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A healing journey along a mother's road of loss**Dorothy's Word*****By Dorothy Word***

Some day soon, sit down and make a list of your close friends and your casual friends. You might be surprised how long that list is. One day before I moved again, I made a list of friends I had made along the way—from Fort Wayne to New Castle to Evansville to Kokomo and back to Fort Wayne to renewed friendships.

The list of my friends was much longer than I expected! There were names from A to Z—from Annie to Zeila! Here is a short list of my friends with "B" names. Some of them have the same names. For example, there are five Barbaras, four Bettys, three Beths, two Bevs, one Brenda, "and a partridge in a pear tree!"

In my May 2, 2007, article, I wrote about my friend Bev and her daughter, Beth, and the loss of her son, Dan. Today, I am sharing the story of another friend and the loss of her child. This friend is Beth Farra, not to be confused with Bev's daughter also named Beth.

Beth Farra and I were classmates at Marion College, now called Indiana Wesleyan University. After graduation, I traveled to Wisconsin to Beth's wedding where she became Beth Farra Jacobs. We kept in touch via "snail mail." There was no e-mail in those days. One day a letter came with a new address. Beth and George had moved to Alaska. Later on, another letter came announcing the birth of Brenda Marie, Nov. 26, 1970. Brenda lived to be 26-years-old.

From our college days to this very day, Beth has been a person with unshakable faith. That faith was stretched and strengthened as Beth mourned the death of Brenda. And, it was natural for Beth to immerse and envelop herself in the Bible scriptures and inspirational Christian writings. Those words of comfort were recorded in her journal, beginning March 1997.

Beth said she never intended to publish the journal, but she finally did, thanks to a friend "who kept pestering me to put this together." When I heard about the publication, I asked Beth to send me a copy. It arrived after Christmas 2006. The title is, "The Comforting Journey of Brenda's Mom," by Beth Jacobs.

On the Dedication page Beth wrote:

"I would like to dedicate this booklet to all parents who have experienced the loss of one of their children, no matter what age."

On the Introduction page Beth wrote:

"All my life I have had deep sympathy for anyone who lost a child. I have said many, many times in my life, 'I cannot imagine the pain of losing a child'. I said it when a baby died, a child died, a teenager died, or an adult child died. I could think of nothing more terrible than losing a child."

"However, on the morning of March 7, 1997, when my husband said that he thought our 26-yearold daughter, Brenda Marie, was dead, there was instantly a sweet peace from the Lord that I could never have imagined possible. Although the death was totally unexpected, God's peace flooded our hearts."

A summary of Brenda's life was included in the journal: Brenda Marie was born at Faith Hospital in Glennallen, Alaska. She was born with some serious physical problems. Before Brenda was 24-hoursold, she had to be flown 200 miles away from where she was born to Providence Hospital in Anchorage, Alaska for special care. Brenda was the first baby taken to Anchorage in a new portable incubator.

At age seven months, Brenda contracted spinal meningitis and the doctor also heard a heart murmur. At age 14 months, Brenda and family flew to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. The following years, Mayo doctors came to Alaska and checked Brenda. At age 12, Brenda's doctor said, "It seems obvious the doctors have made a wrong diagnosis, so I don't see any reason for you to keep coming to Anchorage for yearly tests." That was great news!

Brenda went forward and enjoyed a normal life. She was in "Who's Who in American High Schools" and she was on the honor roll in high school and college. She received an associate of arts degree in Bible at the Alaska Bible College. She graduated with a bachelor of science degree in journalism in 1993, in Oklahoma. She chose to work on the local newspaper and also help with the family business. Her younger brother worked there too.

Brenda's last day on earth was her mother's birthday—probably the last food she ate was a piece of birthday cake. That night Brenda died in her sleep, March 7, 1997.

In the last section of "The Comforting Journey of Brenda's Mom" are hundreds of scriptures taken from different versions of the Bible. Other sources are inspirational publications. Since Beth had not planned to publish her journal, she didn't document each quotation.

Here are a few of the journal entries:

March 7—Daily Bread: "God is with us in a way we could have never imagined before."

March 21—Daily Bread: "We cannot control the wind, but we can adjust our sails."

April 3—Spurgeon: "Out of our pain we are equipped to minister to other hurting people and there is no substitute for experience."

July 20—John Homer Miller: "Circumstances and situations color life but you have been given the mind to choose what the color will be."

Aug. 9—Guidepost: "Death is a celebration, a coronation, and a commencement."

My two friends, Beth Jacobs and Bev Grienke don't know each other; they never met. But, I think they are alike in how they pursued positive, productive ways to deal with their loss of a child. I am grateful these two mothers shared their journeys with me as they traveled "the road to healing."

Site Map

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