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"I was flipped out of and pinned under the boat. When they found me I was already dead. When the cold water was filling my lungs, as I lost consciousness, I saw a warm yellow light. Then, calm. I remember thinking two things before my heart stopped and I lost consciousness: This is not such a bad way to die—with people I love in a place I love and, I am not going to be able to say goodbye to my family. I was, literally, dead in the water. Then, under the gray water, a bright warm, yellow light beckoned. I knew it was a safe place. I felt like God was reaching for me. I needed to climb out of that canyon."

As she coughed up the water in her lungs, she managed to sputter to her terrified friend, "God drew me from the water today." Her friend responded, "She threw you in there, too—you think about *that!*"

Robbi feels that getting back on the horse, so to speak, can be hard. "We are pulled in so many directions—and ruts happen. Fears don't go away—but how do we change our lives that much? We can get stuck in patterns and not be able to find our way to the next level. I had waking drowning terrors and lungs that would never be at their full capacity again. How do I climb out of that canyon?" Robbi questioned.

She found strength in her family and community to get over the emotional and physical disabilities that resulted from the accident. "I yelled at God a lot. I created a lot of artwork, wrote a lot of songs and talked with professionals and clergy."

Years later, after numerous healings and trips back to the scene, Robbi can finally declare, "I am no longer the terrified one who drowned almost 13 years ago. She doesn't exist anymore."

Surprisingly, female rabbis started in the late 1950s and currently there are more females than males in the seminaries becoming rabbis and cantors. Rabbi Robbi recalls her path. "I had been thinking for a long time about becoming a rabbi. I had the chance to attend a really exciting new seminary, the Jewish Spiritual Leader Institute in New York. The entire program is online and for experienced spiritual leaders who wanted the next ordination. It's a

high-level, second-career, rabbinical program," she says. After completing the program she was ordained on Saturday, July 12 of this year in Del Ray Beach, Florida. "It's amazing to me every day that I'm the spiritual leader of B'nai Butte. I've made lifelong friendships and discovered parts of myself that I didn't know existed. It is a community of seekers. B'nai Butte created me. They are partners in my evolution of becoming a rabbi. I became a rabbi for them."

An interesting side note to Robbi's rabbinic journey was that she wrote her thesis on the ancient Chinese game of mahjong. She discovered a traveling American businessman brought the game to the United States, and he took it to his friend, Milton Bradley, the megabusiness toy and game maker.

"It was the largest seller before Monopoly but it had so many rules. Jewish housewives were all playing it. They'd gamble but they'd donate their winnings to charity." Like the mahjong queens, Robbi has donated tens of thousands of dollars in profits from her music to charities.

The rabbi knew early on in life that she wanted to pursue being the kind of spirit that inspired people, helped them connect to their heritage and become jazzed about being Jewish. "I want people to understand that it's fun to be Jewish. There are so many ways to connect. My way was through music and still is. Once a month I fly in and stay four or five days in Crested Butte and in that time we do worship services, holidays, I work with bar and bat mitzvah students, I counsel people. I've done concerts for the Oh Be Joyful congregation."

Rabbi Robbi works and meets with all the various denomination leaders as well. "I'm part of the community when I'm here and even when I'm not here. I love this community," she says with much heartfelt love for her home and people in the mountains. "The focus of who I am is to find the joy in any situation. I'm extraordinarily happy. That makes me the luckiest person in the world. Being a rabbi is just a part of that."

You can listen to Rabbi-Cantor Robbi's music at [sababamusic.com](http://sababamusic.com).