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**Verbatim Report #2
HSL/HRC**

Chaplain Intern:

CPE Supervisor: Mary Martha Thiel

Verbatim #: 2

Verbatim # on this person: 1

Date of visit: 27 Jun 2012

Visit # with this person: 3

Time and length of visit: 15:30 | 40 minutes

Date of writing verbatim: 27/28 Jun 2012

What I want to learn from writing up this conversation: I have been finding it very difficult to get into spiritual conversation with men. No matter how many lines I put out there, it seems that I just can't bridge the gap. Having said that, I also know that there is something comforting about the companionship for the men, and perhaps it's just me needing to learn how to be that non-anxious presence and accepting whatever each man has to give.

The Person

Person's initials of pseudonym: Max

Institution and unit: NBOC Long-Term Care

Date of admission: 07 Dec 2009

Age: 95

Gender:

Race/Ethnicity: Caucasian

Family status: Widower

Number of children: Two daughters, one son

Religious affiliation/practice growing up: Jewish

Religious affiliation/practice now: Jewish

Home location (local or transplanted): Raised family in Dorchester and Hull; moved to NBOC from Orchard Cove

Admitting diagnosis: Anemia, depression, HTN (hypertension)

Additional factual information: Born and raised in Roxbury, one of nine children. Graduated from high school and studied engineering at the Wentworth Institute. Owned and operated an industrial pipe supply company which his father founded and is now being managed by his son and grandson.

His wife developed dementia, received private care at home, and died in October 2009. He suffered from a lot of depression then, and I see from his EMR that he's still on antidepressants. Meanwhile, he had fractured his hip in June 2009, had it surgically repaired, and was receiving therapy at Orchard Cove SNF when his

wife died. He has 10 great-grandsons! No girls.

He seems to preside over household meals at NBOC. He has regular visits from family; I noticed visitors twice in the past week.

Summary of any previous visits with this person: My visits before had been somewhat social – getting to know him. The second time I sat with him at dinner. He was talkative, but not a very articulate person. Dinner behavior with staff was gruff, as he only likes the simplest of foods and didn't know what he was eating. A thoughtful, loving family man, but very little social polish.

Occasion of this visit (routine, follow-up, referral, etc.): Follow-up

The Visit

Plan for this visit: To see if I could find a way into a more spiritual conversation.

Observations: Max was sitting in his wheelchair at a random spot in the hallway. I'd seen him about 15 minutes earlier in the same spot, but asleep. I pulled up a chair to sit and chat. Max is permanently bent over somewhat, so even sitting, it's hard to make eye contact with him and his voice is soft and raspy. He's ill-groomed.

The text of the visit:

C01: Hi, Max. How're you doing today?

M01: Fine. How's about you?

C02: Great, thank God... (A lot of back and forth social conversation ensues about family members and about the business, which is a large family business dealing with industrial pipe; there are some half a dozen branches around New England. The business was started by Max's father.)

C03: So, did you start the business or did your dad?

M03: My dad used to work for my uncle (names him) who was in the scrap metal business, and then one day he realized that they were selling all these old pipes for scrap, when they were perfectly good steel or copper so he started refurbishing them and selling them on his own. People really worked hard in those days; my dad could never work for anyone else. First he tried the ice and coal business, but that didn't work out for him. The best thing was to work for yourself and take care of your family.

C04: I loved that generation of Jewish guys. They were so inventive, and there was nothing "beneath" them, as long as they could feed and clothe their families.

M04: Yep. And now I've got kids and grandkids and in-laws, all kinds of people working in the business. Yep. It's all about family (gets quiet and a little wistful for a few seconds.)

- M05: My dad was orthodox. They kept kosher and he wasn't allowed to do anything on Shabbes. Sent us to Hebrew School.
- Co6: Yeah. You went to Hebrew School.
- M06: You bet! Twice a week after school and then on Saturday morning. We all did that.
- M07: I wasn't very religious though. My kids all went to schul and were Bar Mitzvahed and all that. My wife was really in charge of all that. You know I just wrote a big check to a religious school that's going to be named for her. It's important that those schools can keep going. Yeah, I once was at this schul and, you know, the roof was leaking, and I said, "What's with the roof?" And they said they couldn't afford to replace it. So I told them to get a new roof and to send me the bill.
- M08: Yeah. My wife and daughter would go shopping together every Saturday. They were a real team those two. They'd come back with so many packages (chuckles), and then she'd ask if I wanted to see the things and I said that I'd wait to see it until it was on her. That it'd look much more beautiful that way. I just asked her to give me the slips, and then I'd pay them, whatever she spent.
- Co8: Smart man.
- M09: Yeah. I was blessed that money was never a problem. I always seemed to have a lot of luck in business and, you know, with my investments.
- M10: She was the most beautiful girl I ever saw in my life. We never went to bed angry. If we'd had a fight about something, I'd always be happy to apologize. You never want to go to be angry. I'd get into bed every night, kiss her good night, and we'd fall asleep holding hands.
- C10: You must have nothing but good memories about her if you never went to bed angry.
- M11: Absolutely. I never slept on bad feelings. She was the most beautiful girl I ever saw, and she was the best mother. Sort of the center of our family. She loved to wear white all the time. She just looked so beautiful.
- C11: She must have looked like an angel dressed that way. (He's quiet.)
- M12: Yeah. (Says the company's name and slogan, a regular interjection throughout all the conversations we've had.) Now we've got branches all over the northeast. Every kid who joins the company wants to run their own branch, so we keep opening new branches. (Chuckles.) And you know, they all really do a good job too!

- C12: (This is a long visit, and I really need to stay very focused because of the lowness of his voice. It's also physically straining because I have to stay bent over as his head is always pointed down. I'm getting a little loopy and know I need to wrap up.) So, Max, I've got to go do some paperwork now. You know what that's like!
- M13: Yeah. There's always paperwork, whatever your job is.
- C14: So, I'm going to scoot out now. Thanks for your time.
- M14: It's always a pleasure talking to you.
- C15: See you soon.
- M15: Any time!

Analysis of the Visit

Dynamics of the visit: Max has a very narrow range of affect, and is, therefore, difficult to read. Also, he speaks with his head down, which only adds to the difficulty. He smiled three or four times during the visit and definitely kept up his end of the conversation, though, when he didn't know what to say he seemed to go back to repeating the name of his company and its slogan.

Theological Issues:

The person: It's hard to read this. I know Judaism is important to him, but I don't have a sense of how important. It's been a not insignificant part of his whole life and the naming of the Hebrew School for his wife – and I think for him as well, though he didn't say that – has deep importance. I tried to get in through the discussion of his wife dressed in white looking like an angel, but no response. Probably too raw.

I, the Chaplain: I feel like I've been unsuccessful in bringing theology per se to our visits, though clearly presence is important to him.

Psychological Issues:

The person: He gets a lot of his identify from his business and from his wife, and he's been treated for depression since her death.

I, the Chaplain: Frustrated. I'm watchful of my need to be liked by an older man given the strain and unfulfilled relation with my own father.

Sociological/Demographic/Cultural Issues:

The person: Not very socially polished, and always looks messy and badly shaven. Always in the same flannel shirt. But he clearly welcomes my visits.

I, the Chaplain: No comment

Ethical Issues:

The person: No ethical issues that I can identify.

I, the Chaplain: No ethical issues that I can identify.

The institution: No ethical issues that I can identify.

Critique of my function:

Strengths: I'm not sure. I think I'm somewhat impatient, and feel like if I haven't gotten to *what I consider* the core of the discussion (a discussion of God and end-of-life), then I must be failing. I also realize that relationship-building takes time, and that this conversation was more intimate and much longer than previous ones.

Weaknesses: See "Strengths"

Future plans: Keep at it.

Spiritual Assessment:

Love and belonging. I think Max has a lot of both from his family, though he longs for the one he loved the most

Trust. I don't sense any issues

Meaning. I don't know what gives his life meaning. He clearly gets a big kick out of 10 grandkids, but they're not that present in his life or his conversation. The quality of the relationship with his deceased wife seems to bring him the most meaning.

Gratitude. Again, his wife. His family, the fact that he never had to worry about money and always found a way to bring it in.

Other.