



Sheryl Andre
A life of love, grit, laughter and faith
by Sheryl Andre
edited by David Andre and Tami Hicks

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This book is dedicated to love. To the love of and from mothers, yes, and to love itself.

1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love,

I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge,

and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,

but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues,

they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part,

but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

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Part 1: Sheryl’s Story

During a period in the mid-to-late 1990s, Sheryl wrote a great deal of stories, both non-fictional and fictional. She enrolled in a few writing classes, and some of this work came out of those. She also came back to some of this in the last few years as she started working on her book for Josie. She wrote about her life and wrote a few poems and storeis about her experiences as well. This section of the book contains the storeies she wrote about her life from her point of view in about 1999. I’ve merged them together into a some-what coherent story of the first 55 years of her life with only minimal editing of her text. We’ll get some insight into the later years in the rest of this book. Tami and I found and added photos to help illustrate her stories.

Where not otherwise specified in this book, the writing is her writing. Green sidebars are separate es-says or stories Sheryl wrote; blue sidebars indicate scripture.

=David



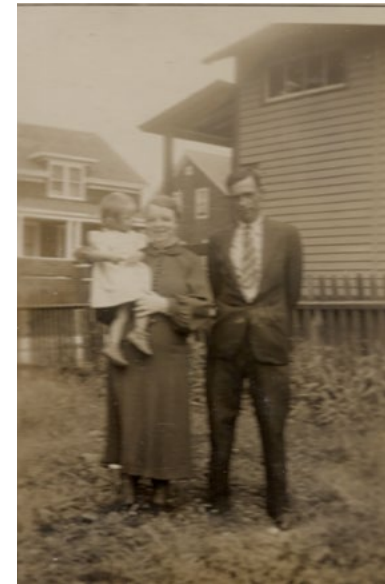
Sheryl before her prom, 1962

Chapter 1: Background



*Victorino and Maria Martins
(Vovoo and Vovoa)*

My Dad was brought up in Tiverton, RI by Portuguese parents. His parents both came over from `the Azores' (a tiny island off the coast of Portugal). I am not sure what my grandmother's maiden name was. They both worked in the local factories that made clothes and made enough money to buy a home in Tiverton for \$600. There were 5 children in his family: Aunts Sara and Mary, and Uncles Joe and Vic. Uncle Vic died in World War II. Dad only went to school until 5th grade; then he quit to work. All the kids spoke only Portuguese until they started school, which made school difficult. My Dad's last name was altered to Antonio `Martins' from `Martin' because of the way it sounded when said by a person used to speaking Portuguese. He was the only family member with an 's' on his last name. Dad's parents never did learn to speak English (though they did understand some). They spent all free time working the small farm that they'd bought with the house. This included a grape arbor, which was to become a prime play area when we visited them. They were strict Catholics. Sometimes when we'd visit they'd have a statue of the Holy Ghost at the house from the church and all the neighbors would stop by to see it. In later years, my Dad's favorite possession was a statue of the baby Jesus; he even bought clothes for it.



*William and Emma Chace
(Memere and Pepere)*

Mom (Helena) was the oldest of 10 children raised in Fall River, Mass (her maiden name was Chace). Her mother was French as she was from Quebec and her father was half English and half American Indian. Again, the family was all raised Catholic (Mom's mom's maiden name was Joubert). Memere' (the French for grandma) had heart disease and diabetes (as did my cousin Carolyn). My Mom's dad worked at many jobs including the clothes mills and door-to-door sales. He was college educated (in a seminary yet!) but the depression did no good for his working life. He died of tuberculosis when Mom was about 17. Mom's mother never worked (she lived into her 70s - she died 3 weeks after Tami was born on the day before we moved to Iowa). Mom left high school to help support her family, as did her sisters as they became old enough. My Aunt Lilian who was the youngest spent some time in an

orphanage because there wasn't enough money to support all the children. Sometimes Mom talks about those times and they seem like fond memories: all the children were born at home, most birthday and Christmas presents were handmade or very inexpensive, sharing bedrooms, nightly dishwashing...) There was no TV, no computer, no VCRs, and math was done by hand. Supermarkets were nonexistent as were strip malls and major department stores were Penny's and Sears. Her dad had one of the first cars. Most of the aunts and uncles are mentioned later on, but my aunt Eveline died shortly after I was born, also of tuberculosis. As the story goes, when their Dad died all the children were checked to see if they also had TB, but the youngest were `too young for x-rays' so they were given an injection which was supposed to immunize them against the disease. Unfortunately, Aunt Eveline contracted her TB from those shots. (This led to my mother's later distrust of any kind of shots.)



The Chace Family



Emma Chace (Memere)



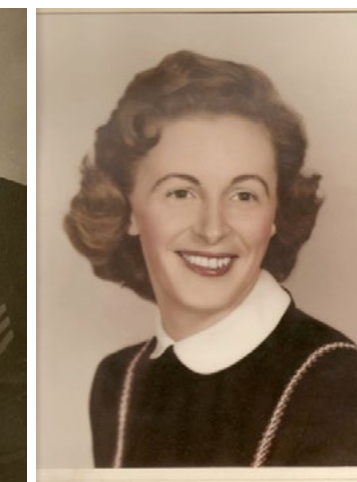
Emma Chace (Memere)



Evelyn Chace



Albert Chace



Teresa Chace



George Chace



Doris Chace



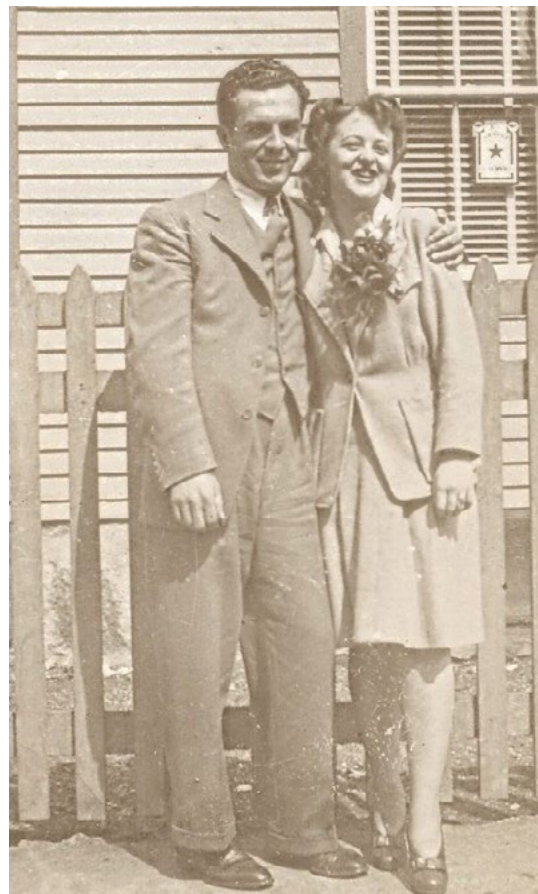
George Chace and wife



Evelyn and friends



The whole clan



Helena and Antonio, 1942



Memere and Helena



Helena as a young woman

My cousin Carolyn (Aunt Beaty's daughter...Carolyn's maiden name is Meeks) has made an attempt to trace her family background, which would be the same on her mother's side as mine, but little could be found about the Indian side of the family. There were relatives on both sides who had what sounds like scoliosis (they refer to it as hunch back, though this could be osteoporosis) and on my father's side there was a case of multiple sclerosis. Doctors maintain that these are not hereditary diseases, but my family history makes me wonder.

Mom was married once before my Dad. She left him because he abused her. She became pregnant with me before she and my Dad were married. (My brother was not 'planned' either). (This was before the era of birth control pills and Mom was a strict Catholic anyhow, sooo...). When my parents were dating and planning to marry, my father's parents were not pleased that he was marrying 'a French girl'. They were sure she wouldn't feed him well. From the stories I was told there were strong prejudices in the Portuguese community at the time (and from some things mom says the French didn't like the Portuguese either!). Until I was born, my Mom was not welcome in my Dad's parents home. However, since I was the first grandchild, all was forgiven. I was also the first grandchild on my mom's side. My aunt Alice had 2 older step-sons, but otherwise I was first.

My parents got married right during World War II when life was filled with ration books and stamps. It was a time when the role of women was changing dramatically. Mom always worked, very different than when her mom was having children.

The Chicken Caper (1934)

(written by Sheryl based on stories she heard as a kid)

Summer could be a boring time even with a houseful of children to play with, but Mom's brothers always found ways to keep occupied. Raymond, Albert and George were always anxious to explore. They were the youngest of nine children and the most inventive when it came to getting into trouble.

Their most notorious adventure occurred about 1934. The family lived on Tucker Street on an acre of land with a three-bedroom house and an old barn that had been converted to a garage for the family car. On the far side of the garage was the family garden with colorful flowers along the border and vegetables within. Pa did the gardening after coming home from his job as an electrician/mechanic in the mill. All the children helped with weeding, raking and hoeing. Children watered the garden with a watering can while Pa mowed the lawn with his push-mower.

The garden provided the family with most of their vegetables: carrots, watermelon, turnips, tomatoes, cucumbers, green onions, and peppers. The peppers were of the sweet and hot variety and were used along with the tomatoes and onions to make pickallilli. Mom's hands used to turn red and burn for

days, from the hot pepper juice and onions, after making that wonderful relish. Off to one side were grape vines. The older girls also helped to can tomatoes and make grape jelly. Pa’s brother kept the family supplied with apples, peaches, pears and plums.

The milkman came by every Saturday with 12 loaves of bread and 5 pounds of butter. The family drank tea and not milk with their meals. Every effort to save money made sense during those depression years. Everyone helped with the chores, but the boys, being the youngest, had the least responsibility and the most free time.

The family kept 25 chickens that were used for eggs and meat. The chicken coop was in the back of the house. One summer day, there must not have been enough chores, because George and Raymond decided to see if they could make chickens fly. Albert went along too as he loved ‘playing’ with his older brothers. My mother didn’t know about this escapade until many years later when she and her brothers shared some youthful memories at a family gathering.

Raymond and George climbed to the top of the barn, each holding a very reluctant chicken. They tossed the poor birds up into the air one at a time. The bird would flutter its wings and protest with a loud screech all the way to the ground, then hobble quickly away from all human company. The boys put their heads together.

“Maybe those were just dumb birds.” Raymond suggested as he brushed the chicken feathers away from his pudgy body.

“Lets try another!” George said. “There are lots more down there.”

Albert looked on wishing that he were old enough to climb so high. He also watched out for grownups.

Another victim was captured and the boys repeated their experiment with no more success. Now all the chickens were making a racket and running all over the yard, so the boys decided to wait for another day to try again. All that noise would surely attract attention.

They tried the same thing several times, never managing to get the birds to fly. Raymond and George decided they just had dumb chickens and went on to other games.

Meanwhile, Pa wondered what was wrong with his chickens. All of a sudden none of them were laying any eggs. Not a one! He tried changing the feed, watched out for animals that might have scared the birds. Nothing. He never did find out what happened to his birds. The Chace family was very short on eggs for a while, but they had a chicken every Sunday night until all the birds were gone. Those birds never did lay another egg.

Helena’s Teen Driving (1934) (short essay)

Helena didn’t get her license to drive until she was 25 years old, but that didn’t stop her from managing to get into an accident while driving when she was only 15. She was the oldest of nine children and was supposed to set a good example for her brothers and sisters. Usually she did just that, but this one time was an exception.

During the summer of 1934, they were living in a house on Tucker Street in Fall River, Massachusetts. A service station mechanic had just returned Pa’s car after some minor repairs. He gave Helena the keys and left the car in the driveway instead of in the old barn that they used for a garage. Pa had carpooled to work at the torpedo factory and Ma was out buying groceries, leaving Helena in charge at home.

Having car keys available was too tempting for a 15 year old, so she decided to park the car in the garage on her own. Helena bravely picked up the keys, tossed her short brown curls and went out into the bright sunny day to see what she could do. Brothers and sisters played indoors, so there was no audience and nobody in the way. Helena had observed Pa’s driving but had never tried this exciting task herself. She didn’t count on how warm the interior of the black Ford would be in the summer heat, but nothing could distract her from her goal.

Before getting into the car, she opened the garage doors wide. She looked around carefully to make sure no grownups were nearby and she had a clear path to the garage. Behind the wheel, with her tiny 4’10” frame, Helena could barely see over the dashboard. Her feet just touched the pedals. One half inch less and her teen drive may never have happened, but she was in luck, or so she thought. She turned on the car easily enough, put it in gear and bucked a few times before managing to make it into the barn without a problem.

Since it seemed so easy, she wanted everyone to see just what an accomplished driver she was. She returned the car to the middle of the driveway. Then she called all the kids outside to watch, lining them up on either side of the driveway, away from any potential harm. Everyone was wide-eyed at Helena’s bravery. Nobody drove that shiny black Ford except Pa.

Helena got back in the car just as if she had been driving for years and put it in drive. The ride this time was even smoother. She was so proud of herself! She was having such a good time that she was a little slow hitting the brake and the car drove right into the back part of the barn. She sat there amazed as the entire wall fell so slowly to the ground. It landed with a loud crash right on the neighbor’s flower garden! Helena was staring right out at the neighbor’s yard!

“Oh dear.” she thought as the dust settled. Her sisters and brothers were speechless for a few minutes.

“Oh! Pa’s going to be mad!” George, the 4 year-old, said as they all stared through the gaping hole.

Helena got out of the car and looked over the damage. What should she do now? But wait!

“Quick! Everyone come help me try to push it back up. Maybe we can fix it.” Helena took charge.

She organized all the kids and they pushed and shoved, sweating in the summer heat. Even the smallest ones tried to help. They finally managed to raise the back section of the garage and lean it against the old barn. They did such a good job they could hardly tell that anything was wrong. Of course, the neighbor’s flower garden had been trampled to bits in the process, but they didn’t even see that nor did they notice the mud all over their shoes.

Everyone returned indoors and played as if nothing had happened. That night at supper all the kids were extra quiet and hoping that Pa would not find out about their little escapade. The phone rang just as they were eating desert. They all got a little pale, but nobody said a word. Pa talked for a while and returned to the table. He looked directly at his eldest daughter and said,

“Is there something you want to tell me?”

She had no choice, she told the whole story, taking all the blame. One thing all the kids hated was getting a ‘talking to’ from Pa. His sermons were worse than a spanking most times. Well, Helena got a long sermon about how he needed to be able to trust her with the younger kids and how she was a role model and needed to be on her best behavior. She cringed when he mentioned that she had endangered her sisters and brothers. Being unable to listen to her favorite stories on the radio that Pa had built was ample punishment. The radio had a horn on one side and could only get a few stations, but it was a favorite for the whole family. “The Shadow Knows” and “Inner Sanctum” played in the other room that night and the next while Helena watched the younger kids and everyone else listened.

Helena never again tried to drive a car until after she was married and far away from home. Nobody but Pa ever drove that big black Ford again. Her younger sisters and brothers all waited until they were away from Pa’s influence before attempting to learn to drive. Helena had learned the lesson and so had everyone else.

Chapter 2: Early Years

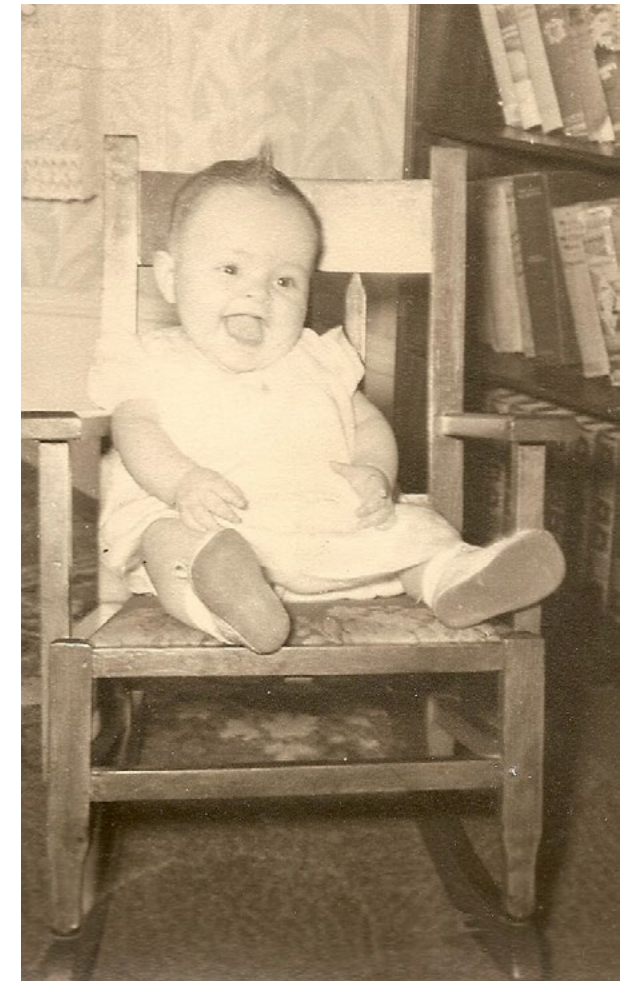
The earliest thing I can remember is living with my grandmother (on Third Street, Fall River) while my parents got started in the restaurant (I was about 7-8). It was only for a few months but it seemed a lot longer. There are a lot of memories of that time. The grocery stores had penny candy (it came loose with no brand names) and my cousins and I would spend an hour there trying to figure out how to spend five cents! the favorite candies were red licorice, and these candies that came on a strip and were glued (the latter got a bad reputation later on when they were used as a way to get kids high on drugs). Other stuff in the store was without brand names too, like sugar, flour, oatmeal, etc..



Sheryl in 1946

Memere’ (Mom’s Mom) used to try to wake up Uncle George again and again - he never wanted to get up. He was young and stayed out late either playing or working. One time I was out playing on the back porch and was trying to build a kite. I reached behind for a piece of string and got bit by a bumblebee. I used to pretend I knew how to play piano (Memere’ had a very old one) and I loved to ‘practice’ on it, though I’m sure nobody else liked the sounds! We all went to church as the whole family... Aunts, Uncles, neices, nephews, everyone. It was quite a group.

I’ve been told about earlier times though, like the time I chewed eggs for a whole day (I always was a fussy eater!), like the time the ceiling nearly fell on me while I was in my highchair, like how my dad couldn’t stand to hear me cry (that made it hard for Mom to control those terrible twos!), like the time I made mud pies and was eating them when my dad (who wanted everything I touched boiled) found me: he was not happy!! I don’t remember much of the time before my brother Vic was born, which is really sad as I’m sure from my own child raising that my parents worked very hard



Sheryl at 8 months of age



Sheryl with Antonion and Helena, 1945.

Uncle Ray (and those cousins - out of state) was in the service, Aunt Lilian was not around much except for the time she babysat us - she was a teenager at the time and had other things to do. (She was only 17 years older than I.) She had 5 cousins for us. There was also an Aunt Evelyn whom I never knew. She died young of tuberculosis.

There were Vovoo and Vovo (Dad's Dad and Mom) and Aunts Sara (Moniz) (one more cousin!) and Mary (Souza) (two more cousins!) and uncle Joe who had 2 girls. One of Aunt Mary's daughters had Multiple Sclerosis, and though we visited them often I never really got to know her even though she was very close

so that I would have a happy childhood. I can remember every year from as early as I knew what they were, praying that I would live to see my next birthday or the next Christmas; those were very special times, not just the presents but also the atmosphere, the family. Its funny how even as a young tot I thought (worried) a lot about dying. Maybe because I'd had relatives die, maybe because my relatives stressed it, I don't know. Its not because I didn't enjoy living; I can remember waking each morning with a boundless energy, raring to face the world. (Oh the joy of innocent youth!)

The family included many many people, most of whom we saw at least once a week. There was Memere (Mom's mom - Emma Chace) and Aunts Alice - married name Humphreys and a second marriage much later (and her 6 kids), Dot (single), Beatrice (married to a Carl Meeks, and she had 5 kids, one was a set of twin boys), To-too (Teresa) (married several times, the latest was to a Hanscom) and Uncle George (two more cousins) (and of course all appropriate spouses). That was just the regulars on Mom's side.



Sheryl with Helena, 1945.



Mary, Vovoo, Agnes, Sheryl, Del, Rosemary, Vic, Vavoo



Vovoo, Vovoa, Rosemary

to my own age. I can understand better now, that she was paying attention to her own needs first and I was trying not to notice her problems. (I've only mentioned immediate family, but there were also second cousins and great aunts and uncles whom we visited regularly.)

Later, when we visited my Dad's folks they always had food ready for us and when we'd come and go we'd ask for their blessing (in Portugese - Vovo s'abanse, vovoo s'abanse). On the way out they'd always give us each a dime (and as inflation hit, later a quarter). My aunt Dot died from a brain hemorrhage when I was quite young. She was the first person I really knew who died. All I remember is that she was nice to me and very tall. There were great-Aunts and Uncles and cousins galore that visited from out of town occasionally, and they all helped to contribute to the strong sense of family. For some reason, as I got older my parents' home was a gathering place for many of my Mom's family. They'd come and play cards, play games with us, talk and argue, just as a real family does. Birthdays, Christmas and Easter were real celebrations with all the extra folks stopping by and Thanksgiving was always a big family affair.

I remember one Easter (I was in high school by then) my aunt To-too bought Vic and I complete Easter outfits. Vic's was a suit and mine included a dress, hat, coat, gloves, purse and shoes. At the time I thought it was pretty neat. (My aunt To-too went through several marriages and I think we became her family between marriages.) By the way, To-too comes from my early years when I couldn't pronounce Theresa.

It's kind of funny to look back on, because at the time I'd moan about another day spent with all the 'old folks', but now I look back on those memories quite fondly. There was Aunt Alice who was very fat and liked to come over and hug. She had a stroke about the time I was in high school and after that she couldn't talk very well. There was Memere who seldom said much at all to the younger group...I often wondered how she'd managed to bring up ten children of her own. There was Aunt To-too who tried really hard to be our friend, but it was hard to trust a grown-up. Aunt Lilian was closer to our age, but she and I never did get along, especially after she'd spent



Sheryl in 1954



Sheryl at 3



Sheryl before her confirmation

time babysitting us. She had a lot of negative feelings because she was one of the younger kids who were sent to an `orphans' home for a while because Memere couldn't afford to take care of the whole family after mom's dad died. (Aunt Alice also used the orphans' home for some of her kids after her husband died.) Uncle George was always good for a laugh. The folks on Dad's side were more like duty visits. We really never had much in common, though Vic and I did enjoy playing outside at Vo-voo's and we always got a laugh (and plenty of food) at uncle Joe's.

The cousins were all ok playmates and several were about the same age as I was, so the same things interested us. My Aunt Alice had 2 stepsons who were older than I and everyone else was younger. One of those stepsons and I got caught playing doctor a time or two, which made everyone nervous, but for my part, I was just curious. The entire family was fairly poor, so there were no economic barriers, and while I was young they all lived fairly close. I remember Uncle George filling up the cans for the heater...that was long before everyone had gas heat. We had big meals...lots of roasts and stews...it was too much work to make many of the things we have today when there were so many people.

I was raised to be a `good Catholic', attending church every Sunday, catechism lessons, First Communion, Conformation. It was actually a way of life. Whenever I did something `wrong' I had to tell the priest at confession. We had Sunday best clothes and got special clothes for Easter Sunday. At the time it

seemed like the only way to live. It wasn't until I reached college that I began to question my religion. I'm sure it made it easier for my parents to raise me. There was no questioning of what was right and what was wrong. It also contributed to a strong sense of family that pervaded my growing years. The only thing I ever won in my life was a statue of the Virgin Mary and Child in my Catechism class. At the time I figured it was a sign of some sort (if it was the purpose got lost along the way.)

We were always poor, or at least, struggling to make ends meet. From the first, Dad was in the restaurant business, as was Mom. When I was very small they worked opposing shifts so that there was always someone to take care of me. We moved a lot and Dad switched jobs a lot, though I'm not really sure why. He'd work at a place for a while, then he'd find all sorts of things to complain about and next thing I knew, we were moving to a new job (and usually there was a between time when he had no job at all.) I do know Mom hated moving.



The whole family, circa 1953

Uncle George (short essay)

In March of 1952 my life took a major turn. We were living in Fall River, Massachusetts and surviving just like most other families. I was in second grade, my little brother was dealing with the terrible twos. Then my parents decided to buy a restaurant. That wasn't the worst part. The restaurant was in Newport, Rhode Island and rather than take me out of school in mid-year, mom decided to let us stay with my grandmother until the end of the school year. That would give them time to get the restaurant organized without little ones underfoot and I could stay in school. It was a pretty hard time for me. Having my parents leave me, even temporarily, was difficult, but looking back, I realize that I learned a great deal about my extended family while I was there.

Memere (my grandmother) lived in a two story gray apartment house. It had been converted into four separate and fairly small apartments. We lived there along with my Uncle George and my Aunt Doris. Aunt Doris and Uncle George worked, so that gave Vic and me more room to play. Actually, the thing I remember most about Uncle George was that he was very hard to wake up. Memere would stand at the bedroom door (she would never go in!) and yell:

“George! Its time to get up” and ten minutes later ...

“George!! You are going to be late for work!” and again later:

“This is the very last time! You can just get into trouble at work!”

Sometimes she had to even yell a fourth and fifth time. I never understood why she didn't just go in and pull off his covers. I even offered to go in myself to wake him, but I just got a firm "NO!" It was not until much later that I learned that he slept in the nude. Memere was a quiet and proper Catholic woman. She would never expose herself to that!

Every weekend that they could, my parents visited, so after a few weeks there was less of a sense of abandonment and more of a feeling of family. My aunt Alice and her seven children visited often, so I had a ready-made group of playmates.

Summer - 1953 through Summer 1960

I was 8 years old when my brother and I went to live in Newport, R.I. (342 Thames Street.) where my parents had bought a small restaurant. It seemed like an exciting adventure. Looking back on it now, it was quite the adventure. We met movie stars in town for the yacht races, lived on one of the original cobblestone streets, ate fresh fish caught only hours earlier and got to visit the ocean nearly every day. At the time however, I became somewhat disillusioned when I discovered that my parents had to work long hours every day (seven days a week) and they expected me to help out. I learned how to wash dishes quite well and by the time I was 10 or so even got to be a waitress just like the grownups when we were busy - which wasn't very often. (Unfortunately, I never did learn to cook.) I enjoyed playing the pinball machine we had a lot more than I enjoyed the dishes, but waitressing was kinda fun - most of the customers were friends and treated me like I was grown up. I used to wear this uniform that made me look perfectly square! I never got as good as Mom was at carrying several plates at once...she could carry 4 plates in one hand and another three in the other hand and one on her arm! I always thought that was neat! I didn't waitress all the time though. Many happy hours were spent at Turo Park feeding stale bread to the hungry pigeons. It was a pretty small park, but at the time I didn't notice. The birds got so used to me, they would come right up to me to get the bread! They would listen to my problems and to me it seemed that they sympathized.

During the first few years the lady who lived behind the restaurant took care of Vic and I. She was old (older than my parents and at the time that was ancient) and spent the day watching soaps and chewing on ice. I don't remember much else except that she hit Vic once for something and left bruises. When Mom found the bruises, we didn't go there any more.

Many of the customers were like extended family for me. One fellow in particular, Buddy Moy, was about 6 foot 6 inches. He used to try to pick me high up in the air whenever he could catch me. Even then I wasn't very pleased with heights. There was a shipyard nearby owned by a family of 7 brothers (the Parascondolas). They were regulars in the restaurant and whenever they'd bring in a fresh catch, they'd bring some to Mom and she would cook it for them for free. Of course there was always lots left over for us. I got very attached to



Sheryl in the restaurant, 1958



Sheryl in front of the restaurant



Sheryl in the restaurant, 1958

fresh caught fish, fresh lobster, and the Parascondola boys. They had lots of fun in our place. Today, no matter how fresh the fish is, it never comes close to these memories!

All my friends went on vacations in the summertime, but I got to have a little bit of vacation every day. Because they worked such long hours, my parents saved a special time for family. Every evening after they closed the restaurant at 7 PM, Mom, Dad, my four-year-old brother Vic and I would pack a meal, climb into our 1950 Ford station wagon and take a ten-minute ride to Second Beach. Mom usually wore her over starched blue and white waitress uniform; Dad wore his white shirt and white pants. We were all in too much of a rush to get there to change clothes.

Second Beach was a fifty-yard-wide stretch of sand bounded by pebbles and seashells on the east and by two large rocks on the west.



Father's Day, 1956



Helena, Vic, and Sheryl on the couch at Thames St.

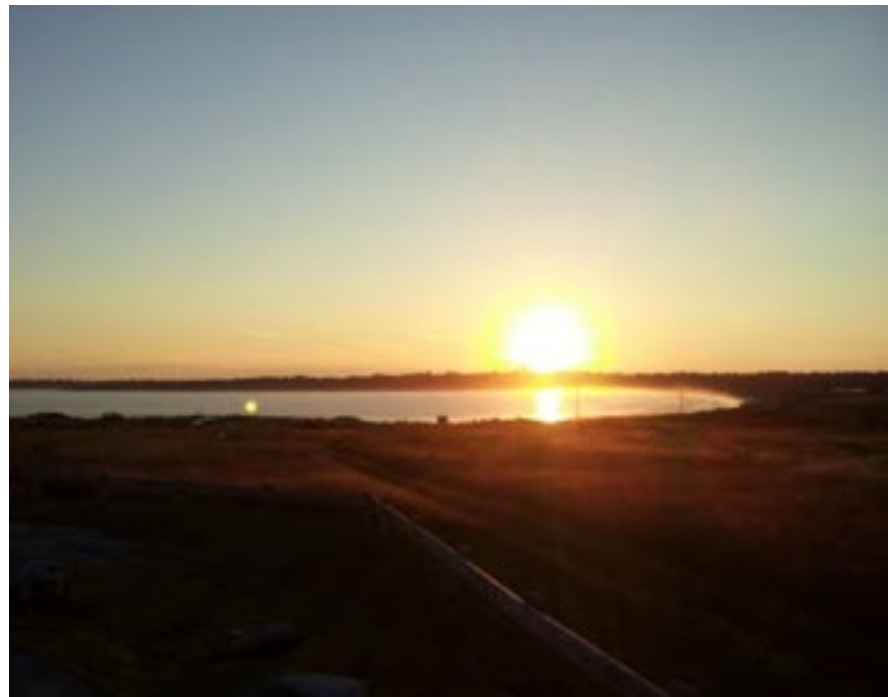
The largest rock reminded me of an oblong salad bowl turned upside down. Its top was level with the parking area and it reached out to the waves at high tide. The rock surface had been smoothed by years of sea and sand, so it provided a perfect playground for Vic and me. When I stood on the sand, the rock reached up about twice my height; it was shallow enough for me to scale and a perfect highway for trucks filled with sand to speed along. The smaller rock looked like a plate upended in the sand and it ran parallel to the larger one, making a narrow alleyway that we used for hiding and playing fort. On the other side of the rocks ran a two-mile-long stretch of beach called Third Beach where more people went to swim and play. Parking spaces for Second Beach were on the other side of a four-foot-high retaining wall on the north and only 30 feet from the ocean on the south. Dad would pull the car into one of those spaces so he and Mom would have a good position to watch my brother and me as we played.

Vic and I were always eager to go out and play in the sand or even in the water if the weather was warm enough, but first we had to eat. While we ate, Mom would ask about our day or we would talk about any family plans for the weekend, usually trips to visit my grandparents. As soon as we could gobble down our food, though, we would rush out to play. There were so many wonderful things to do. Vic loved running his little cars along the retaining wall, or we would jump off the wall, down into the sand, climb back up again and repeat the process. When we tired of that, we could build sand castles with moats that we filled with water from the shore. We decorated our castles with strips of green seaweed for flags and small rocks or shells for windows. The smell of salt in the air and the smell of the seaweed banners is something I never found on any other beach I visited.

Both of us had rock and shell collections and often spent our time searching for new treasures. All the while the waves gently lapped against the shore with a relaxing rhythm and the sea gulls screeched at us from above as they



Third Beach, around 1961



Sunset over third beach



At the beach

scoured the beach searching for food. The waves would rush up, cooling the warm sand, and retreat, leaving a clear mark of their travels. It was a peaceful place for my parents to eat and discuss their day while we used up our boundless energy below. Most of the time we had this beach all to ourselves, but once in a while there would be other children to play with. Since we were at the beach every night, we felt like we owned it. Other children sensed that and they usually did what we wanted.

There were two kinds of events that quickly became my favorites. When the weather was warm enough, Dad would come out to the water with us. He was an excellent swimmer. Mom came out, too, but she liked to stay near the shore. When Dad was with us, I became brave and would go out to my waist and ride the waves into shore, tasting the salty brine on my lips. Vic would go out as far as his little legs would carry him as he tried to keep up with us.

The other favorite time was when we had to stay in the car because of a storm. Lightning storms over the water reminded me of the Fourth of July fireworks, only better. The lights streaking down from the sky, the rumbles of thunder shaking us even in the car, all added to our excitement. The waves would crash into the big rocks with a huge whoosh, smoothing all the rough edges, and then recede to return again even stronger. Our little castles would disappear beneath the onslaught of the waves as they crept ever farther up the beach toward the car. Looking out in the distance we could see ships bobbing along on the crests of waves and disappearing into the troughs only to appear again. They looked like toy boats. Sometimes I worried that the water would come right to the car, but it never did.

We took our daily outings from May through September every year until we moved away in 1960 when my parents sold the restaurant. In September, we would say “Good-bye” knowing that our waves and sand



Lightning storm over the ocean



*Sheryl in her bedroom on
Thames St., 1955*

and rocks would be there next May.

We had more fun on that beach with shells and sand and rocks than we ever had with store bought toys. While I'm sure we occasionally brought friends to play with us, what I remember best is just the four of us. Mom and Dad would often sit in the car and talk over the day while Vic and I played king of the mountain, built sand cities and chased the waves. I never minded the seaweeds that often bunched up on shore, or in the shallow water. It was just part of the beach. The smell is something I have found nowhere else at all. The smell of home, love and innocence.

We lived in a small apartment over the restaurant and ate most of our meals downstairs with the customers. Over the years there were several memorable folks. I can

remember once when my Dad let a couple of lobsters walk around the kitchen for a while. I'm sure they were as scared as I was but I didn't know that then.

Sometime during our stay in Newport I remember my Dad had a bad problem with his legs. I don't recall what they called it but one time I went into the back room (where they did all the bookkeeping - a room smaller than most bathrooms) and he was standing there trying not to cry, but obviously in pain. Small as I was I offered to help him walk. Whatever it was, it went away soon afterward.

There were two apartments over the restaurant. At first we were in the one on the third floor and later we moved to the second floor because it was a larger place. The third floor had a large kitchen/living room and a good size bathroom, but the second floor had bigger bedrooms and a pantry. Once when we were on the third floor, a pretty scary thing happened. The guy who lived on the second floor drank heavily. One night he didn't make it up the stairs. My parents found his body when they went downstairs in the morning. By the time I went downstairs the body was gone, but there were red spots all over the spot where he landed. I really got pretty upset by that incident. As a matter of fact I'm pretty sure that's part of why I'm so afraid of heights.

My Dad was kind of addicted to a kind of gambling called the 'numbers' where folks bet on the amounts taken in at the races in Providence...at the time it was definitely illegal, but there were always bookies to take your money. Anyhow, after spending a fortune on this, my Dad won about \$100. He spent it on a new bedroom



Sheryl and Vic in 1957

set for me. At the time that didn't mean a lot, though I did like the set, but now when I think of how many bills they could have paid and how many other ways they could have spent that money, it means a lot more. His favorite number was 342 (from our address - 342 Thames Street) and I still think of him whenever I see that number.

Restaurant Living.

"Special 99 cents" "Lobster salad roll \$1.25" "Welcome to Martin's Restaurant" the signs read.

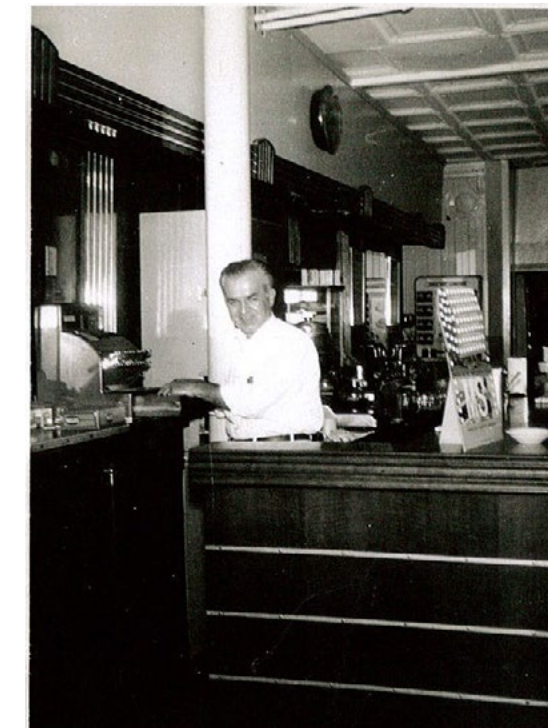
The front of our restaurant contained several huge windows. They had fancy writing on them telling about our specials, like advertisements. Sometimes Vic and I would hide behind displays and watch people go by.

Being part of a restaurant family meant lots of good food, whatever I wanted. It also meant that my parents spent incredible amounts of time running the place so that my 'family life' became a part of the restaurant. In 1953, they bought "Martin's Restaurant" at 342 Thames Street in Newport, R.I. and moved our family to a small apartment above.

The restaurant resembled a small diner and catered mostly to local business people. It boasted five red tables and a red counter with red vinyl stools that I loved to spin. My brother Vic, at three years old, could fit between the footrests and the underneath of the countertop as he moved along, trying to get all the stools to spin at once.

At the end of the row of tables stood a shiny pinball machine, its lights flickering, beckoning us to test our skill. Both Vic and I enjoyed standing on a chair and playing for hours, the flashing lights and ringing bells sounded as music to our ears. We inserted coins painted with pink nail polish and when the machine repair-person came on his weekly run, he would return those pink coins to my parents. The music from the coin-operated juke box was frequently punctuated by the bells and dings from the pinball machine as we tried our best to become high scorers.

Mom ran the counter and tables with a little "help" from me as a dishwasher/gofer. (I even had my own dull tan uniform.) She also did a lot of the cooking in the kitchen, but dad ran the grill and fryalator. When we



Tony in the restaurant



*Sheryl in the apartment over the
restaurant, 1957*

had our rush hour crowds, mom would handle waitressing for all the customers pretty much by herself and dad would prepare orders from foods already made and refrigerated until needed. Vic and I tried to stay out of the way, though regular customers enjoyed playing with us.

The red cobblestone street outside separated our restaurant from an electric shop and a fishing wharf. Seven Parascondola brothers owned the wharf and often came into our place to eat. When they had fresh fish or lobster, they would bring us a basket full and mom and dad would cook it for them for free. There were always plenty of leftovers for us and sometimes even for other customers. That is where I developed a taste for fresh fish and that is where I first learned to eat lobster.

Eating lobster is an acquired art form that is mostly lost on folks who live away from the ocean. The hard red body has tiny sharp points just waiting to prick a wary finger. The meat inside those mean-looking claws is sweet and tender as anything I have ever eaten. Mom taught me how to get tasty meat out of every part of the lobster, even those tiny little claws.

Anyone who ever saw mom eat lobster would want to taste it too. She would enjoy every morsel, in spite of the mess of empty claws and greasy butter all over the place. First she would eat the juiciest part: the large claws, then she would suck out the meat from those little claws. Then the tail, the part many people think is the only part to eat, would be next. After all of that she would tear apart the body and find more meat in the joints. Stuffed lobster, mom said, tasted best because boiled ones lost some flavor to the water. Some people boil them first to kill them and that changes the flavor too. Some years lobster were scarce because storms chased them further out to sea.

Because we lived so close to the water, whenever a hurricane blew through, the Parascondolas would batten down their boats and dad would board up each of the big windows against the strong winds and tides. Dad brought huge pieces of plywood up from the cellar and nailed them over every bit of window until we couldn't see outside at all. One year, during hurricane Carol, the water came from the wharf to right across the street and dad and a few other men had to go help save someone from drowning. At the time, I thought it was just terrible that I couldn't watch the storm from the windows. Once they brought that man indoors though, I decided maybe I would go play far inside.

I could get into trouble even without storms. One time, after pleading to help cook and getting no response, I decided to try it on my own. I grabbed the big meat cleaver dad used and ran my thumb along the edge to see if it was sharp enough. I had seen my dad do that dozens of times. Somehow I did it wrong



Sheryl and Vic

though because I cut my thumb. I couldn't tell anyone because I knew I would get into trouble, so I retreated to the tiny bathroom in the rear of the kitchen and rolled my thumb up in my bright yellow dress. I prayed that it would stop bleeding soon. Fifteen minutes later, my dress began to resemble a yellow and red polka-dotted dress and I knew I had to tell someone. I quietly walked up to mom and showed her my finger. I thought she would pass out looking at the blood all over me, but she rallied and managed to get the bleeding stopped. Funny how Moms are so good at that.

We lived in two different apartments above the restaurant. The first was a tiny two-bedroom place where the kitchen was also the living room. I remember one time when I brought a girlfriend, Susie, up there, going against my father's strict rules. Susie lived in the apartment building right next door to ours. As we played quietly with our dolls, I heard dad's voice on the intercom.

"Sheryl. Do you have someone upstairs?" came his loud shout.

"No dad. I am playing with my dolls." I answered quietly.

A short while later dad came thundering up the stairs. I rushed to hide Susie underneath my bed and went to try to head off an angry dad.

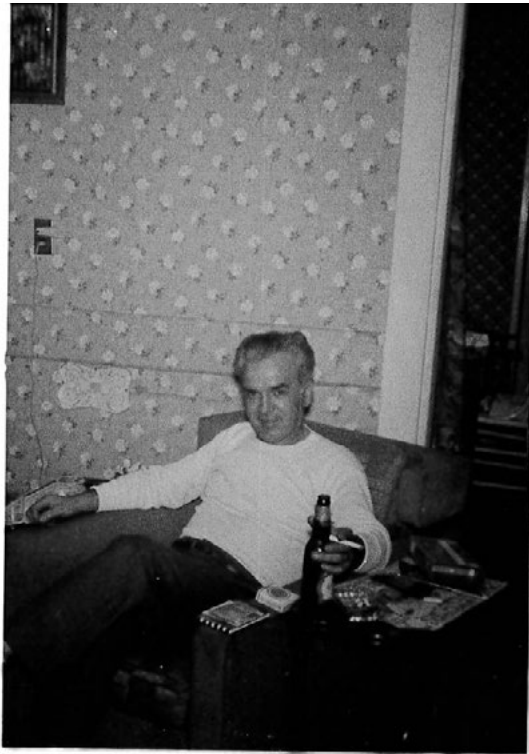
"I heard another voice here!" he shouted as he looked around. It only took him a minute to find Susie cowering under the bed.

"Go home and don't come back." he said, barely controlling his temper.

I got a good spanking and a week at home without friends. He was furious that I had lied to him. I learned that intercoms pick up a lot more noise than I thought they did. It wasn't until much later that I figured out how to shut the darn thing off but I never lied quite so obviously again.

The second apartment had three bedrooms. My bedroom was the biggest room in the place. One time we left the window open and a pigeon flew in there. Chasing him around was not fun. We managed to get him out without hurting him, but I ended up with Hitchcock-like nightmares for a while.

My brother and I had to walk through our parents' bedroom to get to the bathroom at night. Vic regularly had nightmares so he walked through there often in hopes of waking up someone who would



Antonio on Thames St.

protect him from his dreams. One night he woke my father so often that dad literally threw Vic back into bed and told him to stay there. Later that same night, I woke up to see my bedroom floor littered with Kleenex. Vic was throwing Kleenex my way hoping to wake me up! None of the tissues were within 5 feet of the bed, so he was very lucky I woke up at all.

I went to my first formal dance from that apartment, suffered through two sets of measles from there and even ran away from home while we lived there. It was a growing-up place that left lots of fond memories.

Another not so scary, but memorable incident happened in that apartment. My parents had given my brother and I strict instructions that we were to have no friends in our rooms when they were downstairs working. Well, I guess I wasn't too bright because I ignored their warnings and had a friend from next door up there. We were playing and 'not doing anything wrong' when my Dad called up on the intercom and asked whether I had anyone up there. I sure wasn't going to admit that I'd disobeyed the rules, so I said "No." A few minutes later here comes my Dad fighting mad up the stairs. I quick got my friend under my bed and tried to face him as if nothing was wrong. Of course he knew there was someone there and only took a minute to find her. She went home and I got punished, but I did learn that intercoms are two-way devices and an easy way to get in trouble.

Once we moved to the second floor, life was a lot calmer. My bedroom was huge and I could just about see the water from the windows. One day I was coming upstairs and looked up to see a pigeon on the landing staring at me. I went back down those stairs fast. A bird indoors is not fun! We tried opening windows, but that bird was too nervous to try it. It took us about a half hour to get that poor bird back down the stairs and outside and I had nightmares for a week!

Even this early I had some trouble with my arm. I can recall letting my hair stay straight because it took me forever to put it in rollers and the rollers never seemed to stay put. My hair was fine and not too thick, but the biggest problem was keeping my hands over my head for the time it took to set my hair. Of course at the time no one thought too much about it, but that was probably one of the first indications that there was a physical problem.

My memories of this time include hours spent playing in the parks, feeding the pigeons, lying and watching the clouds go by. I once spent an entire



Sheryl from about 1958

afternoon just thinking about what life would be like if I were a butterfly. That was a result of an inventive school assignment, but it gave me a whole different perspective on life for a while.

I got very spoiled by all the good food in the restaurant. Mom baked lots of creme pies (chocolate, banana, coconut, butterscotch) and we got more from a local bakery (apple, blueberry, ...), and there was always anything I felt like eating. Mom did most of the cooking and Dad did the short order work, which is just as well, because she was the better cook. (It's no wonder my waitress uniform made me look so fat!)

My first trip to the dentist was when I was about 12 and I had a tooth that was really a mess. My mom was always afraid of dentists, so I'd never gone before that. The dentist wasn't very good. He gave me gas and proceeded to pull the tooth without making sure the gas was working. It wasn't! Well, after that experience, I only needed to hear the word dentist and I'd become unglued. I can remember one time I went, sitting in the dentist's chair when the nurse walked in and I got hysterical. As a result of this phobia I let my teeth go and ended up needing to have them all out at an early age (about 23).

I remember Newport being somewhat segmented with the negro population all in one tiny corner and ignored by the rest of the community. As young as I was I didn't question this, but it bothered me in later years when I was trying to form my own values. I can remember being afraid to walk home past large groups of blacks and they had not done anything to me, so it must have been something I picked up at home. Luckily I managed to loose most of that prejudice as I grew older (though its hard to tell since I've lived in cities with very low negro populations as an adult). As a disabled person, I feel I have a better understanding of what some of the discrimination feels like for people of different colors. I'm sure I don't have a good understanding though, just as they cannot truly understand my problems because they haven't lived them.

One of the neat people I met while we were in Newport was Dick Crane. He was my parents' age and he was blind. He'd been blind all his life and dealt with his disability very well. He used a cane to feel his way and read a lot using braille. He ran the concession stand at the Post Office a block away from our restaurant and often came into the restaurant to eat. I used to go visit him at the Post Office and occasionally helped him stack the magazines for his stand. He had a very acute sense of hearing and could always tell who was coming by the sound of their footsteps. (Now I wonder if even then I walked with some slight limp and maybe thats why he could identify me so eaasily.)

One interesting thing about this period...I don't remember any big mall type stores or any strip mall either. We shopped at "outlet stores" which were the precursors of places like Target and Wall-Mart. There



Sheryl and her dad, 1958

still were Woolworths’ and 5 and 10 cent stores (and some things really cost that!) and downtowns were big. It wasn’t till I was in high school that the stores started to head for the suburbs. If we had a TV I don’t remember it, and of course there were no VCR’s or computers, no battery operated kitchen gadgets, no food processors, microwaves, answering machines, and definitely no portable or touch-tone phones. It’s amazing how much things have changed!

While we lived there most of my friends were boys who lived nearby. I was then as I am now, very shy and I found it hard to make friends. There weren’t a lot of children in the area. There was one particular guy who lived nearby and his parents worked, so we used to spend a lot of our time at his house. He had a large rambling house and it was fun to play in. My Mom was always trying to get me to watch my brother - he was five years younger and I thought at the time that he was a real pain. My friend Mike and I would always scare Vic so he’d run back home and I wouldn’t have to deal with him. And I wondered why David did the same thing to Tami later!! (That’s part of why I wanted my kids to be closer together in age.)

Mike and I had lots of fun in that old house. We experimented with smoking at the tender age of 10, tried our skill at cooking (using a little of just about everything in the kitchen!) which got Mike grounded for a while. We played fort in a vacant lot in back of the house. At one point the neighborhood church decided to make the vacant lot into a parking lot. The workmen spent half their days chasing Mike and I away so they could cut down the trees. We were quite the pests.



Sheryl and Mike, 1958

My First Dance (1958)

Every Sunday, from 1953 through 1960, our parents closed the restaurant and we all went to visit my grandparents. First we traveled to Fall River, Massachusetts where mom’s mother lived.

Memere (French for grandma) wore glasses that looked like the bottoms of coke bottles to help eyesight damaged by cataracts. A quiet, tiny woman, she let us play with her old record player. Songs like “Sixteen Tons” and “Moon River” may have belonged to a different generation, but we knew all the words. She always wore long dresses that looked like they were from long ago. When other cousins visited and we got too rambunctious for her one bedroom apartment we were all sent outside to play.

Because the neighboring houses all nestled close together, we had no grassy areas for our enjoyment, so we spread out along the sidewalk and delighted in our games there. Everybody’s porch was fair game for hide-go-seek or tag. Nobody seemed to mind an army of noisy children running around. After visiting

Memere for about an hour, Mom, Dad, Vic and I would all climb back into our old station wagon and head off towards Dad’s parent’s home in Tiverton.

They lived on the top floor of their house, which had a large garden and grape vines. Dad’s sister and her two children lived downstairs. Vovoo and Voa (Portuguese for grandma and grandpa) had traveled to America from the Azores and both spoke only Portuguese. So after a brief visit to ask for their blessing, Vic and I would scurry outside to play. Once in a while Dad’s father even came out with us. He could make himself understood when he wanted to. He liked showing us his rabbits and sitting in the grape arbor while we ran around. I think he really enjoyed getting away from the house sometimes because his wife tended to be pretty bossy.

When we left their house, Vovoo and Voa always gave us money. It was just a dime, but at the time we thought we were rich. We always stopped in Billy’s Cafe in Tiverton for supper before heading home. Billy’s had a bar and a separate a restaurant section where, on Sundays, we were usually the only customers.

Dad gave us each a quarter (we weren’t spending our precious dimes) and we ran to the jukebox and played our favorite songs. When all the songs were over our meals would be ready. Billy’s had lots of spicy Portuguese foods like Chourico and Kielbasa (marinated and smoked pork sausages). They had the world’s best katsup too.

One Sunday there was another family of four sitting in a nearby booth. I had my eye on a boy in their group who was just about my age. He had glasses, brown hair and a thin frame and he didn’t strike me as overly handsome, but at 13, every boy gets admired a little. Vic and I still chose our songs at the jukebox and when we returned to our table the boy came over to our booth.

“Sir. May I ask your daughter to dance?” he asked formally as we all looked on with astonishment.

I sat there in shock. First at the old fashioned idea of asking my father and second that he had asked at all. Then I cringed waiting for Dad to say something to embarrass me, but I was in luck. He just said “Sure. Its up to her.”

We went out on the dance floor and danced as well as two self-conscious teenagers could dance. We talked a little, but whatever was said disappeared in the aura of the moment. The boy returned me to my seat just as our meals came and their family left shortly afterwards.

Dad and Vic teased me all the way home about it but I didn’t mind. My mind soared in the clouds thinking of my introduction to dancing. Would I meet him again? Where could I learn to dance? I could hardly wait until we reached home to tell my friends. I had reached a milestone in my race to adulthood. My first dance. No other would ever be as sweet.



Antonio, Vic, and Sheryl, on Thames St.

One other time, I needed to get rid of my pesky brother, so I convinced him that I had a job working for the F.B.I. and that I had to report on all the cars that passed a certain porch, through the porch-post!! I told him I'd let him do it for me... that kept him out of my hair all afternoon!! Another time I'd thought I'd been good; I let Vic watch us play tennis (on the street with no net) and one time when I went to swing, he was right behind me. He got whacked right on the nose and we both ran home to deal with the bloody nose. (That time really was an accident, but to this day I'm not sure Vic believes me.)

Then there was the time I was supposed to be watching Vic and he managed to get his foot run over by a car!! Luckily he could pull the foot out, so it was just a lost pair of shoes, but I didn't know that when I ran home yelling that Vic just got run over!! Its a wonder my folks didn't have a heart attack!!! I really did love the kid, but I think the way he worshiped me got to be old fast.

I remember too watching all the fancy cars at the Kennedy wedding (Jack and Jackie), which was held in that same church and thinking I'd like to have a big car someday. There were a lot of wealthy folks in town but most of the time we never even saw them. Most of them lived along 12-mile drive, a pretty drive fronting on the water. The wedding was one event I'd remember several times as I grew up. It was the closest I ever got to the rich and famous.

Many times I would go to a little park, called Turo Park (about the size of a small city block. It had a brick monument in the middle of it that the pigeons loved to nest in.) I would bring some stale bread and feed the birds and just be alone and think. Sometimes the birds would come right up to my hand to get the food. They were all colors and I would name them and talk to them and tell them my problems. (Yes, even an 8-9 year old has problems... They seemed big at the time.) Other times I would lie on the grass and watch the clouds and think of what the shapes looked like.

I remember too the transition from thinking that my parents knew everything to thinking that I knew everything and they didn't. It always helped me when bringing up my own children to remember these things. It was a lot harder to be on the grownup side than to be the one growing up, although it sure didn't seem so when I was young! It also wasn't easy as an adult to always remember that those terrible twos or self-centered annoying teens weren't any different than I was. There were times I wondered why I'd ever had kids



Sheryl and Vic

(like at 2am feedings or after a hard day at work ...), but now that they are grown up, I'm very glad I did.

My school experiences weren't much, especially the lower grades. I had terrible penmanship, I was shy and never had many friends, was usually picked last for any athletic games. My grades were just average. I wasn't terribly interested in school then. I'd sometimes dawdle on the way to school and play on a really neat fence. It was a bar type thing and I loved climbing on it and swinging around. The only problem was it made me kinda late. They weren't terribly happy about that.

There was also a nice park that I played in on my way home. Once I kind of lost track of time and my Dad came looking for me. He was fighting mad and I got scared then! He and Mom were scared out of their wits because I was hours late, but at the time I couldn't understand why everyone was so upset! I stayed home for a while after that incident! When I think back on school I don't remember my parents helping me much. I guess they might have been self-conscious about not having gone very far in school, but Mom at least was pretty smart when she wasn't worrying about it.

There was also a sixth-grade teacher (my first male teacher) who was well known for draping his arm around the young girls' rears when he was "explaining" things. I always stayed on the other side of the desk!! I remember sixth grade as a time when I noticed lots of groups of colored kids on my way home. I tried my



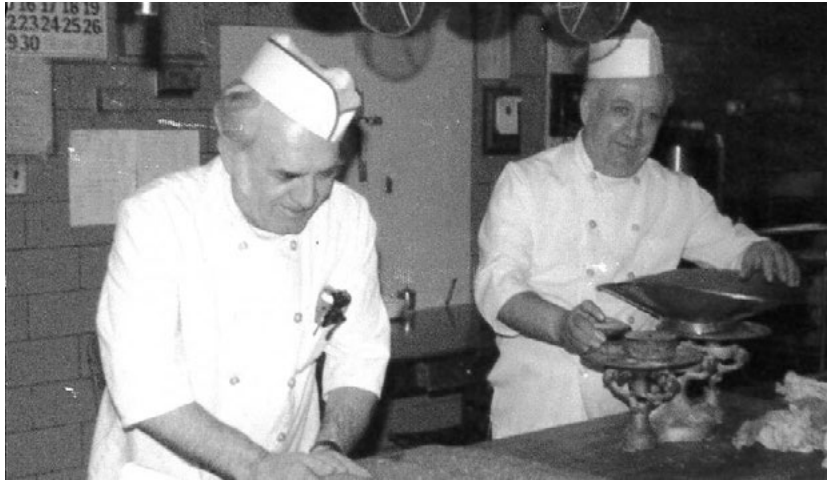
Sheryl, 1959



Helena and Sheryl in the Thames St. Apartment



Helena, Antonio, and Sheryl in the Thames St. Apartment



Antonio (left) at work

best to avoid them though don't think they ever gave me any reason to be afraid. That probably came from my parents. My father was especially biased and as I got older we would fight about it.

I learned a lot about knives the hard way too. Everyone was always telling me not to play with knives, yet I'd watch my parents cook and they never got hurt. Well, I managed to get my

hands on the meat cleaver and ran my thumb along the edge just to see if it was really sharp. It was! And now I had blood all over my finger! I sure wasn't going to admit that I'd done anything wrong so I wrapped the finger in my yellow dress and went into the bathroom. About fifteen minutes later I was still bleeding and starting to get worried. I'm not sure if I was more worried about the cut or the fact that my dress was now red and yellow polka dot from holding my cut finger! Anyway I finally walked up to Mom and said "Mom, fix it!" No wonder parents get grey hair!!

Junior High was great fun for me. For some reason my grades just shot up and I was really enjoying myself. I think it had something to do with changing classes all the time and I had some friends too (that was new for me). I had my first crush on a guy who lived in the midst of the ghetto section of the city - he never did know I existed - I don't think we ever talked at all, but he was cute! I joined the school chorus and really enjoyed singing at the various concerts around town. At that age my voice was pretty good (before syringomyelia ruined it). I have fond memories of Christmas concerts, singing Adeste Fideles, and at Easter one year a concert with Oklahoma as the main song. The long hours of practice didn't faze me; I enjoyed it all. (I wonder if that's where David gets his love of drama? and where Tami gets her beautiful singing voice? Mom had a good singing voice too...) Unfortunately my voice went away with age.

Throughout my childhood, I'd never had very many close friends but this was compensated for by a large number of relatives, many of them cousins in my age range. While we were in Newport we spent most Sundays visiting my grandparents in nearby Tiverton and Fall River. After our visits we'd eat supper at Billy's in Tiverton, which is where I was first asked to dance and where later I had my wedding reception. Billy's was a Portuguese bar/restaurant and they had yummy things like chorizo sandwiches and a marinated pork, and the best French fries I have ever tasted. The French fries were best with their thick catsup and some vinegar. I think this is where I developed a taste for eating out often (this and having my own restaurant.).



Helena at work

The visiting of relatives was not an option for us as kids, but a requirement. At the time I often thought it was a pain, but looking back I can see that as where I got my sense of family (a thing I feel is less strong in my own children). I usually had cousins to play with while my parents and grandparents talked. We'd play in Vovooo's garden or at Memere's we'd play out on the sidewalk... jacks, jump rope, hopscotch, tag... or we'd go to the nearby grocery and spend a half hour spending 5 cents!

My Dad's parents lived almost in the country in Tiverton. They had a grape arbor and a small vegetable garden and for a while they had rabbits. They spoke only Portuguese so Vic and I spent a lot of our time there outside playing in the yard. I never did get to know them very well, partly because they only spoke Portuguese. There was a ritual we went through every time we went there. We'd go inside, ask the grandparents for their blessing in a Portuguese phrase we'd memorized, then go out to play until it was time to go. Then they would give each of us a dime (which bought more then) and we'd ask for their blessing again and off we'd go.

My Mom's Dad was dead, but her Mom and some of her sisters and a brother lived in Fall River. On our Sunday visits I'd spend hours listening to my grandmother's record collection. Today songs like "Sixteen Tons" and "Blue Moon" bring back memories of that time even though the songs are from an earlier period than mine. Often we'd be there at the same time as some of my cousins and we'd get into mischief together. Most of the cousins were boys, so I was often the tomboy.

There was one time I remember that one of my older cousins and I got caught playing "doctor". My grandmother was quite upset over that incident and she didn't get upset very often (you'd think after bringing up ten kids of her own she'd be used to things like that, but she wasn't.) I guess I felt closer to Mom's family because before we'd gone to Newport we'd stayed there for a few months, so we knew each other better. (It's so hard to believe that they are all grown up now too and have their own families. I would really like for us to all have a family reunion but we are stretched all over the country.)

Sometime in here I was told I needed glasses. Of course my parents did what all good parents do and they bought me some. Then I did what most kids seem to do at the time.. I didn't wear them! Actually I didn't wear my glasses regularly until I was in college.

I was a fairly healthy kid, but did manage to get measles three times when you were only supposed to get them once! It wasn't too bad though because doctors still made house calls until after I was a junior in high school. My syringomyelia symptoms weren't showing until maybe one time when we visited Memere' and



Sheryl and Vic on Thames St, 1957

I was outside and running and fell down, tripping over my own feet. I chipped a front tooth on that fall. No one thought anything about it though, all kids fall sometimes.

The tooth was replaced with a partial plate that was partially responsible for the fact that my teeth went bad very young; the plate trapped food between my teeth and I ended up with lots of cavities. Since Mom hated dentists, we did very little about those cavities unless the teeth hurt, at which point it was way too late. (She definitely passed that fear on to me.)



Theresa, Tony, Carolyn, and Sheryl

A few years before we left Newport we moved to a place farther away from the restaurant. I’m not sure I ever knew why we moved, but I liked the idea since it was close to the new high school and there was a nice grassy area to play in. My Aunt Lillian used to babysit while Mom and Dad worked and she’d always make us take a nap in the afternoon. Well I knew I was too old for naps, but Vic wouldn’t sleep unless he thought I was sleeping too, so I’d tuck a few comic books under my pillow and spend that time reading. My aunt probably knew but she never let on.



Tony and Vic in the Restaurant

Chapter 3: High School

When I was about to start my sophomore year in high school, my parents sold the restaurant and we moved back to Fall River. I was very unhappy about the move because I wanted to go to the new high school in Newport that I’d looked forward to for so long. Our new apartment (80 Freedom Street) was the first floor in a house built by a guy who owned a lumber yard and was large and full of fancy woodwork. (My parents never owned their own home. It wasn’t as much of a thing to do for ‘regular’ folks then.) My bedroom had a walk in cedar closet and there was a double parlor with beautiful glass doors and a sun parlor with about 9 windows (this became my bedroom when my grandmother moved in with us). The kitchen had an inlaid floor and lots of glassed in cupboards. In the kitchen was also a fold-up ironing board that was where I spent a bit of time as a teen (I hate ironing!!!) There was a mom and pop grocery on the adjacent corner (with lots of penny candy!) and a police/fire station across the street. It seemed like quite a step up from our last place.

The family spent most of the time around the kitchen table talking, playing cards, visiting with our numerous relatives. We used the living room only occasionally to watch “American Bandstand”, “Bonanza” and “Hopalong Cassidy” on the black and white TV, or I’d spend some time talking with friends on the phone. When I think of that home I remember the card games, the battles over who won, my parents not talking to each other because they were mad about how a particular game had come out, joking about who was the current “Champ-een”. (They played ‘Pitch’ and ‘Hearts’.)

There was an amusement park in Dartmouth nearby and we went there a few



Durfee High School in Fall River, Massachusetts



Getting her hair done



Aunt Theresa's Beauty Salon

someone was listening, so I used to spend hours sitting on his bed while he played. He got to be pretty good too!! When I hear 'In a Little Spanish Town' I still think of those times. There was one time that he was playing



Sheryl in High School

times. I found out that I had no stomach for the high rides. The first time my aunt to-to (Teresa) took me on the baby rollercoaster I was green for a week! And my stomach was upset for at least that long. I had problems with the 'dobby horses' too. The around and up and down motion made me dizzy. All in all I wasn't much good at the rides. I liked the bumper cars best...a precursor of my driving?

Vic and I had several ways of taunting each other. We'd fight over the choicest pieces of green lettuce from a salad, or even better, the juiciest pieces of roast pork leftovers; we'd get a piece on a fork and offer it to the other and pull it back and eat it ourselves. It was happy type teasing. Actually we got along fairly well during this time.

I took a cooking class one year and learned to make American chop suey. Well I made it at home and Vic ate so much of it that he got sick!! He learned to play the guitar during this time, but he didn't like to play unless someone was listening, so I used to spend hours sitting on his bed while he played. He got to be pretty good too!!

with a friend next to the police station - with matches yet!! Well, a policeman caught them and next thing I knew, Vic was running into his bedroom and the cop was knocking at the door. I was the only one home, so I talked to the man and said I'd let my parents know what had happened. I did tell my Mom, but we decided not to tell my Dad because he was petrified of fire and had already threatened Vic about playing with matches. (My Dad had a violent temper that didn't show very often, but when it did we all got out of the way.)

I got my license at 16 years old and promptly proceeded to get into 3 minor accidents. The first was weird, my algebra teacher banged into the drivers' side door as I was getting out of the car. I was lucky to miss being hit! The other two were my fault, though I wouldn't have admitted that at the time (they were both just fender benders). Once I had the use of a car, the whole world changed. It seemed like there was nowhere I wanted to go that I didn't need a car, even though I had walked there a few weeks ago. I was using my



Sheryl and her family before prom, 1963

parents' car, and that meant a constant battle to try to figure out ways to use it...like getting up to drive Mom to work at some god-awful time, and picking her up after work. It seemed like a super pain at the time. (It must not have been too bad since I never did buy my own car until after I was married.)

I started earning money for college at my aunt's beauty parlor, cleaning up and washing heads while she did the rest of the hairdressing. I had learned from my Mom how to save and found it pretty easy to put away a good part of my earnings for college. (My Dad would spend every penny he could, and then borrow more. He spent it on all of us, but the bills were a definite problem in the marriage.) I knew my parents didn't make enough to be of much help. I did find enough spare cash to spend a lot of time eating at McDonald's (the local hangout). Summer jobs once I was 16 included waitressing at the restaurant where my Mom worked, waitressing at Dunkin Doughnuts (oh how I remember those early mornings!!), working in a couple of local mills (checking material for flaws or cutting off threads from curtains...such boredom I'd never seen!). It was a quick education on what life was really like for folks without a college degree. I knew I didn't want to do that for the rest of my life!

One job lasted a half-day. It was a job stuffing powder puffs. The work area got so full of dust in a half day that I could hardly breathe. I left at noon and never even went back for my check!! It took two baths to get even half clean after that one!!

There were a lot of kids who did not finish school. Fall River was a town with a high percentage of newly arrived immigrants from Portugal and many of them opted for marriage and a family the first chance they had. I wanted more from life and did not understand why others didn't too. I'd watched my parents spend their lives going to work each day at jobs they did not enjoy and I didn't want that for me. As a result I had little to talk about with many of the folks I worked with. The jobs I had were strictly work experiences and not places where I'd meet people I wanted for friends. (It may sound snobbish and maybe it was, but I had a hard time relating to girls whose only goal in life was to get married even when that meant they would work for the rest of their lives in a sweaty old mill and never have enough money for the basics.)



Ronnie and Sheryl, Prom, 1962

My Driving Troubles

My driving test was slightly rigged. I had just turned 16 on that warm June day in 1961 and my anticipation of passing that biggest rite of adulthood warmed the air in the old blue ford used for high school driving lessons. Harry, a short balding man in his fifties, had taught defensive driving for B. M. C. Durfee High in Fall River, Massachusetts for years. He was acquainted with the official inspectors who gave all the driving tests and he knew what usually happened during the exams.

Harry understood I had never mastered that most formidable of driving skills - parallel parking. He had tried to teach me throughout our spring class with no success. My test came at the end of a long, hot day spent dealing with smart-mouthed noisy kids and he was tired. He hoped I would flunk the written test so he could go home early, but when I ran out to the car happily waving my test, he knew he was out of luck.

“The car is all set to back up. just put it in reverse and don’t turn the wheel.” Harry whispered to me. I was surprised that he would do this for me after I had spent a whole spring giving him gray hairs with my clumsiness. I never had managed to complete that famous Y-turn without driving over at least one curb. Luckily I had never hit anything but a garbage can. Harry sensed that I would mess up again and he didn’t want to have to return with me tomorrow to repeat this test if he could avoid it. He was counting on the late hour and relying on the inspector being in a hurry to go home early too.

Perspiration dampened my hands as I watched the burly examiner circle the car to check all the lights. He wore dark glasses, making it difficult to distinguish his expressions. Was he bored? Angry? Did he plan to give me extra-difficult tasks? He looked like a drill sergeant ready to blast his troops. My stomach roiled from all the pressure.

Finally, the drill sergeant climbed in and told me to back up in a growly voice. I wondered if examiners ever smiled, but didn’t dare try to find out. He sounded like he ate kids for breakfast. I took a deep breath, looked into the rearview mirror and slowly backed up the car, all the while praying that the wheel was really straight and I wasn’t going to drive over a curb. I was in luck! No problems! A few right and left turns later I had that magical approval for my license. The examiner even took his glasses off to reveal laughing blue eyes when he congratulated me. I sure would have never guessed!

That whole summer was a time of joy. I had to wake up at 6 am to drive mom to work so that I could use our big blue bomber, a 1959 Lincoln Continental. That car had all power windows, buttons to adjust the seats, a switch to lock the doors and fancy bells to remind the driver when fuel was running low. It even had a fancy remote control sitting on the dashboard to dim the high beams automatically when another car was approaching.

I usually drove myself to work at a local garment factory, then took the long way home driving past friends’ homes on my way. Dad even complained once that I had put over 100 miles on the car in one day! The Lincoln used gas like we owned a station, so my summer salary went mostly toward driving costs. My parents anxiety over having a teen driver often meant I had to beg most times and work out intricate plans to get the car and still keep everyone happy.

The first day of my senior year of high school arrived and I had negotiated the use of the car. I felt ten feet tall as I picked up my four best friends and drove up the hill to school. We arrived early so I found a parking spot right next to the school. I wondered if life could get any better.

Suddenly, as I opened my door to get out of the car, I heard a huge crunch. As I looked to my left, I saw a car rammed into my drivers side door. Now you’d think that since my car was stopped, it would be the other driver’s fault, but no. The other driver happened to be my math teacher.

“Why didn’t you watch for oncoming traffic?” he asked.

“Your insurance company will have to pay.” When he said this I knew that as a high school senior, I had no power to object. I was going to lose one way or another. Since I didn’t want to have trouble in class I knew I had to take the blame.

“I will contact the insurance.” I said submissively.

That ended my trips to school with the family car. Once repairs were made mom and dad refused to let me get near the car in spite of all my arguments. They blamed me for the accident. I felt hurt and angry because it really was not my fault. A few weekends later, I had begged for the car to “go shopping”. I was just pulling away from the stop sign near where mom worked and ran into another car. Luckily we were both going so slow that little damage was done, but again my parents called a halt to my driving. Since the car belonged to them I didn’t have much say in the matter. What I would have given for a car of my own! Luckily my boyfriend frequently let me use his car, a 1956 white and blue chevy. Sometimes I walked the three miles between our houses just to be able to drive his car.

I wondered how on earth parents expected teens to grow up when we couldn’t do adult things. When would my chance ever come? It was not until I had teens of my own that I understood why my parents worried so much about my safety. Isn’t it a good thing they never knew that I drag raced my boyfriend’s car at the beach?

Both of my parents were still in the restaurant business (working for other people now) and I remember that money was very tight. I can remember one incident very well. Mom was out of money and we needed a quarter to pay the paperboy. We had nearly turned the house upside down looking for loose change to give that kid so she wouldn’t have to ask him to come back later in the week. I think that was when I realized that we had money problems. I knew I wanted something better.

Sometime during my high school years, my grandmother moved in with us. She was a tiny lady who seldom said much and I really don't remember much about her except that my mom often got frustrated with her. She'd start off the morning asking mom what she wanted for supper that day and mom was never a morning person, so she tended to be a bit grumpy. (It's hardly funny that now mom lives with me and often does exactly the same thing!). Memere (french for grandma) was a diabetic and gave herself a shot every morning and had to be sure she ate on time and the right foods (I now know that she cheated on that diet often. Mom found a salt shaker in her dresser after she moved out and that was a definite no-no!). When we'd go out to eat, we'd all have lobster, steak or shrimp and she'd have turkey. It seemed like such a waste at the time. It was really a case of my not understanding what she had to do to control her diabetes.

As usual, I didn't make friends easily. At first I spent most of my time studying, but before long I'd joined the girls' basketball team and was dating occasionally. After a year of trying to play basketball, I settled for an assistant coaching job, which was much easier. I still got to go to the away games, but I didn't have to make a fool of myself on the floor. I never was very coordinated and it showed. I do remember all the away games



Sheryl (upper left) managed the girls' basketball team



Sheryl's Senior Picture

and the fun we had on the bus trips (the poor bus drivers! We'd sing songs, some clean and some not, tell all the local gossip, tease each other, etc)!

My social life was very restricted by my parents' curfews and insistence that they meet all my dates. I settled for going to Saturday night Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) dances and meeting my friends there. Dancing consisted of standing still and swaying slowly. I could do the 'Twist' too, but tended to go hide when they played the jitterbug. I still had to be home by the time the dance was out, so there wasn't much time to get into trouble. Of course we left the dance early so we could neck for a while before going home. (That is also where I started smoking.)

The summer after my sophomore year I got my



Sheryl, 1963



Sheryl and Ronnie at Prom, 1963

license and started cruising around the city looking for boys. One day my Dad checked the mileage and I'd put 100 miles on the car without ever leaving the city! He was not too happy with me! I got into a few accidents, but none that were really serious or my fault (in my opinion).

That same summer I was dating a boy named Russ who was in the Air Force. The uniform added something to his looks and I was always proud of him when we went out. When he went back to the base he gave me his dog tags. I thought I was in heaven! But going steady with someone who is far away isn't as exciting as having a guy to go out with on Saturday night. Then Russ would come home on leave and everything would be fine. Once after he'd returned to the base I got a call from his Dad saying he'd been killed in a traffic accident. I don't think I really understood that he was dead until after the funeral. It was just things like that were supposed to only happen to people that I didn't know. At 16 its very difficult to understand death; I was much more interested in living. I must not have been very serious about him because I got over him fairly quickly, but I've always been nervous since when faced with lots of traffic and often worry excessively when those I care for are traveling.

During my junior and senior years I had a very steady boyfriend. Ronnie went to the Catholic High School in Dartmouth, but we met at the CYO dances. We spent every minute we could together. Often I would walk across town to visit him at the drug store where he worked (especially when I couldn't get mom's car). He made a great cabinet (milk shake with ice cream) and I gained a few pounds. He and I went to both school proms each year and did a lot of heavy necking in between. I thought for sure I'd found my mate for life. But first we both had to get through college and he planned a tour of duty in the Army after that. It seemed like forever.



Sheryl and friends, 1963.

SHERYL ANN MARTINS
National Honor Society 3, 4
Science Club 3, 4
Numeral Club 3
Basketball 3, Mgr. 4
German Club 4
Dramatics Club 3

Sheryl's yearbook entry,
1963

It’s funny that with all this Catholic upbringing I just really wasn’t very religious. We went to church regularly but that was really about the only time I thought about it. I followed the rules.... didn’t steal etc. but that was the only carryover.

I often used to borrow Ronnie’s car to drive out to the beach (it got lots better mileage than my parents’ car). I would even drive out in the winter and had an occasional drag race with friends. Luckily we chose to do that between the sand dunes so we ran a little less risk of killing ourselves. I still shudder today at the chances I took with my life when I was young and seemingly indestructible. My adolescent years were a large part of why I worried so much about my own kids as they were going through the same things.

I was a good student throughout high school (which took many long hours of hard work as learning did not come easy. Some days I would spend every spare minute studying - just to get mostly B’s and C’s.) Early in my senior year I was accepted to the University of Massachusetts. Senioritis set in big time! Ronnie was going to college in nearby Dartmouth. The second half of our senior year was one long and teary goodbye. We were looking at what seemed like a very long separation and I almost decided to go to the same school as him (in Dartmouth) to avoid it. Looking back, I’m very glad I didn’t switch, but I sure wouldn’t want to relive that time.



Sheryl with the German club; she’s in the first row, third from the right

Chapter 4: College

HomeSick

I was homesick! Just one week after I finally achieved my dream of moving away from home, I was already missing everything: mom’s home cooking, laundry services, my steady boyfriend, Ronnie, my innocence.

College life at the University of Massachusetts in 1963 sure did not live up to my imagination. The food had no taste and even less visual appeal. My roommate, who came from the ritzier area of Brookline near Boston, made sure I knew she was not pleased with being my roommate. Yet we had to share this miniature brick walled room. Just to make it less appetizing, they had painted it in a drab yellow that reminded me of hospital rooms.. I continually found that other students’ morality differed from what I thought was my own. Everything I believed about life was now questioned.

Still, I wrote home religiously every week to try to let mom know that I was safe, happy and enjoying my new life. In reality, those first weeks, mom’s daily letters and weekly phone calls held me strong in my connection to home.

Dear Mom,

I'm learning lots in my classes already. The homework load is much heavier than I expected, but I keep my head above water. I have made a few friends, though its hard to find time after homework and laundry and eating. The food does not live up to anyone's ideals. They could use some lessons from you.

Early curfews give us more time for studies, but some of the girls stay outside the dorm until the last minute kissing their boyfriends. I miss Ronnie. I miss you too.

Talk to you when you call Sunday,

Love, Sher

The truth was that I hated having an 8AM gym class even if it were next door to the dorm. And I didn’t like the oversized freshman classes in half my subjects.

Dear Sheryl,

Glad to hear your studies are going OK, Life at home is empty without you. Our weather is fine. Vic is still giving me troubles about going to school. I think he misses you too, though he will never admit it.

Dad is changing jobs again. He says the head chef at the Holiday Inn keeps giving him a hard time for no reason. So it looks like he will be looking for a new job again.

*Talk to you tomorrow.
Love, Mom*

These little bits of home kept me centered and reminded me where my heart belonged. In the early 1960's the girls' dormitories were across campus from the boys' dorms. All dorms were sturdy uniform brick buildings that operated like barracks. Bathrooms, phones, laundry facilities and the one TV set were shared by fellow dorm residents. .

Mail came to the tiny boxes on the first floor and everyone knew when I received a "care package" of yummys from home. A private phone conversation using the dorm telephones required lots of planning. Even 2 AM calls found onlookers.

The boys spent plenty of time hanging around Leach House. There was always someone sitting in the first floor waiting area in anticipation of a girl's entrance. Then there were the nights when groups of guys would descend on our dorm area after curfew shouting "Panty Raid!" Many of the girls would toss panties out the windows to them as they yelled and cheered. This would last until the dorm mothers could get the crowd of guys to go back to their own side of campus.

Meanwhile, I had met Kay, Karen and Ann who lived on the same floor of our dorm, Leach House. They became good friends over the four years I spent in college. They especially helped to smooth the transition for me from home to school.

College years 1963-1967

The University of Massachusetts was a three hour drive away from home and for a while it felt like I was on the other side of the universe from everyone I knew. It was the first time I'd really been away from home and everything was very different than I'd expected. My first roommate was from Brookline, Mass. and very snobish, there were all sorts of folks on campus I'd never had to deal with before - kids on drugs, couples making out on the front step of the dorm (this seems more commonplace now but was definitely not something I was used to at the time!), professors who assumed I'd know stuff that I wasn't sure I'd ever heard of. I was definitely homesick. It took about one month for me to lose 35 pounds...because the food was awful (wet scrambled eggs, spaghetti sauce that tasted like nothing, mystery meat which was pork, beef or whatever but no one could tell, soggy toast...then on st. Patty's day they'd make green eggs! not very appetizing!). Having been brought up with my choice of meals in the restaurant was NOT a help when I was confronted with institutional cooking. I was sick of standing in lines after two days. This wonderful experience that I'd looked forward to for so long was too much!



University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Somehow I made it through those first few months and found some good friends. It did help that my Mom wrote every day and called once a week. (Dad claimed he was never comfortable expressing himself on paper, so I only heard from him when they called) I enjoyed the numerous care packages too. (Wish I were more able to do the same for my kids, but they seem more independent than I was. I hope that means I did a good job?) I sure would never have expected to miss home as much as I did. What I missed wasn't necessarily specific things like people (though that was part of it), but I missed the general care for...safe ... protected feeling of living at home. Little did I know that feeling was lost forever.

Sometime in October my friends and I were at a dance and I met Tom. At the time all I could tell anyone was that he had the most beautiful blue eyes I'd ever seen, a cleft on his chin, was a good dancer and made me feel all funny inside. I'd always been terrible with names and I'd forgotten his before I even finished the dance. We looked him up in the freshman "mug book" as soon as we got home and luckily found him right away (a last name starting with A helped - if it had been Z I'd have never found it!).

Notes on the times include that there were no answering machines...you were home or you got a scribbled note (maybe), computers were just starting (yikes! no e-mail!!), we seldom used calculators and slide



Thomas Andre, in college

rules were the thing for the science types. (Of course there were no personal computers!) Portable phones weren't missed. We just carried the phone and its long cord into the nearest private spot (a dorm full of girls meant there was almost always someone on the phone!) The dorms were NOT coed..and boys and girls were even separated by most of the campus!! We had lots of fun though with 'panty raids' and sneaking in guys past the housemothers. We seldom watched TV as the only one in the dorm was in the basement (which is also where the washer/dryer and coke machine were... not any mountain dew here either!).

Classes were the one part of college life I enjoyed most. They were mostly a challenge and the ones that weren't I could skip most of the time. I spent a lot of time sitting in booths at the student union (where the food was better than the dining commons) with friends and talking for hours. The lines were shorter and the company better.

Tom called for another date and we were a couple before I knew it. I was a little apprehensive because I still was writing to Ronnie back home. During Thanksgiving vacation I managed to get up the nerve to break up with Ronnie and figured I'd done it fairly gently. I spent the remainder of the year dating Tom off and on. Even then he was pretty absentminded and sometimes it'd be weeks before I heard from him again. Somehow though, he always called eventually. We both enjoyed taking computer classes and working

together on our homework. Computers were very new then and we wrote programs in a language called FORTRAN. Most of what we did was to help other professors analyze their data. The professors would run studies to try to prove their theories and we would summarize the data and see if the results were meaningful or just random chance. Some of these programs were pretty challenging to write and sometimes we would stay out late at night testing our programs. We would often get them working at something like 3am and run through campus shouting "Output! We got output!" I'm sure anyone who saw us thought we were nuts.

College was a time to question the values I'd grown up with. I remember fondly many long discussions in the dorm about religion and politics and of course boys. Sometime during my college career I opted out of the formalized church environment - a decision that caused my parents untold hours of worry. I just felt that if there was a god, he really wouldn't care if I chose to talk to him on my own instead of in church. As I grew I felt that it was a lot more important for me to live a good life as I defined it than for me to blindly follow rules



*Sheryl with her parents outside of
80 Freedom St., 1966*

established by others. My thoughts on this were influenced not only by Tom who was a devout athiest but also by experiences with campus priests who were not very aware of what life was about for someone my age. They were more in tune with blind faith and I had a hard time swallowing that. Considering the era, I consider myself a moderate. After all, I could have gone with the flow and started demonstrations and lived in communes. Later in life I would miss the sense of community that the church brings, but then it would be physically difficult to get me to church.

That first year was marred by the assassination of J.F. Kennedy. Then the later assassination of his brother and Martin Luther King. It might be that those of us who grew up during this turbulent time hold our values so dear because so many people had to die while our values were so new. Like everyone who lived through those days, I remember where I was and the great sorrow I felt and everyone felt that such great leaders had been silenced. The piss poor political games that followed this only served to make the era stand out more prominently in my memory. I still wonder today if these killings weren't a plot to rid our country of its best and brightest minds. It sure has been mostly downhill since then. Now the richest get elected and the poor just hang on and hope. I've always been a strong liberal, not that it has done me any good.

Many of the values I have now were formed during my college years. Some of those values had roots in my childhood, like the strong work ethic, which seems sometimes to have disappeared in many of the younger generation (this thought is based on my work experiences - my children seem to have picked up the good work ethic, so some things do carry on), and some were in direct contrast to my family values, like religion and my feelings about discrimination. My father and I had a couple of very heavy arguments about the latter. Right up until he died, he felt that I would show prejudice were one of my children to decide to intermarry with someone of a different color. I would like to think I'm better than that and that I would judge a person for their inner selves and not because of some outer difference be it color, religion, sexual preference or disability. Anyway, the values developed out of the many hours spent with people my own age discussing just about any topic. Looking back, I feel that the one topic we really didn't cover very well was disability and old age and that is probably because we had few people who could discuss those subjects with any degree of knowledge.



College yearbook picture



Sheryl, Helena, Tom, 1966

Today where I live has something to do with those attitudes. I have visited the south and love the weather, but cannot live with the deep seated prejudices. When we've visited my aunt To-too in Florida, the comments she makes about the blacks and hispanics are enough to turn my stomach. I have the same problem when we get a visit from my aunt Beaty from Texas. I may hate the cold, but its definitely preferable to living with the narrowmindedness of the southern climate. What is strange is that my brother shows some of the same narrowmindedness, not toward color but toward sexual preference and disability. It isn't something I can discuss easily with him, so I just try to ignore it.



Sheryl's Bridal Shower



Famillies meeting: Memere, Sheryl, Vic, Beatrice (Tom's mother), Antonio, and Helena

My early relationship with Tom was lots of fun. We spent nearly every weekend together and went to lots of Phi Sigma Delta fraternity parties. We talked about anything and everything; our interest in computers and our asistantships helped to bind us together. We seemed to want the same things out of life and had a lot of good times talking about the state of the world and how we would improve it. (We also spent a part of that time overusing alcohol. I'm very glad that phase passed! and very lucky we lived thru it!!) The fraternity had its own 'make out rooms where we would start an evening socializing with other brothers but end up necking. Fraternity dances usually featured very loud music... many beatles songs and a drink they called th 'strip n go naked' because after one you were so drunk you would.

During that time I was something of a flirt. I used to flirt outrageously with the fraternity brothers. Nothing was serious, and everyone had fun. My self confidence was a whole lot higher then. Somehow, the process of dealing with life after college, my divorce and my physical problems did a lot to erode



that confidence.



Throughout our courtship I always had a feeling that I cared for Tom a lot more than he cared for me. I think a lot of that was that he had a lot more trouble showing his emotions. Later I found that was true even in his relationship with his mother. I found that I frequently talked to her more than he did.

The actual marriage was held in the Catholic Church (St. Patrick's in Fall River) to please our parents. This was the first time I can remember that I was late and Tom was on time. I had lots of second thoughts (but I am glad I got married anyway). My Dad gave me away and if he was emotional about it he did a good job of hiding it. Actually I was so nervous I wouldn't have noticed anyhow. We had a large reception at Billy's in Tiverton (the same place I'd had my first dance with a boy) and there were over 100 relatives there to cheer us on. I had a great-uncle in Florida who came up just for the wedding. I bought Tom his first set of golf clubs for a wedding present and he bought me a black and white pearl ring. Our honneymoon was a wonderful trip to Vermont. We had loads of fun and saw lots of mountains, beautiful trees, and did the whole tourist thing.



(a) Antonio and Sheryl, (b) the wedding banquet, (c) Beatrice, Maria, Tom, Sheryl, Victorino, (d) Maria, Tom, Sheryl, Victorino



(a) Sheryl and Tom, (b) leaving the church, (c) in "depart for honeymoon" garb (d) on the honeymoon in New Hampshire

We got lots and lots of gifts. I can remember opening envelopes after the honeymoon and money all over the kitchen table and Vic singing "Ice Cream , We're gonna have ICE CREAM!!" He always was a nut!! We got about 4 chip-and-dip sets, 2 scales, sheets galore, and a very good start on all that we would need during our early married life. (Remember though that there were none of the fancier things we have today, like bread machines and salad makers. Still we got by just fine.)

Our first home was a tiny apartment in Amherst MA on the 2nd floor. It had 2 rooms and the refrigerator



First shared apartment in Amherst



Whole wedding party



Moving!

was in the entrance hallway. The owners lived downstairs It was furnished with twin beds which we tied together. I found out fast that married life wasn't all the movies had led me to believe. I had to learn to cook (a long and not overly successful process), there was regular shopping and at least a minimum of cleaning to do along with our senior year's normal schoolwork. I managed to figure out how to cook food so it wasn't burnt, but never did have much success at creating tasty meals. I did figure out how to make a yummy duck with



Reading; in the Amherst apartment



Family visiting at college graduation, Vic, Aunt Teri, Helena, Sherl, Antonio



Laughing about something in the Amherst apartment



College graduation: a) Sheryl and Vic, b) Sheryl and Tom, c) Antonio, Helena, Sheryl, Beatrice, Tom

stuffing that I still enjoy today, but my fiasco with a cheese omelet (cheese all over the bottom of the pan!) and the pork chops cooked so long they were like shoe leather led me to avoid any further attempts at being too fancy. Tom did cook occasionally, but he wasn't much of a cook either. His idea of cooking was to throw whatever happened to be on hand into the pot and see how it tasted. I wasn't terribly impressed.

After college we moved to Illinois so Tom could get his masters and PhD at the University of Illinois. We lived in Champaign-Urbana and I found a programming job in Bloomington (50 miles away) with State Farm Insurance. It was quite a drive, but the work was challenging and I enjoyed it tremendously. I travelled back and forth for 3 years. During this time Tom was working at getting his degrees and doing most of the cooking at home (it had improved some by this time) as it was too late to cook by the time I got home. We spent most weekends together and still did our share of partying and ate out at least once a week (and that was not a McDonalds trip either! We enjoyed our outings!!). What I remember most about this time is work related - I got to be quite good at programming and was lucky enough to be allowed to travel to Charlottesville, North Carolina and Dallas, Texas to implement various new programs. I also got calls at home (many at wierd hours) to fix problems that arose from all over the states. I had a strong feeling of self-worth and what seemed at the time to be a good marriage (but our interests were beginning to take different directions even then).

During this time we went back east a few times to visit and once we went back to attend Tom's uncle's funeral. This last trip was quite a trip. We ended up spending a night in O'Hare airport watching the people go by. It was an edudational experience and not one I'd recommend!!One other trip was no fun either. The car engine blew up outside of Herkimer New York. We spent a night in a motel , took a bus back. Then Tom had to go back there to get the car!! And it wasn't quite right the first time he tried to head home either. Cars were



Antonio and Helena at 80 Freedom Street, Christmas

a bit of a nightmare for us for a while there. We would have been fine but absolutely nothing was available in that small town and it took forever to get parts shipped there. It was like nobody believed we really wanted to have anything sent to Herkimer!

During Tom's third year in Illinois he received an induction notice - Uncle Sam wants You! - and we set about organizing our lives to deal with this new situation. We moved to Bloomington so that I could continue to work while he was gone and Tom made plans to leave school. We got his physical moved to Chicago (from Massachusetts) and I saw Tom off on the train with lots of concern about how our life was changing. Things turned out totally different than what we'd expected because Tom decided that if he was going to be in the service he might as well be an officer. So when he went for his physical he got a more thorough one than he would have otherwise and they found out that he was allergic to bee stings. Amazingly enough that was enough to keep him out of the service altogether!

By the time we figured all this out, the next semester had already started, so Tom proceeded to work on his research and took a stab at doing some writing (altho nothing much ever came out of that - which is really too bad because he was very good!). We were renting a super-small appartment at this time - a bedroom/ living room with a closet size kitchen and bath. While he was out of school Tom took care of the household chores and I continued to work at State Farm. Tom went back and forth to Champaign often during this period and he was not as enthused with driving long distances as I was. We managed to buy a trailer during this time and had what seemed like a lot more room although it managed to get just as cluttered. It was during this time that I had all my teeth removed because of gum disease. I spent 3 months with no teeth - which did not do great things for my self-image.



Visiting Vic, who went into the service in 1968. He served in Vietnam as a helicopter mechanic

Chapter 5: Motherhood

It was also during this time that I first got pregnant. Up until Tom’s draft notice I had been taking birth control pills and the thought of him being gone for possibly years convinced me that it was time to have a child before it was too late! It didn’t take too much convincing to talk Tom into it. We were both excited when I became pregnant and were both looking forward to having a baby. Unfortunately I miscarried, and what followed was probably one of the lowest periods of my life. I had no interest in anything and ended up gaining 35 pounds. (As usual I internalized most of my grief, which was not good for me or for Tom).

We moved back to Champaign shortly after and I quit my State Farm job to take a job at the University (this was during Tom’s last year at Illinois). I had become disenchanted with State Farm because of obvious cases of male chauvenism. The crowning touch was when a guy who was only an average programmer who had less experience than I was promoted over me to a management position. I have never been a real womens’ lib person, but I did and do expect equal treatment for all. So I went to work for “The Center for Advanced Computation” where we were attempting to develop a super computer called the Illiac IV using Burroughs computers and a programming language called ALGOL. I was nowhere near as challenged as I had been at State Farm and found the job quite boring. They may have made more progress after I left, but while I was there they really didn’t have a very good plan of attack for their project. I often was totally without any assigned task and wasn’t given enough background of the whole project to be able to work on my own without direction.

It was now early 1970 and Tom had finished most of his doctoral work and began applying for jobs. We probably sent out about 100 applications and were very anxious about where we would go from there. I don’t remember whether we got multiple offers or not. I do remember the job market being tight (all the baby boomers were trying to get jobs too). We finally got an offer from SUNY in Cortland and proceeded to move our few belongings. Tom had been there earlier for an interview and had found a place we could sublet for the summer while we were looking for a house to buy. Selling the trailer was no problem, and it gave us money to use for a down paayment on a house.



Sheryl at the house on Cosmos Hill Road in Cortland, NY

Meanwhile, part of the reason we were



Moving to Cortland



David, 1971

something wrong with the baby. We also knew that we had no real idea of how to care for an infant.

David was 5 weeks early and was very small. After 24 hours of labor I’d begun to wonder if he was ever going to be born. It wasn’t a period I wanted to repeat real soon. The hospital kept him for 18 days until he reached five pounds. I went to see him every day and spent my nights being depressed because he wasn’t home. Luckily he had no major problems (at least they didn’t show then) and once we got him home he gained rapidly. We learned fast about how to care for him. He knew what he wanted and if he didn’t get it he’d howl until he did.



Aunt Theresa?, Helena, David, Antonio, Sheryl, 1972

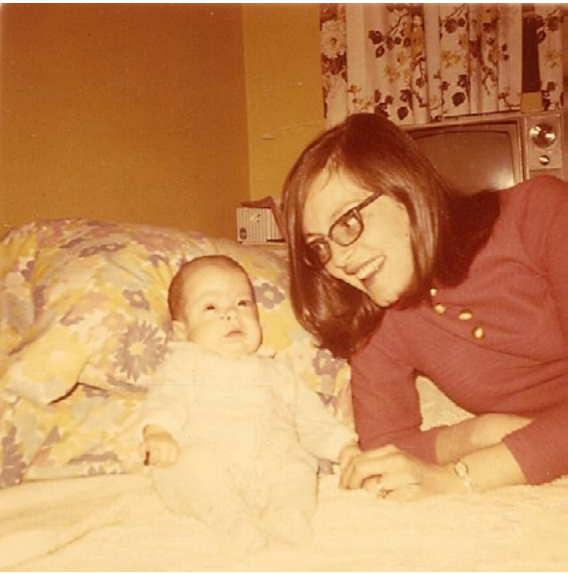
anxious about getting a job was that I was pregnant again (after several months of trying) and we wanted to get settled quickly with minimum stress on me in the hopes that we wouldn’t loose this baby. We moved from Champaign, Illinois to Cortland, NY and during the moving process I started to bleed, thus scaring both of us half to death. We took me to the doctor as soon as we arrived in Cortland and he proceeded to give me shots which managed to stop the bleeding. I spent my summer resting and getting to know the folks in town and worrying about being able to deliver normally.

We also were looking for a house to buy that was in our price range (low - as all we had for down-payment was \$3000 from selling the trailer). Being pregnant for the second time was scary; we were always worried that there’d be another miscarriage or that there’d be



Sheryl with David, 1971

At first I was disappointed by the amount of time he spent sleeping, then real soon I was glad for the quiet time. I do remember one funny time when Tom was dressing David in one of those one-piece jumpers that babies often wear and instead of putting it on from the feet first, he’d put it over David’s head. The poor kid looked like he was in a straight jacket and he let everyone know he wasn’t very happy about it too. I wasn’t working and spent a lot of time just bonding with David. He liked to cuddle, and



Sheryl with David, 1972



David with Helena, 1972

so did I. It was mostly a peaceful time. David spent lots of time rolling around on the floor playing with his baby toys, but as I remember whenever I got busy making supper or whatever, he'd pick that time to get fussy. The doctors said he had colic, I think he just wanted attention. Another good memory: David spent a lot of time in one of those round walker type things and used to love playing with old plastic bowls on the door of the dishwasher while I tried to cook around him. He wasn't the hellion they show on the TV commercials, but he did get around well. We were first time parents so we took lots of pictures (and now I'm sorry we didn't take as many

of Tami) and enjoyed things like first words and first steps, but what I enjoyed most (and this was true with both children) was watching them grow from tiny little babies to toddlers with their own personalities.

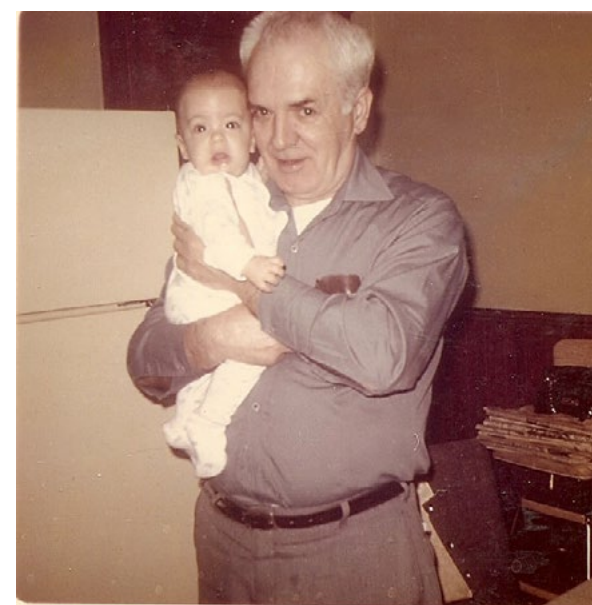
I don't remember how much we paid for the house on Cosmos Hill, but it must have been ok as I don't recall any money worries. The house was just perfect for us, 3 bedrooms, living room with fireplace, combination kitchen/dining room and a huge yard. I think it had a garage but we used it very little. It had a big picture window and was up on a hill so the scenery was wonderful. Cortland is a small town so it wasn't far to get anywhere; just down the hill and the town was all right there. There was a corn field in back of our back yard which I wasn't too thrilled with as I'd gotten pretty sick of corn fields in Illinois, but I got used to it. (It looked a lot prettier in the winter covered with snow - sometimes a whole lot of snow!!) That house was the only one my dad ever visited. He was terrified of flying and found other excuses not to drive out



Beatrice, David, and Sheryl, 1972



Sheryl and David, 1972



Antonio and David, 1972

cats who we'd had since about the time of my miscarriage, and they were enough for me. Luckily they were very good with David in spite of his hair pulling and tight squeezes.



Sheryl and David in 1972

to our other homes. We also got regular visits from both grandmas. My Aunt Teresa and Uncle George also paid us a visit. Everyone else in my rather large family and Tom's smaller one was content to wait till we visited them.

We had a lot of pleasant times in that back yard. We used to invite a few couples over most weekends to cook out in the yard. The children had lots of room to roam and that left us grown-ups free to talk on our own. It would have been a beautiful place to have a dog, but with a new baby I didn't want to be dealing with the antics of a puppy. Besides we had 2



David in 1972, camping

Since I wasn't 'working' other than taking care of David and the house, I had some free time to make friends and tended to be friendly with women who also had young children. The two friends I remember most were both wives of Psych department faculty and both close friends had boys David's age. We'd get together and compare notes on how the kids were doing and what to do about problems like teething pain and diaper rash. Not exactly weighty subjects, but important to me at the time. We spent a fair amount of time taking babies to the park and the local YWCA to learn to swim (without much success and with quite a bit of yelling).

I also had time to become a pretty good bridge player. One of the other faculty wives and I paired up to play in the duplicate bridge club once a week. It was a change of pace from the constant discussions with a toddler. I also did some programming for Tom to help him out with his research. This gave us a common interest to talk about. There wasn't a lot otherwise as when he came home, Tom wasn't interested in a blow-by-blow description of what David did that day. (not that I can blame him now, but since I had no full time work,



Antonio, Tom, David, Sheryl, and Helena

most of my world revolved around David)

We spent some of our free family time driving around the area which has some of the most beautiful scenery in the country. There were lots of mountains and lakes and forests all pretty much untouched by the faces of civilization. It was a happy time for me. There was a distancing between Tom and I but at the time I found other things to occupy me and assumed things were temporary. Having an infant didn't stop us from traveling at all. We just packed up all the baby toys and junk and headed out. We took several trips back to Massachusetts and a memorable trip to New Brunswick. That trip was when David was 18 months old, and I can remember the sand dunes in Maine, the ocean shores, the beauty of New Brunswick where the strange tidal patterns carved rock into the most interesting patterns. I can also remember camping out and eating lobster and clams in the campground while other campers watched and wished they could join us (we'd fed David earlier so we were free to enjoy our outdoor feast).

Watching David grow up was an interesting if exhausting process. We had some very serious ideas about how to raise a child and were applying them in real life. It helped a lot that he was an easy child to raise. I can remember one entire afternoon spent in a tug of wills over whether or not he was going to put his toys away (He did, but given how neat he is now, I'm pretty sure I lost that battle after all). He had his temper tantrums and there were times I wondered why I'd wanted children, but most of the time raising him was rewarding. We never used baby talk when talking to him and when he started talking, it was in multi-syllable words, which rapidly progressed to sentences. He was always very bright and found schoolwork much less than challenging. As he grew older, his expectations for himself were very high. I always worried that we'd pushed him too hard, but he seemed to be able to do everything so easily and pushed himself a lot harder than we ever did.

When David was nearly 1 year old I convinced Tom that it'd be a good



David in Cortland, 1974



Pregnant with Tami, 1974



Tami near birth

time to have a second child. I'd already given up on my initial dream to have a large family (I didn't have the stamina as my physical problems were already developing), but I still wanted at least 2 children. I got pregnant fairly easily but again had some bleeding and was constantly worried about a miscarriage. Being pregnant during the warm weather wasn't any fun at all, and being pregnant and still caring for a toddler was more exhausting than I'd expected, but somehow I got through it all.

I drove myself to the hospital to deliver her, just as I did with David. My labor with Tami was much shorter, though no less painful than David's was. She was on time and normal size. I was just thrilled to have her and planned on an easy time raising her since we'd been through it all before and theoretically knew how to do it. Well, it didn't work out that way at all. I'd forgotten how exhausting it is to deal with a child who can't talk and just cries to get its needs met .

Tami's life started out differently too. When she was just 3 weeks old we moved from Cortland N.Y. to Ames Iowa. Tami was in her car seat on the floor of the UHaul truck while David sat between Tom and I and kept kicking his feet into poor Tami's face! Tom had a sprained ankle from trying to move all our things into the UHaul and he had to drive the whole way because the truck was more than I could handle. We were very happy to get to Ames... In August the temperatures were in the mid 90s and that truck wasn't air conditioned! We stayed at a low-class motel called Ames Motor Lodge for a few nights until we found a duplex to rent. That motel was an experience in itself! I think the bugs got free rent! Anyhow, we found a nice duplex on Quebec street and life started to regain some normalcy.

Tami was a very different child than David had been. She liked to wake up at 2 AM and wanted to stay up for the day. It took a few 2 hour crying sessions (she'd be crying to get up in her room and I'd be crying in my room) before she got over that. In some ways she was a lot easier to care for: we were more experienced and knew how to dress/feed a new baby, and she was much more independent than David had been at the same age. Though she always wanted to be in the same room with me, Tami loved to just be left alone to play with her toys and needed/wanted less attention than David had. Baths were quite interesting as she just loved to kick as much water out of the baby tub as she could; I washed her in the kitchen (on Quebec Street)



Tami with Helena



(a) David and Tami, (b) David, Sheryl, Tom, and Tami, (c) Sheryl, David, Tami, and Helena

and usually had a washed floor by the time I was done. It was fun though, and she loved it.

She didn't like the walker type toys but was happy playing in the play pen for long periods. Also, she was more likely to play with boxes and regular household stuff instead of toys. She also didn't like to cuddle the way David had, which I found a little disappointing, but I got used to it. I had worried that there would be lots of fighting between them, but while there was some, on the whole they fought much less than I'd expected. Almost from the first they were constant companions. As they got older, wherever David was, Tami wasn't too far away.

Another major difference that was interesting was how each child reacted to TV. David would watch Sesame Street forever and would stop whatever he was doing to watch a commercial. Mr. Rogers was another favorite. Tami on the other hand didn't want to watch tv at all, tho she would stop and pay attention to commercials. It was interesting I thought that the commercials, even those for adult products were set up to attract so much attention. As teenagers, the positions were reversed. David watched almost no tv and Tami was hooked on soap operas. One thing that David did used to drive me nutty. If his program was interrupted for any reason, he got mad at me! It was like I was the one in charge of the tv, so I should be able to fix it. For both kids, I refused to use the tv as a babysitter. I let them watch those things that were at least somewhat educational, but not everything. I must admit tho that Saturday morning cartoons were an exception. I wanted my extra few minutes' sleep!

I always found it interesting that when I worked I could get up at ridiculously early hours and be civil by the time I got to work, but other than that I've never been a morning person. I think I'm still trying to catch up on all the sleep I lost as a college student.



Tami in the house on Quebec St.

I remember when I was growing up that my brother worshiped me, I guess because I was older and could do things that he couldn't. I saw the same thing with David and Tami. Tami always liked playing with David's older friends and always tried to do whatever he did. (This of course was before they turned adolescent, at which point she wanted to be as different from her brother as she could.) All the storybook tales about bringing up a little girl didn't hold true. She never really liked dolls or dressees and liked sporty things as much as any boy (but I do remember a few christmas times that I managed to get her into a pretty red dress and a yellow knitted dress mom had made. She was just as cute as could be in dresses or pants). Once she started choosing her own clothes, I never could get her into a dress, though she has always chosen clothes that accent her beauty. (Now in her early 20's Tami wears dresses and looks great in them.)

She has always been much more sensitive to other people's feelings and as a result of that, is easily hurt by a harsh word or look. I still remember the trauma David put her through by telling ghost stories when we first moved into the house on Clark. She absolutely would not go upstairs on her own for the longest time after that. And of course we had to check closets and under the bed for creepy things.

Both kids had their share of physical problems. David had the scoliosis and fused ribs, which we had to watch for several years and finally he had an operation before he went into sixth grade to put metal bars in to straighten the spine. Tami had convulsions when she was about 18 months old that really scared us, but luckily the convulsions never returned (though the doctor put her on medecine for quite a while just in case). While she was in the hospital for tests after the convulsions she wouldn't let me anywhere near her and I was very upset about the whole thing. Luckily she was back to 'normal' once she was feeling better. All I ever asked was that they grow up without any major physical or mental problems, and I was lucky enough to get my wish. Its funny how parents always want so much for their children, and then when they're older its always "When I was young..." like we really wanted them to live as we had when in fact we'd tried to give them more than we'd ever had. I'm not sure that giving more is the right way to go, as there seems to have been some benefit to growing up the way I did in terms of the values I formed, but its too early to tell whether or not the same values were passed down just through different channels. As I recall, when I



Tami, Helena, and David

was teenage, I was pretty self centered too. I think that is a necessary phase that everyone has to go through to figure out a balance of the things that are good for them and things that are good for the people they live with and love.

The other thing that is clear to me now is how much a part of my life my children became. When I first had them there was a time that I went sometimes for days without doing anything that did not in some way involve the kids (Conversation consisted of ‘Choo-Chos’ and ‘potties’ and such.) Then as they got older, I had time for work and other “non-child” activities, but they were a part of every day. They were what I’d think about first on waking and what I’d think about before I went to bed. Many if not most of the decisions I made revolved around what was best for them. Now all of a sudden they’re both away from home, and its like there’s a large hole in my life. You can’t just change the way you’ve lived for 18 years overnight and I find its hard to do. I understand perfectly that what is happening is a good thing and that they need to build lives of their own, but it is going to take me a while to build MY life up again. I also realize now just what my mom went through when I moved away and then Vic moved. Its too bad we can’t learn these things before living through them.



David, in Cortland, with the cat



Tami eating



*David in the fire engine at
Brookside Park*

the truck in her carrier; David sat between us and as would be expected for a 2 1/2 year old he was bored and tried to use up energy by swinging his feet - right into his sister’s face! All in all it was not a fun trip.

Once we were here, we spent the first few nights in the Lincoln Lodge Motel (which was far from clean) while we looked for a place to rent. Finding the duplex on Quebec Street was a lucky break. The view wasn’t great but as it turned out we had wonderful neighbors. Tom went right to work at ISU and I proceeded to get used to a new city while toting 2 kids.

The parks were nicer than Cortland’s (the kids loved the big red fire engine!), the people seemed ok, I had a hell of a time getting used to the bitter cold though. Karen and Duane Lassen, our neighbors in the duplex, became good friends. They had a girl, Erica, and later a boy, Jay - each a year younger than ours. Our back yards were together so it was easy to do things together. Some favorite memories of this time include: bathing Tami in the kitchen of the duplex - getting more water on the floor than anything else; toys all over the living room and 2 contented kids (or 3 if Erica came over) playing with empty boxes; Tami contentedly chewing on David’s slipper (to the point that the bottom was clean!). David’s ‘Play with me Mommy.’ and ‘Why’. We had one spring flood when the water came up almost to the house and one April snowstorm when I got stuck in snow in the driveway.

There was all the fun stuff, like getting 2 young children ready to go out in the winter, potty training, baby food... David went on his first



The house at 904 Clark

Halloween night from that house (it was pouring and Tom took him to 3 houses, but he was happy.), my nights crying over Tami and her wanting to play at 2 am happened there; there was gardening and pool parties and many trips to the parks (playing in the wading pool and on the fire engine) and to Ledges (wading in the water). Looking back its hard to believe we only spent a year there.

In September 1975 we found the house on Clark. When we were looking there were some very nice houses in Boone for a lot less money, but I was planning on returning to work and that seemed to mean Des Moines as there wasn't a lot of opportunity in Ames unless I wanted to work at the university, and I didn't (the academic community was ok while I was attending school, but I wanted something different, bigger now). So we settled in at 904 Clark and the kids loved it. They spent the first few months running all over the house - round and round in circles. Tom and a local plumber redid the second floor bathroom. Tom even made a nice cabinet for under the sink. Then there was the shopping for wall paper for David and Tami's rooms...David picked a lion, tiger type with a brown wicker offsetting paper (I wonderred at the time if he did that because he liked it or because he knew I liked lions.). Tami picked a yellow-tan pattern with lots of different teddy bears (she absolutely loved stuffed animals!!).

The next 10 years went by in a blur. I was working at the Department of Human Services in Des Moines, Tom was busy working on research and teaching, with a few night classes thrown in, the kids were busy growing up. I tried to keep suppertime a family time where we all would share what our day was like. (Tami was very good at this at first.."I got up, I brushed my teeth , I ate breakfast.....) That worked better when the kids were younger. As they hit their teens, I considered myself lucky to have them home at mealtimes...sharing what their lives were like then was a dream of mine, not one that got fulfilled very often.(Where



At 904 Clark, 1975



1975



David and Tami, circa 1976



David and Tami, 1976

each child quietly for a while (I think this is my favorite - David and I would talk about all sorts of things from sex to nuclear bombs while Tami and I would play tea party using the animals on her wallpaper to dispense drinks. Both were ways to be close and I'll lways treasure those times.). Then there was Christmas time when it'd take half a day to put up the tree (but only 20 minutes to take it down), but we did it together, singing songs while we worked..hanging my teapots and all the other pretty balls...reading "The Night Before Christmas" ...trying to make the presents under the tree cover the whole room, opening the presents one at a time...when they were younger both kids had more fun with the boxes and paper than with the presents. When they were old enough, we let them make up their Christmas list using the Sears and Pennys Catalogues...between these and endless advertisements, the lists were pretty long, but they always seemed happy with what they got. (I never did answer the question "mom, is there really a Santa Clause? I always said hmmm. I sure think somebody gives us all those presents!)



Visiting Lincoln Park, 1978

are you going...out...what're you gonna do...nuthin)

Favorite memories include: being den mother for David's cub scout pack, Tami's Campfire ceremonies, building snowmen and angels in the snow, making christmas cookies with 'help', May Day candies deliveries, the kids searching for Easter eggs all around the first floor, playing in the wrapping paper after opening presents on Christmas morning, both kids' first day of school, birthday parties, David playing with matchbox cars and Fischer-Price toys, Tami playing with leggos and collecting stuffed animals, saying goodnight every night and talking or playing with



1978



Sheryl, Beatrice, David, and Tami, at Horseshoe Beach



David, Tami, Sheryl

More good times included first days of school- both kids going in with school bags full of paper, pencils, paste and such, school conferences which were always a source of pride, many parent nights with each child proudly showing off their accomplishments, refrigerator doors and walls full of school art, David's ceramic candleholders and Tami's ceramic handprint (I still have all of these), playing on the fire engine at Brookside park, school plays (Tami as a black cat, David as a hunchback), concerts, David writing his own play and winning an art contest, his speech therapy time (he couldn't say r's well), the way I used to try to get them to say 'light' (la-la-la-light') when they were very young, and they would say 'la-la-la-wight'; their first ice-cream cones, first chocolate cakes (messy!!), long car trips - 'are we there yet?' - singing songs together as a family, visiting grandparents, amusement parks ('mommy why don't you want to go on the ride' - I really did have more fun watching, but my fear of hights was part of it too) ('Can I go again???').

Other memories - Tami falling and cutting her lip on the corner of the coffee table (I'll never forget the helpless feeling waiting in the hospital while she got stitches, hearing her scream and not being able to take away the pain), David's operation (same helpless feeling, it lasted longer though). I remember making cookies with the kids, the ongoing piano lessons, practices (I really did enjoy those after we got thru the arguments about I don't want to) and recitals



David, Tom, and Tami, circa 1977

(one of the few times Tami wore a dress and David wore a suit), Christmas presents like a rocking horse, a bike, Tami's stove and fridge (which never did get used for that purpose), the little table and chairs we got for the kids (it started out red, white and blue with red chairs and we used it so much it was really faded by the time we got rid of it. We used it to play cards and games and to paint lemonade signs and build Lego castles or card castles among many other things), paper routes, detasselling, Hardees' and other odd jobs. Kids doing



Easter, 1977



The red, white, and blue table; this picture is circa 1981



Playing outside the 904 Clark house.

jobs around the house like mowing (Tami seemed to have a lot more trouble than David starting the mower...hmmmm)...snow shoveling...and watching them thru the windows. They were pretty small when they started these chores.

I remember the 'surprise' ritual...at supper, the kids didn't have to eat all their food, but if they didn't then there was no 'surprise'. we had started calling desert a supriz at some point when they didn't know what was for desert, and after that they just always asked for a 'surprise'. Most of the time these deserts were just a few store-bought cookies because I was working and didn't have time to make fancy things. But I know when I made chocolate-chip and butterscotch-chip cookies everyone tried real hard to finish their meals. The other favorite desert was the frozen popsicles. They always ate certain colors first and the green ones always seemed to be left till last. Since neither of them ended up overweight, I guess I didn't hurt anything with my surprises.

I had noticed David's scoliosis when he was in first grade, (I was sensitive to it because I had it too) but the doctors wouldn't do anything until he was older, so we went up to St. Paul, Minn. once a year until he got big enough. We kept a really close eye on Tami to be sure she didn't develop the same thing too. Tom and I managed the house ok between us though it got pretty messy at times. We had a very good sitter the first few years, then a few bad ones, then Mrs. Songer next door. The Songers were the best neighbors anyone could ever want. Joe was a handyman and always in the yard working and willing to help out if we needed anything. Mrs Songer's idea of how to raise children was a lot stricter than ours, but it was the best we could do at the time.

The Stansberry family moved in to the north and they had 2 kids, the daughter, Rachael was a year younger than David, so she and Tami (and sometimes David) played together some. Best friends...David's was Brian Pepper and Tami's was Summer Knudtsen, tho both of those changed as the kids grew older. My work was rewarding. I started out as a programmer working on the systems that paid the Medicaid nursing home bills, which at the time I started were issuing \$10 million per month in payments.

It was a challenge to keep things running smoothly in spite of poorly constructed programs, no documentation and constant changes. The clerical staff that assisted with the operation was fun to work with - they each had their own unique personality



With friends from work



Sheryl and Tami in “Mom’s Char”

and the challenge was to get them to do things without bickering. After a year I was promoted to a systems analyst position with 2-3 programmers reporting to me. (This was a double promotion as there should have been an in between step of programmer/analyst, but given my previous work experience before I came to Iowa I was qualified - I was proud that the folks in charge realized my abilities.) They added a few new systems to go along with the promotion. These dealt with the mental health institutions and I got used to a new group of folks - all with their own special needs.

During this time I was working for Nancy Norman, who had started in the same position I had about 2 years before I started. She reorganized the entire staff about 2 years after my promotion to analyst and I ended up with 25 people reporting to me as a data processing manager (this promotion skipped over the senior analyst and supervisory positions.) My responsibilities broadened to include all the process that dealt with Medicaid, Food Stamps and ADC as well as the Child Support systems, Accounting systems and other social service related systems (like child protection, statistics etc.) During the many years I held this position I learned a lot about dealing with private vendors willing to work for the state as consultants (who really spent most of

their time just getting state people to figure out what they wanted to do). I worked a lot with the contractors who pay all the Medicaid claims besides nursing homes, helped write RFPs, helped rewrite the ADC and Food Stamp system and many other things. One of my major accomplishments was to introduce a system of setting priorities so that everyone was not asking us to do everything at the same time.

This helped reduce the stress level in my area and it helped the rest of the department to realize the amount of work we were turning out. It also provided a concrete means of measuring our progress on larger projects (and there were many of these). Since my job was in Des Moines, I spent an hour each day driving to and from work. I tended to work at least 9 hours a day, so when I got home I was pretty tired. Still, I did most of the cooking, washing, shopping and cleaning that go with having a family and managed to spend some quality time with the kids. (Tom did the outside stuff and fixit stuff when work allowed) I was den mother for David’s cub scout troop for a year and remember frequent trips to the park with Tami and campfire stuff. I limited my work overtime to early mornings and early after work so that I would have the weekends and evenings free for family. This worked well for me. Unfortunately Tom’s job required a lot of evening work, so he wasn’t around a lot, but the



The Andres, 1980

kids and I did ok.

I remember all the fun times, playing with the kids’ toys, watching them play (with friends or without), baking cookies or cleaning ‘with help’, big wheels and the green machine roaring down the sidewalk, playing cards (go fish, uno, war and many more).

About a year after I’d started working for the Department of Human Services I took some sick leave to have exploratory surgery done to try to find out what my physical problem was (The right arm was still getting weaker and I was having trouble with the leg too). The surgery was preceded by several tests (myelograms and angiograms) that left me with a horrible migraine for a couple of days. The surgery found nothing and left me with a tilt in my neck that just exaggerated the ‘abnormal’ look. (It also left a lot of scar tissue that nearly caused my death during the 1985 operation, but more about that later.) It took a month for me to recuperate enough for me to return to work, and I still had no idea why my right arm wouldn’t work and why I got so tired all the time. Still, with the use of a cane I was able to get around, so again I set out to live life as a ‘normal’ person. Problem was I continued to have very low energy and occasional dizzy spells.

I took a few trips toward the end of my work career. There was a trip to Massachusetts and Washington, DC and later 2 trips back to DC that were lots of fun (great food but lots of work). The purpose of these trips was to work with contractors to insure that the system the state wanted was close to the one the contractors were developing, and to assist with system testing.

During the course of my work I made many friends, but none that were very close. One major reason was that I always had to drive back to Ames. I had no one to talk to about my illness and the condition my marriage was in. Driving to and from Des Moines, working and being a mother, cook, housekeeper, etc. got to be very draining. I had no friends in Ames to talk to either. (For the same reason - driving took so much time.) We went to faculty “parties” where everyone would stand around and ‘chat’ but I had very little in common with many of these people and I was finding it difficult to stand for any length of time. The parties from my work group weren’t much better. This is where my being shy and quiet was a definite problem. I could be forceful at work where I knew my experience put me on top, but in any other setting I felt at a loss and tended to be super shy.

During the late 70’s Tom spent a lot of nights either teaching classes or going back to the office to work on research, so I was on my own with the kids. Tom and I spent less and less time doing things together and more time getting on each other’s nerves to the point that in 1980 I told him I thought we needed marriage counseling. There was nothing obvious wrong with the marriage but all the little things kept adding up and we seldom discussed our increasing distance. We went to counseling once a week for about a year. During



Sheryl playing piano while David practices guitar.

that time we learned a lot about ourselves, but we were still miles apart and still not really dealing well with each other at home. What it all came down to was that I just didn't have the energy to continue as things were with no support from Tom and Tom was tired of my bitching (not that I could blame him). There was no real communication any more and from what I could see, no desire to change that. We had grown so far apart that there was not much point in trying to stay together - the love that was there at first had died. In some ways I blame the doctors and my disease for our breakup. I'm not sure if things would have turned out the same if I had been diagnosed with something real instead of both of us wondering if I was just lazy or slightly nutty.

The absolute hardest thing I've ever done was to tell the kids that we were separating. It was very painful for all of us and I don't think either of them will ever really understand. I sure hope neither of them has to go through a similar experience.

Tom and I worked out all the details of the separation and later divorce without much bickering, though I always felt that I had been super generous. Because I had supported him while he got his advanced degrees I knew that I could theoretically ask for a good size alimony check and full custody of the children. I felt though that since I was working full time asking for alimony was just being mean. Similarly, I felt that our children would lose too much if either of us had full custody, so we decided to share custody. It was hard for both of us at first to restart our lives as single parents with our kids watching us for any sign of `what really happened'. (Even years later I would still get questions from David about why we had divorced and why the split was the way it was. These always stirred up the old pains.)

Looking back on it now, I think we did the best we could. The worst and best part of our agreement was that the kids would spend a week at my house and then a week at Tom's. This allowed them to continue to have

both parents although the moving back and forth got to be a real burden on them after a while. This also allowed both Tom and I a week without the responsibilities of family. At first I spent those off weeks just feeling miserable and missing my babies, but after a while I used the extra time to get extra work done and occasionally to go out with co-workers for meals or drinks. Tom and I continued to share in all the school activities that each child participated in. At the time our divorce was very unusual, but I still feel that it was the best we could do given our decision to separate.



Hugs, 1981

Chapter 6: The 1980s

After Tom and I separated many things were different. Tami and David were more independent; they were older but I think the divorce made them grow up faster than I would have liked. David's operation was the first major crisis and we faced it together, though Tami chose to stay at home with Tom's mom rather than come with us. Looking back, that was a good choice as we were both kind of preoccupied with David until he was feeling better. He was a favorite with most of the nurses because he was so easy to please. He would say "Thank you" even after they gave him a shot and he seldom complained. When he got out of the hospital he stayed at Tom's and I had to go over there to visit him. While that made sense because Tom's mom was there to take care of him, it was hard for me to have him hurting and not with me. It didn't take too long for him to bounce back though.

Christmas Papers

Whenever I think about Christmas, I think about family. From the earliest Christmases of my childhood to the one about to happen, it has always been a time of loving and giving, of togetherness and thoughtfulness. Whether we have lots to spend or just a little, what we give is more than gifts. Each year gives us all a memory. It's something we can take out and cherish whenever we feel lonely. It's a blanket around our hearts. This story is just one of many wonderful jewels from my Christmas treasure chest.

I was all ready for Christmas that snowy December 24, 1982. Gifts were wrapped and hidden, until just the right minute. I waited for my children to return from visiting their Dad's house, just a block away. His holiday time was Christmas Eve. When David ran into the house at 9PM, his 11 year-old body covered with snow, his eyes were shining with holiday pleasure. His arms were full of little treasures. Tami zoomed in about 5 minutes later, her blond hair sprinkled with shining snowflakes. She carried all her Christmas gifts in a huge bag and started talking right away.

"Mom, guess what? I got this beautiful dog!" she shouted as I cringed. I didn't want to play referee between a dog and our two cats. I was pleasantly surprised when my nine-year-old daughter pulled an orange-and-white stuffed dog out of her bag. The animal was nearly as large as she was.



Christmas at 904 Clark

“I got the neatest new Walkman!”

“See my Etch-A-Sketch?”

“OK! Lets all have some cookies and milk. Then we will set out goodies for Santa.” I knew David no longer believed, but Tami still had not admitted that she knew who Santa was. (Come to think of it, she still hasn’t 15 years later!)

We had a cardboard box decorated to look just like a fireplace. Since our home had its own special room for our seven-foot artificial tree, but no fireplace, the little box served as a substitute. It was atop this tiny box that they placed their offering of cookies and milk and of course a carrot for Rudolf. We had spent the previous weekend making fancy decorated cookies for just this purpose. I took our annual pictures, getting only half the tree and making everything crooked as usual.

“Put everything under the tree so that Santa can remember what he already gave you.” I cautioned. I wanted to get these two excited children into bed so that Santa could come. I was already tired and many things remained undone.

“Awww Mom!” chorused both children.



Putting out milk and cookies for Santa



Reading “The Night Before Christmas” in 1979

I sat in the middle of the couch and gestured to gather both children to me. They brought our family’s edition of “The Night Before Christmas”. This was a special book made by David when he was in the first grade. He had carefully printed out the entire story along with hand drawn pictures illustrating what happened on each page. Every year we took it out and read the special story. Each of us would read a page, pass it along and listen. What a wonderful way to finish each Christmas eve, it gave us a true sense of family and continuity.

Upstairs we trooped, leaving our giant tree shining brightly. It stayed lit until Santa came. He would shut it off after he left his presents.

“Do you think Santa knows we want more presents here?” Tami asked as I tucked her in. This was just her second year with two different houses for the holidays and she still wasn’t sure Santa understood.

“I’m sure sweetie. Now right to sleep! Santa is watching!” She squeezed her

hazel eyes shut tight as I hugged her, trying to force herself to sleep.

“You too hon. Put the tree on when you go out to deliver your papers in the morning.” I hugged David briefly. “Be sure to dress warmly!”

Christmas morning came very early as David shook me awake at 5 am, a worried look in his brown eyes.

“Mom. It’s minus 35 outside with tons of snow. I need help with my paper route.” He was apologetic. He knew I hated early mornings, but I had told him never to try his deliveries when the weather was unsafe.

“OK, I’m coming. Go shovel out the car.” I groaned as I pulled my sleepy limbs away from the temptation of the warm covers.

I tumbled into some warm sweats and left a note for Tami, still sleeping blissfully under a mound of stuffed animals. Running downstairs, I grabbed my boots; over a foot of snow awaited me outside. Coat, hat and mittens went on as I hurried out the door and down the back steps.

“Santa must have had a smooth ride last night.” I thought to myself as I blinked at the sea of white covering everything. “I hope ours is half as easy!” I was thinking about my small blue 1975 Chevy Citation sitting out in the drive. David had tunneled down to it, but we still needed a path to the street. He was getting his exercise today for sure.

While David continued his shoveling, I got in and tried to start the car. “Grrrrumph!” was all I heard. Again and again I tried. We had the motor heater plugged in and had even put a blanket over the engine. It was beginning to seem like a hopeless cause as the motor kept repeating its refusal, when my 60 year old neighbor, Joe, came out all covered in his red goose down jacket. His silver hair was hidden by the heavy hood of his parka. He looked just like a Santa to me, bundled up and offering help at such a crazy hour on Christmas morning. He had one of those spray cans that help to start the car and, sure enough, with just a few quick squirts, he had us on our way. Joe offered to take David out for me, but I thought this would be a good time for David and I to spend together.

“Thanks Joel!” we shouted thinking that Iowa was a great place to live in spite of the weather. Now we were ready to tackle the snow-blanketed streets.

David’s route was just two blocks from home. We crawled along the rutted street, not another car in sight, not even a snowplow. I looked up, halfway expecting to see a sleigh full of reindeer riding through the stormy skies. What I saw was the fog of ice crystals blowing around. I knew once the sun rose we

would have snow dogs creating a rainbow of color around the sun.(I had never heard of these until I moved to Iowa. They are little reflections of the sun off the ice crystals that create two mini-suns on either side along with rainbows that look like a halo around the sun.) As we began the route, Christmas lights glistened through the blowing snow and as I watched David push through the drifts and lights reflecting everywhere, it looked just like a picture post card.

We had about 100 papers in the car and I combined the funnies with the rest. I listened to the warm purr of the engine, getting my hands covered with the smelly newspaper ink, while David went out to brave the elements. He returned every few houses and took off his mittens to warm his hands, then he was off again. He told me about his subscribers as he went: an older lady who liked to talk and sometimes fed him goodies, a man with a mean dog, some college students who always paid late. I found a real sense of what my son's life was about during his early morning deliveries.

His pant legs were quickly frozen solid from all his treks through the snowdrifts. So about halfway through we returned home for a quick change and a check on Tami. I parked right in the street rather than try to get in and out of that driveway again.

The second half was a little easier because a snowplow had actually cleared a path for us. Still, we were both frozen when we finally returned home around 6:30am. I sighed, no sense in returning to bed now. I usually didn't let them come downstairs on Christmas morning until 7, but I was already up. I even wondered if Tami might not have sneaked downstairs for a peek.

I opened the big sliding doors that hid all the Christmas bounty, and gloried in the sense of happiness that always filled me each holiday season. The mound of gifts presented a kaleidoscope of color reflected in the glitter of all the lights and balls. Even the little crystal reindeer sparkled back at me. Everything shouted warmth and love.

As David and Tami finished opening their gifts, I got a special hug and thanks from David and I knew that morning we had grown a little closer and created a beautiful memory that would be a special treasure for us both.

During the time after the divorce, there were the usual activities - softball, volleyball, plays, music concerts, school open houses and teacher conferences. Whenever possible Tom and I both went, though by the time Tami was into softball, my weakness had progressed so that it was very hard for me to attend her games. As they both became adolescents they wanted less and less to do with each other or with me. I remembered feeling the same way when I was that age, but it still was hard to deal with. Our meals became harder and harder to have as a family, there was always something happening either after school or early evening. They both started wanting to stay out later and later. "Can I stay at?" became a good way to get a later curfew (or none at all!) In most cases I was pretty easy to get along with (though they might not have thought so), but I



*Sheryl, David, Tami, and
Monkey, 1983*

did insist on punctuality. I can easily remember my mom saying how she would worry when I was late, and I found I would do the same thing (especially if I heard sirens while they were out). I guess the worst part of being a mother was the constant worrying (though the kids could not understand). My fondest hope is that they each have their own children. Then they will understand what I meant, and then they will have the best thing in the world - a child's love.



All smiles with Tami, Sheryl, and David.

My best memories of this time are from when Tami stood up after a wrestling dinner and thanked everyone for her memories. She is so sensitive that she is super, but I worry about her getting hurt. David is sensitive too, but in a different way; he keeps his feelings closer to himself. We used to have long talks that I'll cherish always. Other memories include David's many chess games, plays and awards, teaching both kids to drive (and this is also a favorite as I got to spend a lot of quality time with them), the frequent trips with Tami were a bonding time different from David's. Catching Tami with booze and David's car wrecks were the down side of the teens, but at least they lived through it with few scars...I think they must have had guardian angels to make it though!



*Sheryl in front of the Apple II+,
early 1980s*

Tami (Tamara) Andre had just turned 10 years old in the fall of 1984 as she fought with the lawn mower trying to push it over the irregular spots on the grass. Our house at 904 Clark in Ames, Iowa occupied a small corner lot and all the passers-by probably thought I was a cruel mother for making such a small child mow the lawn. Since I was disabled I did tend to rely on my children for more chores than maybe some others did and they did their share of complaining about it. Looking back, I think it gave us extra memories to add to our collections and extra reason to bond together. Special times when nothing specific happened, but we were together as a family helping each other with daily chores.

Tami always took about 5 minutes to get the mower started, hoping that maybe this time it would be broken or out of gas and she would be able to

leave the task until another day. Once she got moving though, it didn't really take long to finish, maybe 15 minutes. I used to watch through the living room windows in our 3-story historical district home as she pushed the mower back and forth across the lawn. The big white house provided her with shade in the heat. She always took special care to mow around the two tiny trees that were plantings sent home from school, trees that would one day grow to be tall and strong, just as I hoped that she would be.

Tiny sparrows nesting in the nearby maple trees would often play a game with her, diving down to just over her head and then back up to the housetop, trying to attract her attention.

Sometimes, as I watched, I would see her talking and wonder whether she was talking to the birds or mumbling about what a hot and miserable job she had. To me, peeking from inside, Tami looked like an angel with her long blonde hair tied back and her T-shirt just about covering her shorts. Try though I might, I never could get her to wear jeans to be safe. I did manage to make sure that her shoelaces were tied most of the time. The fad then was to keep them untied. She finally outwitted me and took the laces off!

In the fall she would try her hardest to avoid cutting the grass and mowing over all the dead leaves. Her favorite time was when the leaves had all fallen and she and her brother David could make great big piles of multicolor leaves and jump on them until they were just like pieces of dust. I have one picture of her covered with leaves, just her smiling face shining out of the pile, a bright red leaf caught in her hair. Yes these memories are special indeed.

During this time I was finding increasing difficulty with work. Driving to and from work was becoming a chore. I'd start off for work and have heartburn the whole way down, and the same on the return trip. My right hand was now totally useless and there were times that the hand and arm were quite painful. While I was at work things would go ok, as long as someone carried my papers to and from meetings. This was a very busy time at work because we were installing a new welfare computer system. The system was developed by contractors (Electronic Data Systems - owned by H. Ross Perot at the time) and I was the prime liaison, so I needed to be available at odd hours to assist with testing and modifications. There were 2 3-week periods that I was sent to Washington DC to work on the system testing there. Though my physical health was still bad I did enjoy those trips and the constant battles with the contractors to get everything done right. Being in Washington in the spring I got to see the cherry blossoms, I also ate lots and lots of sea food all courtesy of the state of Iowa. The overtime really piled up rapidly since I was working 80-hour weeks (though because I was management I was only paid for 40 hours).

Shortly after the system was installed, my mother retired and moved out to live with us. I was very proud



*Sheryl, David, Tami, Helena,
reading near Christmas-time*



Christmas time, mid 1980s



*Tami, Sheryl, and Helena. The ceramic
Santa was painted by Antonio Martins*

of my children because they voluntarily gave up their toy room so that mom would have a decent size bedroom. They also seemed to put up with her idiosyncrasies better than I could. Anyhow, mom took over all the housework and cooking, which took a big load off me. She did tend to get super antsy over things like messy rooms and kids being late for supper, but mostly they managed to get along. I always thought she was a bit too hard on David, but he didn't seem to mind. At the time I really needed help because I'd begun to have dizzy spells, mostly at night, where I could hardly sit up, much less walk (looking back on this now I wonder if some of my low blood pressure and nighttime breathing problems were part of the cause here - though the doctors didn't say so at the time). As these got more severe and the heartburn

increased, I finally decided to try another round of doctors to see if they could pin down what was happening to me. One visit to Dr. VanGuilder in Iowa City and I finally had a name for what was happening to me - syringomyelia.

Once we had a name, there was a potential for 'cure' - or at least a stop to the steadily worsening physical problems. We scheduled an operation for November 1, 1985 and the plan was to insert a shunt just below the base of my skull to drain the liquid from the cyst in my spine. Tom was very helpful in taking care of the kids while I was going thru this. The operation lasted 8 hours and one of my lungs collapsed in the process. I was in intensive care for quite a while and didn't leave the hospital until right before Thanksgiving. It took me all of December to recuperate to the point that I thought I could return to work. I saw the children often but because I was so ill they spent most of their time with Tom. (Tami especially had a problem dealing with the fact that I was so sick, probably because she was only 11).

Once I was back at work things were harder than ever. Everywhere I went someone needed to go along to carry things for me. Even going to the bathroom, which was a lot more frequent, was difficult. My heartburn got a lot worse, and I was forever yelling at the kids and



Tami and Helena

griping at mom at home. I was always super-tired. The dizziness had gone away, but the operation took too much out of me. I was taking increasing amounts of time off as sick leave (and I didn't have too much left after being off the entire months of November and December.) The overtime from the earlier project came in handy here. I became convinced that I was not pulling my weight at work when I saw that I was not keeping up with the program changes. My staff was carrying me and would have continued to do so for quite a while had I let them and I was still sooo tired. I just couldn't deal with not doing the full job and being a bitch at home besides, so I applied for disability.

The people at work tried very hard to talk me into returning to work, but I had to do what I thought was best for me and for my children. I figured out how much vacation and sick leave I had to carry me through the 5 month waiting period before disability payments started (I was short by a month or so, very tight money-wise) and I had started being a much nicer person to live with at home. I was extremely depressed about the whole situation.

It seemed like every time I looked there was someone who seemed worse off who was working; articles about folks who were struggling to keep working popped up everywhere. I kept going back and forth, should I go back, should I try to find something less strenuous, should I stay home... I made my decision and stuck with it instead of making myself miserable second guessing. As a result of that I got to spend a few good years with the kids and mom before the worst of the teens hit. I am firmly convinced that I would have had a lot more problems had I stayed working; not only existing but new problems because the disease was still progressing but the rate slowed when I changed the stress level. (I still notice today that when I overdo the symptoms tend to get worse, and only sometimes do they go away after I rest up.) When Tom and I divorced, we made provisions that I could ask for alimony if I became disabled. I chose not to do that because I felt that I would be able to make it alone. Now, ten years later, money is very tight and I sometimes wonder if that was the right decision, but I just couldn't see asking for money.

Chapter 7: Onto Disability

The first 9 months of disability were a mixed blessing. My heartburn went away, I stopped being a bitch around the house, but in bed at night I would cry for the world I had given up. I would wonder if I should have done things differently, wonder if I was just being 'lazy' (this is a byproduct of being told my illness was all in my head when I'd tried to get a diagnosis in earlier years). Again my symptoms seemed to stop worsening and I was spending a lot of time doing essentially nothing. In a way it was a mourning period for what I had lost. After a while though I found that I was going crazy at home. I knew I couldn't handle working full time, the disability rules made part time work essentially pay free, so I started looking for some volunteer work to keep me busy while I could still get out. I found a 'job' working as a part time programmer for the Corrections Department Restitution Division in Ames. The position was tailor made for me.



David in the Camaro, 1987

I could set my own hours and the programming was at least minimally challenging. That job and another working with Story City Retired Senior Volunteer Program to automate some of their paperwork kept me occupied and gave me a feeling of self-worth. Gradually I found that I had enough energy for these 'jobs' and I helped to start a volunteer committee to assist the disabled that was fun too. I was getting out of the house (with mom's help and only when the weather allowed) and making some new acquaintances. It helped me to sleep at night. My condition was still deteriorating, but at a much slower rate than it was when I was working full time. My right leg was now to the point that I needed to use a cane whenever I went out and even with that I was starting to get wobbly.

Why Mothers Go Gray

David spent the summer before his sixteenth birthday with his dad, Tom, patching and repairing an old yellow-gold 1977 Camaro that they bought at a credit union auction for just a few hundred dollars. David gave up allowances for a year to pay for it. It was to be David's own car when he turned 16 in November. Most of the money he earned working as a busboy at Village Inn went into parts for that car.

By the time November came along, the car had almost as much primer gray as yellow-gold. It still needed shocks and the driver's seat was not firmly attached to the car. The floorboard had several major holes in it. The wheels were a bit threadbare and it seemed slightly tilted because the suspension was nearly trashed. The interior was filled with Mountain Dew cans and various candy wrappers. It even

had a “self-destruct” button on the dash that someone donated to the cause. Little did we know how accurate that button was.

David managed to drive his baby for nine whole days without incident and his dad and I were starting to breathe a sigh of relief at how much easier life could be without chauffeur duties. We restricted him to city driving hoping that speed limits and traffic lights would control his teenage desire for speed. All of David’s friends made fun of the car, giving him a funny card showing a car racing down the road, calling it the ‘dandre-mobile’ and making fun of its tilt. They teased him and warned him about its safety problems even though he provided chauffeur services for them. The car did have a personality all its own.

But he and his best friend, Brian, just had to discover how fast his speedmobile would go. They intended to stay in town, driving out to Elwood Drive, the longest street with the least traffic and stoplights that they could find. Then, with the radio blaring, he floored it. They were flying low at about 85 miles-per-hour when they hit the gravel portion of the road just outside city limits. The car shuddered, but didn’t even skid. David thought he was home free since he still had control of the car. Nope.

About two miles farther they crossed an intersection, still going about 85, and the car began to fishtail. It couldn’t handle the change of gravel surfaces at that speed.

“Oh s**t!” David fought for control as his heart began to beat faster and his hands became slippery with sweat, but they were traveling too fast. The car had a will of its own. He tried braking. That only caused them to spin faster. They spun into the right-hand ditch, going forward, with Brian’s side of the car dragging along the bottom of the ditch. Suddenly they hit a bump and were weightless for a split-second that seemed an eternity. The car flipped over, landing on the driver’s side hood, crushing the hood and crashing David’s side window into pieces. It skidded across the empty cornfield, upside-down and facing the wrong way, and then stopped.

The motor continued running; the shattered window glass spread across the field and the boys. The driver’s window frame bent all out of shape. The radio kept on blaring. Brian scrambled out and looked back at a very shocked David hanging by his seat belt with his head touching the roof. After a very worried Brian yelled a few times, David finally came to his senses and crawled from the car. He reached back in and turned off the ignition, before even checking for cuts and bruises.

They straggled back to a nearby farmhouse, blood dripping from their hands. Luckily the farmer was at home and they called me. The farmer said he often saw accidents in that area and when he saw the car



David and Sheryl with the Camaro pre crash, 1987.

flip he was sure they would be dead. He had already called the police.

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When I received David’s phone call, I panicked.

“Mom, I’m OK, but I’ve had an accident.”

“Oh God! Where are you?”

“Two miles past the gravel part of Elwood Drive. I’m really OK.”

“I’ll be right there!” as I slammed down the phone. I quickly told my mom that David had been in an accident but was OK and that I was going after him, and I ran out the door.

“Call Tom and Tami! “ I shouted as I left, wanting to make sure David’s dad and sister knew what had happened.

I broke every speed limit getting there and nearly had an accident of my own, but I didn’t care. I had to see that he was really in one piece. As I drove tears flowed down my face.

“I knew we shouldn’t have let him have his own car so young!” I thought.

When I pulled up at the site and saw that car on its top with the driver’s side crushed in, I almost fainted. I looked around and saw David running across the field toward me. I grabbed him and hugged him tight as my tears flowed into his bloodstained sweatshirt. He was really safe and whole. I couldn’t believe it. Given the way David hugged me back, I could tell he knew he was damn lucky to be alive.

When we returned home to a nearly hysterical grandma and Tami, we relived the whole story and I shuddered at what might have been. Grandma and Tami were just as upset as we were and they had the disadvantage of not knowing what happened for a lot longer. They had cried to each other on the phone while they waited and waited for us to return.

We discussed potential punishments and decided David had lost his car and nearly his life and that was ample punishment. There were no charges filed because the police agreed that David had been through enough, but the insurance company sure made him listen to a long lecture. David still has a hubcap from that car as a reminder. Seat belts have saved his life a few times, but never more than this first time. To this day, David never goes anywhere without his seat belt.



The Camaro, after the crash

Life with teens was something no one ever can imagine. It required my total energy just to keep up with them and I needed to remember daily how I felt when I was that age in order to stay sane. I could tell myself that they had both been taught the difference between right and wrong, but that didn't turn off the worries. How I made it through and they made it through without our killing either ourselves or each other is a total mystery! I just hope that if and when my kids have kids that they can remember all those times they stayed over at friends to get around their curfew and how many times they might not have been where they were supposed to be... It will help them stay sane! My physical problems did not make these years any easier. There were very few things that I could do with my kids to try to keep the bonds between us strong. I was past long vacations both physically and monetarily; long shopping trips were difficult, even going to various school activities was hard. I did what I could, but still feel that I could have been closer...especially to Tami who got the worst of the problems because she was younger when the problems started to get worse.

Tami's Driving Lessons

Somewhere between ages 8 and 11 Tami changed from a sweet loving young girl into a turbulent teen. One day she was content to play with her Legos on the living room floor or to play rummy with her grandma and me; the next day she was angry and frustrated with everything I said or did. She would holler, "I don't care!" and run to her bedroom upstairs. I felt that she meant she thought 'I' didn't care about her. She was constantly pushing all the boundaries and I wasn't always calm in my replies. I felt confused and angry, not knowing how to repair the rift that was building between us.

Two things saved my sanity during this difficult time. First, I remembered the hellish teenager I had been in my own time, ignoring my parents and ashamed of them at times. I outgrew it and I hoped Tami would too. The second was the driving lessons I gave her when she turned 14.

Tami ran out to the car that bright July day, her long curly hair flying, a bright smile on her tanned face. Her biggest birthday present to herself was passing the written drivers' exam.

"I made it! I passed the test! When can I start my lessons?" she asked impatiently.

She was ready and eager to begin learning to drive now, this minute, even though she had to take those lessons from her mom. She tried to be "cool" but I could feel the excitement bubbling up from inside.

"Congratulations!" I said, pride filling my voice in spite of my good intentions of avoiding embarrassing comments.



Tami in 1988

In 1988, Iowa children were allowed to drive at 14 as long as an adult was in the car. Since I was not working, I was elected to teach Tami all about driving. She wanted to learn it all that day she turned 14, fully expecting that one lesson would make her an expert. I gathered up my courage and my patience and drove both of us to River Valley park, a few blocks from home. As I drove, I thanked my lucky stars that we lived in Ames, Iowa instead of some major city.

Most Ames residents were vacationing in July, so the traffic volume was even lighter than usual. The hum of the air-conditioner muffled extraneous sounds from outside. I could still hear my heart pounding inside, my concern that this be a positive experience was showing through.

River Valley parking lot filled up during early evenings when local softball teams met to decide who would be city champion. During the day it sat empty, an ideal proving ground for novice drivers. The 50-foot long oval parking lot was clear enough of obstructions to allow for several mistakes without major calamity. One huge oak stood proud along one side right next to an outdoor phone. The opposite side had several posts, but all stood far enough away from the gravel 'road' to be safe from harm.

I had already been through this with David two years earlier, so it should have been easier but it wasn't. As Tami sat in the driver's seat, my palms started sweating even though she seemed perfectly ready. Her hazel eyes were bright with anticipation, as she turned to me, unable to hide a confident smile. I could tell she would rather be on her own, but she was stuck with old mom for now. We quickly passed through the preliminary "talk" about wearing seat belts and using rearview mirrors. Hand positioning sounded boring even to me.

So anxious to drive, Tami didn't once say "Oh Mommm!" She put the gray 1985 Volkswagen Golf into drive and suddenly discovered that driving was harder than it looked from a passenger seat. She looked at me with a new respect. I had actually known what I was talking about. I really wasn't quite so dumb after all. I felt 100 feet tall. I cherished my daughter's respect and held it close to my heart. I felt that now we might be able to work on mending the rift caused by teen rebelliousness.

Our first objective was to drive the car around the lot without leaving the gravel area. The one tree in the area seemed to grow in size as we approached it. The car wobbled a bit as she turned the wheel a bit more than necessary and then overcorrected. Once past that, the way was clear until she had to take the curve.

My hand was firmly planted on the dashboard; my foot pressed an invisible brake. I tried not to be nervous, but it didn't work. After about four turns around the area, each one a little less wobbly, Tami managed to figure out the steering. She turned to me beaming, brushing her ash blonde hair away from her face, ready to tackle any obstacle. I took the risk of encouraging her, saying she had done well. Her eyes said, "I know."

The next trial included putting the car into reverse and driving backwards over the same area. She looked at me like I was crazy.

“What for?”

“Because I want you to be able to back up better than I do.” I said.

Four more turns and she was enjoying this backwards ride. To me it seemed a lot like a roller coaster. Her exuberance got the best of her and she started changing speeds. My stomach was in knots. I wasn’t worried about my relatively new car as much as I was about her getting hurt, but she managed just fine. She even managed to park the car between two posts without incident.

“Now lets drive in traffic.” I suggested with a queasy stomach. I would much rather have gone home and recuperated until another day, but I knew she was in heaven and I hated to break the spell. Tami’s eyes gleamed with expectation, even a little appreciation of what I was giving her.

She waited a while at the exit from the park until she felt that she could get into the four-lane street without trouble. She sat up straight, eyes taking in everything, proud to be so grown up. As I watched, she did all the right things, checked her mirrors, used her turn signals, and even stayed within the speed limit. My nerves calmed a little and I started talking about her schoolwork, trying to take my mind away from my worries. She turned to me to answer a question and there went the car to the opposite side of the road.

“Tami!”

“Oops.” She straightened, realizing that she needed to keep her attention on her driving. Aside from that one misstep, she drove beautifully. We meandered through the neighborhood taking first a left and then a right until I felt comfortable with her reactions. Then we headed for home. She would have driven all day, but my knees were wobbly and I needed to be on solid ground.

The very next day, Tami was home from school two minutes when she politely asked,

“Mom, can we go riding today?” with obvious desire in her hazel eyes. Her whole body radiated her pleasure at being a “real driver.”

I said yes that day as I did many days after that. That first day we drove all over town. I found some places I had never been and Tami grew more confident in her driving skills. We talked about some of our differences of opinion, how sometimes she felt like I was treating her as a baby and not listening well. I agreed to listen more carefully if she would try to see my point of view as well. I could see how I was trying to keep her from growing up so fast. Parents are not always right after all.

It was a special bonding time for me. We drove all over town, past every friend’s home, past every boy’s home, past fraternity row. I even let her drive to Hardee’s when she began working there. These rides also insured that Tami would be on her best behavior in order to keep the driving privileges available to her.

We spent many summer days driving around Ames that year and the next. We talked about all sorts of things on those drives: boys (of course), school, car maintenance, her school plays and her future. She would let me know when I reverted to my ‘clinging mom’ ways and I would try to explain when she really wasn’t old enough for some things.

I had lost touch with my teenager and these rides were a perfect way to regain the connection, to rebuild the trust that the early obnoxious teen years had lost. The rest of her teen years still held lots of controversy. Sometimes I forgot to listen or she forgot the rules, but the bond we had formed helped to keep us from totally breaking apart.

Now she is an adult and a great friend. It seems all our chats paved the way for many years of close bonding times to come.

As I became ‘used’ to my disability I found that my old stubborn self would refuse to admit that the disease was getting worse. Though I purchased a 3-wheeler I told myself that I was using it kind of as a toy, just to take ‘walks’ around the area. I didn’t use the cane or the 3- wheeler in the house; I continued to go up and down the stairs and used the cane only at night to and from the bathroom. I didn’t want to admit that things



Tami in 1990 in the new house on Douglas

were getting bad, but Dorothy, who had become a close friend through the Committee for the Disabled, made me see that mom was very worried about me and I was taking risks that were unneeded. Once David went to college and Tami decided to live with Tom, it seemed silly to continue to live in such a large house when I was clearly becoming unable to handle the stairs and night trips to the bathroom. I loved the house and the memories we had shared in it, but I couldn’t continue to live in it safely. Even getting folks in to help out with the cleaning and outside work would not solve the problem; it was how poorly I move around that was the main issue.

I moved and I’m sure David could have shot me for doing it since he had just left home and I didn’t even give him a chance to come home once before I moved. (Though I did offer to pay for him to come visit over Thanksgiving, but we were mostly packed by then) I know I would

have been very upset if my parents had pulled that on me, but my logic was simple: The new house was perfect for me and no matter what I did the old house would not have been the same anyhow. The memories are never lost. Part of my reasoning was as a result of my own experiences too. Once I'd left home, coming back was like living in someone else's house; so maybe it was better after all to preserve the memories. Tami didn't seem to have a problem with the move. I think she was too involved with high school life to care what I did, besides she was in town though living with Tom.

The actual move took a lot out of both mom and I. Luckily many of David's friends were able to help. Mom and her need for total order did not help the process at all, but we managed. We were totally moved in within a week. Help from our neighbors and a lady I'd hired to clean the cellar was a real plus too. It took a lot longer than that to sell the other house and I was paying 2 mortgages for 5 months. Not fun!! In the new house I was able to get around at night with my 3-wheeler and during the day by using furniture to keep me from falling (I still didn't want to use the cane at home!) The volunteer activities were still going fine; I even started working for the Open Line office (out of Red Cross).

It seemed like my life after children was beginning to take shape. In the new house, I gave in to the disability and began using the 3-wheeler to go back and forth between rooms and began using the cane more often. I still felt fairly independent because I could get to the stores to buy things on my own (with help opening doors and such), though it was increasingly obvious that those trips were harder than earlier. I started trying to minimize the distance I needed to walk, relied increasingly on mom and the 3-wheeler to get me around. I still hate being pushed in a wheelchair; whatever I'm wanting to see is always behind us by the time I say I'd like to see it and whenever we stop it's usually still behind me or I can't reach it. I fluctuate between saying something about it and just putting up with it.

May 1992

Then one morning I woke up with a massive pain in my stomach. After a quick trip to the doctor, I found that I had a massive kidney stone and it was badly infected. I was very upset as I was supposed to go to California just a week later. I ended up spending 2 weeks on my back before they could even operate and then another two weeks after the operation before I could even think about going home. Both my kids were a great help both during the hospital stay and after. David came home for the operation and pushed me to get better and worked with the doctors trying to deal with my pain. Tami came to visit every day and even came to let me



Tami and Sheryl in the house on Douglas

see her prom dress on prom night! When I got home I was like a wet dishrag. I couldn't even get up on my own to pee. Tami spent many a night sleeping at the foot of my bed so she could help me use the porta-potty. I had home health aides come in every day to help out and a physical therapist to provide exercises to strengthen my muscles.

Either as a result of the operation or because I spent so long in bed, I ended up with what they called a nervous leg. It would spasm with no notice, most often in the middle of the night, and was very painful. As I continued to learn to walk again the spasms diminished, though I still get them sometimes, especially whenever I do more or less walking than I usually do.

Mom was a trooper through the whole process, though she nearly wore herself to a frazzle worrying. She actually ended up with a sciatic nerve problem as a result of picking me up and



Sheryl with David at his graduation ceremonies in 1994

working with me. So there was a time when BOTH of us were in bad shape. Luckily the nurses aides were available to take up the slack. Though mom was supposed to be bedridden she still did all the cooking, though we had to use the aides to do the shopping and such. I think that really scared Mom because now she has slowed down quite a lot. At one point she was in worse pain than I was. Not a good time! Now we have a lady to come in twice a month to do the major housework, though I have a hard time keeping mom from cleaning before she comes "so she won't think we're dirty" mom says. Sometimes she is so compulsive!

By January 1993 things were a little better. I was walking, though not very far (and with a cane even in the house) and Mom was better as long as she didn't push too hard. Both of us restarted our volunteer work in April, and both of us were much happier as a result.

We went to California to see David and managed the trip fairly well (though that was because David spent a lot of time with us. I'm not sure it would have gone as well on our own.) Meeting Lisa and her folks was not as traumatic as I'd expected. They are very nice and that helped a lot. I also proved to myself that I could do it, and that in itself was a major accomplishment.

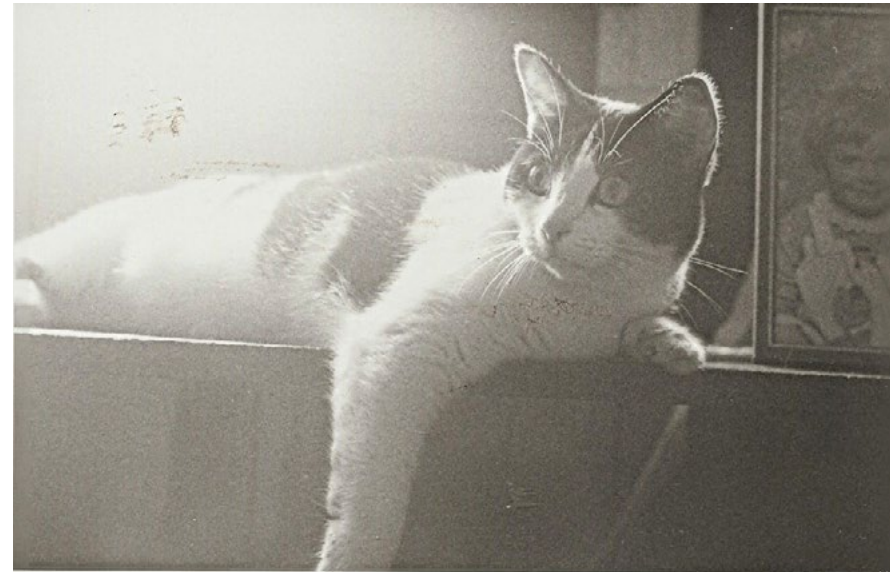


Sheryl prepping the Christmas ornaments

Tami went off for the summer to Florida selling books and that was very traumatic for me. My feelings were just as mixed as they were with David when he left...I was glad she felt confident enough to leave home, but I missed her like crazy. In a way it was worse than David leaving because I had no more kids at home to help me feel less alone. I know I should find other interests and I do try with my volunteer activities, but it just isn't the same.

Another major change in my life happened that spring-summer. My Dad had cancer and I found that though he and I have not been close for a very long time, I still cared very strongly. His deteriorating health has led me back to rethinking many of my old memories. It's strange how illness can change things. Having him die inch by inch was very hard and I am glad I decided not to fly back to visit him again. I preferred that we both keep our memories. He died at Rose Hawthorn Home for Cancer Patients on July 7, 1993.

I've started thinking about how I might feel if it were me in his place, and that brought some serious soul searching. My condition is getting worse inch by inch and while it's not life threatening yet, it is getting pretty serious. I want my kids to keep getting on with their lives and not spend the best years looking after a weakening parent. I want them to remember the good times and not the woman who can't walk and needs help for nearly everything. I want to have enough money so that I don't have to depend on my children to keep going. Yes I want all of that, but it's very hard not to want to spend as much time with them as I can. I want to spend holidays especially with them and I know that soon they will want to begin to have their own family traditions.



Monkey

Now it's October 19, 1994 and I've just had to put Monkey to sleep. She finally had heart problems and trouble breathing too. It's a very sad time. She was with us for the past 18 years and has been a good companion for me. I miss her terribly. Sometimes I think I can hear her crying. She used to follow me around and cry for me to sit down so she could sit on my lap.

Other memories of Monkey include: When she was younger, I'd be taking a bath or washing the kids and she would come into the bathroom and put her front paws up on the tub so she could see what was going on! We even used to put water on her paws, but she wanted to know where everybody was! Warlock (our other cat) used to chase



Sheryl with David and Tom, 1994



Tami with Monkey. Sheryl loved this picture and had a print of it up on her wall for the last 20 years of her life.

Monkey all over the house and she'd run into the front living room and hide inside of the organ where the foot pedal was. He somehow couldn't get her there.... neither could we!! She'd chase a string around thru the living rooms, dining room and front hall forever when she was younger. Tami liked to do this a lot. Monkey spent a lot of Christmases hiding under the wrapping paper or investigating the boxes. She couldn't stand to have a paper bag she hadn't looked thru...even though we would pick up the bag and wait to see how she would get out. She always managed. When the kids were little they would tie strings on her tail and let her chase the strings for a while. It sounds mean, but she enjoyed it. She loved watching the outside world thru the windows ... in the summer when we would have an open window, there she'd be sitting and watching the traffic go by. Sometimes I'd put her on the porch on a desk so she could see clearly, but being outside was never one of her favorite things. she would run back inside first chance she got. On the few occasions when she did get out, she would hide under the front porch and I'd sometimes have to send the kids to get her back in, though most of the time she would come when I called her. She had this neat hiding place on the top of the old octopus heater pipes in the cellar. I'd be worried about where she was and the kids would go down to look and there she'd be on top of those pipes! One time she even managed to get inside of one! Of course the pipes were warm and she liked that. Where she spent the most time though was on my lap or on our couch. She liked to curl up and just snore away.



Monkey on the piano



Tami, Sheryl, Helena

Part 2

Chapter 8 : Sheryl's Stories and Essays

“Since that time, I have kept as active as possible with my volunteer data processing job and my Committee for the Physically Disabled. I've taken several creative writing classes and continue to work on my family history.

I live day-to-day, watching for new problems and doing what I can. The ASAP group and listserv have become a source of strength and comfort in those times when I find it hard to maintain a cheerful attitude. I work at writing a family history for my children in hopes that they will know a little better just who I am and what forces helped to shape my life. “ – Sheryl Andre, circa 1997

Sheryl in the late 1990s was spending more and more time online on the burgeoning internet, connecting with other people with syringomyelia and trying to help them cope with their disease and their pain. In this period, she wrote most of the stories that we've included in this book, including the history of her life to that point in Part 1, the stories we've included along the way so far, and the set of essays and stories we present here in this chapter. In this chapter, we include pictures of Sheryl and her family continuing on from the last chapter.



Sheryl and Helena

Mom (Helena)

Mom loves to wait on others no matter where she is. Even when we go out to eat, she helps clear off the dishes to make room for coffee or deserts. At home, everyone who comes to visit is greeted with:

“Would you like some sweet bread? Some coffee? Some water?” She keeps right on asking questions until the beleaguered guest says yes. Whenever her granddaughter and friends visit, they are treated to mom's “flat toast” made by flattening bread in a frying pan with a little butter. And of course they have to have some Kool Aid, coffee, tea or water to go with it.

Mom and I have lived alone for over 10 years now, and she has spoiled me for eating out because she can cook better than anyone. Some nights we might eat simple and enjoy chicken and dumplings, but many nights she makes her more exotic dishes like escargot in mushroom caps, rack of lamb, lobster salad rolls, salmon salad plate with potato salad. It's a wonder I do not get terribly overweight.



Decorating the tree at Christmas in the 1714 house

Neither is mom overweight. At age 79, she is 4 foot, 10 inches tall and when she is trying hard she could weigh in at 94 pounds. I started eating deserts after most meals in order to try to get her weight up from 87 pounds. She is always impeccably dressed and has her hair ‘done’ every week come rain or snow.

One winter we had a huge storm and she had to go to the hair-dresser, but couldn’t even see the driveway to back up. That wasn’t going to stop her. She tried anyhow and when she got stuck in a drift,

she kept on rocking back and forth until our next door neighbor took pity on her and came out with some sand to help her out of her predicament. Once she got out, she said thank you and proceeded on to the beauty parlor, never caring that she might have trouble returning home in an

hour.

She is a tiny bundle of energy, always with something to do. All her groceries have to be fresh, so she goes to the store nearly every day. All her windows are washed at least twice a year, storms, curtains and all.

Always careful to be easy to live with, she tip-toes around the house until I am awake just to make sure nothing she might do could wake me up. She always asks what I wanted for meals, preferring to make sure that she only cooks my favorites.



Helena



Sheryl and Helena at David’s first wedding in 1995

Memories

What is the spirit behind Christmas, that warm, happy glow that we wish would stay around forever? It doesn’t happen automatically. It is helped along by traditions, by memories and by love. When a child is young and impressionable he or she sees this magnificent tree covered with multicolored lights and sparkling tinsel and hears the joyful songs and a new cycle of memories has begun. Somewhere, during the early years, a strong sense of family and tradition needs to be added to counterbalance the glitz and appeal of all those toys that appear in ads everywhere in a mounting frenzy until the holiday arrives.

“Pretty!” thinks the 6 month old Tony, as he looks up at the huge tree glistening and covered fancy balls. He might sit in a brand new sled purchased by his parents, but he’s too young to understand its use, nor does he realize that they could barely afford such a luxury. They think they bought it for him, but really they are following their own memories. They want to return to a time when such innocence existed. They want to give their child the memories they cherish. But is that memory centered on buying gifts or something more?



Tami and David still doing the holiday cookie tradition in the 1990s

“Wow! What a big tree!” says the 2 year old Dana as she reaches for the fancy decorations hanging just out of reach. She is old enough to enjoy the gift opening and clap her little hands to the happy music, but when all is said and done, she will prefer to play with the boxes and papers as mom and dad explain about Santa and relive their own childhoods.

“When do I need to start being good?” asks 4 year old Peter in October when all the advertisements begin to appear.

“Can we put up the tree yet? When is Santa coming? Can I write my letter now?” he asks as his parents smile at his enthusiasm. In preschool he might create a card for his parents that they will save long after the season is gone. He will forget that wonderful gift unless reminded.

*After he opens all his presents and the holiday is over, Peter takes about a week to tire of his new toys (especially that expensive *toy of the year* that mom looked so hard to find).*

“My XYZ-car is broken mom!” is a common complaint.

Meanwhile mom and dad need a weeks vacation to recover from all the shopping, cooking and partying and months to recover from the bills. This is not the way they remembered it.

“I don’t need to see Santa this year.” says the wise 8 year old Jane when she hands mom her Christmas list.

“Can I have some money to get you something?” she asks. She is not interested in family gatherings or caroling. After the holiday, her friend Gail’s presents seem more interesting.

“Do I have to stay home for the family dinner?” asks 12 year old Robert who would much rather be outside playing with his new skateboard and his friends.

The children above are missing something important. It may be that they have to be more mature before they understand or it may be that their parents place too much emphasis on gifts. Christmas isn’t just about gifts and Santa. Its also about family and traditions, giving and loving. The parents above are working too hard at providing the gifts and not hard enough at finding memories for their children to gather to them all their lives.

When I look back at my own childhood, I don’t remember the gifts at all. I remember the decorating, the sweet smelling pine tree and the family time together. I even remember the arguments about whether the tree was tilting or how straight the tinsel was hung (“One strand at a time!”). We played Christmas songs and visited grandparents. At the time I know I muttered about having to do all this, but now I understand.

There is a different side to the holidays when traditions are not important. Lets look at some different ghosts of Christmas past.

“Sigh. My children can’t come back for the holidays this year. It will be a lonely time. Especially hard because of all the advertising and celebrating around me.”

These thoughts from Grandma Jones as she looks around the empty house. Wouldn’t a visit by some friends or a few carolers lighten her holiday? Do her children know how lonely she is without anyone? Maybe they could send her a ticket to come visit and bring some old traditions to their new home. If she has to stay home, she could invite another lonely soul and they could create some new traditions together.

“Its so hard to shop for presents. “ says a disabled woman who cannot deal with all the crowds in the stores. Some stores offer special seniors and handicapped-only times to make shopping easier. A friend might stop by offering to help with a few presents or an invitation to drive around town looking at the light displays.

“I just can’t celebrate this year.” says Fran who has just lost her husband. A close friend talks her into coming over for Christmas dinner.



Sheryl at Christmas in the 90s.

These people can be given special gifts of love. People who give those gifts are the ones who remember the traditions of when they were young, not the people who were only interested in toys. Some gifts are more precious than any money can buy. Those are the gifts from the heart that offer love, caring and memories.

Here are a few other ideas for holiday traditions.

Who gets to hang the oldest, prettiest ornaments might rotate each year or reading “The Night Before Christmas” together, with everyone reading a different page, could become a regular event. Christmas Carols and visits are important too.

Another fun thing to do is to each draw and write up cards that say some nice things about the recipients. Little ones will really enjoy this, but adults can write some beautiful cards too. Though these cards might not be as pretty or as poetically correct as the store-bought ones, they will be treasured much longer.

If you live in a warm climate, you might consider creating a “Frosty” using some old cardboard boxes and white spray paint. It doesn’t need to be expensive to be memorable.

These are the things that will be remembered later with fondness, not who got what toy.

An online site that offers ideas for Christmas travelers is “Santa’s Workshop” at

<<http://home1.gte.net/santa/>>. This site offers many different kinds of holiday cheer. There are links to discussions about how Christmas is celebrated in different countries and how Santa got all his various names. There are links to provide the words to carols and other links to provide two sets of words for the story of the “Night Before Christmas” . There is also a link to a place offering clip art for cards, or even the ability to send an email card or gift.

Children can send Santa’s letters here and receive replies. There is even an area where they can talk to Santa that is being tested using ICQ (Internet Chat Quest similar to Internet Relay Chat). There are reminders about how Santa knows who has been good and a link telling some ways he checks up on us. There is even a “Christmas countdown” telling everyone just how many days are left that should save Mom a lot of counting.

The reason I have remarked on this website is that it has several areas that talk about Christmas traditions and they might give everyone some ideas about ways to improve their own holiday time.

This web link can provide loads of new ideas for ways to bring a little more love into Christmas. When you think about the holiday this year maybe you can add just one new tradition that makes the season special, something everyone will remember in the years to come.

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The most intriguing part for the children would be my 3 wheeler, my substitute legs and the only thing that keeps me truly mobile. As the day approached for my visit I tried to put my fears aside. I knew the teacher would be there to keep the children under control and I would just have to hope that I could hold their interest. The local volunteer bureau made transportation arrangements so that a six-foot tall former wrestling coach was available to help me.

“What is that for?” asked one older girl. “It helps me to get around because my legs are weak.”

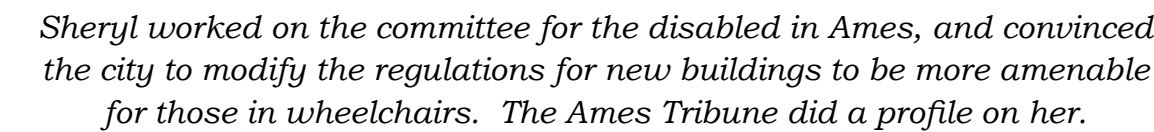
“What makes it run?” “Batteries.”

“Can someone show us to Mrs. Smith’s room?” I asked hoping that we could find an accessible ramp into the old school building. Of course we had a parade of eager volunteers leading us through the wide, locker-lined halls.

Once in the classroom I discovered that my talk would be the main event for two fifth grade classes in their lessons about disabilities. The children quickly scurried into their seats so that they could hear what I had to say. Even though there were two children to a desk they were attentive and quiet.

I explained that I had a disease that made my muscles weak and that I could not walk without assistance. A demonstration about how I started my cart followed some comments about the physical changes that happened gradually over 20 years. Then we opened it up for questions. I expected a few curious thoughts, but nearly every child in the room wanted to say something. Even the two teachers had questions.

“My grandma has a wheelchair,” said one tall boy in the front row. He felt that he knew what I was talking



“Does it hurt?” was asked quietly by a tiny girl who was right in front of me. “Sometimes.”

“Can you cook?” asked a boy with thick red glasses. “Yes.”

At this point a barrage of questions poured from all the children.

“How do you tie your shoes?” “With Velcro.”

“Do you have a boyfriend?” “Not right now.”

“Were you always like this?” “No, it took a long time before I had all these troubles.”

“What is the name of your disease?”
 “Syringomyelia.” The children kind of shook
 their heads at this tongue twister.

“Are there a lot of people with your illness?”

“No, only about 1,500 in the whole country, “ I could tell from their questions that they were concerned about their chances of getting something similar. To ease their fears, I talked a little bit about the doctors and the drain they had put in my spine to stop the disease from getting worse and how most people today are treated long before they are as ill as I am because the doctors know more about what to look for. That explanation seemed to soothe the anxiety.

It was nearly time for recess and the younger teacher asked, “Is there anything that our

class could do to help you?”

She wanted to challenge the children to invent something that would make my life easier. Baffled by the request, I thought for a while before answering. So many things could help, but those were way beyond the fifth graders. Finally, I thought of a good one.

“I need a bag that will fit on the cart and allow me to carry things while I am driving.”

I could see the creative energies light up those young eyes as they wrote down what I said. After thanking everyone for letting me come to visit and pointing out how helpful the handicap parking spot was, I drove out of the room, my young escorts returning to the car with me.

Two weeks later I received a package from Mrs. Smith’s class in the mail. It contained a pretty bag sewn together by the class and also 35 beautiful thank you cards from the children. I was so pleased I felt great all week.

It is always delightful to know that people care. These children were untainted by whatever causes adults to turn away. The children were interested and they treated me just like they would have treated the police chief if he had come to class to speak. That was their greatest gift to me.



Sheryl loved swimming -- it was great physical therapy for her and she liked the weightless feeling.



Sheryl visitng California in 1995 with Helena

Dr. Happy

A fictional piece by Sheryl. -eds.

Dr. Joe Garrison tosses and turns restlessly as his dream of skiing down a mountainside turns into a nightmare. His patients are chasing him, yelling angrily, “Now you see! This is what we feel like too!”

Several patients nearly catch him. He sees pretty Mary Sue with her tiny body and curly hair. He talked to her just before his own nightmare started. He told her that she couldn’t possibly be having cramps because she just had a successful surgery. Now he wonders how successful that surgery really was. He remembers seeing the pain in her eyes as she described her new symptoms, things that he was feeling now himself.

Then Frank, an older, balding patient, appears in the dream, hounding him and yelling, “Now will you give me some pain medication? How do YOU like the pain?”

Another patient, Stephanie, with her tired eyes and usually quiet voice, calls out to him, “How do you like waiting for things? Do you understand yet why waiting for three weeks was a problem for me? I was in agony, but you were too busy playing golf to see me.”

Joe struggles to wake up from this nightmare as the angry patients nearly catch him. He senses they are trying to give him their symptoms and he attempts to run away, but his legs are like cement. They won’t move. Just as the patients reach him, Joe awakens. He wipes the sweat from his face and looks around to make sure he is alone. Shaking his head, he tries to tell himself it was only a dream.



Tami and Sheryl at Tami’s college graduation

However he is still in the hospital and his legs still feel like lead. He has no energy even though he slept for eight hours. Are the dreams sapping his strength?

Joe’s neurologist, Dr. Happy, doesn’t look like he has any new suggestions as he enters the room.

“Sorry Joe, but the EKG didn’t answer our questions. We still don’t understand why you are so weak.”

“What do you mean you don’t know?” Dr. Garrison moans as he stares at the white haired man next to his bed. Dr. Garrison just suffered through his fourth series of tests in a week, and still Dr. Happy cannot tell him what is wrong.

“How many different tests are you going to make me endure? You know the symptoms. Can’t you figure it out? Isn’t that why

they call you a neurologist?” Dr. Garrison runs his hand through his dirty hair. He had suffered a serious fall on his way out of the doctor’s lounge five days earlier and had been stuck in this hospital bed ever since.

“Calm down, Joe. Have patience. You are reminding me of why doctors make the worst patients. You know that I have to rule out things with all these tests,” Dr. Happy says with his characteristic smile softening the hard truths he has to speak. His gentle brown eyes show concern for his distraught patient.

“Yeah, I know. But I’m getting damn tired of this hospital bed with my closet of a room and the beautiful view of the other side of the building. They keep drawing blood and waking me up at odd hours. You won’t give me anything for pain, and I hurt, and I hate bedpans! When I am awake, they want me to stay in bed! I’m getting as weak as a kitten. I’m sick of being sick! I am sick of waiting for your answers!”

“At this point, Joe, all the tests have turned out negative. I can’t give you pain meds or they will mask the symptoms. Your muscle pain and headaches could easily just be something your mind is doing to your body. Now, now, don’t throw a fit! I know you are sane, but sometimes our minds play tricks.”

“There is NOTHING wrong with my mind! I need to get out of here!” Dr. Garrison glares at his longtime friend.

“Okay, let’s stand you up and see what happens.”

Joe eagerly grasps onto the side of the bed and pulls himself into a sitting position, but as soon as he tries to step onto the shiny hospital floor, his legs give out and he sways unsteadily, grasping onto the bedside table for support. Dr. Happy lifts Joe back into the bed and says, “I think we need to run a few more tests. First, let’s review what we know.” as he ticks off Joe’s symptoms on his fingers, his brow lined with worry.

“You have been dropping things and tripping over your feet recently.

“You are experiencing frequent and painful leg cramping.

“You have been having burning sensations on your legs and back.



Sheryl and David, 1995

“The EEG and EMG show nothing significant, and the myelogram showed nothing either.”

“Yeah, and I keep getting wicked headaches which were not helped by your myelogram.” Joe says, his anger dissipating into a wave of fatigue.

“Let’s try an MRI. Maybe it will give us some clue. I’ll schedule it for tomorrow.” Dr. Happy says as he searches for potential answers to his patient’s condition.

“Can you at least get me a shower?” Joe asks as he resigns himself to still more poking and prodding.

“Sorry, but the nurses are too busy right now. Given your dizzy spells, it’s best that we stick to bed baths.”

Dr. Garrison watches his neurologist leave the room wondering if he will ever return to his medical practice and his beautiful home. Flashes of memories fly through his mind of all the family times in the past and his hopes for the future. All his dreams might disappear because of this rapidly progressing illness. He remembers those patients who reported problems similar to his and wonders if he could have been more thorough and more understanding. Now that he is the patient, the need for empathy is much clearer.

Joe tries to stay awake and avoid the terrorizing dreams, but fatigue wins as he slips into another nightmare world. He can no longer hold his two year old granddaughter or drive his red Porsche. He sits at home, by his window, and watches the world go by. Then the view in the dream changes and there are more angry patients. They raise their fists and shout, “Will you tell my insurance to help me now? Will you talk to Social Security for me yet? Will you take the time to explain to me what is wrong?” Joe squirms around and tries to wake as they howl more questions at him.



Tami, Sheryl, David, and Helena, 1995, at David’s first wedding

As he wakes again, Joe thinks too many more of these dreams and he will be ready to talk to the psychiatrists. He resigns himself to more waiting until he can have his new MRI.

Two days later, the pounding noises of the MRI further irritate Joe’s headache as he lays still in the tiny capsule. He fights to remain motionless so that the results will be clear and maybe give some indication to the cause of his problem.

Shortly after he returns to his room, Dr. Happy enters with a smile lighting his face.

“We’ve found it! You have syringomyelia. It’s a cyst in your spine that is pressing on the nerve cells and causing them to misfire. The result

is kind of like a pinball machine; sometimes things work, like when the ball ricochets off the rubber cones, and sometimes they don't. The headaches are caused by a buildup of fluid in your spine."

Dr. Garrison feels an initial wave of relief that his problem has a name. "I'm really not crazy! I am not the only one who feels this way! Why did it take so long to find it? All this time I've been worried sick and my symptoms have been getting worse! I don't remember hearing of this disease in med school. How do we treat it?"

"There is an operation, but nobody can guarantee that you'll be better afterwards. There is a chance that you might even be worse. I'm going to send you to the neurosurgeon first. He can tell you more about the operation."

Dr. Garrison sinks back into the bed, discouraged at the lack of progress and the thought of having to repeat his medical history to yet another doctor. Another round of pinpricks and explanations.

Things like: "Do you feel this?" when they know he can't feel anything. Another round of squeezing fingers when everyone knows his strength is nearly nil.

The following morning, Joe awakes feeling very unusual. His headaches and dizziness have disappeared, and his fatigue has lessened. Dr. Happy is standing at the foot of the bed, obviously anticipating Joe's questions.

"What's happening?" Joe asks. "I feel really strange. My headache is gone. Did they operate?" he whispers, amazed at the loss of symptoms.

"Dr. Garrison, you have just finished a week in our Virtual Medicine laboratories. All of your symptoms were virtually induced by the computers," Dr. Happy pronounces.

"You aren't kidding? That was a terrible trick to play on me! Why did you do this?" Dr. Joe hollers, his eyes as big as saucers, a frown beginning to form on his flushed face. His fists are tight with wanting to hit something, but memory of the weakness holds him back.

"No kidding, Joe. Your body is fine. A little bit of exercise and you will be back to your old self. That's why they call me Dr. Happy. The patients always leave the hospital healthy. I hope that you now have a better insight to what agonies your patients go through when searching for a diagnosis and dealing with their diseases."

"You bet I do. I'm going to call a few clients right away! Somebody ought to write a book!"



David and Sheryl being silly, mid-1990s



Tami and David decorating the Christmas tree

"I know a few other doctors who need this kind of treatment too!" Joe thinks as he begins to understand the benefit of this unusual treatment.

Dr. Happy explains, "The way that doctors receive this treatment is they are recommended by either patients or fellow doctors, so you are welcome to make any suggestions you like."

"I sure understand now why I was one of the doctors chosen. My empathy level has changed dramatically in just a few days."

"That's the purpose of the program. Eventually all our medical professionals will find Virtual Medicine and our patients will be much better cared for."

The American Medical Association approved using Virtual Medicine to improve doctors' empathy with patients. The pilot program, which ran from June, 2000 to June, 2001, required doctors in three states to attend a week-long session of training. Results showed, above all, that doctors make the worst patients. However, it also illustrated how much more understanding the medical professionals can be when they have firsthand knowledge of the patients' experience. The above incident, taken from the pilot testing, illustrates the results most clearly. The Virtual Medicine will become a part of every doctor's retraining within the year.

Being Disabled

An essay by Sheryl. -eds.

The comments below are a result of my experiences and opinions as a disabled person living in today's world. They are in no way meant to be a comprehensive study of the problems faced by the disabled.

DEALING WITH DISABILITY The process of daily living gets a lot more complicated when a disability is involved. In my case its been a very gradual regression, so I didn't notice it most of the time, but then I'd try to do something I'd been doing all my life and find that I could no longer do it. Even simple things like putting dishes away after supper are difficult when you cannot raise your arms to reach into the cupboards. Opening and closing windows is impossible when you have no strength in your arms. Its a major project just to go to the store for a few groceries; even getting to and from the car is a challenge especially in the very hot and cold weather.

How I've dealt with this for the most part is to ignore what I can't do and try to concentrate on what I can do. In some way this is a denial of the disease and what it may be doing to me, but I cannot live my life thinking constantly of what I've lost and what I cannot do; its too depressing and serves no useful purpose. Its a lot more productive to live each day as it comes and try to make it as 'normal' as possible. I feel better physically when I treat each day as a challenge, something to get as much out of as I'm able. It makes me more productive and takes my mind off my problems. This is not unlike what happens when a child is upset because of some frustration and the parent gives the child a toy or a sweet to take their mind off the problem. That works pretty well with adults too.

Many of the events that would have seemed trivial 'in an earlier life' become much more important when



Sheryl went to several confernces about her disease run by the ASAP group. This is a photo from the event in California that she and Tami flew out for in 2001.



Visiting the beach with David and Tami on that same trip to southern California in 2001



David, ????, Sheryl, and Tami at the ASAP conference in southern California in 2001



Sheryl, David, and Tami at the San Diego Zoo, 2001

one is coping with a disability. The little kindnesses that I once enjoyed, like baking cookies for children and neighbors at Christmastime, are no longer possible without assistance. However, the reverse is true for the kindnesses others bestow on me. I find that an offer of help is very much appreciated yet I still find it difficult to ask for help. What is frustrating is that I know there is very little I can do in return for the assistance and that bothers me. I still remember when I was working and had little free time and I hate to interfere with the free time of others when there is little I can offer in return. Fortunately I am blessed with a wonderful Mom and neighbors and friends who don't wait for me to ask for help, but offer whenever they find the time. Without that help my life would be a lot more difficult than it already is.

I recently watched part of the Jerry Lewis Telethon for children with muscular dystrophy and he ended the show with a very appropriate song: "You'll Never Walk Alone". Now I often sing that to myself when I'm feeling low or scared. It helps!

DEGREES OF DISABILITY

Almost everyone has some sort of physical or mental problem to overcome, but most can deal with it fairly easily. Many people who have physical problems choose to deal with them alone so thay they will appear 'normal' and as a result do not get the support of others. People with problems such as diabetes, arthritis, food allergies, chronic bronchitis and many others have many of the same stresses in their lives as the severely disabled, and yet they can continue to attempt to live independently and many choose to try to live a 'normal' life. Why is it that 'normal' has so much attraction? People who have problems yet cope with everyday life as if they didn't are wanting to conform, and they can to some degree.

The severely disabled do not have that option. To them life is a long struggle just to get the things done that are

necessary to survival. While I am in no way diminishing the stress level of those who have problems but can cope, the stress level is a million times greater when you know that if things get much worse you'll be in a nursing home and have no control over your life at all. Worrying about if you can manage to cook the next meal, can get through a shower without falling, can get dressed without getting tangled in the clothes, even wondering if you'll be able to open the bottle of necessary medicine can make even the simplest life complicated.

LONELINESS

One of the hardest things to deal with is an overwhelming sense of loneliness. There is a sense of being different, set apart and not understood that is very real. A 'healthy' person can try to understand what having a disability means, but true understanding is impossible unless you have the same problems. Even a temporary disability will only give a glimpse of what some of the problems are. For example, a person with a broken leg has a great deal of trouble getting around and must make major alterations in lifestyle to deal with crutches and stairs, but broken legs heal and one always knows that the problem is temporary and 'normal' life can be resumed once the leg heals. A person with a permanent disability not only knows that this won't go away, but often knows that it will continue to get worse over time. Each loss of functioning is a loss of independence and freedom. (This is discussed further below)

There is no way a healthy person can ever conceive of the pain and frustration that go with living with a disability. Someone who can open doors, can run, jump, climb, swim, ski, and generally live as an independent person will always have difficulty relating to someone who becomes exhausted just getting from a chair to the bathroom, who cannot climb even a sidewalk curb, who has difficulty getting in and out of a bathtub. Those who have had their lives touched by someone with a disability have at least an inkling of what the problems are like, but it's very much like a white person truly understanding what it's like to be of African origin. You can try to understand as you would understand how to solve an algebraic formula, but you will never know it as you know how to ride a bike.

Still, it helps every time I can make another person even partially understand what it means to have a disability. It means that person has a better understanding of what life is like for me and for others. It helps them to know what can be done to improve my life and the lives of others like me. Simple things like opening



Sheryl with Helena and Tami, looking none too thrilled at her prize????

doors and offering to carry packages are a big help and they add a quality to both my day and that of the person offering the help.

I've found that talking to others who have similar problems also helps to lessen the feeling that I am alone. There are lots of people who share the problems I face. Some of them are reluctant to talk about their problems either because it's easier to deny the problems, because some of the problems are embarrassing or because they don't want pity. These are the same reasons behind why some folks will refuse an offer of help even though they need it. It's hard sometimes for anyone to ask for assistance regardless of physical problems; we all like to think that we can do everything on our own, but I've found that asking for help is also asking for friendship and that's a neat thing to have.

What is truly frustrating is not knowing from day to day what new things I will be unable to do. My particular illness involves a slow loss of muscle control and that means that over time I continue to lose abilities and thus need to go through periodic phases of mourning for losses and relearning to cope in new ways. This process does not help to fight the battle I have to fight almost daily with depression. In this way my disease even separates me from those who have disabilities that are more steady, like spinal cord accidents, since their loss is all at once and then they learn to deal with it and don't have to be concerned with continual worsening of their condition. Some would say it couldn't get worse, but it seems that there is always another step down.

WAYS TO HELP

- Open doors. If you are involved in building, make doors easy to open and without high thresholds. This makes life easier for the able-bodied as well as the disabled. A parent pushing a stroller or a person carrying packages has just as much trouble with heavy doors as a person in a wheelchair.

- Ask questions. Often people skirt around questions about a disability because they don't want to pry, but asking shows that you want to know more about the person behind the disability and that lessens the feeling of loneliness. Young children are especially good at this because they have not yet built up their inhibitions. There will be times when the disabled person refuses to answer, but just showing an interest is a step in the right direction.

- Don't be put off if someone turns down an offer of help or refuses to answer a question. We all need to be as independent as we can be, just let them try and offer again at another time. Also, disabled folks have more than their share of frustrations and may be having a bad day. That doesn't mean that they might not be more receptive at another time. Remember it's the asking that conveys that you care and want to help and want to know the other person. Even if they don't answer you've still helped.

- Include the disabled in your activities. This may mean making a little more effort to transport a wheelchair, it may mean providing seating so that someone can rest or it might mean taking someone along

on a shopping trip and carrying their purchases for them. Being out of the house is a luxury for someone who cannot get out on their own and doing so with a friend is a special treat.

- Ask “Can I get you anything while I’m out?” Those of us who cannot shop on our own have the same needs as others, but we often cannot hop in a car and go get things, so we often make do or do without rather than impose on someone. Picking up a few items while you are shopping can be a special gift for someone who otherwise would have had to do without.

- Don’t be afraid of those who are disabled. In nearly every case the disease is not contagious to folks who do not have intimate contact with the disabled person. Many times small children show a fear of the disabled because they don’t understand why people get diseases. Older people sometimes show the same fear because the disabilities are reminders that everyone is aging and may be in a similar condition someday soon. The golden rule applies very well here. Treat others as you would want to be treated if you were in a similar physical state, and hopefully someone will do the same for you should you ever need it.

- If you are walking/talking with a disabled person who uses a cane or walker, slow your pace to theirs. Otherwise they may try to keep up with you and overexert. In this situation it is difficult to ask the mobile person to slow down since it takes most of the disabled person’s effort to walk and keep track of a conversation. Its later when the muscles are protesting that it occurs to them that they overdid.

LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE

Our whole life is geared toward being independent. From the time a child is two and into the `no’ stage life is a process of learning what is needed to be independent. If I could have a penny for each time I offered to help one of my children , but they’d say “I can do it myself!”, I’d probably be rich! Teenagers are also well known for their attempts to become independent. Anyone with a drivers license remembers the exultation associated with getting their own driver’s license and being freed from some parental controls. Unfortunately, dealing with a disability means giving up a lot of that independence. It means asking for help to do all the things the disability makes impossible. Many people are dependent on others for transportation, for grocery shopping, cooking, house cleaning. Some of the more severely disabled are dependent on others for dressing, bathing and other more personal chores.



*Helena and Sheryl shortly after arriving
in San Francisco, 2002*

The emotions that this enforced reliance on others causes include a lot of grief and anger. The disabled person can go through all the stages of emotion that one goes through after the loss of a loved one. In a very real sense the loss of control over your body is a loss of a part of yourself.

The level of disability typically varies from day to day just as how a healthy person feels changes. The level of independence and level of control a person feels over his/her life has a great deal of impact on how they feel. Someone who has just lost a job will usually be depressed; similarly one who has recently lost one more level of independence is depressed. It is to everyone’s benefit for the disabled individual to stay as independent as possible for as long as possible. For example, it makes sense to stay ambulatory and out of a wheelchair for as long as is physically safe. Once a person is wheelchair bound, the loss of mobility tends to cause other physical problems (backaches, pressure sores, etc.) as well as the corresponding emotional problems.

LOSS OF PRIVACY

Along with the gradual worsening of my condition comes a growing need to have things done by others. This can be as simple as needing someone else to do the housecleaning (which never gets done the way I’d like it) to needing help dressing, bathing and even going to the bathroom. No matter what the level of need there is a built in loss of privacy along with it. One of my biggest complaints is that there is always somebody watching me. If I want to do something without an audience I have to ask, and there are times it just isn’t physically possible. Sometimes the best I can do is to change the watcher. There is a constant feeling that someone is always waiting for me...to wake up, to finish in the bathroom, whatever, and that makes for a definite loss of privacy. Luckily my thoughts are still my own, though little else is.

EXAMPLES OF PROBLEMS IN MOBILITY

- A short while ago I wrote to a local business to let them know that their wheelchair was not much use to folks since it was stored in the administrative offices which are closed on nights and weekends. The reply I received indicated that I could call the offices during normal business hours and make special arrangements to use the chair during the off hours. While it is helpful that the administrators have made allowances to make the chair available, the method still emphasizes the problem. A healthy person does not need to plan a shopping trip one or two days in advance. Why does a disabled person need to plan that far ahead?

- The issue of how much a business must do to improve accessibility has been discussed more recently because of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Its too soon to tell if this will improve matters, but in my community right now there are very few places that I can go without assistance because I can no longer open the doors to most businesses. I cannot even get in and out of my doctors’ offices without help because of the heavy doors. The results of this problem are both good and bad. I need to have help when I have to go to these places, but I’ve found that I spend a lot less because I cannot act on impulse and shop

whenever the mood strikes.

- Something that most people take for granted is opening the mail. Because of a loss of muscle control, I and others like me have a great deal of difficulty opening certain types of mail. The computer self-mailers present a special challenge, and most packages are next to impossible. Bills with perforated return sections that are not along a fold often end up torn in all the wrong places. Each time it is necessary to ask someone else to help, the disabled give up one more piece of freedom.

EMPLOYMENT

The way the current system works, once a person is receiving disability money there is no incentive to even try going back to work. Private disability plans often require dollar for dollar exchange at best for all earned income and at worst they stop paying entirely. This does not allow a person to try to earn a living with any assurances that, if the disability problems cause too much trouble, they will be able to return to the insurance moneys without having to wait through another 5 month period to requalify. Similarly, if a person is successful in returning to work, the Medicare coverage ceases, necessitating that either a private insurance picks up the bills or the individual pays the bills. The very nature of disabilities often means that a person cannot get private insurance.

In many communities, a person needing ‘personal care’ (assistance with grooming, cooking, cleaning etc.) receives that care and pays based on a sliding income scale. Once that person returns to the work force, he/she must pay full fee for the same care. For many with severe physical problems this cost alone eats up enough of the income that they are worse off working than they were when they were receiving disability money. Some states have some leeway allowing for a portion of earned income to be set aside and using the remaining income only to determine the sliding scale payments. To put this in monetary terms, a person needing 6 hours of care each day could need to pay \$15 per hour or more full fee as opposed to \$6 per hour on a sliding scale. When this is multiplied out times 365 days a year, the cost is very high (nearly \$20,000 per year difference).

Even with all these disincentives, many people feel a strong urge to return to work. The sense of self worth, the companionship of coworkers, the desire to contribute something to society, these all are strong motivators, but few are willing to work for free. Our society needs to make some concessions to the disabled if we are to try to utilize all the knowledge and experience locked in their minds.



In Muir Woods with Susan Hegland, Tami, David, Sheryl, Lisa Clark, and Helena, 2002

ECHOES IN THE NIGHT

This is a fictional piece by Sheryl inspired by imagining that she could meet her childhood friend who was blind, Dick Crane. -ed.

The quiet of the night was shattered by an eerie sound setting all the neighborhood dogs barking. I leaped from the safety of my bed to try to find the cause for alarm. The cloudy moonless night amplified the odd noise and the barking. It was a strange squeaky dissonance that could have come from anything.

I trembled as I stood at my back door terrified about what was going on in my normally peaceful neighborhood. The hair on my arms stood on end as I heard the harsh music echo again, always seeming to come from a different place, but always close by. It was not anything I had ever heard but it was something I was not going to forget.

A strong wind blew across the yard shaking all the leaves and casting shadows everywhere. The light from my yard lamp flickered and died, throwing the whole area into total darkness. The wind carried the sound in every direction as it echoed in the darkness so that it was impossible to determine the source of the commotion.

Suddenly I saw a tall balding man carrying a white cane emerge from the bushes. My eyes widened in surprise as I realized I was looking at my childhood friend Dick! My mind was whirling in panic as I knew this was a special meeting. Dick’s clothes were rumpled and dusty but his demeanor was calm and there was nothing about him to warrant my fear.

“Dick! What are you doing in my yard in the middle of the night?” I asked. “The noises I heard terrified me! I was ready to call the police!”

“Hold your horses! Dick quipped. “It’s cold as ice out here and black as pitch!” He always talked as though he were sighted. He walked toward me swinging that cane, never missing a step. As always, he knew right where I was.

“I was terrified! There was no way to know what was making that eerie sound! I thought you were a ghost!”

“I am sorry I scared you to death. I haven’t bitten that bullet yet!” he laughed playfully. “I couldn’t get your gate closed to save my soul. I am clumsy as an ox. “

Finally “Sheryl, I was feeling my age and wanted to see old pals before I kicked the bucket. I didn’t realize that you lived in the middle of nowhere or I would have started earlier.”

As my fear subsided I found I could be excited about this visit because Dick and I shared more as adults than we had before. Now we would get a chance to share some of our feelings about being disabled. I did

think though that it would be easier to talk with him if his vocabulary were less trite.

“Dick, are you ill?” I asked worriedly.

“No, I just wanted to walk down memory lane a bit and chat with a friend. Most of my friends are gone and I am lonely.”

I led him indoors and settled him down for a little rest before our reminiscing and tried to catch a little more sleep myself. Though I didn’t actually sleep I did manage to calm down and gather my thoughts. There was so much to share with him.

In the morning we sat at the kitchen table, dressed in our p.j.s, with a nice warm cup of coffee. First we talked about what had happened during the many years since we had last been together. I bragged about my children, he talked about his travels and we reminisced about our past.

Talking with Dick was like returning to the ocean that I have missed so dearly over the years. His easy, relaxed manner was like the waves caressing my mind, his sharp wit like the call of the seagulls beckoning me to be my best, to open up the corners of my mind.

As we regained our comfortable friendship we started talking more about the things that mattered most.

“I never thanked you for being my friend and not singling me out because I was blind. True friends are rare especially for those of us who are different. That is the major reason I wanted to visit you now.” He was being honest and I responded in kind.

“You were always a good friend.” I confessed. “Even when we were apart our friendship has helped me to come to terms with the fact that my body is not perfect. You always lived and acted as though you were just as ‘normal’ as anyone else and I never had any reason to treat you differently. Then when I became partially paralyzed I borrowed from your lessons and refused to give up. Every day is a struggle but it is much easier when I approach it with a smile just as you always have.”



Tami and Chris, 2003

Searching for a Cure.

Another fictional piece by Sheryl clearly inspired by her love of science fiction writing. -eds.

“I’ll meet you in my office after you dress.” Dr. Rudy Kelp said as he moved towards the cubicle door, the wrinkles on his forehead a clear indication that he was not happy with his news.

Martha Dawes dressed quietly in the examining room. Her movements were slow and methodical, conserving energy. Her blue eyes clouded with worry over what the news would be. For months now, her usual energetic self had been hiding somewhere behind sighs and impatience with every little problem. Her two room Boston apartment in the quiet part of town had been gathering dust, her tiny garden gathering weeds. Her afternoon tea and cards with friends was forgotten in favor of regular afternoon naps. Martha finished dressing in her long navy-blue cotton dress, collected her clutch purse and walked into the doctor’s office.

“Rudy, what is wrong with me? Please don’t hide the truth. You know I can take it.” she asked her longtime friend.

Dr. Kelp pushed his eyeglasses up higher on his nose, a nervous habit that almost drew a smile from his lifelong friend.

“I am afraid the news is not good. Your heart is just worn out. There’s nothing I can do. In another few years, maybe, but I am afraid you don’t have that much time.” Rudy sighed heavily.

Martha’s heart suddenly felt like it was pounding in her chest, ticking away like a time bomb.

“How long?”

“Maybe 6 months, maybe a year. You will have to slow down. Get help at home. Maybe get someone to live in?” Rudy asked hopefully as he reached to hold her hands, years of friendship showing in those gentle brown eyes.

Martha was trying to concentrate. She clutched her navy purse tightly. No crying now! There was too much to do and so little time.

“I’ll have to t-tell the children. and make arrangements. They will need someone to care for them!.. oh! “ She started sobbing. Rudy came around the desk to hold her shoulders and give her support.

“There just isn’t much time.” Martha said, dabbing her eyes with her lace handkerchief. “Peter and Lucy are so young! “

Rudy’s saddened eyes studied the youthful form of his patient and friend.

“I - I wanted to see my grandchildren!” She sobbed into her handkerchief spoiling the delicately starched flowers she had embroidered there.

“Martha, please. All this crying is making you worse!” Rudy said as he held her shoulders.

“I don’t know how Lucy will take it. She has had so much trouble in her short life, and she still needs lots of care. Peter will bluster and holler to hide his fear. “ Martha smiled sadly, love for her children in her eyes.

“My Dad loves the children. I hope he and his housekeeper will be willing to care for them.” Martha thought. “Their farmhouse will be a wonderful place for my babies to grow up.”

“Could I have your help breaking the news to my Dad and my children?” Martha asked quietly; she was busily planning how to deal with this crisis, trying as always to put her children first. Still tears clouded her pretty blue eyes.

She watched Rudy’s caring brown eyes as puddles began to form in the corners. Her hand reached out and touched his cheek softly. “I will miss you too friend.” she said.

“Of course Martha. I will help you explain to your family.” Will you let me bring something?” He said as he buried her head in his chest.

His silent tears fell warmly on her auburn curls.

Martha pulled away. “Oh Dear!! You said 6 months! I can at least cook for my children!

I will make something easy... meat loaf.” Now sparks were back in those pretty blue eyes. She would fight to the last for her children.

James Dawes, a 60 year old farmer, sat quietly at the kitchen table as Martha and Rudy told their story. Sara, James’ 48 year old housekeeper, refilled the coffee cups as tears silently coursed down her cheeks.

“Of course I will gladly take care of the children! They have been the joy that has kept me young all these years.” James said as he held his daughter’s hand tightly in his own. “Sara will enjoy having someone else to cook for who doesn’t grumble all the time.” He smiled up at his longtime friend and companion.

“Lucy’s blindness won’t be a problem because she is familiar with the farm.” Sara said trying to think of positive things to say as she passed around another plate of cookies, but nobody was hungry.

“Are you sure there is nothing that can be done?” James asked Rudy. Sadness covered the room like a quilt as the doctor shook his head.

“Dad, can you and Sara come with us to talk to the children? We need a strong show of support to insure them that they will be all right even after I am gone.” Martha was still organizing this to make this as easy as possible on her babies.

“You bet we’ll come! Just let me get Reb!” Rebel was the children’s favorite farm dog. He had been a pup when Peter was born. Now he had a beautiful long collie coat that both children loved to brush.

Everyone sat in the living room, watching Peter and Lucy pet Reb. Reb was the happiest one there. He loved his young friends. Martha started her explanation. “Peter and Lucy, Mommy has a problem.”

Both children sensed the seriousness of the discussion and went over to their Mom. “My heart is sick and Dr. Rudy says I may have to go to heaven like your Daddy.” Peter’s eyes grew large as he turned his head to look at each person in the room. Martha knew he was hoping for someone to deny this horrible thing. Lucy reached for her mother’s hand and crawled into her lap.

Peter, began to pace the parlor floor, his hands in his pockets, grumbling to himself. He was tall for a ten year old and Martha could feel his confusion and worry. Martha hurt inside for her sensitive son who would have to grow up so fast.

“I feel so - so cooped up in here!” Peter said to Martha, as he looked around at all the ferns in the tiny apartment. “What are we going to do? We still need you! Who will look after Lucy? Who will take care of me?” He looked straight at his grandpa as he asked, almost knowing the answer.

Lucy was a tiny blind 6 year old with long brown hair. She cried on the couch as she held her mom tightly. Martha was trying to be brave but this whole meeting was exhausting. Rudy explained how few options were available, trying to be gentle, honest and quick. He could tell that all this emotion was not helping Martha at all.

“There HAS to be a way!” Peter exploded. “You know I read all the time about how miracles can happen. A time machine, a newly discovered cure, something.”

Grandpa’s eyes lit up at this thought, but he didn’t say anything. Martha wondered what crazy scheme had crossed his mind, but she was too concerned with her children right now.

Lucy looked hopefully in Rudy’s direction. “She’s only 40! I need her here!” Lucy cried.



David, Sheryl, Tami, and Chris at Tami’s wedding, 2005

Rudy shook his head sadly and said: “Scientists are still researching what can be done in these cases. There is very little hope that a cure will be found within the time your mother has left.”

“Grandpa and Sara would like to take care of you if anything happens to me. Do you like that idea?” Martha asked.

“You can play with Reb all the time and I’ll even let you help me with the farm?” Grandpa asked softly, praying that they would want to come.

“I’ll make lots of your favorite foods, and I’ll even let you bring Reb in the house. “ Sara said, drawing a sharp look from James and Martha because she had never let the dog in before.

“I want to stay with you!” Both children said addressing their mother. Martha shook her head. “How about if we all go out to the farm? Then grandpa and Sara can take care of all of us?”

Grampa slapped his knee, “A great idea!” Sara smiled and even Rudy grinned at the most sensible temporary solution.

Lucy just finished washing the supper dishes for Sara when Peter burst into the kitchen, his gangly 10 year old body full of energy.

“Where’s Ma?” he asked gruffly.

“She is resting and I don’t think you should bother her. “ Lucy said bravely. Martha could hear the fear in Lucy’s voice from her bed in the room across from the kitchen.

“Who is that?” Martha called and both children ran to her door.

“I knew you would wake her!” Lucy dug at Peter’s ribs. Giving her a quick push, Peter ran in to sit on the bed. He glanced into his mother’s sad eyes while holding her tiny hand.

“Mom, Grandpa and I have found a man who really has done time travel! He has sent mice into the future and then retrieved them. He hasn’t ever sent a human being but he’s willing to talk to you.”

“Peter! you wouldn’t?” cried Lucy. “What if something happens? It’s dangerous!”

He gave his younger sister a dark look of disgust. “ And walking around with a weak heart is safe?”



Helena, Sheryl, Tami, at Tami’s wedding, 2005

As Martha and her father walked into Joe’s lab, he was mumbling to himself.

“There are so many variables!” Joe said as he sat at his workbench meticulously scribbling “I need to allow for larger mass and weight of a person, a longer time period...”

He scribbled numbers on his worksheet and mumbled to himself. As he saw his visitors, he welcomed them in, his eyes widening as he looked at Martha. She blushed at his look, not knowing why for sure, but she liked him already.

“James, who is this pretty lady?” Joe turned his best smile on Martha. “Just because I am past 45 doesn’t mean I have forgotten what to say to the pretty ladies.” A blush crept up her pale cheeks adding a little color to show what she might have looked like before her illness. Martha was angry at herself. She had never blushed so much in her life!

“After talking to James, I am willing to try my machine with a person, but I am far from convinced that it will

work. His fingers twirled the pencil around in his hand as he stared at the worksheet. “There are so many possible flaws in this logic!”

“I understand your situation and truly want to be able to help, I just don’t want to kill you in the process.” Joe said.

As they were talking, the latest mouse trial showed remarkable success. The gray creature appeared in the casing, just where Joe had placed him last month. Martha gasped at that sight.

“A month is the longest trial so far and now James wants me to try for 10 years. I get a headache with all the changes required.” Joe’s eyes traveled all over Martha, making her blush again as she realized that he was looking at her as a woman and not just an experiment.

“You sure are not old enough! Not old enough to die!” he said as he shook his head at the unfairness of it all.

“Martha, please sit down. I need to make sure that you understand how experimental this is! James has convinced me that you want to do this, but I need to know that you understand the risks.”

Martha nodded quietly, knowing she would not understand but wanting to please this kind and gentle man.

“I could send you farther into the future than you want or I could send you to tomorrow. I have never tried this with a person, so I can only guess.”

“I understand.” Martha said quietly. “It is worth the risk to be able to see my grandchildren.”

“Also, once you are there, there is no way to get back as far as I know. The anti-grav thrust that pushes you into the future will dissipate once you are there. The machine will not work for a return trip.”

“I am sure that the theory of time travel is more than I can understand if it is giving you a headache.” Martha said as she watched Joe rub his forehead.

“I have to worry about keeping an area empty to give you a place to ‘land’, worrying about the potential of you being in two time zones at once which would cause further energy drain on your already ill body.” It all showed in Joe’s eyes as they clouded with concern.

Lucy cried “Mom, don’t worry about me! I will be fine”

“I am only going to talk to him today. Peter and Grandpa will take care of you.” Martha said as she hoped that Lucy was not feeling like a burden on her family. She smoothed down her light blue cotton dress and walked out the door leaving her daughter - again. It reminded her of when Lucy was 2 and leaving home was so hard. Joe greeted her outside the house with a big smile as he opened the door to his 1937 Buick. He was very proud of being seen with such a lovely lady in his fancy car. Martha’s black mood evaporated when she saw his smile and the gorgeous flowers he held out to her.

“I thought we would have supper at Daily’s Diner before we settle down to working on measurements?” he asked hesitantly. “I want to spend as much time with you as I can.” He grinned boyishly.

“Fine.” Martha blushed. She had not been alone with a strange man for many years and felt a little awkward.



Helena and Tami at Tami’s wedding, 2005

They talked about all sorts of things as they ate. They both came from large families, both had lived in the Boston area all their lives, so it was surprising that they had never met. They both enjoyed sea food too. “I am overwhelmed by your strength, your courage and your beauty.” He blurted out suddenly. Martha was very attracted to him, but tried to ignore her feelings. This was not a time to start new relationships.

After supper they stopped at the workshop for more measurements. Joe enjoyed every minute of measuring Martha’s height and weight. She was very nervous at such familiarity, but didn’t know what to do. She did not want to appear forward, but she kind of liked it.

After a final check of her waist size, Joe said: “That should be all.”

Martha let out a big sigh of relief. “When do we do it?”

“First I want to put something your size in here and send it to next week as a test. Then we will be more comfortable with the machinery and the calculations. You have grown too precious to me to lose!” he said as he held her hand.

Marsha blushed and lowered her eyes, feeling warm and cared for with this kind man.

“Joe! The experiment is not working!!” Martha cried when she saw Joe spinning the dials on the time machine the next day as the test bundle refused to disappear.

“Martha, don’t worry, I can fix it.” Joe soothed as he began to recalibrate everything, ignoring the rest of the family nervously staring at the machinery.

Peter watched solemnly as he stood by holding Lucy’s hand. Martha wondered if he was hoping that the experiment would fail so that she would stay with him. “Peter, no matter what, my heart will not get better here. I need to leave you for a little while.”

Peter looked up, trying to hide the tears. “I know, Mom. I will help take care of Lucy and Grandpa.”

Suddenly Martha cried “Ohh!” as she placed her hands over her chest and crumpled to the floor struggling for breath. Joe and Peter rushed to her side.

“What is it? Mom? MOM!” Lucy wailed as she tried to move forward on her own in the strange workshop, stumbling around a stool.

“Mom!! Please! Please be ok!” Peter begged.

“Martha, just rest for a bit, breathe slowly. What can I do?” Joe asked feeling totally helpless.

“ Should we call Dr. Rudy?” Peter asked as he tried to steer Lucy around their fallen mother.

“Everyone stop your fussing. I am all right.” Martha said quietly once she caught her breath.

“My knees just went funny and I fell. I’m ok now.”

“Maybe we had better skip the test run and get you where you need to be.” Joe suggested.

Lucy and Peter just stood there in shock. They had never seen their Mom so weak.

“We can put this off a day if you like?” James asked hesitantly as he stood with Joe and Martha, ready to try the time capsule for real. They had skipped the final test because Martha was feeling weaker and weaker. There was no more time to waste.

“No, Dad, I love you all and I know my time is running out. I need to get myself to that cure. Please take care of my babies. They are good kids.” She kissed her son and daughter.

“Good-bye Joe and thank you for all you have done.” She blushed as Joe also gave her a quick hug.

Joe watched as he turned the switch, “I will keep your image in my heart. See you soon!”

Martha walked slowly out of the dusty office into the daylight of a different year.

“What year was she in? Had they discovered a way to cure her ailing heart?”

Thousands of questions swirled around in her head as she tried to orient herself. There were cars everywhere!



Tami, Chris, Helena, Sheryl, David, Sarah Hegland, Tom, Susan Hegland, Corine Hegland, at David & Melissa’s wedding, 2006 in Pittsburgh

People bustling along towards tall buildings that had not been there in her own time. Women in short shorts and some man with green hair and a single earring was selling flowers! Her son, Peter, was supposed to meet her, but nobody looked familiar and she was so tired!

“Can I help you?” a 50ish blond man asked softly.

“I must look pretty shaky”, she thought.

“Do you feel all right?”

“I need to know what day this is.” Martha asked knowing that she must sound very strange. This man looked safe, but she was wary of strangers.

“Wednesday.”

“No, what year?”

“August, 1997.” he replied, looking at her carefully to see if she was joking or what.

“Oh dear! Now what?” Martha said, realizing that she had been sent 50 years instead of 10. What should she do? Where were her children? They would be past their 60s already. Older than their mother! Suddenly she began to feel faint.

“I think we need to take you to a hospital. “ The strange man said. “I don’t like the way you are looking at all.”

He gently took her arm. “Let me get a cab and take you there, luv?” he asked in his combination of Brookline accent and London twang.

Martha was too exhausted to disagree and soon found herself at Boston Medical Center with this stranger.

“Thank you.” she said, not knowing what else to say. The cab ride had been something she could not believe, with incredible speeds, horn blowing, screeching stops. She wondered if this was safe at all!

“My name is Tony.” he said politely. “Can I call someone for you?”

Martha started crying and explained to Tony how she came to be where she was. Tony’s eyes grew larger and larger and Martha knew he finally believed she was telling the truth and she really was from 1947.

“You are indeed a stranger to this land. I have been a stranger too. I would be honored to help out. I will stay and wait to see what the doctors say.” he said as he took her hand.

Three days later, Tony helped Martha into a cab once again, this time her color was better and her smile wider.

“Your new pacemaker has already changed your appearance so much that you look years younger.” Tony said.

“I can’t believe I have a machine in my body! How strange.” Martha mused.

“You are so kind! You have given me so much. Now I must learn how to live in this new world” she told him, dreading being alone in this bewildering place. Tony gently shepherded her towards the street as she wondered whether she had enough money to pay for all of this.

“You can come home with me, luv. I have a guest room and nobody will bother you while you get used to being healthy again and decide what you want to do.”

Martha sighed her relief.

“I know how hard it is to get used to a strange land because I emigrated from England . I had to learn the hard way that you must look and sound like everyone else if you want to have friends. I care about what happens to you, lovely lady. Your adventuresome spirit is amazing and your perseverance awe inspiring.”

“If I stay with you, then I will cook and clean.” Martha insisted. Now that she was feeling better, that was better than just hanging around, at least until she found her family. “ In my free time I will try to find my family.”

While Tony was at his counseling job, she went around the apartment cleaning and looking at all the unusual things. Tony had shown her his huge television... in color even! and talked about tapes and CDs whatever they were. She just left all the newfangled things alone and hummed to herself as she folded the laundry. At least the washer/dryer were not too hard to figure out. She blushed a bit as she folded his underwear. It looked mighty skimpy! She looked through the telephone book, searching for her children’s names. There was no Peter Dawes or Lucy Dawes. No Dr. Rudy Kelp.

“Oh!” She started crying realizing that her father had probably died long ago. She had not had a chance to say good-bye. She remembered that Peter was going to be a lawyer, so maybe his name would appear under lawyers; no luck. Maybe the Lawyers’ Association would have a record? Finally, she had a number! 555-4354. Hmmmm, this phone didn’t have a dialer. Nobody was there to take the number when she picked up the receiver. Just buttons. She tried pressing the buttons,



Adam, Lori, Arthur, and Michele Altenderfer, Melissa, David, Susan Hegland, Helena, Tom, Sheryl, Chris, Tami, Corine and Sarah Hegland at David and Melissa’s wedding in 2006 in Pittsburgh, PA

“You have reached...”

“Can you help me?” Martha asked, but the lady just kept right on talking as if Martha had not said anything!

“...If you are looking for an attorney, press 4...”

Martha didn’t understand why she needed to press more numbers, but she pressed the button.

“If you are currently charged with a crime, press one. If you want to sue someone press 2...”

Martha was getting frustrated with this lady who would not answer her questions, so she pressed 1 and 2 hoping that the lady would stop her rambling and talk to her. “Incorrect response. If you are currently....” Everything was repeating. Martha sighed and waited for this telephone person to run out of steam. Finally she heard: “If you are looking for a specific person press 9.” She pressed 9

hopefully.

“All our lines are busy...” Martha could not get anyone to answer her! No wonder their lines are busy, she thought. They never stop talking! She hung up and decided to ask Tony tonight.

Going into the kitchen, she looked into the refrigerator. All she could find were lots of little packages with pictures of meals. No meat, no eggs, no vegetables. She read the directions carefully. “Place package in the microwave for 2 minutes...”

“In the what?” Martha thought. She looked around the kitchen.

Several strange machines sat along the counter. The only one that was recognizable was a coffee maker and it was glass so how could she put it on the stove! The machine that had “Microwave” written on it had all sorts of numbers. Martha tried pressing a few but the machine just beeped at her. Maybe she could cook the

package in the oven. She searched for matches to light the oven... No matches!

When Tony came home, Martha was sitting quietly on the couch, tears of frustration falling slowly down her cheeks. Nothing had worked all day. All the new machines baffled her and she wanted to find her children. Tony consoled her and started to explain how to use the microwave and what the telephone girl was trying to do. But Martha was too tired to understand. This strange new world was complicated. She was homesick for her tiny apartment and her family.

Tony called for ‘Pizza’, another thing she had never heard of. Nobody delivered prepared food in 1947. When she tasted the pizza, Martha decided there was something good about this time after all.

She sat there with Tony and talked all night about her family and the time she had come from. Tony held her hand and listened quietly, every story telling him more and more about this woman he was becoming very attracted to.

“You are such a good listener! Tell me something about yourself.” she asked.

“I came here from England when very young. My parents and a sister moved west when I was 12, and I have been here with an aunt ever since. I have tried to change my speech and my looks to try to fit in, so I understand a little of what you are going through.”

“I want to help you find your family.” he said as he held her hand. He talked about the major events that happened since her time, about World War II and Viet Nam and new presidents and computers. She knew he wanted to make her more comfortable in his time. She listened avidly, thinking how relaxing and safe his voice made her feel. Neither one noticed the time until the sun was creeping back into the sky.

The next day Martha took a taxi back to that old dusty building where she had emerged from the time machine. Maybe there would be a hint somewhere. Sure enough, after a quick look around, Martha found a picture of Lucy and a handsome man and two beautiful children. And a second picture of Peter and an older boy. She wondered where his wife was? What happened to Joe? Would she ever find them again? Suddenly the remnants of the time machine began to brighten and hum. As quick as a blink, there was Joe, looking just as he had when she left him. His face turned into a huge smile when he saw her!. “At last! Martha, you don’t



Sheryl with her van. Her van was amazing; she could drive right up the ramp and into a special locking mechanism built for her wheelchair. She was able to drive up until 2011.

know how good it is to see you! I have been hopping around different times trying to find you. I thought for sure I had sent you away forever.”

“Joe!” Martha started crying and hugged him to her. He turned a bright red, but did nothing to stop her embrace.

“What happened to me? Are Peter and Lucy all right? Are Dad and Sara still around? How did you get here? Can you return? Can I return?” She was so full of questions, she couldn’t give him time to answer.

“We have 24 hours before the machine will disappear.” he said. “I would like very much to bring you back with me.” he looked at her with his heart in his eyes. Martha did not know what to do.

Joe and Tony sat on opposite ends of the sofa while Joe explained how his original machine had mis-calibrated and overshot the time he wanted.

“I can’t talk about the children. It has to do with parallel universes that result from changes in time lines. What happens in a given world can change depending on what people do.”

Martha didn’t understand.

Joe said that his machine could take her back to her original time, but whatever they did had to be soon before the fact that she was here and now changed the course of history for this time. Tony was listening carefully, nodding his head. He seemed to be making at least partial sense of all of this because he too enjoyed reading science fiction.

“Once you return to your own time you cannot return here.” Joe explained. “We have found that time travelers change the way things happen in whatever time they are in. Even my use of this machine is dangerous.”

Martha looked at Tony whom she had come to care for, to whom she owed a great deal and wondered how she could stand to leave him behind. She wouldn’t miss those phone calls or the machines with fancy buttons though.

“I have to go back to my family! But I will miss you. You have been my support during this difficult time.” She said as she thought, “I wish he could return with us.”

Tony looked at Joe and saw that the other man also had feelings for this special woman. What could he do? “I will miss you too. You have become a special part of my life.” He said, “I can’t ask you to give up returning to your children.”

Martha looked at both men. She knew she had to decide but she didn’t know either man well enough to make such a big decision. “Joe, could Tony return with us?” she asked, surprising all of them.

“He could return, but he would have to make sure that he did not act on any knowledge that he has of what will happen. That is a difficult task.” Joe said.

Tony said “I can do that. My job as a counselor keeps me out of the areas that would provide the most temptation. “ He looked into Martha’s eyes, “Are you sure that you want me? Forever?”

“Tony, where I come from, all relationships are forever. But to be honest, I don’t know you well enough yet, so it may not be to your advantage.” Joe’s eyes brightened at this comment. He knew he still had a chance. Both looked at Tony.

“After seeing how much trouble you had adjusting to life here and now, I think I will be best staying here.” Tony said. “Joe will take good care of you and I am not ready to jump so far back in time and lose all of my family. You have taught me how important family is.”

“Come give me a good-bye kiss.” he said, holding out his long arms. Martha walked to him easily and hugged him tight.

“I will miss you, but will never forget.”

Peter and Lucy hugged Martha when she returned. Joe whispered to Martha that she had returned to a time only two days after she had left. Both were overjoyed to see their mom with such good color and such a big smile.

“Did you get your heart fixed that fast?” “What was it like?” Martha shook her head slowly. It was hard to talk about things that hadn’t happened yet.

“What will happen?” asked Peter.

“Will I ever find a husband?” asked Lucy.

Martha smiled, looked at Joe and said:

“Wait and see.”

Every day was just as precious as before, but now she felt more at peace with her life and her family. She knew she would have time to try out this new relationship with Joe. However long she had would be long enough.

IN MY DREAMS

by Sheryl Andre

In my dreams I walk and run,
and jump and run some more,
I play in the snow, in the water
and in the sand.

In my dreams I shop and ski
and have lots of energy
for everything.

In my dreams there is no pain,
no stomach trouble and no shame,
There’s no freezing cold
and no dizzy spells.

In my dreams I travel and try
to live the most in every day.
There’s room for everything.

I still try to live the most each day.
O what fun if dreams came true
What a fuller life for me and you.

Chapter 9: Memere

Editor's note: We took the discretion of putting this short photo-essay, about Sheryl's as a grandmother, before the chapter about her relationship with Jesus largely because Sheryl would want her faith showcased as the last chapter of her life and her message.



On December 16, 2008, Sheryl became Memere when Josephine Helena Andre was born in San Francisco. Sheryl came out to visit in January 2009 with Tami and Chris. The picture on the right is Sheryl's big smile at meeting her granddaughter for the first time. On the facing page is Sheryl holding Josie for the first time and a picture of Josie from January 2009.

Sheryl's joy at having a grandchild was palpable. She went through such physical torment to travel across the country to get a few more days of visiting time with her. She was a good parental advisor as well. While she wasn't afraid to sometimes say 'I told you there'd be payback' she also had a great deal of useful, practical advice and perspective to share.





From the upper right, clockwise: Josie skyped with her Memere nearly every Saturday for 3.5 years. Josie pushing “Memere” virtually around in the wagon, on a visit in 2010; Sheryl feeding Josie in Iowa in 2009. The Skyping became quite a thing, and Sheryl started recording images of Josie and our family from each chat and then annotating them with what she thought Josie might be thinking (and later with what she was saying). She collected all of these images, and a memorial book of all of these images is in the works. As was true for much of her life, Sheryl led the way when it came to incorporating digital technology into her life.



Getting Josie together with Memere usually made for much laughter.



Visiting in June of 2010; playing with teapots and reading; then, visiting San Francisco over Thanksgiving of 2010 and reading with Josie in the giraffe suit that was her nearly permanent attire at the time.



Top left: Josie and Sheryl playing ice-cream store in the Reiman Gardens Garden. Bottom left -- family portrait after feeding the ducks at Lake Laverne in Ames with Sheryl, Margee Hay, Paul Hay, Tom, Melissa, Josie, and David. Right: Visiting the Des Moines Zoo with Jason Volmer, Melissa, Susan Hegland, Sheryl, Thomas, and Josie.



Left: three generations! Right: visiting the Story City Carousel in the summer of 2012.



Top: Sheryl, Tami, and Josie in the butterfly exhibit at Reiman Gardens. Bottom right: Josie and Sheryl in the Reiman Gardens. Bottom left: We were visiting Tami and Chris's place in Ames in early May 2012, and the Chappel girls and Josie were playing an obstacle course game where Sheryl was an integral part of things; they had to give her something as the second to last step of the game.



Left: last visit in the summer of 2012 to Memere's room in Story City; Right: The last kiss from Memere for Josie. After playing with water pistols and playing chase games and hide and seek with the Chappell girls and a fun family dinner, Memere needed to go home and Josie, despite only being three and a half years old, knew something was special about this goodbye. She told Memere she loved her without prompting. I am glad that Memere waited as long as she did so that Josie really remembers her.



Josie and Sheryl sharing a joke in Story City, July, 2012.



Part 3:

Chapter 10: Finding Jesus

John 3:16: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Tami Hicks:

One of the most important things in Sheryl’s life in her last 11 years was her faith in God. She ran an amazing life race and continued to do so through her last days on earth. Here is interview she did with one of her pastors, Jeff Dodge, where she tells her story.

Jeff Dodge/Sheryl Andre Interview 1/30/2011

Sheryl: I was raised a catholic. One of my very first God story memories is when I was a catholic, my parents owned a restaurant. Every night they would close up the restaurant and have supper on the beach and watch the ocean. It just drew me. It is still my very favorite place in the world. I cannot help but cry everytime I go.

I didn’t have a super religious background. We just went to church. My parents couldn’t read the Bible. They weren’t smart enough.

I went to college, left the faith because I was captured by the world. I met my husband to be who was an atheist. So I had a choice to make. I chose him. I didn’t like the answers I was getting from the priest so I ignored them. We married in my senior year. Five years later we started having children. We brought them up as unbelieving children, to my regret. But my daughter was a real treat.

In the summer after her freshman year in college, she went to sell books and became a Christian. She came back and hounded me: kept talking about Jesus to me, do I believe in Jesus? Yes...but not really in an active way. She would push, but only to a point, not too hard, just to make me think. Then in a couple weeks she would come back and ask another question. All the while, I’m just “I don’t want to go there.” A long while later, seven years she was doing this off and on. Then September 11 happened. The month after September 11 happened, I got an email from someone I didn’t know with a pencil drawing of Jesus with His hands over the towers and people coming up to Him, to His hands. I looked at that and said “I want that”. I broke down and started bawling. Tami had told me what I needed to do. I did it right then in front of my computer. I didn’t tell anyone for awhile. I went to the computer

and started reading the Bible. When Tami came over, I'd ask her questions, things I didn't understand. I was having a really hard time making sure that my experience was real and not just me as a Mom wanting to bond with my daughter.

It was probably two months later when I told Tami that I wanted to come to church. I'd come to Cornerstone a couple of times for Christmas plays but never for a church service. So she brings me to church and introduces me to Karen and Joyce. Everyone that I need is either named Jen or has been praying for me. It just amazed me the connections – the family that I had that I didn't even know I had. I was enthralled at the experience. I was as close to heaven as though I was back on the beach. The music was superb. I don't remember the message. I've listened to so many good messages, it would be hard to say.

Oh by the way, the picture disappeared. I went back to show it to others, but it was gone. I tried to find it by looking through September 11 stuff but nothing. It was a God moment.

So a baby Christian, not a clue what to do. For some reason, God convinced me I could drive again. I hadn't driven for six years. I didn't have a car. I didn't have a license. I bought a car. I still didn't have a license. Learned to drive the car which was an experience. I even ran into Cornerstone at one point. I flunked the driving test three times. We were in the Larson connection group. Shelly was convinced that I was insane, that I was going to kill somebody. I just kept praying "God, you told me to do this. I'm doing it. You got to provide the right stuff to make it work." And He finally did. That van was a constant prayer, every time I got in, I prayed. I'd only driven small cars: VWs. Here is this monster car. I'm afraid of heights, sitting a mile off the ground. I remember going down the hill on 13th thinking, "I'm going too fast, too fast!" The whole learning to drive, passing the test, remembering...I mean I don't know how many times I took a right without looking and could have hit a car. I don't know how many times I prayed, God keep me safe, keep everyone safe. Then God would do the driving. I was just holding the wheel. You know my feet don't work real well. Tami and Chris made a little gadget to keep my feet separate so that I wouldn't hit the gas instead of the brake...well keep my foot on the brake. Sometimes it would fall off and I had to rely on God to get me to a curb before I hit something. It was a constant God-story.

I need to back up, because my symptoms started when I was a teenager. I didn't know that at the time. I thought I was clumsy. Because my first indication was that I was tripping over my feet. I fell easily. I didn't start to find out what was wrong until college. Twenty years of going to doctors before they found



Sheryl with Helena, Tami, and Chris

what was going on. I was forty when they did surgery and put in a drain. It helped slow it down, but the damage was already permanent as far as my right hand and my right leg was weaker too. About 10 years before they found out, I had exploratory surgery. That's when they clipped something that started the head tilt. They didn't find the cyst then. When they operated in '85, it did help. Though the symptoms did not get worse, I would start having panic attacks. And so, I finally had to quit work. I drove to Des Moines for 11 years. I'd be half way there or home and my heart would start racing. I'd have to pull over and calm down. I didn't know if at some point, I'd not be able to drive home.

I went on disability after the divorce. I was divorced three years before the surgery. And I think we did pretty well. We set it up so that we shared custody of the kids. Got the best of both worlds. We switched houses every week for six years and then every two weeks for seven. My Mom came to live with us right after the divorce. Initially, she did all the housework, the cooking, cleaning and she was a clean-a-holic, and still catholic, very catholic. She helped with the kids. It allowed me to keep working while I could. Then when I couldn't, she was there to help me with groceries and companionship, because it's isolating.

The computer has become the other connection. I've done a lot of evangelizing in my own way, tiny ways. Always having something in there about my studies. I've always had, ever since I've started the studies, I've had a thirst. I can't get enough Bible studies. I just can't. At one time, I was trying to do four: a Precept, BSF, Connection Group, and there was another small study somewhere. It was one too many. I'm still doing three: Karen's, Connection Group, and a Tuesday morning study on Revelation.

Jeff: I've got a question. So just in your studies over these last years, as your health has continued to deteriorate, have there been some of those times in one of those Bibles studies or one of those books of the Bible that really helped you along the way to kind of hold onto your faith?

Sheryl: Always, always, always. Simple things. Stand firm, stand firm. That is still one of the things that is keeping me out of a nursing home. I've been eligible for a nursing home for years. But if I go, I lose all of my mobility. Then, the legs go. Then the internal organs have more chance to go. The more independence I can keep, the more exercise I have, and the longer I'm going to last. It is hard. Extremely hard. I am almost like an asthmatic when I start even to do something as simple as a transfer. When I need the oxygen, I can't have it, because the wheelchair gets all tied up with the cords. So, it is really hard. I mean I don't expect to make next winter. And I'm fine with that. I'd be happy going. I'd be overjoyed to go today, but it is the hanging on that is the struggle. But what keeps me going is the connection to Cornerstone, the help that I can get from Cornerstone. Joyce will be over at the drop of a hat to rescue me if I drop something, or have an accident. Tami – I've got a lifeline. She's been over several times to pick me up off the floor. But I have people buying my groceries, people learning to drive my car, because I've given up the driving. But every time I give up, there is a grief process that



Sheryl with Tami

goes through. And Satan is just tugging and saying “Give it up. Give it up.” all the way through. And it is hard.

Jeff: Have you ever had a time since you’ve become a believer that you want to give up your faith?

Sheryl: No, not give up my faith. But I do want to quit. I want to just let go and let Jesus take me. But I don’t have permission from Him.

Jeff: So why do you think He keeps you here, when it seems like if it was just up to you, you would say take me Home? Why do you think God want you to stick around?

Sheryl: To encourage others. I enjoy teaching Revelation to others who have always been afraid to read it. To maybe even be an encouragement to people like Becky who have just gotten cancer. Ginnia Zantow has been coming over and talking with me and she gets encouragement from what I... I have had strangers come over and say that they saw me raising my hand and it was just amazing. I can’t help it. You know. How can I not?

Jeff: You’ve mentioned Revelation several times. What is it about that book that has caught your heart and why you want to teach it to others?

Sheryl: Because it is not about destruction. It is about God’s love. All the way through the book of Revelation, He gives them a taste of His wrath and saying “will you repent?” Well, He’s done it all the way through the Bible, but especially in Revelation. He keeps saying, “OK this is what is going to happen, will you repent?” He does it all the time! He loves us all so much. It is a beautiful picture. And of course, at the end of it, it is a beautiful picture!

At home, to work on the computer, I pull up to the computer, I put in the oxygen, plug in the chair, then that falls off and I have to do it all over again. That kind of constant, “you can’t do this”, that I’m getting. It brings me back to Job. This is where I need to be reminding myself that this is who I am, this is who God is, and I just need to do what He knows is best.

Jeff: In the recent past, say in the last 3 months or so, can you think of any specific lessons where God has stepped in to strengthen your faith?

Sheryl: Now, it is constant. It is pray without ceasing. I don’t transfer without praying. Because I’m not transferring, He is. He’s the one that gives me enough strength to make that transfer. It often takes me 3-4 times to do it. And more often than not, it is a plop. My back is sore from the plops! You have to transfer to a toilet, to a recliner, to a bed, probably 8 or 10 times each day. It is constantly relying on God to do what I need to do or to let me fall and break something that I can’t live without and then I’ll have to be in a nursing home.

Jeff: So you talked about Ginnia...people who are young, healthy. What kind of faith lessons do you want to pass onto them since they don’t face your same hurdles?

Sheryl: We’re all facing problems. And prayer can help with those problems. Prayer, if it is accompanied with studying the Bible, will help with those problems. He may not provide physical strength, but He can provide patience, compassion for others. He can provide direction if there are questions that need to be answered. You have to have patience to get there. He may not do it in your time frame. But it is all about God, in your life, in anybody’s life. It is not about the wheelchair. It is about God. It is His story.

Jeff: So do you have a favorite verse?

Sheryl: “Delight yourselves in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4? That one probably would be one of many. I’ve always had trouble memorizing. There are several that touch my heart. I keep a list. I also keep a list of the things that God has done. When I get down, and I do get down, I go there. It is not just all the biggies, like the van, but the answers to prayer that happen on a regular basis. I’ve always enjoyed the beauty that He brings...not so much in the winter. But driving down the road and see a flock of geese, or coming home from Connection group and it’s a full moon. I’ve always wanted to park between here and Story City and watch a thunderstorm. I used to really like when we would go to the ocean and we could watch thunderstorms. They would be incredibly beautiful.

Jeff: You almost wonder if something like that holds your attention here, what must heaven be like?

Sheryl: Precisely. Oh, I have many a dream about meeting Jesus. Being able to take a knee, to fall down and worship Him. You know I can’t do that now.

Jeff: My hunch is that He sees you taking a knee with a lot more glory than some who are able bodied and physically take a knee now. But it will be awesome for you to be able to take a knee.

Sheryl: And to praise Him. I’ve been singing Hallelujah for weeks in my head now. Remember that



Sheryl with Alex and Anastasia Tuckness

you-tube video in the mall? That is what got me started.

Jeff: That is what you'll sing when you get there? But not yet. You're still living in the dash.

Sheryl: Hopefully toward the end of it! I've been trying to convince my son, David, that there is something bigger. He sent me an ESV study Bible for Christmas. That is a huge step for him. We are talking back and forth. But it is still from an agnostic point of view. And I can almost see his problem because I was there. And it is pride and also close friendships too.

Jeff: That is probably one big reason why you are still in the dash...for David.

Sheryl: Well, I don't know, but perhaps my death will be part of what helps to push him through. That just puts more pressure on whoever does the service for me!

Jeff: So think about that funeral. If there was one legacy that you want them to mention, what would that be?

Sheryl: That's really hard... No matter what, no matter what you've done, no matter what, Jesus loves you and He will bring you through whatever you're facing. You just need to trust Him. That's my life in a nutshell.

As a witness to that transformation in her life, I wanted to share another perspective on her story. I remember when I became a believer in 1994, one of the first things I was convicted about was becoming a better daughter. I had given plenty of grief to my parents in my teenage years. Often was I unsympathetic and selfish when it came to her disease and disabilities. It was inconvenient, different and uncool from my self-centered eyes. I did little to help my mom before I became a believer. I spent the next 20 years trying to make up for lost time. I started helping her on weekends with her exercises, helping with household chores and trying to have deeper conversations with her about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness... and of course I tried to talk about God. She wasn't very open to talking about anything spiritual or religious at the time. She had a lot of bitterness towards the church. Most things religious were against what she believed so while she thought it was good for me, she wanted no part of it.

So I tried to talk less and do more. Over the years I tried to just help her whenever I could. I had others pray for her for peace and comfort. My friends helped when needed too. She liked these friends much more than the others I'd had earlier in life. Eventually her heart softened to talking about God and at least answering a few questions about it. Ultimately she would start asking



Steve Larson & Marcia McDowell help mom in the door of her surprise birthday party



Sheryl with Steve and Shelly Larson

questions about what I believed. Sometime around 2000, she asked to read the bible and if we could read together. We read Galatians - which is not one of the easiest books to read. Then we read Romans. Each chapter would bring questions and email discussions. LOTS of them. It was so fun to see her seeking and asking questions about what she thought she already knew.

Then 9/11 happened in 2001 and in the days that followed, we had some very intense conversations. She said that she felt like God was giving up on people - and it was a couple of days later that she realized that God's given everyone as much time as they need. God knows everything, everyone. He knows whether they will believe or not, she figured out that he knows where each of us is at in our journey and he meets us where we are at. I think that's about the same time she got the email with the picture she mentioned in her interview with Jeff.

A couple days later she called me and said something that made me realize she had made a choice to follow God, that she believed in Jesus and had released her worries, concerns and life to Him. I remember thinking, what a minute, what happened? It was a very obviously, deliberate change that had been made. She made a choice to live differently, for something different than she had before and her life was never the same.

After she became a Christ follower, she immersed herself in the bible. She got into a connection group, a bible study and another study. She would ask me questions sometimes, but quickly surpassed any knowledge I had as she dove into the Word. She was always a very good student, she loved to learn.

She wanted to get involved with a ministry of some sort. She wanted to serve others and struggled to figure out a way to do so. At first she felt like her disabilities where a road block to serving in a lot of ways. She couldn't go overseas to share the truth with others, she couldn't physically serve others needs or hammer nails for set construction. She couldn't financially contribute a lot of money. Soon she started greeting at church, handing out programs, helping with administrative projects such as the international prayer sheets and being a part of the prayer team. She even had a map of where all the missionaries were living that Cornerstone sent out so that she could pray for them. She did way more than she even knows that she did.

Never did she want to miss church and rarely did she. Only on the coldest of winter days or if she was sick did she miss it and hated every minute of it. She would get there early... super early... so she didn't have to fight with traffic. I think she really liked to talk with people before and after church and make sure she got her "spot" in the auditorium. Many a day I would want to sleep in on a Sunday morning, but I knew she wanted to go to church and did my best to make sure she got there.

She loved the worship at Cornerstone, even though she thought it was for the young people, she loved it all the same. The teaching was a close second though. She loved that we went through the bible book by book, verse by verse. She had me take notes for her so that she could study the passages afterwards and be prepared for connection group or bible study. She would then type them into the computer so that she could add notes and thoughts on them.

Sheryl desired a lot of things, she desired joy, time in the word, freedom, energy, knowledge, truth, time with those she loved and giving gifts to those she loved. Happiness and joy for her kids, and grandkids. Most of all, she wanted others to know the God that she had come to love. She wanted others to know the truth that she had come to believe. She wanted people to know Jesus and that He loves them. In her last years, this became more and more evident in her life. While she was at Bethany Manor she would frequently share the gospel with the other people there, telling them that Jesus loves them no matter what they’ve done.

That is what I think she would want people to remember from her life. Jesus loves you, no matter what. All you have to do is accept him as your Lord and Savior. She didn’t know that her whole life, or grow up being taught the bible. But in her last chapters, she grasped on to that truth with all the strength she had. She so wanted people know Jesus and the saving grace that she had experienced.

The things that come to mind are from this time in her life. She was a different person than she was before. She was always an encouragement, always had a great sense of humor, always fun. I loved doing puzzles with her, playing games with her, walking with her. I loved making pictures for her and her awe of the clouds, the stars, and the ocean. She loved the waves. She loved giving gifts and I helped wrapping them all...even the ones for me. She loved Christmas, even before she was a Christian, and so much more afterwards. Kids, she loved the kids, especially babies. She loved being a grandma. She was smart. She was proud of my brother and I and all that we’ve accomplished.

In her death, after 11 years of her new life in Christ, she was still running towards the finish line. She was ready to go home because she knew her home was not on this earth. One of my favorite moments in the hours before she went home was at about midnight, the night before she died. We convinced her she needed to sleep a little so she closed her eyes to try to sleep. About one minute later, she sighed really deeply. I said, “mom, what’s wrong?” She replied with impatience, “It hasn’t happened yet.” So ready to get there, to heaven, to see Jesus, to sign, to be free from the body she had on earth, to dance, to worship God. That’s where she wanted to be... that’s where she wants us all to be.



Sheryl with Marie Nesbitt

She Never Stayed Down For The 10 Count

Chris Hicks

I remember the first time I met Sheryl Andre. It was sometime in 2002, and I had recently be-friended my future wife, Tami, Sheryl’s daughter. Tami and I were running in the same circle of friends, attending the same church, and even working in the same circles, albeit for different employers. So at the time, while I knew of Tami, and was just beginning to get to know Tami, we had not yet had any serious discussions about family, life, hopes, dreams, and all the myriad of things that people who will someday be married typically discuss.

As a result, when I saw Tami pushing a wheelchair out of the sanctuary of Cornerstone Church, and into the lobby after our regular Sunday service, I didn’t know what was going on. Because Tami has such a servant’s heart, my first reaction was to think “This fits. Tami going out of her way to help a special needs person attend church. That’s the kind of heart she has.” Tami walked up to me pushing the wheelchair, and she said to Sheryl, “This is Chris.” I didn’t know how to respond to this introduction. I didn’t know who this person was, and honestly, I didn’t know how to act. This lady’s head tilted badly to one side, and she had a badly atrophied arm and leg. I didn’t know if she could talk. I didn’t know what disability had befallen her. All I said was “hello”, and I remember being embarrassed later thinking that I said it like I was saying “hello” to a six year old that I had met for the first time. Sheryl just smiled, rolled her eyes at Tami a little bit, and responded “I’m Tami’s Mom.”

Now in talking to her, I quickly realized that Sheryl was all there mentally. She was a very smart lady with a good sense of humor. Her limitations were physical only, and even they were minimized by her emotional strength, her spirit, and her will to NOT let them be a limitation. But this initial meeting, and learning of Tami’s Mom’s disability without being prepped for it caught me off guard. Over ten years later, I’m somewhat



Sheryl with Tracey Bramble ; Sheryl with YYY; Sheryl with ZZZ (10.9, 10.10)

ashamed to say that initially, my heart went out to Tami for having the burden of having to care for her Mom placed on her shoulders. And the knowledge that her Mom’s condition was degenerative only made me more sympathetic. How will Tami’s role in her Mom’s life NOT need to increase as Sheryl ages? How is Tami dealing with the bitterness that her Mom undoubtedly has about the loss of her physical abilities? How does this story possibly have a happy ending? These were the questions I asked myself after that initial meeting, and as I grew to know Tami better in the coming weeks and months.

As the saying goes, hindsight is 20/20. There was so much more to Sheryl than I saw that day. There was the heart of a lion. There was a soul that ran deeper than maybe anyone I’ve ever known. I am a boxing fan, and I love boxers that lose every round of a 10 round fight, get knocked down with 45 seconds left in the last round of the fight, and still get up. They could stay down, take the 10 count, end the merciless beating they are taking, and no one, including their trainer, their fans, or anyone would blame them for doing so. This is what most fighters do when victory is hopeless and so far out of reach. But the fighters who get up anyway, whose hearts refuse to keep them down, whose belief in themselves, whose belief in their soul that there is no way this fight is over – these are the boxers that move me, that leave me in awe, that help me wonder what kind of heart I have inside of me. And in this way, Sheryl was as strong as anyone I’ve seen. Despite an uncountable list of obstacles that only continued to increase as her fight went on, she never stayed down on the mat for the 10 count. And just like I love these kinds of boxers, I loved Sheryl, and so did everyone else. She was an inspiration. She may have eventually lost the fight physically, just like we all will, but in her mind and her heart and her soul, she NEVER gave up on her fight, no matter how insurmountable the odds.

I know where this strength came from too. Many times, and in many ways, Jesus Christ promised everlasting life to anyone that wanted it, if they would merely accept his offer of salvation from their sin. But to use the word “merely” in this case is an injustice, because accepting his offer of life is not a small thing. It means giving your life, your hope, your dreams, your words, your everything, to Jesus. It means turning away from the sin in your life, often things you love. This is why so few people actually do it – they perceive the sacrifice is too great, and the need for salvation from their sin is too small or not needed. You put your trust in Jesus with everything that you have, everything that you do, everything that you know. In return, Jesus claims you as his own. He gives you the strength to handle anything. He frees you from your sin, and one sin is all it takes to be a “sinner”. Soon, the joy a person experiences by having Jesus in their life trumps all circumstances. Now, with most people, this is a process, not a switch. Just accepting Jesus usually does not mean that all the other idols in one’s life disappear. It does not mean that you don’t make mistakes, that you are a perfect person. But over time, with growth, practice, and maturity, your focus on Jesus gets stronger, and the idols and the sin usually tend to increasingly get washed away as a result.

Sheryl believed fully in Jesus Christ. And with Sheryl, with her acceptance of Jesus Christ into her life in 2001, her conversion was rare in that it was one of the few times that I’ve witnessed that it was more of a switch than a process. For one thing, by the time she became a Christian in 2001, she was already very



Sheryl with Julie Larson ; Sheryl with Nattie Larson; Sheryl with Eve Lederhouse and Mandy Stenberg

in her soul that was just waiting for Jesus to enter, and when he did, WOW, Sheryl quickly became the incredible person I met in 2002.

She passed away without a shred of fear. 12 hours before she died, she was talking pictures, telling stories, and celebrating the life she was given, knowing full well that she would not survive the next day. She was happy and joyful. She was strong, bold, and outspoken about her faith in Jesus, as she wanted everyone else to experience the joy she had experienced for the last 11 years of her life. She recorded messages to give to her grandchildren that would have only vague or no memories of her and told them both how much she loved them. Hollywood has yet to write a script for the end of someone’s life that is better than what I had the honor to witness in August of 2012.

One final thought. Personally, things changed for me the day Sheryl died. It was the beginning of a re-prioritization of my life that is still in progress. Her life was a clear example of how life should be lived, and her death made me realize that I have some rearranging to do. I have a lot of idols in my life that Sheryl didn’t have. I am often religious about the wrong things. I have experienced some general life “discontentment” since her death that hasn’t subsided, and a good friend of mine recently suggested to me that my “discontentment” could be because I recognize that Sheryl had something that I don’t yet have. Like Sheryl, I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and savior, but I still have a long way to go to know Him as intimately as Sheryl did. I plan on continuing to remodel my priorities, my goals, my thoughts, and my time, to be more like Sheryl, and to continue to seek out what she had found.

Imagine, in 2002, I felt sorry for Sheryl, and pity for my future wife. And now, in 2013, as I write this, I feel jealousy for a weak, broken down, cripple, sick, terminal, atrophied, pained, immobile woman who lived the best life of anyone I have ever met.

Exodus 15:2 The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

2 Peter 1:13-14 I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

From an article by Benjamin Bradley in Intersect Magazine from 2006
Tami Hicks and Sheryl Andre / Proven Faithful

A daughter’s prayers avail much It was a day that became the nation’s worst nightmare. The Twin Towers were burning in New York City, but the emotions and confusion were felt throughout the rest of the country. It was enough to convince Sheryl once and for all; God was giving up on everyone.

Tami Hicks had shared the gospel with her mom, Sheryl Andre, for years. And while Tami tried several approaches to witness to her, she knew all along the real answer was through prayer. Tami became a Christian in 1997. Almost immediately after her conversion, she shared her testimony with her mother. Soon after, Tami began praying for Sheryl. Tami’s consistent prayer request was for her mom’s salvation. Monday morning prayer meeting attendees, her connection group, her prayer partner, her closest friends—they all knew that Tami’s heart was to see her mom come to know Christ. “During the times where I slacked off in praying, there would always be someone sharing about someone else they had been praying for a long time who just became a Christian. It’s like God was asking me, ‘Are you still praying?’” So Tami would pray again.

A seemingly random email ended up in Sheryl’s inbox containing a pencil sketch that would haunt her for months; Twin Towers burning in the background, shadow images of people floating up to meet Jesus who had outstretched arms waiting to receive them. Sheryl started crying. Tami’s prayers moved her to action. “God was changing my heart to serve and love [my mom] more to be a better witness to her. He really pounded into me that it was important.”

Sheryl had battled a debilitating Syringomyelia disease for years that now mostly confined her to a wheelchair. Tami started going to her Mom’s house several more times each week to help with chores and Sheryl’s ongoing physical therapy exercises. Sheryl noticed a change in Tami’s attitude right away, but refused to acknowledge the God her daughter claimed as Savior. There were times the mother and daughter would have arguments about Christianity, frustrating Tami until she remembered, “I’m not the one that will change [Mom’s] heart. God is.” “We can’t get discouraged if we don’t see change and results,” Tami learned. “If I’m doing the will of God, He is faithful. It’s not always in ways I can see, but in the end He will reveal something awesome—and it may or may not be in this lifetime.”

Sheryl couldn’t get the image out of her head. She wanted to be welcomed into Jesus’ arms, too. “I didn’t have it, but I wanted it. And then, all the conversations I had with Tami suddenly made sense.” Shortly after 9/11, Sheryl began to read the Bible online. Soon she asked Tami for suggestions of what to read in the Bible. The more she investigated, the more questions Sheryl had. Often she would email questions to Tami opening up more dialogue about the Bible. Tami’s prayers remained consistent.

And then, something caught Tami off guard. “I got an email from my mom and there was something in there that made me think—wait—I think she’s a Christian!” Sure enough, Sheryl had surrendered her life to Christ. When Sheryl started attending church with Tami, people approached her immediately, saying, “We’re so glad you’re here. We’ve been praying for you. Tami prays for you all the time.” She remembers the image as clearly as the day it was emailed to her, but now Sheryl is confident Jesus is waiting for her, too. In



From upper left, going clockwise (all with Sheryl): Beth Chappell, Amy Gay (Steger), Diane, Doug and Twyla Anderson, Miles and Jayme Morgan, Tracey Bramble, Larry Ludemann; ZZZZ all from Sheryl’s surprise 60th birthday party in 2005.

the meantime, Tami and Sheryl have realized that God has positioned Sheryl perfectly to be another prayer warrior.

“I have lists of prayer requests on my computer that I go through every day,” Sheryl shares. “I’d be lost without it.”

From Church Newsletter:

Sheryl Andre’s favorite quote is: “God never puts more on us than we can bear.” Repeating this familiar adage gives her strength to face her problems when life gets hectic. “That’s what I try to remember when the whole world seems to be falling apart,” Sheryl states.

As a youngster, Sheryl experienced symptoms of syringomyelia (SM) before most of the medical profession even knew the degenerative disorder existed. She was known as a “clumsy child” and her mother constantly reminded her to stand straight. By the time, she was an adult, her foot began to drag and her hands became weak. Doctors had no idea what was wrong with her.

After Sheryl gave birth to her second child in 1974, her symptoms progressed and she went through exploratory surgery, with still no diagnosis. The next few years were difficult for Sheryl. She suffered added pain and the continued loss of body functions, plus the break-up of her marriage. Yet, this determined lady from Ames, Iowa would not be defeated. She still managed to continue with her data processing career and parent her two daughters.

Finally, in 1984, after the progression of SM and scoliosis intensified, the new X-ray technique, the MRI, gave Sheryl’s disorder a name. The MRI showed a cavity in her spinal cord filled with cystic fluid. She had syringomyelia. At last, she knew her maladies were not mental. After twenty years, she had an illness with a name, an illness she feared, an illness she would fight.. Her first step in the determined battle against SM was surgery to place a shunt in the cyst to drain away the fluid. This helped for a while, but Sheryl was never able to go back to work.

Yet, Sheryl Andre did not give up. She has taken computer classes in creative writing and genealogy. Sheryl is active in a local Committee For The Disabled, which she organized after her surgery. She does volunteer work for her church and is a source of encouragement to the ASAP Listserve. Sheryl greets every newcomer who joins the list in order to obtain information about syringomyelia or just to be in contact with another person who has this rare disorder. Sheryl is the first to offer comfort or information to anyone seeking help. She says she finds comfort for herself when she helps others. She also writes privately to individuals on the list who have become personal friends through the e-mail list serve.

Doing work on her family genealogy takes much of Sheryl’s time. She has traced her family tree back to France in the 1500’s. Now she is trying to obtain as many photographs of her ancestors as possible and putting them in the family history book she is writing. She wants to leave her grandchildren as much family heritage as she can garner.

Although Sheryl’s shunt surgery helped in some ways, her health continued to decline. She lost one of her kidneys because she could not recognize the pain of a kidney stone. She needed a body cast in order to walk. Then her legs became too weak to function and her arms were nearly as weak. Now Sheryl is confined to a



Sheryl and Shelly Larson

through the sky.

Each new day brings a new challenge to Sheryl. Getting out of the house is Sheryl’s biggest challenge, yet she manages to do so with her family’s assistance and with the help of home health care.. Sheryl has a problem with asking for help. She hates to ask others to do personal things for her, but she knows and accepts that she must.

Sheryl meets each challenge on a daily basis. She tries not to think about tomorrow. She wants to concentrate on today and how she will meet her present challenge or how she can help a friend or a stranger adapt to living with syringomyelia.

When asked how she copes with all her infirmities, Sheryl likes to quote from the Bible, “2 Cor. 12:9 ... for my strength is made perfect in weakness...”

Ephesians 2:8 NIV For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

wheelchair.

Sheryl still carries on the battle. She loves it when the days come for her pool therapy . You can hear the smile in her voice as she describes the pleasure the pool offers. “When I am in the water, I can walk all by myself like everyone else,” she says.

Sheryl tells us she gets much of her strength from prayer and her faith in God. She says, “I can’t lie down and go to sleep unless I have somewhere to leave my troubles at the end of each day.” She reads her Bible every night and her daughter takes her to church on Sunday.

Sheryl’s mother moved in with her when Sheryl became disabled and has been a lifeline for Sheryl. Her daughter lives near and offers help and support. Sheryl says her church peers offer her friendship and comfort. She feels lucky to have a wonderful family and good friends. Her family and her friends are also her strength.

Sheryl says now that her life is not rushed, she has gained a new relationship with nature. She has more time to smell the fragrance of spring. She can admire the colors of the flowers and watch the birds soar



Sheryl and friends at her 60th birthday party

Galatians 3:29 (NASB) And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

Psalms 46:10 NIV “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Sheryl, the Bible study gal with an unquenchable thirst, and an insatiable hunger for God and His Word - by Karen Kovach

Why? What drove her?

She recognized the heart of God in the Word and couldn’t get enough of Him.

From the time He broke through her shell of self-sufficiency and independence through the Internet picture, the “vision”, of the everlasting arms, she knew she could rest in His love. It was no longer about her own effort to stand on her own two feet. It was all about God. He had been pursuing her in love all her life. In retrospect, she realized that pride had kept her from acknowledging her need. The world was broken. She was broken. Could there be a God in the midst of all this who is good? If He is good, pure, lovely and loving - all the things she wanted in a God - how could they communicate? Didn’t her very brokenness make relationship with perfect wholeness impossible? Yes, yes it did. Then she saw the Arms. It was Jesus. It was just after 9/11, and it was a picture on the Internet of the Twin Towers being destroyed. But in the midst of the chaos, someone had shown the spiritual reality: Jesus’ arms receiving those who knew Him. When she saw those



Sheryl and Rick and Hope Arthur and their son

arms of love, she knew the arms had been stretched out before. He had spread out His arms on the Cross and embraced our brokenness. He took it all...she just needed to say...”thank you”. It was the beginning of a whole new life for Sheryl.

She was there, rolling-in to every Bible study, month after month, for the next 10 years. In every book in the Bible that we studied together, she saw this Great Exchange. His wholeness for our brokenness; peace for anxiety; strength for weariness; joy for pain; freedom instead of bondage. The deeper she dug into Scripture, the more she reveled in His plan for our future. From Genesis to Revelation, the book-ends of Scripture, she saw His provision, His hunger for relationship with all who would see the gift offered and say “yes, thank you very much, I will accept your gift of exchange.” The book of Revelation was a special delight to her. Here, in particular, she saw the deep love of a Father who will do whatever it takes to open the eyes of the drowning to the life preserver that He has placed right within their grasp. And she saw the end of the story: the preparations that God is making for the new heaven

and earth, waiting on the edge of His throne to welcome us Home.

As she studied one book after another, her face often radiated joy at a fresh revelation, a reaffirmation of His goodness and love. Her keen mind delighted in the perfect logic and cohesiveness of the message from one book to the next. I rejoiced weekly to see the beauty of Truth wash over her. She would lean her head back, closing her eyes while a beautiful smile spread across her face. Then she would say, “It fits. It all fits.”

The last two years of our study together took place at Bethany Manor. Several gals drove up from Ames to study the book of Romans with Sheryl. She called it her “meat and drink”. When we started the two-year Romans study, her one concern was that she wouldn’t be around to finish it. She made it - two weeks ahead of the Call to go Home.

In her last week, we talked about the joy of finally seeing Him face to face, of walking into His presence with eyes wide open, of dancing before His throne. She wanted to worship Him with both arms lifted high.

The eyes were open when she stepped through.

She’s dancing.

Her arms are lifted high.



Kelley (Stember) Hurst, Helena, Sheryl, and Tami

Sheryl
is Home.



Sheryl and Chiara Chappell

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding

What I've learned from God, by Sheryl Andre

1. He is always there, listening, watching, offering encouragement, whether I am paying attention or not. My day can be good even when it is filled with trials if I remember that He has a purpose.

2. Prayers are always answered. Sometimes the answer is 'not yet' and sometimes the answer is in a completely different form than I expect. What is neat is that sometimes, the answer is here before I even finish praying. Also the answer is also always what is best as opposed to what I want.

3. The bible never contradicts itself, but God has only told us what we need to know. He leaves us to imagine what heaven will be like. He also often leaves out the 'Why' answers, so that we have things to try to figure out on our own and things to accept with faith.

4. Standing firm in my faith doesn't mean arguing with others about what is true. It is being kind and loving and as Christ-like as we can be.

Dying is not meant to be an easy process, but one that insures that you are standing firm in your faith in God – or if you don't believe, giving you an opportunity.



Sheryl getting flowers at her 60th birthday party



Sheryl with Arianna in 2005



Chiara, Ariana, Beth, and Valor Chappell visiting Sheryl in August 2012

Revelation 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.

Revelation 1:8 | "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Revelation 2:3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Revelation 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

Revelation 5:9-13 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

Revelation 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Revelation 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

“I Can Only Imagine”

by: Mercy Me

I can only imagine
What it will be like
When I walk
By your side
I can only imagine
What my eyes will see
When your face
Is before me
I can only imagine
[Chorus:]
Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel
Will I dance for you Jesus or in awe of you be still
Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall
Will I sing hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all
I can only imagine

I can only imagine
When that day comes
And I find myself
Standing in the Son

I can only imagine
When all I will do
Is forever
Forever worship You
I can only imagine
[Chorus]
I can only imagine [x2]
I can only imagine
When all I will do

Is forever, forever worship you

Chapter 10: The Last Months

Life in a nursing home (written June 2012 by Sheryl)

Around fall of 2010 my muscles started getting weaker. I was still trying to exercise in the heated pool that the hospital had so that I could retain my ability to transfer and be able to live on my own with help for cooking and cleaning. The problem was that each pool session took 1.5 hours, but only 20 minutes of that was for actual time in the pool because after 20 minutes I was exhausted and we still needed to redress and return home. In December 2010 my bladder muscles stopped working and I needed a catheter. My doctor suggested that I might want to think about hospice care because my body seemed to be failing quickly. Initially, we were getting help from hospice at home, but within a few months after stopping the pool trips, I had to call someone to help me get up because my muscles were not working. On March 18, 2011, I went to Bethany Manor nursing home.

Tami and I had checked out a few other homes, but Bethany was the best. The biggest drawback was that it was 20 minutes away from Ames making it harder for visitors to come.

Over a year later, I’m still here, wondering what God wants from me. I’ve attempted a few times to join with others here in studying God’s word, but the people I found who were most interested had a lot of trouble hearing my voice. One lady spends most of her time reading His word and I just wish we could talk, but she can hardly hear me at all. The chaplain is not interested in expanding the studies they already have which are oversimplified to allow most of the people who come to understand.

I have learned to continue to lean on God when I get frustrated and depressed. I know He understands me, and I wish I understood Him better. I have found great peace in studying the Word with Karen and the other women who are willing to travel up here to study with me. Lately this group has shrunk from 6 to 3-4 which is sad, because there is so much to learn. I’ve learned to be content with visiting a few women who live in the home nearby and just spending time alone praying – writing emails, working on genealogy or playing games. Mostly, playing games seems to win because it keeps my mind occupied enough to not think much.

In June, 2012 I moved into a double room because I knew I would soon be out of funds and there was an open room in the same unit. It made sense to stay in the unit because at least some of my helpers knew my routine. They could get me up in 20 minutes instead of 45 minutes for a new person. It turned out that move was the best possible thing I could do. My new roommate, Luella, is a happy go lucky person who is easy to live with and her attitude makes it easy for me to stay positive. The room is also one of the largest doubles in the facility, which also makes life easier.

Luella is probably in her 60s, has Cerebral Palsy and has never walked ‘on her own’. Yet she has a wonderful sense of humor. She struggles with asthma and diabetes as well.



Sheryl with Marcia McDowell in August 2012



Sheryl with Amelia Flickinger in August 2012



Sheryl with Tami in August 2012

Our lives are somewhat regimented based on when the help changes shifts. (6-2, 2-10, 10-6). Morning staff gets everyone up and to breakfast and lunch. There are activities usually planned between meals and showers are split between morning and afternoon shifts. Afternoon gets us to supper and to bed. Ideally, the overnight shift stocks and fills o2 tanks. Staffing is usually a day to day because people call in sick or take vacations. There is one set of well-trained morning and afternoon staff. When they are not here for whatever reason, we get what I call leftovers. Some have been here before and some haven't, but few have been here regularly, so chances are good that life will not run smoothly. The untrained staff take longer to do anything and often require step by step instructions to get through any process at all. It adds to the day-to-day struggle to try to keep life on an even keel.

Email From Sheryl to David.... 8/17/12

When I saw this email below from my Mom, I knew the end was near. I was distraught, and not entirely ready for what was to come. She handled this last week of her life so much better than I did. I am pleased that I was able to tell her how I felt -- and that I was able to have real conversations with her up until the

morning of her passing. On the day before she passed, we talked on Skype with Tami there -- and we raised a glass to honor her -- and she drank a little of her favorite, Southern Comfort, while I drank a wee dram of whiskey. Thousands of miles away, touching glasses only on the screen, but when my Mom tossed hers down and cracked a joke, we all laughed in that special way that the three of us had of sharing a joke together and letting the laughter and joy build until it was bubbling out of us.

finally got to seeth movie. it his job ti eat ,og/,ol

my brain/fingrf dexterity ix going

lol vd mom

f



Pitctures from the "Slumber Party" the night before Sheryl passed away. Middle picture: Marcia McDowell, Amelia Flickinger, and Joyce Driscoll

Written on August 23, 2012, by David Andre

As I type this, my mom is dying. Her lungs are full of liquid, and she is unlikely to last the day. I write this post now as I can do naught but feel, and hurt, for the loss happening and about to pass, as I have said my goodbyes, heard her last words to me, and, because my son Frederick was just born a week ago, I am thousands of miles away. My sister is there with her, and I have been on the phone every few hours, and yet I wish I could do more...

Sheryl Andre is a fighter. She has had scoliosis and syringomyelia nearly her entire life, and her grace, courage, and faith in thriving through her years of illness inspires not just her family and friends, but many dozens or hundreds more in her church where she found Jesus, peace, and grace these last few years.

She is also my mom. She raised my sister, Tami, and I, to be passionate, caring, generous, and humble. She had a great sense of humor. Her laughter -- even when I skyped with her yesterday, will be with me always.

I will write more, I know, when the hurt is less, when my brain is clearer, about the games we played, the food we ate, the trips we took. I will write about how I followed her footsteps and became a computer scientist -- she was a computer analyst and manager for State Farm in Illinois and then for the state of Iowa in Des Moines. She talked to me some in these last weeks about this -- and it is clear to me that she was a pioneer. She invented new ways of doing things -- there were many fewer standards then for how to craft computer programs. She had the skill she passed on to me for debugging complex systems and for finding clever shortcuts.

She, despite being paralyzed on one side for most of my adult life, is a rock in her communities. She helps people who just learned they had syringomyelia by running calls and chat-sessions. She leads bible study groups, and is the most technologically advanced resident in her nursing home, using her iPad and computer to stay connected and engaged.

She is also a doting grandmother -- she skypes with us at least weekly and takes dozens of pictures on each call and annotates them with what she thinks Josie might be thinking.

...

I am lucky to be her son, and am grateful she is now at peace. She died at 1:10pm today, with my sister Tami, brother-in-law Chris, and friend Joyce with her. She was not in pain; she passed into grace. Mom, I miss you.

Chapter 11: In Memoriam

Sheryl Ann (Martins) Andre

June 22, 1945 - August 23, 2012

(Her Obituary)

Sheryl Ann (Martins) Andre was born on June 22, 1945 to Antonio and Helena Martins of Fall River, Mass. She and her younger brother, Victor grew up in the restaurants her parents operated in Fall River and in Newport, R.I., where Sheryl also acquired her lifelong love of the seashore. After graduating from BMS Durfee High School in 1963, she enrolled at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, ultimately earning a Bachelor of Science degree and teaching certificate in mathematics in 1967, a course of study that included the new field of computer programming. While at UMass, she married Thomas Andre in 1966. Upon completing her degree, Sheryl moved to the Midwest, where she used her computer programming skills in positions for State Farm Insurance and the University of Illinois-Bloomington. Her passions included reading, eating out (particularly lobster), the occasional sip of Southern Comfort, and traveling the roads and rails of North America from Canada to Colorado to California.

She moved to Cortland, N.Y. and gave birth to her children, David (1971) and Tamara (1974) before finally settling down for good in Ames in 1974. There she joined the Computer Programming division of the Iowa Department of Human Services in 1975 and worked there until deteriorating health required her to retire in 1988. Sheryl lived in Ames with her mother, Helena Martins, until Helena's death in 2007. She moved to Bethany Manor in Story City in 2011. At Bethany, she was considered "the expert" in technology and computers, using her laptop, iPad and the internet to stay connected with her friends, family, and pen pals all over the world. She especially enjoyed her weekly Skype video chats with her granddaughter, Josie in San Francisco and was able, via the internet, to see her newborn grandson, Frederick on his birthday, Aug. 12, 2012.

For most of her adult life, Sheryl suffered from scoliosis and syringomyelia, a painful, degenerative nerve disease that limited her mobility and physical independence but never limited her fighting spirit or tenacious determination to help others. Sheryl was active in the SM community, using her technological savvy to stay connected with others, leading SM support groups through ASAP (American Syringomyelia & Chiari Alliance Project), and working to raise funds for medical research into the condition. She was also instrumental to an investigation into the status of disabled accessibility to Ames businesses, which led to improvements in local laws in the 1990s.

Sheryl spent most of her considerable energy and passion of the past 10 years into being a member of Cornerstone Church of Ames. Her faith in God was a foundational rock for all she did. She was always looking for ways that she could serve others through prayer and action, including emailing and encouraging others inside and outside of the church, attending multiple bible studies and connection groups, digging into the bible (her favorite book), typing up the church directory, organizing weekly prayer sheets, and mobilizing prayer teams. Sheryl’s perseverance and humor were well-known and she was respected for her fearless, positive attitude. She wanted all to know that Jesus loves them, that Jesus died for them, and that they too can enter the gates of Heaven just by believing in him. Sheryl pressed on toward the goal and leaned into the tape until the very end of her race.

Sheryl passed away peacefully on Aug. 23, 2012 at Bethany Manor. She spent her last days and hours surrounded by family and friends.

Sheryl is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Tami and Chris Hicks, of Ames; her son and daughter-in-law, David and Melissa Andre, of San Francisco, Calif.; her grandchildren, Josephine and Frederick Andre, of San Francisco, Calif.; and many beloved friends all over the world.

Sheryl requested that, in lieu of flowers and gifts, memorial donations be made payable to either Cornerstone Church of Ames (www.cornerstonelife.com) or ASAP (The American Syringomyelia & Chiari Alliance Project), (www.asap.org). Please mail donations to her family, c/o Tami Hicks, PO Box 2491, Ames, Iowa 50010

A memorial service is scheduled for 10:30am on Friday August 31st at Cornerstone Church in Ames, with a luncheon reception to follow. All who knew her or her family are welcome to attend.

Grandon Funeral and Cremation Care is assisting the family.

Tami and David’s Eulogies about Sheryl

Tami Hicks :

Hi. When my mom first came to Cornerstone, people would come up to her and say, oh you must be Tami’s mom. And sometime in the past ten years, the roles reversed and I’m known as Sheryl’s daughter. And if you knew my mom, she was an amazing woman. She was smart and frugal and funny, she was consistent and organized in her own way, she loved and cared about people, she had joy and patience, although she always said that God was still trying to teach her that. She had peace with who she was, she was kind and generous and faithful. She exemplified the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

And you may know this too but the thing I want to talk about today is that my mom is a mom of reminders and all my life she reminded me of things. Remember to call if you’re going to be late, remember to shut the lights off, remember to put gas in the car. When I was helping her with her exercises, she would remind me how to do it, even though I’d done it a hundred times before. She would email me weekly to remind me to bring her chocolate or rice cakes or something else like brownies. And even though I would do these things, and she knew I would, she would say “be careful, drive safe, lock your doors, wear your seatbelt.” She was really just caring for me and loving me through her reminders and I realize that this week, even in her death, she is able to remind me of things.

And here are a couple of things that I feel like I’ll always be reminded of. First of all, that God’s timing is perfect. As I prayed for her passing to be peaceful and quick, in the midst of it all, I often thought that it wasn’t. But as I look back, it really was. It was quick and that prayer was answered. I mean, we were talking and joking and laughing with her twelve hours before she went home to be with Jesus. His timing is really perfect.

The second thing would be to dig into the word with others too. My mom read the Bible a lot and at one point she was in three or four Bible studies all at the same time. I don’t know how she kept them straight but she loved studying the Bible with others. Revelations was her favorite book, and she could never tell me



Tami Hicks

what her favorite verse was. Because she just had too many, there were too many to have just one. Also that fellowship is really important. The fellowship we had the night before she died was the best I'd had in a long time. And it reminded me that we need that too no matter how strong we want to be, no matter how tough we think we are, we need to be surrounded by friends and family. It really is one way that God gives us strength, it's through those that he put around us.

She was always bold and straightforward and real with people. It gets the best results. I've listened to dozens of people tell their stories about my mom this week, and I was reminded that she was all of those things. She was bold, she was straightforward, and she was real. And the effect that it can have on others is amazing.

My mom was never a fan of small talk. She didn't care about what was in right now. She wanted to dig into who you were and have a deep conversation, and know what was really going on in your world, and how God was moving in your neck of the woods.

So that was another thing about my mom. Face your fears was the next thing. My mom was, didn't have very many fears but she was afraid of heights, and my brother lived in a house that had two flights of stairs in front of it just to get to the front door. And my mom let us carry her in her wheelchair up those two flights of stairs just so she could get to see her son and his house and her granddaughter when we went to see them. She was terrified – don't get me wrong, but she got to see her son, and daughter in law, and granddaughter, and she loved that.

I'll remember to laugh at things and laugh at myself. She had a great laugh and a great smile. It was hard to get her to stop laughing when she got going. I remember trips we would take to my brother's house or to an ASAP Conference and there was always something during the trip that would get us rolling. And even in the end her roommate at Bethany Manor (Luella), she was the funniest resident in the whole place and they were always playing jokes on each other and laughing with each other even late into the night. Two nights before she passed away, Luella wanted to make sure to make her smile before she went to sleep, and Luella said "Good night, sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite. And if they do, pick up your shoe, and hit them 'til they're blue." And it just made my mom giggle for five minutes.

The last thing was really just to press on towards a goal with all your energy. We're all running in a race, and some of us are running in a rat race, which is easy to get caught up in, and some of us are running in a different kind of race. My mom ran a different kind of race, one that wasn't concerned with the things of this world, but what comes after. Troy said as I was talking to him on Friday, that she was leaning into the tape and I thought that was a really good picture of how she lived her life. I hope I am able to run the race as well as she ran hers and I hope we're all able to remember all the reminders that she gave us. Thanks.

David Andre:

My name is David Andre and I am Sheryl's son.

I want to be honest with you -- I'm not "done with this", and am still learning and processing and figuring out not just how I will feel, but how I feel now. I know I'm hurt. I know I'm sad, and that I miss her. And I know that miss her.

Last week, after I had said goodbye to her for what was likely the last time, I couldn't sit still -- I had to write something, so I did, and put it online, and many people responded. So many people who had met my mom wrote many eloquent things about her, and because I'm still working it out, I gravitated to some that seemed to capture things that especially resonated with me.

My friend Mike wrote about how wonderful she was -- and his mom Kathyryn wrote about her wonderful smile and eyes.

My friend Dan wrote that she was his "other mom" in high school, and that she offered so much that he could never thank her enough.

Many wrote of how much she'd helped them when they or someone in their family had been diagnosed with Syringomyelia or Chiari syndrome.

My friend Lisa wrote about my Mom's 'grace in the face of what could have been overwhelming adversity', and her 'embodiment of the human spirit'.

Ron said that she supported me "at a volume everyone could hear" at soccer games and other activities.

My friend, Dawn, who grew up across the street, wrote about how smart Sheryl was, yet she never talked down to others.

I thought a lot about what to share, and I decided I wanted to read a poem. My wife, Melissa, suggested this poem by Billy Collins:

The Lanyard - Billy Collins
The other day I was ricocheting slowly
off the blue walls of this room,
moving as if underwater from typewriter to piano,
from bookshelf to an envelope lying on the floor,



David Andre

when I found myself in the L section of the dictionary
where my eyes fell upon the word lanyard.

No cookie nibbled by a French novelist
could send one into the past more suddenly—
a past where I sat at a workbench at a camp
by a deep Adirondack lake
learning how to braid long thin plastic strips
into a lanyard, a gift for my mother.

I had never seen anyone use a lanyard
or wear one, if that's what you did with them,
but that did not keep me from crossing
strand over strand again and again
until I had made a boxy
red and white lanyard for my mother.

She gave me life and milk from her breasts,
and I gave her a lanyard.
She nursed me in many a sick room,
lifted spoons of medicine to my lips,
laid cold face-cloths on my forehead,
and then led me out into the airy light

and taught me to walk and swim,
and I, in turn, presented her with a lanyard.
Here are thousands of meals, she said,
and here is clothing and a good education.
And here is your lanyard, I replied,
which I made with a little help from a counselor.

Here is a breathing body and a beating heart,
strong legs, bones and teeth,
and two clear eyes to read the world, she whispered,
and here, I said, is the lanyard I made at camp.
And here, I wish to say to her now,
is a smaller gift—not the worn truth

that you can never repay your mother,
but the rueful admission that when she took
the two-tone lanyard from my hand,
I was as sure as a boy could be
that this useless, worthless thing I wove
out of boredom would be enough to make us even.

So while I didn't make Mom a lanyard, I made her plenty of similar things, such as this piece of cracked pottery.

Obviously, given my Mom's condition, I (much less so than my sister) have put a lot of time and energy into caring for her. While this changed our relationship to some degree, over all, I still feel like the sentiment of the poem nails it -- she gave me so very much more.

Instead -- she was teaching me. Teaching me how to get older. Teaching me how to get up each day bearing the crosses with humor, love, and grace. I think she embodied the sentiment of Hebrews 12-1, of running the race set before us with patience, endurance, and abandon.

She did this her entire life, whether it was being the first in her family to go to college, or when she was a pioneer in computer programming as a woman, inventing new ways of storing data and retrieving it quickly, or when she had to overcome confused doctors to get the right diagnosis for her condition, or when she open doors for the disabled in Ames, or when she worked so hard for you and with you all here in Cornerstone. She brought her passion, her temerity, her wit, and her humor to each day of her life.

I want to thank you all here at Cornerstone -- my mom was so very much happier after joining you here. Thank you so very much.

To all the friends and family who have come from near and far; thank you for coming to help celebrate her life as she would have wished it to be done -- with passion, wit, love, and humor. Thank you.

Four Short Memories

Thomas Andre wrote these four short essays for/to Tami and David in memory of Sheryl's life

Fried Chicken, White American Cheese, Spumoni, and Coffee Cabs

Your Mom had definite food preferences; you remember Southern Comfort! After we had been dating for a while and I met her parents, they eventually invited me to one of their favorite restaurants. It was a Italian place called Asquino's. It was in East Providence which at the time seemed like a long way to go for a restaurant. But Fall River was only about 15 miles from Providence and East Providence was only about 10 miles. That was half the distance from New Bedford. But when we first started going, Interstate 195 wasn't finished or was only partially finished out of Providence. So it was a longer drive on Route 6 then than now on 195. Anyway, we went to Asquino's. At the time, it was the original Asquino's. It was a smallish older restaurant with two main rooms. From the parking lot, you entered the bar and walked through it to get to the dining room. Every time we went, the bar seemed to populated by older men smoking and drinking and often speaking Italian.

Asquino's was popular. The dining room was crowded and noisy and almost always busy whenever we went. That first time, we sat down and Sheri and your Grandpere and Memere really really really recommended the spaghetti with fried chicken. This was a new combination to me. I ordered it. The plates came with a large chicken breast fried and under a large amount of spaghetti. It smelled wonderful and tasted better! Asquino's had a wonderful marinara sauce and the fried chicken breast was tender and juice. It was clear why this was a favorite restaurant and favority meal! But much as you Mom liked the spaghetti and fried chicken, her absolute favorite thing at Asquino's was dessert! Spumoni ice cream with a brandy sauce! Asquino's spumoni was a wonderful three flavor ice cream and very different from any spumoni I have seen elsewhere. Asquino's became a favorite place to go whenever we were back from college, graduate school, Cortland, or Iowa. Unfortunately, Asquino's was very popular. I think that parents retired and the children took over. They first expanded the building and made it fancier. But the food seemed to decline. Eventually, it closed. Your Mom always missed it! But I think she really mostly missed the spumoni the most!

In August 1967, your newly graduated Mom and I left for Illinois by way of the World's Fair in Montreal and Niagara Falls. We were pulling a Uhaul with my yellow canary Plymouth Belvedere. We enjoyed a great day at the Fair! The drive to Niagara went fine and we found an inexpensive motel one the Canadian side not far from the Falls. We did the standard falls things; looking over the Canadian Falls, going in the tunnels behind the falls, visiting the American falls and walking down the paths in raincoats, visiting the whirlpool, and taking a Maid of the Mist ride. We went to fancier restaurant on the Canadian side just down from the Falls on the road that goes along the river to the Falls. You may remember that we walked up that sidewalk one very cold winter day. But the restaurant is the important thing for this story. On the menu was Fried Chicken with

maple syrup. Your mom's fondness for fried chicken and mine meant we had to try it. It was a great meal and your Mom and remembered it fondly and talked about it for years. We would be some place where fried chicken was served and she (or sometimes I) would say, "remember that fried chicken with maple syrup in Niagara Falls?"

When we moved to Bloomington, IL, when we thought I was going to be drafted, fried chicken play a role in our life. I didn't get drafted; we bought a trailer after living in a very small studio apartment for six months or a year. I started to driving to Illinois for graduate school (50 miles each way). At the corner, where I turned to drive Route 150 to Champaign, there was this restaurant that advertised fried chicken. One day when we didn't feel like cooking, we decided to tried it. It was wonderful; probably the best fried chicken we ever had. It became a staple in our diet. Probably we got it at least once a month or so. It was one of your Mom's favorite things! Like the maple fried chicken in Niagara Falls, it became one of our stories when we thought of fried chicken..."remember that little fried chicken place in Bloomington."

Your Mom liked grilled cheese sandwiches. We made them a lot! But it had to be white Kraft American cheese! I think the first time I brought home yellow Kraft American cheese for grilled cheese sandwiches; I had to go back to the store to get white!

Probably your Mom's most favorite food thing in those early years was a coffee cab! I had never heard of a "cab". It is a blend of ice cream, milk, and syrup that is shaken in a blended. I grew up calling a frappe, but in Rhode Island and Newport, it was a cab. Cab was short for cabinet; we thought that the origin was the cabinets the glass containers that were kept in old time soda fountains. When we traveled to Illinois, we wanted a frappe / cab starting sometime in Ohio. A chain called Howard Johnson's was a restaurant/ice cream parlor at the time. We stopped at several along the way. But all they offered was a "milk shake"! In New England, a milk shake is just syrup and milk blended. We didn't want a milk shake! When we asked for a frappe, they didn't know what we were talking about! As we drove through Ohio, Indiana, and were close to Champaign-Urbana, we were getting more and more frustrated before we finally asked a waitress. What do you call it when you blend ice cream, syrup, and milk? Of course, she said, in a dumbfounded voice, "a milk shake. " Duh! So your Mom finally got her coffee cab and I got my vanilla frappe!

French Fries with Vinegar (Thomas Andre)

Your Mom was the person who introduced me to French fries with vinegar. I had always had French fries with ketchup. It is a British thing to put vinegar with French fries (or chips). And fish and chips on Fridays were a very common meal in southern New England because of the heavy Catholic Portuguese, French, Italian, Polish populations. There were many fish and chip places, and I think many of them served vinegar if requested. But in the Andre family, we had never used vinegar on French fries.

Your Mom and I started dating at UMass in the Spring of our Freshman year. We continued to date in

the summer while back home in New Bedford and Fall River. Usually I picked her up on Saturday night (sometimes Friday) and we went to a movie or drive in or party or something. But after a few summer dates, we started to meet for dinner and a movie. To save money, dinner often was at McDonalds or a New England chain called BurgerChef. Burgers were 15 cents as were fries. A shake was a quarter, I think. BurgerChef had a jingle that went something like:

For 15 cents, a nickel and a dime, at BurgerChef we will feed you really fine. Your Mom and I changed it eventually to: For 15 cents, a nickel and a dime, at BurgerChef you get ptomaine every time. It became a running joke so that whenever the jingle came up in a radio ad, we would shout out the radio with our line. In any case, “dinner” at McDonalds or BC meant both of us could eat for under a couple of dollars. Your Mom would eat the burger, but she really liked the fries, especially if they were freshly fried! The first time we went out to McDonalds, we both ordered a basic burger, fries and a shake. But your Mom asked for vinegar as well as ketchup. I didn’t even know you could order vinegar from McDonalds! It may only have been in southern New England that McDonalds and BC served vinegar. In any case your Mom mixed the vinegar with the ketchup on her fries. I was dubious about it and may not have tried it that time. But I tried it eventually. Over time, I actually got to like the taste! French fries with vinegar and ketchup became common in our diet!

Starting Cars A Sheryl Andre Story, by Thomas Andre

When we were dating, I owned a 1957 Plymouth Belvedere 4 door sedan. It looked like the blue car below, but it was canary yellow where that car is blue. It was from the era of fins on cars, which you can see on the rear view. It also had push button automatic drive; there was no gear stick, you pushed a button (1, 2, D, or R) on the dash.

We dated in that car from Spring, 1964 until August, 1966 when we were married. We used it at UMass for our senior year. Your Mom drove it back and forth to Springfield, MA from Amherst, MA for eight weeks of student teaching. Then we drove that car to Illinois pulling a trailer with all our possession for me to start graduate school and your Mom to find a job.

Your Mom was a licensed math teacher and interviewed at several schools and was offered a position. However, she had not enjoyed her student teaching; she liked the math a lot more than the students! We had taken computer classes together at UMass and she loved programming. There was an ad for a programming position at State Farm Insurance in Bloomington, IL. She interviewed and got the job.

But then she had to drive 100 miles a day (50 each way) to her job. Well, the Plymouth started out OK, but it was 10 years old. It developed a strange problem. There is something in the engine called rocker arms that ride on the camshaft and open and close the valves in the cylinders to let the gasoline/air mixture in and let the exhaust gases out. The rocker arms are set to let the valves open a precise amount. On the Plymouth, the screw threads that held the rocker arms at that precise level loosened up on two of the cylinders. The

threads would start to unscrew themselves as the car ran. Eventually, they would be too loose and that cylinder would start misfiring. I tried to replace the screws with ones from a junk yard, but it still happened. The only way to repair it would be to replace the entire rocker arm assemblies (one on each side of a V-eight engine). Even with used parts, it would cost more than the car was worth (I had paid \$500 for it and we sold it for \$100) so it wasn’t worth much. So we went shopping. Given that your Mom was going to be driving so much, a car with good gas mileage made sense. So we look at Volkswagens, Toyotas, Datsuns, and, at the Cadillac/Renault dealership, a Renault 10. It was a four door, four passenger subcompact car. It promised 35 miles per gallon (when American cars were getting 8-15 mpg.) I had a friend that owned Renaults and like them. It was a demonstrator model and was on sale. (about \$1700). The Cadillac dealership was phasing out its Renault dealership and it was the last Renault they had. But they promised to service it and cover the warranty (in writing even!). I know, it sounds like a disaster in the making, but we had no problems with the dealership.

Your Mom started driving to and from Bloomington five days a week. The interstate highway system was not finished and while Interstate 74 had reached Champaign Urbana (where we lived) from the East, it didn’t extend beyond Champaign-Urbana. So it was good hour+ drive on two lane US 150 each way. That was if the traffic was light and there were few tractors hauling grain. The car was comfortable to drive and your Mom enjoyed the car. The apartment we had rented was close to campus so I could and did walk about 6 blocks to my building. It also had a covered (no door) car stall that we could use. Your Mom had to get up early to get to work by eight and I usually slept in. Things were fine all through the Fall and into the winter. The Renault was rear engined, rear wheel drive, so it was also pretty good in snow. And it did snow some that winter, but our covered stall meant that your Mom didn’t have to clean snow off the car in the morning. But it was also cold that winter.

One morning in February that winter, I woke up to a strange sound. It was a kind of whir, whir, whir just outside the bedroom window that was next to the driveway. What is that I thought and tried to drift back to sleep, but the noise continue. Now you need to know that the driveway sloped a little from the backyard where the covered car stall was to the street. I looked out the window and saw the Renault kind of jerking itself into the driving way, then rolling for a little while and then starting. Your Mom drove off.

That night I asked her what she was doing. It turned out that, while the battery held a charge fine, that Renault was hard to start when it was cold. Your Mom had figured out that it would start if it got rolling down the driveway and she could pop the clutch (it was a standard transmission car). She had been using this starting method, whenever she needed to, from mid December until February.

Of course, it isn’t good for the starting motor or the clutch to be used that way regularly. We had the car serviced, but it didn’t solve the problem entirely. I think we ended up plugging in a light bulb on an extension cord and putting it right under the oilpan at the bottom of the engine on very cold nights. That kept the

engine warm enough to start easily. The days were apparently warm enough, compared to the nights, that your Mom didn't have a problem starting after work.

Despite its foibles, we kept that Renault all they way through graduate school and for the three years we lived in Cortland. We drove it to Washington, DC and Massachusetts on a vacation trip, we drove it in winter at Christmas time from Champaign to Mass one year and it handled a snowstorm on the Pennsylvania turnpike just fine. We drove twice in the summer to Mass on vacation.

Your Mom and I loved that car. It was the first car we had purchased together and it worked well for us as an everyday and trip car. We had fun on the trips we took. At Cortland, we drove it for a couple of year, but it was beginning to have problems and we decided to get another decent car. We had a second car, a old Ford Econoline van that I drove. So we shopped around and decided to buy a 1972 used Datsun station wagon. I expect you remember that car. We made a deal to trade in the Renault as part of the purchase. When the time came to go to get the Datsun, your mom and I were both glum. We got in the Renault and looked at each other. Then one of us said, I don't want to get rid of the Renault. After some talk, we decided to see if we could trade in the Ford instead of the Renault. We didn't get as much for the Ford, but we felt better about the deal.

Beaches (Thomas Andre)

Your Mom loved beaches, though she wasn't much of a swimmer. If you grew up near the ocean in Southeastern Massachusetts or in Newport, Rhode Island, you were never far from an ocean beach. As a child, your parents took you to be beach in the summer to play in the sand and water and to swim. An evening break might be to drive by the beach front and if you were lucky, stop for an ice cream. One of the things your Mom would talk about with fond remembrance from living in Newport was to go to either Second Beach or Third Beach with her parents during a thunderstorm. They would sit in the car and watch the lightning over the water. She always loved watching lightning and we actually did that with you and Tami in Iowa during some thunderstorms. Of course, we would sit on a gravel road near a corn or soybean field rather than by the sea. Not quite the same ambience.

As a teenager in Southeastern New England, especially once you could drive or had a friend that could drive, was to spend summers when you were not working meeting friends at a beach. Growing up in New Bedford, I spend most of the summers of my junior and senior years, during the day when I wasn't working, at East Beach on East Rodney Front Boulevard. It was the hangout place for New Bedford teens in the summer.

For your Mom, I think the comparable beach was Grinnell's Beach in Tiverton, RI.

In the first summer that we dated, Summer, 1964, we went to Grinnell's Beach several times on the

weekends and she would talk about meeting her friends there during high school. Grinnell's Beach, if I have the right beach, was at the south east intersection of the Old Stone Bridge and Main St. in Tiverton. My memory was that there actually was a bridge there when we were going there. But Google earth now shows the bridge gone. I think they may have taken it down after the new interstate bridge from Fall River to Newport was built. Here are some photos from online below. If you google Grinnell's Beach, you can find more photos and even a youtube link.

Your Mom loved that beach !

The other beach she remembered fondly was Horseneck Beach. Horseneck Beach is in Westport, Ma. I know you and Tami have been there. It is State Beach that is fairly long and that often has pretty good surf, for Massachusetts, at least. It doesn't match California, of course. You can swim and Horseneck and body surf (maybe even surf nowadays, but there is strong undertow. But Horseneck also has great dunes. When we were kids, there wasn't a whole lot of environmental concern and you could play in the dunes much more than now.



Sheryl and Vic on a Newport beach

But as driving teenagers, the real attraction of Horseneck was at night. It has large parking lots and kids would gather to drag race. Your mom used to talk about drag racing there with her family's big Chrysler. It was late 1950s Chrysler with a big engine. I don't know how well she did in the races, but she certainly remembered the gatherings with great fondness. If I recall, she sometimes could borrow her Aunt Terri's car. Terri's was a successful hairdresser and had a newer and hotter car. Your Mom loved to be able to use it at Horseneck, though I don't think she got to very often. I actually never was at Horseneck for drag racing, so I know about this only from your Mom's memories. But Horseneck was certainly a beach that played a role in her life.

Video Eulogies by friends

Tami and David asked friends and family to share remembrances of Sheryl; these were collected into a short video that was shown at her service

Mary Townsend:

I've been in a connection group, and lots of bible studies with Sheryl, and most recently we went through the Book of Romans up at Bethany Manor in Story City, Karen (Kovak) lead the group. I missed the study on the chapter 14 of Romans and I emailed Sheryl the next day to ask her what I had missed, and this is the last email I received from her:

Study was excellent yesterday. Romans 14 says it's ok to love everyone enough to share the truth about Jesus. Then we can let the whole spirit direct them regarding the sin in their lives. It helps us not to get bogged down in issues like abortion and sexual preference and concentrate on the key issue that God sacrificed his only son for us. I never quite got that and I always got tangled up in things that weren't my place to judge. Yes it was a great lesson.

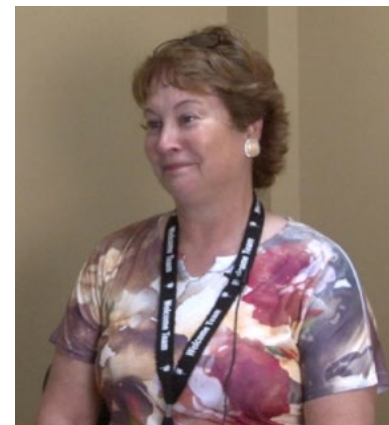
When I saw here a week before she died at Bethany Manor, I told her that I made a copy of the email and I look at it often and how I'll always remember her for it. It capsulated the gospel in just a few sentences and I just felt it was really (Inaudible) advice.



Mary Townsend

Karen Kovach:

Her delight in the word of God and the truth were (Inaudible) in all of us. When the truth just became clear by the Holy Spirit she would throw back her head and just have this beautiful smile on her face. That's my friend Sheryl and I'm going to miss her. We have a date to dance before the throne together and I can't wait.



Leslie Saftig

Leslie Saftig:

I worked at Info Central at the nine o'clock hour at Cornerstone and as such saw Sheryl almost every week. She was always a faithful attender at Cornerstone and loved the Lord, I could tell every time I talked with her. What impressed me so much about Sheryl, her example to me, is she never sought attention for herself. She was always

interested in what was happening with other people and in the body of Christ, and for some every time I asked her how she was doing she would say "Okay" and she never wanted excessive attention, she always wanted the attention to be placed on Christ and the brothers and sisters who were in the body of Christ. And that humility in the face of difficult suffering has been a wonderful example to me. And she radiated the love of the Lord. And I will always remember her and think of her in that example.

Susan Ernest

Well Tami I just wanted to tell you a little bit about my interaction with Sheryl and how much love she brought to our lives. I work at Bethany Manor and Bethany Life Communities and I've been there a while and of course, the first time I met Sheryl was many years ago, and I don't think she even remembers it. I've been friends with Joyce for a really long time and there was a time when Joyce needed to run an errand and interacted with Sheryl, and Joyce was just telling me what a great, wonderful person she was and how much she meant in her life. So when Sheryl came to Bethany Manor, of course Joyce talked to me about it as well and I just knew I needed to get to know her at that time. And just working there with, I work in the food department and dieting, and I got to talk to her about the menu items we got to bring to her, and even though the regular menu items didn't always work out for Sheryl, it was my pleasure to try and find other things that would work for her and help her be able to enjoy the food a little more. It was kind of a challenge and yet she was so gracious and kind about trying to make something work and helping us make it work which was her true spirit of it was always about helping everybody else with what she needed. She was such an amazing witness to our staff and the people that were able to be there with her in her life. And I love that she brought her study group with her to Bethany Manor and you know, just them being there and people seeing her love and love of Christ in that place and her spirit just shared with everyone there. It was our joy and our pleasure to help care for her. And she touched our lives so much and we're just so grateful that we were able to help care for her. My life is blessed because I got to know her better. I got to know her in our connection group as well, and again she brought so much to all of us and thank you so much.



Susan Ernest

Marie Nesbitt:

Well I always think of Philippians 2:13 when I think of Sheryl because it teaches us that God gives us the desire and the power to respond to him as appropriately like he wants us to. And she did that as much as anybody I know. She was just always so full of joy and delight and was a conviction to me. But she was happy and affirming and



Mary Nesbitt

Deep Enough to Dream

By Chris Rice

Lazy summer afternoon
Screened in porch and nothin’ to do
I just kicked off my tennis shoes
Slouchin’ in a plastic chair
Rakin’ my fingers through my hair
I close my eyes and I leave them there
And I yawn, and sigh, and slowly fade away

Deep enough to dream in brilliant colors
I have never seen
Deep enough to join a billion people
For a wedding feast
Deep enough to reach out and touch
The face of the One who made me
And oh, the love I feel, and oh the peace
Do I ever have to wake up

Awakened by a familiar sound
A clumsy fly is buzzin’ around
He bumps the screen and he tumbles down
He gathers about his wits and pride
And tries again for the hundredth time
‘Cause freedom calls from the other side
And I smile and nod, and slowly drift away

Deep enough to dream in brilliant colors
I have never seen
Deep enough to join a billion people
For a wedding feast
Deep enough to reach out and touch
The face of the One who made me
And oh, the love I feel, and oh the peace
Do I ever have to wake up

‘Cause peace is pouring over my soul
See the lambs and the lions playin’
I join in and I drink the music
Holiness is the air I’m breathin’
My faithful heroes break the bread
And answer all of my questions
Not to mention what the streets are made of
My heart’s held hostage by this love

And these brilliant colors I have never seen
I join a billion people for a wedding feast
And I reach out and touch the face of the One who
made me
And oh, the love I feel, and oh the peace
Do I ever have to wake up
Do I ever have to wake up

Do I ever have to wake up
Do I really have to wake up now

Romans 3:20-24 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

“How Great Thou Art”

O Lord my God, When I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made;
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!

When through the woods, and forest glades I
wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.

Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!

And when I think of God, His Son not sparing;
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!

When Christ shall come, with shout of
acclamation,
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart.
Then I shall bow, in humble adoration,
And then proclaim: “My God, how great Thou
art!”

Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!

just always giving God the glory for her life, and I just really appreciated her. She was just a very dear friend and I'm going to miss her, however I'm looking forward to the day that I get to join her in heaven for eternity.

Philippians 2:13 (HCSB)13 For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose.

Doug & Twyla Anderson:

Doug: We were in a connection group right after Sheryl came to Christ and it was fun to see her excitement for God in all of this, but she was always asking for books to be put on our webpage to read and whatnot. But the thing about Sheryl that's interesting is that I got two legs and I get around here and I do a handful of minor things around this place, but Sheryl could minister to more people from a wheelchair in a slouched position than anybody could with two legs getting around. But it's always amazing to see what God does through people.



Doug & Twyla Anderson

Twyla: When I came home from work, the day Sheryl passed away, and I was thinking, oh my feet hurt, I was just going to complain like crazy and then read Marcia's comments on Facebook and I thought, ya know, from here on out, if I do any complaining, would you just say Sheryl's name. She's just awesome.

Ariana Chappell:

Sheryl was very nice and she gave us lots of presents, and she gave me this castle that had a princess and a prince and stuff that makes noise and you could pop up stuff. And she was very nice because she gave us lots of presents.



Chiara, Beth, Valor, and Arianna Chappell

Beth Chappell:

Sheryl, mom, grandma, she was something to each one of us in our family, something a little different all because she loved us and we loved her. And Sheryl was who she was and I've known her a long time because of my friendship with Tami and seeing her before she

knew Christ as her savior and afterwards, she was always doing things before and after, but after she came to know Christ you could tell that her life had new purpose, new meaning and she was happier. And I look at her pictures and the picture of when she was holding Arianna, and her smile was just the same as when days before she was going to see Jesus. And I can tell you almost even broader and brighter of a smile, and she was just always so giving and loving toward our family. She loved my children as if they were her own grandchildren and every time she saw them she always lit up and even coming to church not seeing her by the info center and not seeing her at the back of the sanctuary makes me sad. But I know that she's in such a better place and she was ready to go there and she had such great faith and was so eager to share that wherever she went and whatever she did.

Schelly Donnelly - Lindsey & Tara

Schelly: Sheryl it was so fun coming on Sunday mornings and working with you at the doors, always seeing your smile, always having you right there coming up and giving you hugs and the girls loved it. You were part of the reason that they loved coming to church, and we're really going to miss you.



Schelly, Lindsey, and Tara Donnelly

Tara: Sheryl I loved coming to church in the morning and seeing you and giving you hugs and you always made me smile.

Amelia Flickinger:

I only got to know Sheryl just a few years ago when she moved to Story City, just a few blocks from my house. And I would get to bring her to church and drive her van every once and awhile. And oh my word, she was so patient with me. And if I every got to go over and visit, she didn't fuss at me for not coming over, I only lived three blocks away. She was always so happy to see me whenever I would get come. I was one of the few that got to be with her in the last few hours and the memories we made, I will cherish those hours for a lifetime.



Amelia Flickinger

At one point, she knew when Jesus was coming to see her and she was so excited that she was going to finally get to be dancing, with both her arms raised and her feet working. And at one point she motioned all us to come over and she said, (in a whisper) "I don't have much time." And every one of the staff that came in, and they lined

up to come and tell her goodbye one more time, and she one on one with them gathered them in her arms, one arm, and pull them close and she told them one more time about Jesus. She would tell every single one of them “Jesus loves you.” And one of them said I want to be there someday and she did not waste any breath to tell them, she just wanted them to know one more time that if they wanted to be in heaven, they could be with her but all they had to do was accept Jesus for themselves. Because she would tell every single one of them “Jesus loves you and he died for you and I want you to be with me in heaven and you can be someday but you need Jesus. The only way you’re going to get to heaven is to know Jesus.” And so when she couldn’t even say those words anymore and people were still coming and telling her goodbye, she would be trying to move her lips and all of us knew what she wanted to be saying and so we would take the opportunity to say what Sheryl would be saying if she could talk... And so hopefully the people that loved her there at Bethany Manor will remember her. She was such a powerful witness for Jesus. At one point she was just like this, had her arm propped over on her hand and I said “Is that your waiting look?” (Laughs) And she just nodded at me and I love that picture of Sheryl waiting for Jesus to come and get her, take her home. And it was precious when she just opened her eyes and it was like she was seeing Jesus. She hadn’t had her eyes open for quite a few hours, but she saw Him then, and we got to see her see Jesus. I love that.

Greg Stevenson:

Well, we had the privilege of having Sheryl in our connection group that met in our home just for the last two and a half, three years of her life. She would come in her motorized wheelchair and was always the first there because she needed to get on the road in case there were problems and didn’t want to be a bother to everybody coming in in a wheelchair. I guess the best that I can say is we had known Sheryl before but we came to love her very very deeply because she was just a unique person. But unique in that she was a person who had more reason than most to not be filled with joy and more reason than most to become embitter toward God or to question why God would do that to her. And in our small group without fail, Sheryl was always the one who was full of joy. Sheryl was always the one who if I ever saw her become impatient, it was when we as a group had deviated too far from talking about Christ and from keeping our minds on what Christ wanted us to be. Those who were in love with him, those who wanted to follow him, those who had at the center of their minds his kingdom and what he called us to do and she loved people deeply, and especially her family. And was always I think embarrassed and hesitant to ask for prayer for herself but was never bashful or hesitant to ask for prayer for those that she loved, especially those who didn’t know the Jesus that she knew. And for anybody to me who knew Sheryl, Jesus couldn’t be an abstract thought, couldn’t be just a matter of opinion in this world. But to know that Jesus that Sheryl knew, he’s alive



Greg Stevenson

today, he’s a person. He knew her and she knew him. And I also had the privilege of going to visit with her a few days before she died. And what a privilege again. I’d only had one other experience like that being able to be with somebody in the midst of dying who had a life long love affair with Jesus and I know that Sheryl’s wasn’t quite life long, but she got more love in the amount of life that she knew Jesus than most people do living ninety years with Jesus. And to see the joy in her face and the anticipation to being with Christ and the absolute lack of any question in her mind that the person that she knew was real and the place that she was going was real and the anticipation of being set free from the bondage, the body that she had for so long. And I told her that being with her for me being with her was another selfish moment in my life , to be with her and to see the joy and anticipation because she and I shared maybe a feature of looking ahead to being with Jesus so much that sometimes I don’t pay enough attention to life here on earth and what Jesus is calling me to do now. To be with Sheryl in those hours, I’ll treasure for the rest of my life.

Markaye Dettburn:

The name Sheryl always brings a smile to my face. We’ve been in Bible studies for about eight years together and I met her in a precept study, but I knew all about her even before I met her because everybody was praying for her. I’ll always remember her sense of humor and her cats, her love for her cats. We used to meet at her house for one of the studies and the first time those cats talked to us we all just say there and looked at each other like this can’t be for real but it was. And another time there was a gal that didn’t know that the cats could go under the couch and all of the sudden there was a bump under the cushion and you should have seen her eyes they were like silver dollars. She loved eating at Village Inn and she always ordered the same thing, and a piece of blueberry pie to take home for supper. She was a remarkable woman and friend. Her smile brightened those around her, and she’ll always have a special place in my heart. And even in death her life is shining through Jesus.

Mary Despard

Sheryl, what can I say about Sheryl except that she was a wonderful person and inspiration to all of us. I was in a Bible study with her many times and we met at her house. And I too have heard the talking cats and it was quite a shock but I’m glad that other people heard it, not just me. I recall many things that Sheryl taught us through her ways, through her true devotion. The



Markaye Dettburn



Mary Despard

way she knew the Bible, she never forgot anything that she read. And she could always tell us about it. And particularly during the Book of Revelations and the study by John McArthur she remembered everything and one day she said “We need to have a review because you need to know what we have learned and remember what we have learned so far.” And she truly made an impact on all of us. I visited Sheryl shortly before she passed away and if we all can be as prepared as she was, we will be the better people for it.

Shelly Larson:

Sheryl was in connection group with us for a number of years and just a delightful person, always with so many insights to share with everyone and you could tell that she was really into what we were studying and that she had studied it. The thing that always amazed me about Sheryl was in all of the difficulties she had just to maintain her everyday life and the struggles that that was and the energy that that must have taken, Sheryl always came to connection group and she always had another Bible study to be in, another fellowship, she was just hungry for the word and that just inspired me.

My favorite story about Sheryl really is, it would take two of us to walk her into the house. One on each side holding an arm and she never said anything to us about be careful or anything like that until we got her Christmas tree in the living room, and we had to walk by the Christmas tree to set her up in her spot on the couch. And as we went by the Christmas tree she said “Don’t drop me in the Christmas tree.” And so (Laughing) every week as we walked by the Christmas tree we were talking about whether this would be the week when we would choose to throw her into the tree or just let her get to the couch. She would just laugh and she had a great sense of humor. We’ll always remember Sheryl when we put up our Christmas tree.

Jodi Pribyl

There are many thing to admire about Sheryl, but one main thing I admire is that she was just such a servant, and a servant from the background in ways that some people never knew about. One of those ways is the way she served me. Part of my job is to take care of our overseas workers and she was faithfully a prayer warrior for them and would faithful mobilize others to pray for the overseas workers. Every week she put together this sheet that had the most updated requests from our overseas workers. She was so faithful even when I wasn’t. Every week I’d get those emails and she would ask me how my week was going.



Shelly Larson



Jodi Pribyl

You could tell she cared for me and for the workers. Whenever I’d run into her at church she was always inspiring to me because she had such a great attitude. It was encouraging to be a part of the Cornerstone family with her.

Lu Jansen

Well, I’ve gotten to know Sheryl the last year or so, my wife (Janemale) have gotten to know Sheryl over that last year or so through our connection. And we were always so encouraged by her faithfulness and her love for Jesus. And a week ago I went to visit her, and we had a good visit. We talked about heaven and what that might be like. And I saw no fear in her eyes about death. All I saw was the joy and anticipation about seeing Jesus. And that only comes from knowing Jesus Christ and believing what he did on the cross for us. Death had no victory in Sheryl. Death had no sting in Sheryl. And that just so encouraged me and I think about today and what she’s doing today versus what she was doing last Sunday and it brings a smile to my face and we were just blessed to know your mom.



Shelly Larson

Marcia McDowell:

Sheryl’s mom lived with her for several years, and her mom always told her that she had to come home at a certain time. So her connection group always teased her that she had a curfew. Even when she was in her 50’s she had a curfew. Well one winter night we were coming home from connection group and we must have been a little late because her mom had locked the door. And Sheryl’s garage door opener wouldn’t open. It must have been the battery or something. We went around the house trying to find a door to get open, Sheryl was calling her mom, her mom wasn’t waking up, what are we gonna do? Finally her mom woke up and opened the door, but we were never late after that.



Marcia McDowell

Judy Kuhn:

I only knew Sheryl for about four years, when I started coming to Cornerstone I met her. And I was in a Bible study group that she was in and for a while we were meeting at her house, and then she went up to Bethany Manor and we went up there a little bit. But one time when we were at her house, I think she had gone into the bathroom and the cats were pretty active that day and they were her friends. And the one, I never did know their names, but the one sort of snuck around the corner from the living room to the kitchen and he says “Mom where are you? Mom!” (Laughs) And we got the biggest kick out of that and I never did forget it and when she came back in the room then we told her the cats were calling for her and talking about it and she said “Oh yes they talk!” (Laughs) And that’s a good memory I have with Sheryl. I never met anyone with such great faith, and wanted to go to heaven so bad and that’s what makes her passing so much easier for us. We miss her, and we’re sad that we won’t see her but she is in a much much better place.



Judy Kuhn

Eve Lederhouse:

A few things I really love about Sheryl is besides being the mom of one of my best friends, I loved spending time with her because the more you got to spend time with her the more of the real Sheryl you got to see. And I loved it when she thought she was getting away with something and she got caught and she pretended to feel guilty and she’d be like “Oh sorry” but she really wasn’t sorry, she just loved getting away with that. I think the greatest thing was just really what some people have said how much she loved the idea of seeing Jesus and she may have been in a wheelchair but she definitely sprinted toward the finish line because she knew she got to hug and dance with her savior that she’d been longing to see for so long. I can’t wait to hug and dance with her in heaven sometime soon.



Eve Lederhouse

Joyce Driscoll:

My favorite thing to think about with Sheryl is the first time that I met her and she had just became a believer and had the privilege of already having a relationship with her daughter. And so we were driving to a women’s retreat and I’m scared out of my mind because I’m driving on icy roads, and I say to Sheryl “So how you feeling about this?” (Laughs) And she’s like “I don’t have any fear, I don’t worry about anything anymore since I became a Christian.” And that just blew me away. And so to me that privilege of knowing her at the very beginning of her relationship with God to being there with her at the very end of her time here on earth. She’s my friend, she’s my encourager, she’s the one that prayers with me and for me. I just realize what a privilege it is to know someone who has walked so strong with the Lord for ten years, and that just encourages me. Am I living like Sheryl’s lived life. And now she has the privilege of dancing with the Lord.



Joyce Driscoll

Kris Scheppler:

I just wanted to say that Sheryl meant a lot to me through the different connection groups and bible studies I’ve been with her in over the past 10 plus years. The word I would use to describe Sheryl would be an “inspiration”. She’s been an inspiration in my life and will continue to be forever. When I think of the pain she went through and how she worshipped God through all of it, I give thanks for her and that she’s been a part of my life.

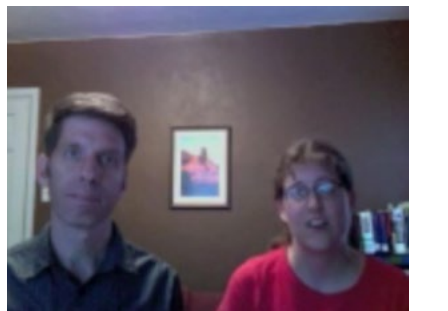


Kris Scheppler

Alex & Anastasia Tuckness

Anastasia: I was in a bible study with Sheryl several years ago. I was always impressed with her preparation and perseverance to get there every time. I was also working at the DOT at that time, so she would come in time after time to get her license to drive again. She had to take a test and I was impressed with how determined she was to get her license so she could come on her own to bible study and connection group and church. I really always admired her dedication to God and serving him and being with his people.

Alex: I think for me, I just really appreciated getting to watch how after she gave her life to Christ, Sheryl was just always thankful and joyful and looking forward to seeing Jesus. And how that just changed



Alex & Anastasia Tuckness

everything about her life and completely transformed her, and it’s just been a real encouragement to me ever since.

Josie Andre:

Memere was my grandmother and I loved her a lot.

Troy Nesbitt:

Never in my life, 30 years of ministry experience, have I ever gotten a text about someone that I love dying and my first response was happiness. And when I saw the text, having spoken to Sheryl, having watched her grow in her faith and suffer in her body, it reminds me of what Paul said “My outer man is decaying day after day, but my soul is being strengthened by God.” And I watched that in a real person in Sheryl Andre. And when she passed into the presence of Jesus, and I got the news, my first response was joy. And I thought, I’m so happy for you Sheryl! And it wasn’t until literally moments later that I thought about the selfishness that we will have because we miss her and we love her, and we’ve lost what now Jesus is delighting in. And I cannot wait. I know for me as long as I live, one of the things I will be looking forward to when I get to heaven is dancing with Sheryl, and hugging Sheryl, and singing with Sheryl with the voice that she claimed she always had that I never really heard. And I want to see Sheryl drive because one of the scariest moments that I ever had with Sheryl was I think one of the first days she ever drove solo, she decided to come to Cornerstone, one of the few places she would come safely and we had parking spots for her. And she took more than one of them and she crashed into the rocks a little bit. (Laughing) You know. And she always drove so slow but she never stopped just right and especially early on I remember she got out of the car just being so tickled that she was such a horrible driver and yet happy in every moment.

The other thing I want to say about Sheryl is I’ve never been to hospice and death is horrible, and she embraced the ugliness of death better than anybody I’ve ever seen. And so I said to Sheryl, when I saw her first of all she said to me “Troy, I’m really going to die this time,” and I said “Yes you are.” And she said to me “I can’t wait.” So I said to her “Sheryl, you really are going to die and you’re going to see Jesus probably before all of us, and when you see him, I don’t want you to have left anything unsaid. And so I want you to say to me what you should say to me, because you don’t want to hear Jesus say, I know I wanted you to say that to him, but you just weren’t brave enough to do it.” So I said “Sheryl what do you have to lose now?” And she said



Josephine Andre



Troy Nesbitt

“Okay.” And she said “I have to think about that.” And then she said “Keep teaching the Bible. I love the Bible, it’s my favorite thing and I love that at our church we teach the Bible verse by verse. Don’t ever stop doing that.” And I said “Okay Sheryl, we got it.” And then she said, and I could tell she was a little pensive, “I love the music, and love that it’s for the young people. I know it’s not for me, it’s for the young people, but could we please sing the new songs more so that old people like me could learn them and enter into them before we start another new song? Do we have to sing so many new songs all the time?” And I said “Got it.” And then she said “Now I know you cancelled that program for the kids. Don’t ever stop reaching to kids with the Bible.” And I was able to guarantee her that we would never, ever stop doing that. We love Sheryl, but we’re going to miss her only in a moment because all of us who know Jesus which is what she wants, will be able to embrace her again forever and ever and we look forward to that.

Sarah Stevenson:

I think the thing I loved so much about Sheryl, my husband and I had the privilege of having Sheryl in our small group, our connection group for two years and she came faithfully every week. And she came with her Bible and she was ready to learn and to dig into the word and she always pointed people to Jesus, and what the word said, and she was a living testimony of the word. She wasn’t just encouraging people towards God, but she herself was living it out. And the other thing that really struck me was that all of us in our group, physically, she was suffering the most and it was apparent. And even in all of her suffering, she didn’t complain, she would ask for prayer and she wouldn’t complain. She would ask people to pray for her and ask that she would be a witness for Jesus through her suffering and that she could reflect Jesus wherever she was. When she was living in her own house, it was to her neighbors or other people she was encountering, and then when she moved into Bethany she was very bent on being a witness to Jesus to the nurses, to her roommates, to the other residents that were living there, and she would go and visit people at Bethany. Which I thought oh wow Sheryl what a testimony of living out her faith and rejoicing despite her circumstances and numerous times though the couple of years that I’ve been at Cornerstone, I heard people talk about how much Sheryl had meant to them. One particular young woman had a series of problems and situations and she would meet with Sheryl sometimes and they would pray together and Sheryl would point her to Jesus and the word and encourage her. That was a common thing about Sheryl. Last week when she was in her last few days, I went to see her and I said “Sheryl what do you look forward to the most about going to heaven?” And she said “I can’t wait to dance with Jesus.” And I said that I was excited to her and I would look forward to dancing with her when I got to heaven with her too.



Sarah Stevenson

Chris Hicks:

Well I’m Chris Hicks, I’m married to Sheryl’s daughter and I just wanted to share a couple of happy, funny family memories that I have of Sheryl. Some of my favorite memories of Sheryl are when she would remember and think back herself to a time that she was a kid that she could run and walk and play and dig in the sand and all of those things that all other kids can do that she’d lost that ability. And one example was we took her up to Massachusetts in 2009, we took her to the beach where she’d played in the sand and dug in the sand and swam as a little girl and just seeing how that moved her just was very joyful to all of the family. To just see her sit on the beach and look at the other kids playing just really moved us all.



Chris Hicks

But a funny memory about eight months ago she was in the hospital with pneumonia and she was bummed out of course and she was tired of fighting this over and over and over and she was lonely in the hospital. So Tami and I went and saw her, and to just cheer her up we were playing twenty questions with her. Who’s your all time favorite actor, your musician? Just all of these questions and we talked about her all time favorite song. And she got this big smile on her face and she said the Hawaiian Wedding song by Andy Williams and she told us this great story. She said when she was a six or seven year old kid, her mom would put her to bed and when all of the lights were off and the kids were in bed, she would go and get her Andy Williams record and put this record on to listen to by herself. And the Hawaiian Wedding song was the very last song on this record. So Sheryl told us that as a little girl she would just sit in bed and she’d be there kicking the sheets and slapping herself and everything else just trying to stay awake so she could stay awake so she could last until she heard the Hawaiian Wedding song. And while she was telling us this, Tami had her cell phone and she pulled that song up on her phone and started playing it, and it was just like Sheryl was teleported away from all of her problems and she closed her eyes and started singing along and she looked like that six or seven year old girl that was lying in bed listening to the Hawaiian Wedding song that her mom was playing. And it just brought joy to both of our hearts to see how she was moved by that song.

The other great memory that I have of her that a lot of you probably don’t know about is that we recovered this (holding up a bottle of Southern Comfort) from her nightstand at the nursing home and how every time Tami and I were up there she would take a swig of this and she really really liked it. And it was my responsibility to keep her in supply of this and so I just wanted to let Sheryl know that I have it and I will be taking care of it for you.

Hawaiian Wedding Song by Andy Williams

This is the moment I’ve waited for
I can hear my heart singing
Soon bells will be ringing
This is the moment of sweet aloha
I will love you longer than forever
Promise me that you will leave me never
Here and now, dear
All my love I vow, dear
Promise me that you will leave me never
I will love you longer than forever
Now that we are one
Clouds won’t hide the sun
Blue skies of Hawaii smile
On this, our wedding day
(I do) I do
(Love you) Love you
With all my heart

Continued Reminders, by Tami Hicks

My mom Sheryl was a mom of reminders! And even now, after she is gone, I am continually reminded of my mom and the things she would want me to remember. Different things throughout each day remind me of her and all that she gave me and taught me over the years.

Clouds. I could be walking down the street and see the clouds and remember how much she loved the clouds. It didn't matter if it was thundering or mostly sunny, if there were clouds, she liked looking at them. This always reminds me to slow down a little... or stop and look up once in awhile. She was always telling me that I work too much, too hard or down slow down enough. I think she would be proud that we are getting better at that. The clouds remind me of mom telling me to slow down and not work so much.

Money. This is another area where I'm often reminded of the good lessons and frugalness she passed on to my brother and me. I see it often in my career where people don't know how to handle money, don't know how to manage it and often spend way more than they make. Mom always taught us to be wise in that area, taught us how to keep track of it and balance our checkbooks, and how to spend less than we make. I used to take that for granted, but now it makes me think of mom and how wise she was with her money.

She always had something to be happy about in each day. Her days would often be filled with struggle, difficulties, not being able to do what she wanted because of her physical limitations or something else that was out of her control. But in all these photos and memories, she was always finding the thing to be happy about, always smiling! She was especially good at this after she became a Christian and there were days when I would be tired and frustrated about work or something else, and she would always find something good in it all. I remember more often now to find the silver lining, the ray of sun coming out from the clouds and to hold onto those things that make us smile. Now when I'm having a hard day and all seems gray... I'm reminded of mom and how happy she was, regardless of circumstance.

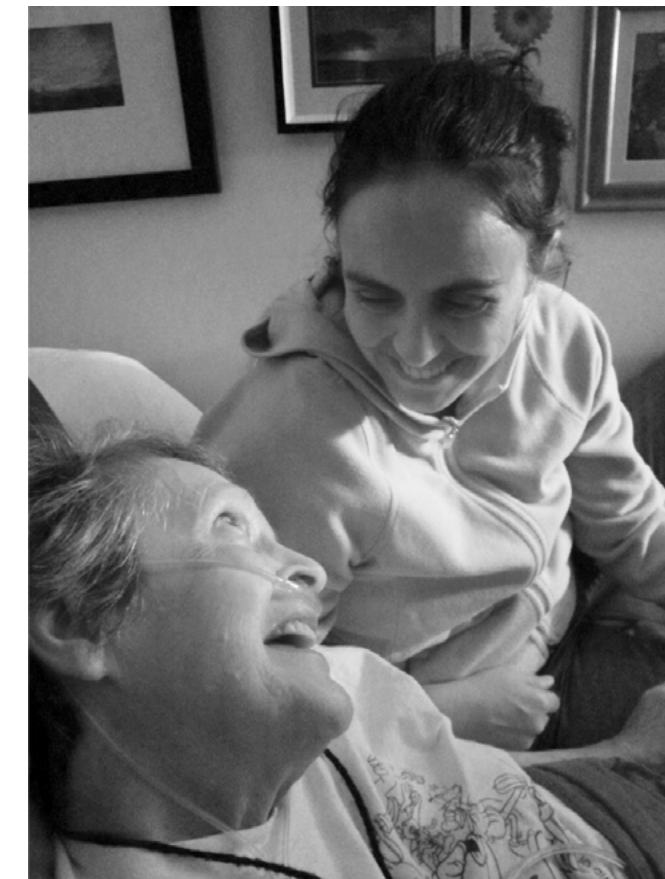
She was a good friend. She asked good questions and wanted to know what was REALLY happening with you. She was concerned about me and how I was doing. She didn't want the generic "ok" or "fine, but wanted to know what she could pray for you for and how God was working in your life. Even the things that seemed like minutia to us were important for her to know. She liked knowing us. This reminds me to slow down and think about others first. I love that she constantly wanted me to tell her about my week, even if it was the same as last week. I am reminded of mom each time I talk to a close friend now and I try to remember to be a good friend back.

Reading and memorizing the bible. She loved to read the bible and books about the bible. She wasn't great at the memorizing part, but usually got the gist of the verse and the book it was in. She always encouraged me to keep memorizing and reading the bible and loved it when I would recite Romans to her from memory. Now, whenever I hear Romans or James, I'm reminded of mom and I try to read and memorize the bible more.

Family & Friends. She loved seeing and talking to family. I'm reminded how blessed we were to have a great family. Even with all that we had go on in the family throughout her life, we still had good relationships amongst everyone, we shared holidays all together and everyone gets along. She took every opportunity to talk with us kids and her grandkids. She had a weekly call with David, Mel & Josie. She never wanted to miss connection group to see friends. Sometimes these lines were very gray as to who fit in what category – but she loved having friends over or going to Perkins with friends. Each time I see those closest to me, I'm reminded of my mom and how important family and friends are in this life.

Most of all her desire to tell others about Jesus and be a good example is a reminder I need daily. It's so easy to get caught up in the flow of life and just live it out on our own. She was always trying to be a good example and to tell others that Jesus loves them with and without words. I still need to be better at that. She was a great example of it. Now when I meet someone that is rude to me, someone that seems angry, someone that is worldly, someone who might need Jesus, I'm reminded of my mom and want an incredible woman of God she was and I am reminded to continuing running towards that goal.

I'm so grateful for the continued reminders that my mom is giving me, even now after she is gone. The memories and the impact she had on my life and how God used her in such mighty ways. My prayer is that her legacy... her reminders... will continue on for ages to come.





Dear Mom,

I wish I could show you this book. I made it happen for you – out of my sense of gratitude for what you’ve taught me and what you tried to teach me that I have yet to learn. By leaving such a rich legacy of yourself in your writing, in the shared memories of your family and friends, and in the photos you bequeathed to us you made pulling together this book not just so much easier, but a truly joyful and meaningful experience. I know I know you better now, after studying all that you wrote and all your friends had to say. I am glad you are at peace and that your passing was, to all evidence, seemingly joyous (and with much laughter for all involved). It is the thing that rings in my heart about you – your laughter. Your laugh is awesome, and sometimes I hear it still at the beach or in the echo of your grandchildren’s laugh.

Love,

David

I’d like to end this book, as with so much of it, with Sheryl’s own words. Here is the last bit of the book she wrote for her grand-daughter, but I think it applies to all of us.

My life has been a series of seasons:

- Growing up
- College
- Married life
- Raising children
- Working with computers
- Dealing with physical disability,
- Being a grandparent
- Living a life devoted to Jesus Christ.

Some stages overlap, some were more painful than others, but my greatest joy is my love for Jesus. His love has helped me deal with some of the hardest parts of my life and through Him I know that I will live forever. God loved me enough to send His only Son, Jesus, to die so that all punishment for my sins (and the sins of all who believe in Him) fell on Him. He was raised from death to sit in heaven with God until the time when He will return and being with Him all who believe. That is a very brief version of God’s story, but you can read it for yourself if you want to. I’d suggest starting in the bible with the book of John. There are many people who can answer any questions you have, including your Aunt Tami. Your Mom and Dad have a different idea about Jesus and you can ask them about why there are so many different kinds of faith.

You can see glimpses of other parts of my life through a series of stories I have written. I hope and pray that I will meet you again in heaven.