dover, New Hampshire at the time. And she was excited even about that, since her birth name was "Dover." And learning that I was a minister, she poured out her widow's grief. We parted as friends. She thanked me for the visit. I thank her for reminding me what a long and winding path it is to have a calling.

TONY KAHN:

Pastor Anne Robertson with today's Morning Story, *Cold Call*. And here we are, with Gary Mott.

GARY MOTT:

Pastor Anne. I just remember stumbling on her blog, right?

TONY KAHN:

Yes. Yeah. Right.

GARY MOTT:

Some years ago. And she's now a regular.

TONY KAHN:

Maybe because she herself is shy, she has a wonderful touch with other people, and and really makes you feel welcome. It's – it's you know – a great title for it would be another line in the story, "Are you related?" Anything that allows you to give and then get

something in return! That's a relation.

Like e-mail. We got a pile of that this week. We want to just go through some of them. The, the first one comes from a woman named Emily who lives in La Crosse, Wisconsin. She says, "I work in Admission at a somewhat small school, but Admission is Admission in any school, no matter what the size. So sometimes the day is overwhelming and the one thing you don't want to do is meet another family that has no idea what a FAFSA is!" Oh, oh, Emily, I don't know what a FAFSA is either! F-A-F-S-A.

Anyway, she goes on, "So I find that listening to your program helps me keep each student and family in perspective. Understanding the common threads of the unique stories I hear on your program helps me appreciate the stories I don't know yet about these families. So I wanted to thank you for giving a voice to those stories you broadcasted, but also for giving a voice to the stories that haven't been broadcasted as well. It's a fabulous program. Keep up the good work!"

Emily, thank you for your kind thoughts and also for suggesting that maybe we're doing twice the amount of work that we think we are! Anyway, appreciate hearing from you.

GARY MOTT:

Thanks also to a guy named "Robert," who doesn't like what we do so much.

TONY KAHN:

Oh! Well ... You're welcome, Robert. [laughs]

GARY MOTT:

He wrote in about the Oliver Sacks piece –

TONY KAHN:

Yah?

GARY MOTT:

– *Ah, My Brother*. He says, your "Oliver Sacks' piece this morning didn't work for me. There was a battle between what Sacks was saying, and the beautiful Mozart. Sacks is good enough alone, but if it needed a piano behind it, it was too loud! I think the piano won."

TONY KAHN:

Oops! We did get quite a bit of mail about the Oliver Sacks story, and it definitely touched a lot of people in a lot of different ways. We heard from a fellow named "Marv," who lives nearby. He says, "I was so moved by Dr. Sacks' story this morning. I can't remember the name of the film – a few years ago starring Robin Williams, about that summer of almost success and ultimate failure. ..."

That was "Awakenings."

GARY MOTT:

"Awakenngs," yes. Yah.

TONY KAHN:

Right.

"But to hear Dr. Sacks speak so personally about his experiences and his brother brought me to tears. The *Morning Stories* segment always forces me to stop whatever I'm doing and give it my attention. Thank you for the few minutes' break between world news and chaos." And I know exactly what chaos he's referring to, because it turns out that Marv works at the docent program at WGBH.

GARY MOTT:

Oh, wow! Okay!

TONY KAHN:

He's often around here showing people our new building, including probably some employees that still can't find their office. [laughs] And, anyway, he says that he hangs around the station during various events. Come on by for coffee any time, Marv.

GARY MOTT:

Definitely!

TONY KAHN:

And let's toast each other!

GARY MOTT:

Tony, I think it's time to celebrate a public radio hero.

TONY KAHN:

We have one?

GARY MOTT:

Yes, we do! His name is Tom Duvall. He's a producer at WMRA in southern Virginia. And we heard from someone who lives there, named Henley. She writes in and says that she's been a devoted listener to public radio for the past six and a half years, and the only drawback – a major one – to moving further south, was not getting reception. "I listen practically twenty-four hours a day. And when I am not in the house, I leave it on for the dogs, the cat, and for the horse in the barn. I wrote to my local station that I was dismayed. Tom Duvall, a producer there, drove an hour to get here one Friday afternoon before Thanksgiving, and spent six- and- a-half hours getting my radio hooked up, and an antenna installed on the roof!"

TONY KAHN:

Wow!

GARY MOTT:

“Tom Duvall embodies it. When he opened the antenna box, a key part was missing, so he had to drive another thirty miles round trip to get the little part.”

TONY KAHN:  
Oh, my gosh!

GARY MOTT:  
“He teetered on a ladder, with me holding it while he struggled to attach the antenna to the side of the house. Now, thanks to Tom, I have a fat cable going from my radio over the cabinet door, drooping in a loop to the sliding glass door, and snaking out to the corner of the house. It withstood the howling 50-mile-an-hour winds we had last week, too. Finally, I can hear all my favorite shows. In rural Rockbridge County, sixty miles south of Harrisonburg, life is good!” Tom – a hero!

TONY KAHN:  
A hero. And we have at least one listener who’s a horse! Which I find actually kind of encouraging, you know? [laughs] And one last letter which comes to us from Viet Nam. Especially compelling if I can read it exactly the way that it was written:

“I have bought an MP3 player, and I began to learn how to use podcast. Then I discover your page with meaningful stories. I’m Vietnamese. And you know, English is my foreign language. And I’m trying my best to study English by listening to your podcasts. Honestly speaking, I love all voices with an expressive reading in the podcast. And I love the instrumental music too. You have done a great job to convey the story content in the most touching way. In my opinion, it would be great if you also post the script of each story so that I (English learners also) can understand it from the very start to the last word. Thanks for reading my message, Mr. Tony Kahn.”

This is from Nguyen Trong Giap. And not the first time that we’ve been asked if we could make podcasts available as a transcript, which we’d very much like to do. Unfortunately, the entire *Morning Stories* staff is right here in this room. We don’t really have the, the time to do that, if we’re going to keep the rest of the broadcast going. But if there’s anybody out there who’d like to volunteer to do a transcript or two of one of the podcasts – just sit there and write down what it was that they hear, you’ll know exactly whom it’s going to help. And there are a lot of people, I know, who listen to this podcast so that they can improve their English and, and be connected to the ability to tell stories in English. Which I think really helps you make a language your own. So, anyway, thank you very much Nguyen Trong Giap. And if there are any volunteers out there, just send us the transcripts. You know we’d appreciate it.

GARY MOTT:  
<morningstories@wgbh>, our e-mail address. Our website, <wgbh.org/morningstories>.

TONY KAHN:  
Happy New Year! Happy everything to all of you. And we’ll be back real soon with another Morning Story. So, take care! 'Bye.

(Music)

[End of Recording]

Notes from transcriber:

FAFSA is “Free Application for Financial Student Aid.”

Transcribed by Liz Cooksey <transcripts\_liz@bellsouth.net>