

MENDING A BROKEN HEART

BY MARION E. GOLD

I first told my story in *THE EXCHANGE* in July 2003. It was less than a year after my mother, Ray Katz Gold, passed away, and three years after the death of my father, Larry Gold. Losing both parents in only two years broke my heart. What I did not envision is how my experience would launch me into an entirely new and different world—one filled with exciting business opportunities in the retail marketplace.

There are as many ways to grieve and heal as there are personalities among us. For me, it turned out to be doing what I do best, starting new ventures. But this time, not in the healthcare marketplace. I started an online retail business selling beaded pens, letter openers, and gemstone jewelry that I design and craft. I use the Artisan name, Miriam Bat-Rachel: *Miriam*, my Hebrew name. *Bat*, which is Hebrew for “daughter of,” and *Rachel*, my mother’s Hebrew name.

WORKING THROUGH GRIEF

My story began in the fall of 2002, when my mother died. Mom was a talented artist. Among her many art works, which I found tucked away in our New Jersey home, were several boxes of vintage beads she had been saving

for one of her projects. As I looked through the beads, I thought about my mother’s artwork, how she placed each tiny piece of paper onto her paper sculpture canvas to create lifelike pictures. I gently touched her needlework, hoping to feel the softness of her hands as she worked so carefully on every stitch.

I decided to look for ways to work with the beads. Just looking through Mom’s craft magazines soothed me, helped me deal with my grief. I added to my mother’s bead collection and used them to form the basis for colorful ballpoint pens and carved pewter bookmarks. Soon I had dozens of these unique items. I gave several as gifts to loved ones, as memories of my mother.

A BUSINESS UNFOLDS

In the spring of 2003, my soul mate Jerry encouraged me to show my products to a local art gallery and gift shop to get the owner’s opinion. I brought a pen to the shop, spoke to the owner, and set up a formal appointment for later that week. Imagine my delight when a week later, “CHIARoScURO,” this popular boutique on Chicago’s chic North Michigan Avenue, was displaying my products. Today, CHIARoScURO still carries my pens, letter openers, and magnifying glasses, and recently added some of my art glass pendant and necklace sets.

EXPANDING ONLINE

In October 2003, I opened the online portal to Moonbeams, Lilacs & Roses. The experience of knowing customers

liked my products enough to buy them, was as thrilling as seeing readers buy my books, or clients appreciating my editorial skills. It reminded me of how proud I was as a child, when my parents hung my artwork on the wall! So I hired a great team of web designers and worked closely with them to create my own *online wall*, one that would reach more potential customers. I wanted the website to be personal. I write all the copy in the same style as I would for a face-to-face presentation with each person—I’ve found this personal touch works. I also take all the product photographs, which is key to selling artistic products. After all, I’m asking people to buy products that they haven’t seen up close or touched. My product descriptions and photos need to touch online viewers, make them want to hold a letter opener or wear one of my necklaces.

I’ve continued my healthcare editorial, marketing, and publishing career, but Moonbeams, Lilacs & Roses is a significant, enriching, and permanent part of my personal and professional life. When I’m working on new jewelry designs, or beading a pen for a customer, I feel my parents smiling at me with the warmth of their love.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social Networking has introduced me to other artisans, and expanded my knowledge of the business. But, at least so far, I haven’t seen a relationship between “Tweets” and sales. What I have found is that I’ve been able to help others move forward with their own lives and careers by sharing marketing ideas and my personal story. Though I haven’t started blogging yet, I’m working on a plan. I want to create something that really educates and informs people about the history of beading and nature of semiprecious gemstones, in an exciting and interesting way.

By retelling my story, I hope to inspire others to turn their grief into experiences that will enrich their lives, and serve as a tribute to their loved ones.

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Miriam at Work



Sparkling Desk Set