

**Harvard 45<sup>th</sup> Reunion – Glimpses**  
**Sunday, October 27, Knafel Center (Old Radcliffe Gym)**

**Blurb for program:**

**Those We Love – Life, Death, Joy**

**My brother Iver's death last year hit hard. I want to honor him by talking about facing the death of loved ones and seeking joy.**

I'm Lars Peterson.

My brother Iver died of Leukemia on August 1, 2012, at the age of 70 – only 70.

I want to honor him by paying tribute to his memory, by bearing witness to you about this man, this brother whom I loved and whose memory I love, and I also want to talk about the way I'm dealing with and acknowledging his death.

.... Nothing profound, we've all had to deal with the death of loved ones. Yes, more and more now. So, I feel as if I'm bearing witness for all of us who have lost loved ones. And we've lost over 120 classmates.

Iver was born in 1942, the third of four siblings. I'm the youngest.

Here we all are at our family place in Vermont; this was taken in February 2012. I'm on the left, then Karen, Iver, and Eric.



And here's Iver at Newell Boat House his freshman year at Harvard. Iver is seated, second on the right. He was class of '64, and stayed on in Cambridge when I was a freshman and a sophomore, so you can imagine my memories of him are all the stronger right now.



He was a free spirit in many ways, somewhat of a contrarian that was irksome sometimes. But he had the courage to lead the life HE wanted to lead.

He was a truly gifted writer for the New York Times where he spent his entire career; I hope some of you might recall seeing his by line.

Iver left behind is wife Chris, four grown children and five grandchildren. He was the rock and anchor of his family.

Iver was diagnosed with Leukemia in October 2011, had the best medical attention, and for most of the time he was ill we all thought he was going to beat it. But he was felled, very quickly, by a lung infection. It was as if he had been hit by a truck, and that he didn't just die, he was killed.

It felt as if a part of me died. Our classmate Tom Williamson lost his younger brother and describes it so well as feeling as if it left a hole in him.

I wrote in my date book on August 1, 2012 “Iver Died.” I wrote it partly to tell myself that yes, he died. The blunt reality of it still feels so cold and suddenly lonely. So, there it is.

Chris, Iver’s widow, related that a friend who had lost his wife at a young age told her – you can’t measure grief, there is no “competition.” I know, there is no way to compare my grief with others.

Yes, it is all so very personal, so I know I have to figure it out for myself.

Sure, I received sympathy from others, but I had to realize that the world wasn’t going to stop because Iver died. I know I have to handle it in my own way, and this is my way, to acknowledge the fact and to talk about it.

For me, the best way to get out of sadness is to let myself feel the full depth of the sadness. I process it, I explore the feelings and memories, I cry, I just let it wash over me.

I know that feeling conflicting emotions at the same time – like sadness and happiness – is normal, but damned hard – not to mention survivor guilt. I find myself not wanting to dwell too long on sadness. When it hits me, I let myself feel it. But Iver’s death has been a motivator to appreciate life all the more while also loving the wonderful memories.

So, now I try to NOT put off doing what I want to do, and I want to tell those I love that I love them, and I don’t want to put off seeing them and spending time with them! And I want to be as good an uncle as possible to Iver’s children, and a good brother to Chris.

I’m also conscious of needing to confront differences with my sister and my brother. I’m trying to not be timid about facing my dislikes, and my regrets, toward them. It’s never too late to rub elbows and wear down those sharp edges my siblings and I put up toward each other – as much as we do love each other.

Of course I'm sad that Iver's gone, but I have to be happy about his LIFE. His death is a reality, but in, the end, what endures is the reality of his great life.

So, the lesson for me is to take joy in life, and to give joy, of which there is such an abundance, and to accept the feeling, at the same time, of my sadness that I've lost my brother.