

## Haunted by the Past

*by Carole Gauntlett*

I believe that many people are haunted by incidents in their pasts that weigh down their ability to move ahead. My younger sister was haunted by past hurts, perceived neglect and humiliation that diminished her enjoyment of life for too many years. Her traumatic divorce changed her life.

It was as if she had picked up a stone as a symbol of each offense and had carried them all with her as a collection of unhappy memories in a cumbersome bag. She seemed unable to leave even one stone along the way in exchange for honors and deep alliances that came her way, although there were many. She was highly treasured for her work with The World Health Organization, won the Margaret Sanger Award in 1990 and when she decided to move from New York to Pennsylvania, the University there snapped her up “on the spot” to teach International Relations.

With all of the pleasure she should have derived from her success, her deep love of ballet, classical music and theater, four grandchildren she adored, she continued to carry her bag of stones. I'm not sure how much pleasure she actually found but I do know that it was always diminished as if she had decided that she really didn't deserve happiness.

Just weeks before she died she told me that she had finally talked to her son about the reasons that she could not forgive his father. She had spent a lot of effort hiding these things over the years and had never interfered with their relationship. I hope that the bag grew lighter for the telling.