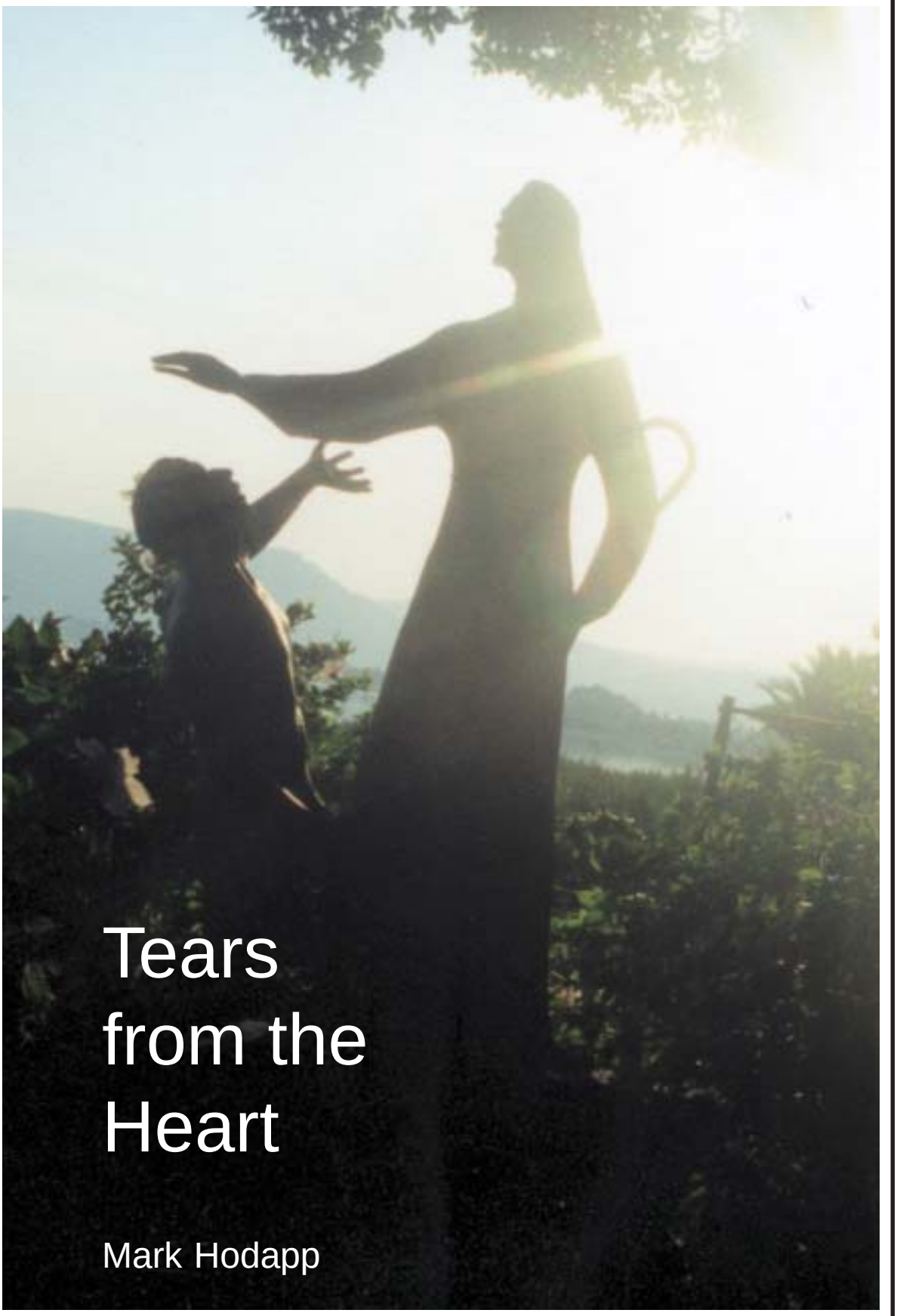


Tears from the Heart

Mark Hodapp

Dedication

My step-daughter, Jenna, cries at my dad's tombstone. My dad died three months after my wife and I were married.

This book is dedicated to my dad, who died June 1, 2003, from esophageal cancer and to all parents who have lost a child.

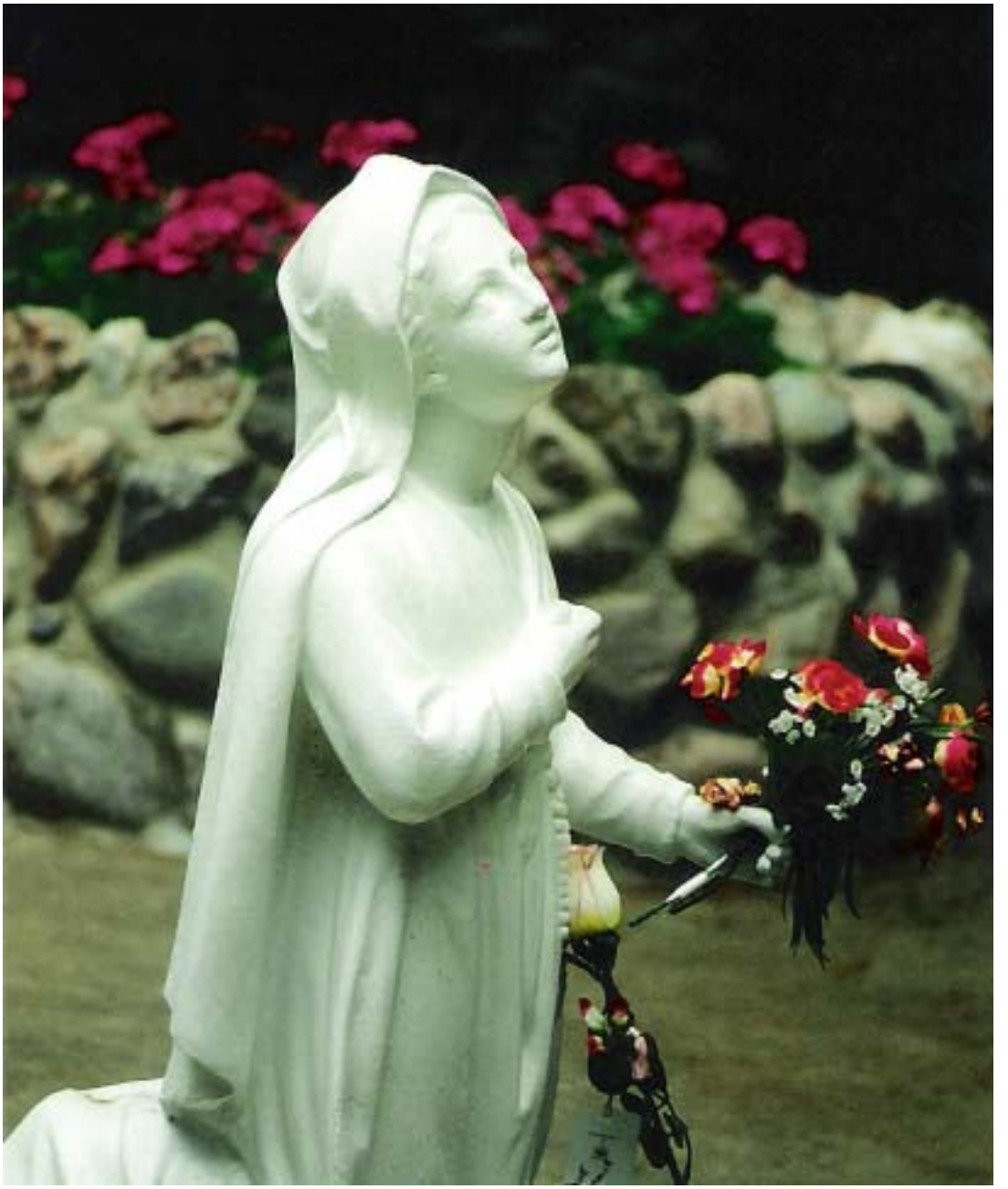
My wife, Marlene, miscarried with our first child July 14, 2003. Just a few weeks earlier, I had a dream about my dad holding our baby. He told Marlene we had a special child.

The night before Marlene miscarried, I had another dream and my dad was holding our baby again. I didn't realize how special this child was to him.

It's quiet today.
A time to stop and pray.
For my wife,
and our life.
A few days ago Marlene and I received some bad news.
It was so unexpected, too.
Instead of hearing our baby cry.
We were the ones who began to cry.
Our unborn child had died.

Our hopes were shattered.
Making us at times feel battered.
Our worst fears...
Have turned into tears.
We are left wondering now why something so cold...
Could happen to us when we were wanting something to hold.
Yet, our love for each other remains strong.
Even though something so joyous had to turn so wrong.
There will undoubtedly be days
When we are left in a daze....
Wondering what ever happened to our child.
Wondering if he or she ever smiled;
Wondering if he ever walked;
Wondering if he ever talked.
It's quiet today...
A time to stop and pray
For my wife.
And our life.

On this day



On this day....
I met a young man who served our country during World II as a Seaman with the U.S. Coast Guard.
He had tears in his eyes
...And was holding his arms out looking for someone to hug
Looking for something to hold

On this day
I was with a man
Who was twice my age
Who thought this day would never come
In the past, she always told me she'd be the first to go, he'd say
He didn't believe that would ever happen.
I thought it would be great if we could go together, he'd say.

On this day...
A man talked about the beauty of his wife of 64 years
...And how hard of a day it has been
The day was even more difficult than the day he lost his mom, he'd say.

I have known this beautiful girl for 66 years...
I have to go now, and take care of my babe.

The man then stood by his wife's side,
Slowly stroking her hand; slowly brushing her gray hair

On this day...
I remember my wife's grandparents.
They always were so welcoming.
And even though her grandma's memory was fading in the later years of her life...
Even calling me the name wrong occasionally, I still felt loved.

On this day...
I will never forget the last time I helped to guide Loretta down our steps
Or the times when she'd inadvertently play the wrong card in pinochle
And later find a trump card in her hand
"Sweetie, hearts is trump," her husband would say.
And the game would go on.

On this day...
I remember my wife's grandmother, Loretta.
She was not only a loving wife, but a mother to some, and a grandmother and great grandmother to others.

On this day...I will never forget the hug I shared with one, Henry Joseph Drury Jr., and our ensuing short conversation about life and his wife.

Rest in peace, Loretta.

Love, Mark

He didn’t like wrong and always wanted his perfect little world.

Yolanda Mack

I still wake up in the morning crying.
Andre dealt with his health problems great.
He took it like a little soldier.
He was a kid you would only dream about.
I have never felt this way before.
I feel a sort of loneliness, but it's a happy loneliness.
It's a weird feeling, but I know Andre is all right, and he's out of pain.
I will deal with it, Andre would say.
And he kept saying, Momma don't cry. I'm going to be all right. I'm strong.
But I will never forget Andre running around, playing cops and robbers with his brothers and little sister.
He didn't like wrong and always wanted his perfect little world.

Yolanda Mack reflects on her nine-year-old son Andre. Andre died Feb. 21, 1998 from sickle cell anemia.

From my heart to yours

I would gain much comfort if I knew for sure he was in heaven.

Joe Sucher

We all have an appointment with a train.
A train destined to collide with us and transport us from the present world into another world forever.
I'm not saying this to impress anyone or to somehow work through my grief.
I am saying this because I feel compelled to do so.
My son, Jeremy, passed from this life on Nov. 7, 1998, when the car he was driving was struck by a train. Although the warning lights were flashing and the bells ringing it seems Jeremy didn't hear them.
I feel I must share with you what God has shown me through Jeremy 's death.
Please be patient and hear me out.
I have been reminded of just how fragile life is.
How quickly and unexpectedly our time on this earth can end.
The opportunity we have to do things with our loved ones can be so quickly snatched from our hands.
I urge everyone to shower the people you love with love.
Show them the way you feel, do it now, don't put it off.

I spoke with Jeremy only five or 10 minutes before his death.
He only made it two blocks before he met the Creator and Judge of us all.
It was just a terrible accident.
An accident that could happen to anyone.
Tragedies like this remind us of how fragile human life really is.
Where Jeremy is right now, only God knows.
Jeremy is in the hands of a perfect God.
A God who loves us more than we can fathom.
A God who became a human and died on the cross for our sins.
A God who is merciful and long-suffering.
What grieves me most as a parent, is that I don't know for sure where Jeremy is spending eternity.
I would gain much comfort if I knew for sure he was in heaven.
But I do know if Jeremy could return and speak to us today, he would urge us to do all we can, while we can.
To live each moment to the fullest.

Joe Sucher
Jeremy's dad

Reaching our potential

With God's help, I'm adapting to my condition as best as I can.

John Foppe

There are a lot of things going through your mind right now. But I am sure each and everyone of us has some of condition in our life.
When I was growing up things were a lot more differently than they are right now for me.
When I began kindergarten, I started to see how different I really was.
My kindergarten teacher sensed something was wrong with my self-esteem, too.
But I always believed there was a God. I just didn't always like him.
I realized I had to change my thinking.
It's important not to let any condition stop you.
Yes, there are limits in the world.
The challenge is not to let the limits define you.
But to push the limits as far as they can go.
I have tripped and fallen before, but it's amazing how the human body can adapt.
With God's help, I'm adapting to my condition as best as I can.

John Foppe, a motivational speaker from Breese, Illinois, was born without arms.

Sometimes, when something like this occurs, it really helps you to focus on your blessings in life.

Debbie Hazlett

I feel so blessed by the outpouring of people and their efforts, and how they are really trying to be of any assistance.
God has left us with so much.
Sometimes, when something like this occurs, it really helps you to focus on your blessings in life.
And I think God has a way of providing these lessons at times when you need them the most.
We were pretty devastated when we first heard Timothy's diagnosis.
Fortunately, at this point he has had no loss of mobility.
Life, however, doesn't go always as you planned, or as you might like.
But God gives you a choice as to what you do during those difficult times.
With his help and his people, you can make a difficult situation and try to make something good come from it.
That is why I feel blessed.
Timothy is just your typical 2-year-old boy who is into mischief.
He loves to run, swing and be outside.
He loves to crawl on counter tops, and do all of the things toddlers love to do.
I think there will be something good that comes from our efforts.

Debbie Hazlett talks about her 2-year-old son, Timothy. Timothy has been diagnosed with Fibrodysplasia Ossifications Progressive. FOP is a rare genetic disorder that causes bones to form in muscles, tendons, ligaments, and other connective tissues.

Finding Peace

How did I survive World War II?
The good Lord will give you the answer to that if you ever meet him.

Clarence Voellinger

A war veteran takes his heart and gives it to his country.
If kids had to go to we today when they were 18, they'd have to do it.
They'd have to be willing to serve their country.
I just made the best of it.
We shouldn't let anything like this happen, again.
I was very lucky.

Norm Becherer U.S. Army Veteran who fought in World War II. He spent four months in Camp Mauthausen in an atrocity camp located 32 miles from Linz, Austria.

How did I survive World War II?
The good Lord will give you the answer to that if you ever meet him.
I believe I would have died if I was laying face down after the shell fragment exploded.
But when things like this happen, you always try to keep it in the back of your mind.
You also realize that someone with higher power than yourself is looking out for you.

A former U.S. Marine, Clarence Voellinger received a purple heart after he injured his lower right ribs after a shell fragment exploded.

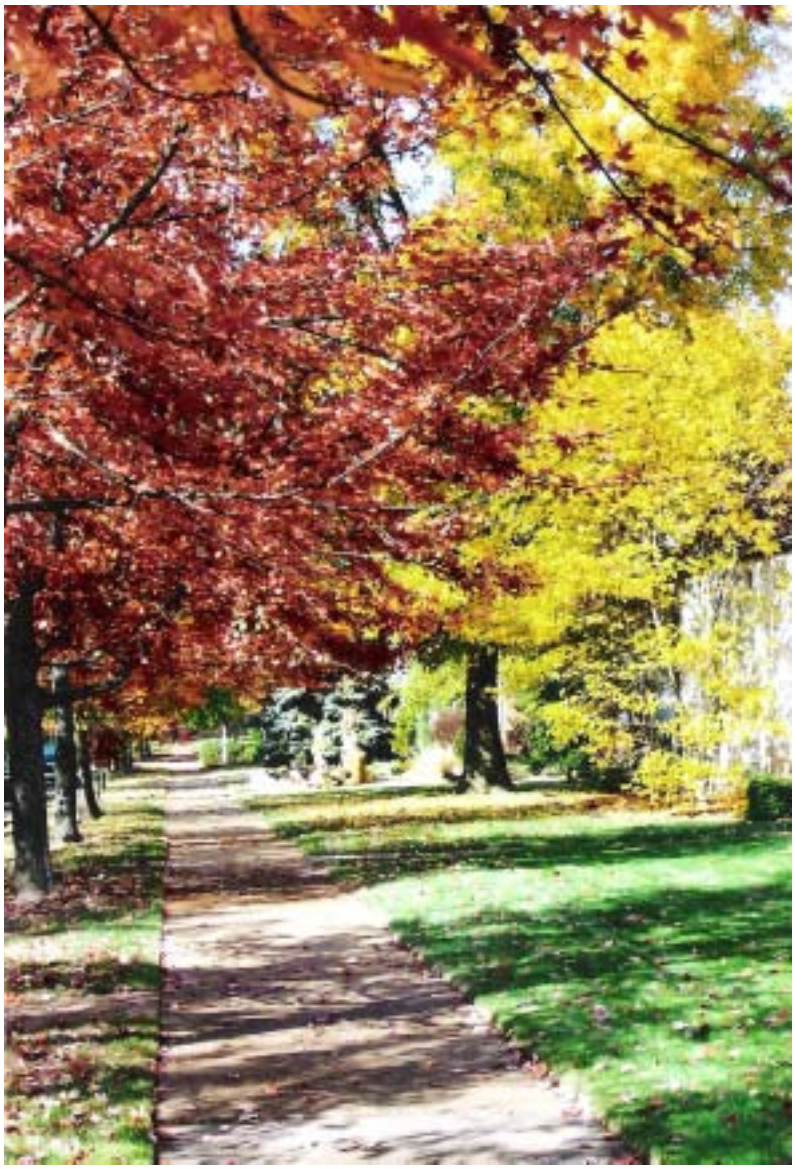
People always say I should go and see the movie "Saving Private Ryan."
I have no real urge.
I have seen it before.
Why do I want to go see it on the screen?
War is hell.
But I fear many children aren't being taught about war, though.
It's not in the history books.

Al May was 18 when he was drafted by the U.S. Army. A member of the 89th Infantry, May spent about a 1 1/2 years in Europe during World War II. Fifty-nine of those days were in combat.

Words to ponder

Crying health soldier dream loneliness feeling pain strong perfect world appointment collide transport destined forever impress share fragile lifetime snatched love show accident tragedies grieves eternity heaven condition different self-esteem like stop limits define you push challenge tripped fallen adapt help best blessed trying assistance focus providing lessons devastated planned choice different situation mischief run swing crawl heart country today willing serve survive meet exploded realize urge fear emotions sad proud memories represent God United States

My first assignment



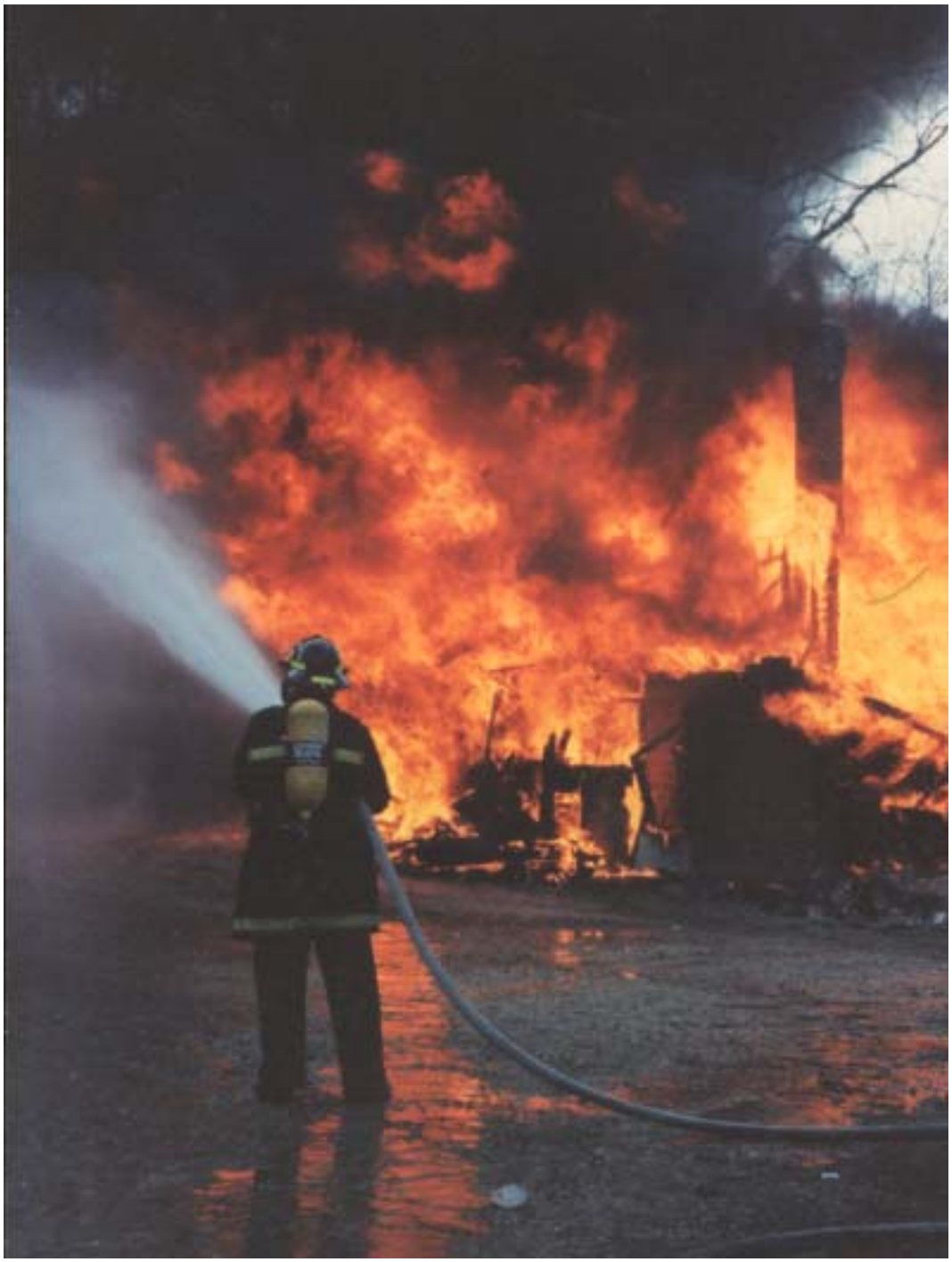
I will never forget those eyes staring at me. The room was not filled with the sounds of children laughing or talking, but with a silence that was looking for guidance...

Ed Fulton

I will never forget those eyes staring at me.
The room was not filled with the sounds of children laughing or talking, but with a silence that was looking for guidance;
Searching for direction;
Needing inspiration;
Needing discipline;
Needing someone to care;
Wanting to be loved;
Quietly asking can you give those things to me?
Will you be my teacher?
I tried everyday to give young people the guidance and direction that they longed for.
I gave them love and care.
I set goals for them that may seem unattainable until they prove to themselves that through preserverance, determination and practice that you can achieve them.
When you achieve goals and high expectations are finally reached, you are drawn once again to those eyes staring at you.
Only this time, there is something else to witness.
A truly remarkable and unforgettable sight.
Just below those eyes you will find the biggest smiles that you can possibly imagine.
It's then and only then, that you realize that you have made a difference in someone's life.

Ed Fulton recalls his first day teaching 27 years ago, and the lessons he learned

Rising from the ashes



Twenty months of hard work. Now, I see it crumbled just before my eyes. But you have to take a deep breath and look to the future.

Jim Stobaugh

The longer you sit, staring at the dark crevasses, the more it starts to hit home.
But we're going to make it.
We've always met catastrophe head-on.
My wife had cancer, and we made it through that.
We went through quite a hassle getting the store.
We were able to get the business and make it successful.
But in a matter of a few minutes it was gone.
Gone.
Twenty months of hard work.
Now, I see it crumbled just before my eyes.
But you have to take a deep breath and look to the future.

Jim Stobaugh
Hours after his store, Sarah's Hallmark, was destroyed in a late-night fire July 13, 1994.

Everybody loves Sarah

I cannot imagine what my life would be without Sarah. She makes me laugh. If she weren't here, there would be such an emptiness.

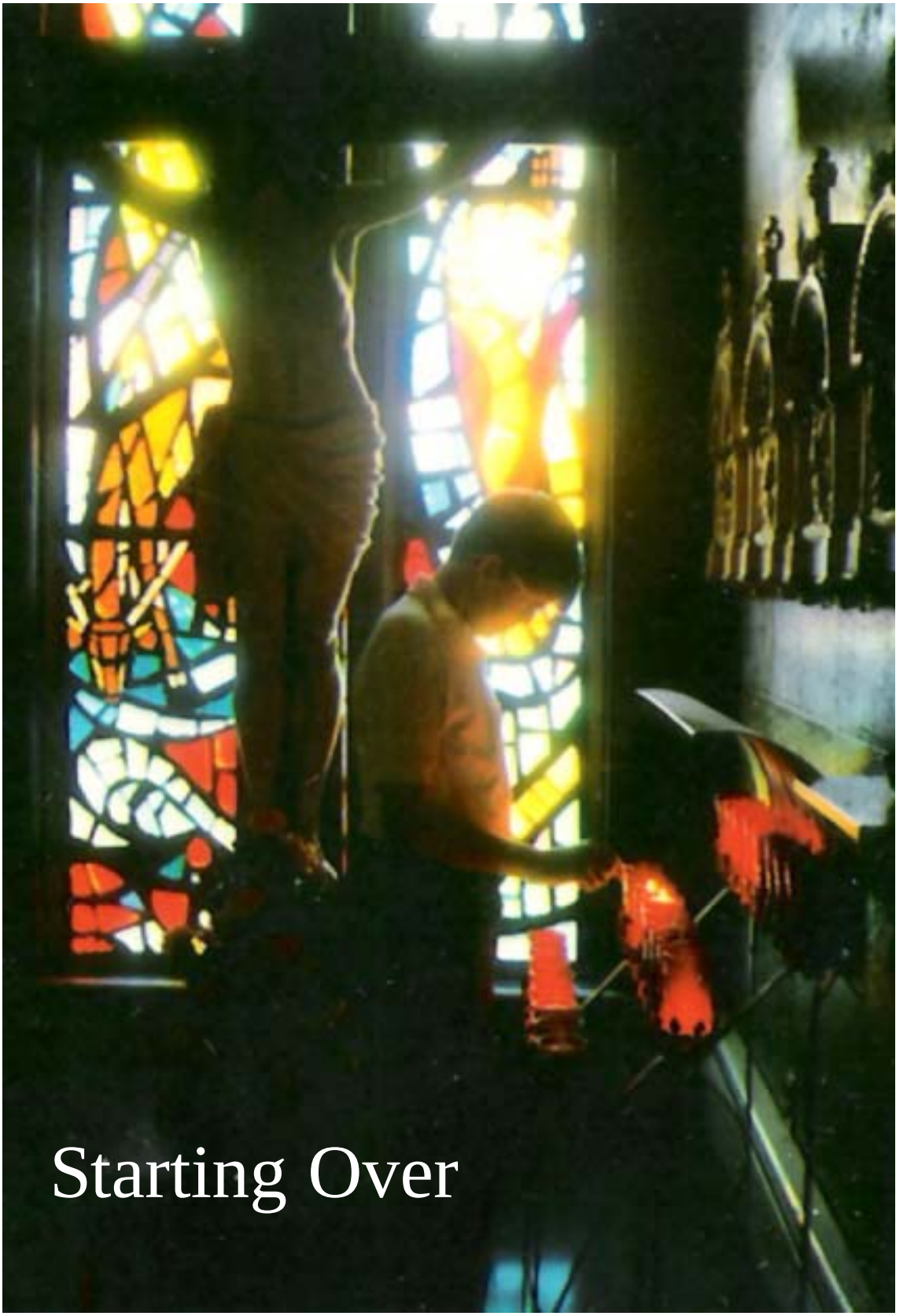
Lisa Amann

I cannot imagine what my life would be without Sarah.
She makes me laugh.
If she weren't here, there would be such an emptiness.
She has a new arm that she is doing really well with.
She is scheduled for reconstructive nose surgery in January.
She also has a prosthesis for legs.
Through it all, Sarah is learning.
She now can count to 14 and she knows her alphabet.
She also loves being with other kids at school.
All of the kids love her.

Lisa Amann looks back at her's daughter's life. Sarah Amann, 3, was diagnosed with meningococcaemia when she was six months old.

Words to ponder

Forget eyes laughing talking silence looking guidance needing inspiration discipline care wanting love asking teacher tried goals unattainable perseverance determination practice witness remarkable unforgettable smiles imagine difference life home catastrophe cancer hassle successful gone crumbled breath look future imagine laugh emptiness new reconstructive surgery prosthesis learning love


Starting Over

It can only get better now.
I don't think anything is worse than losing a parent.
It's time to get on with life and start anew.
When my dad died, it sort of changed everything.
It just left my mom and me.
I now occasionally read my dad's obituary.
I also pray daily to God.
I pray every morning after I get up, thanking Him for helping me make it through the night.
I hope and pray God will lead me to see my daddy, again.
I look forward to seeing him when I go to heaven.

Chad Briesacher, 14, reflects on his late dad. He died from pancreatic cancer.

Where did I get strength?
I sometimes found strength from tears from the heart.
As a mother, I saw my son at his highest and lowest points.

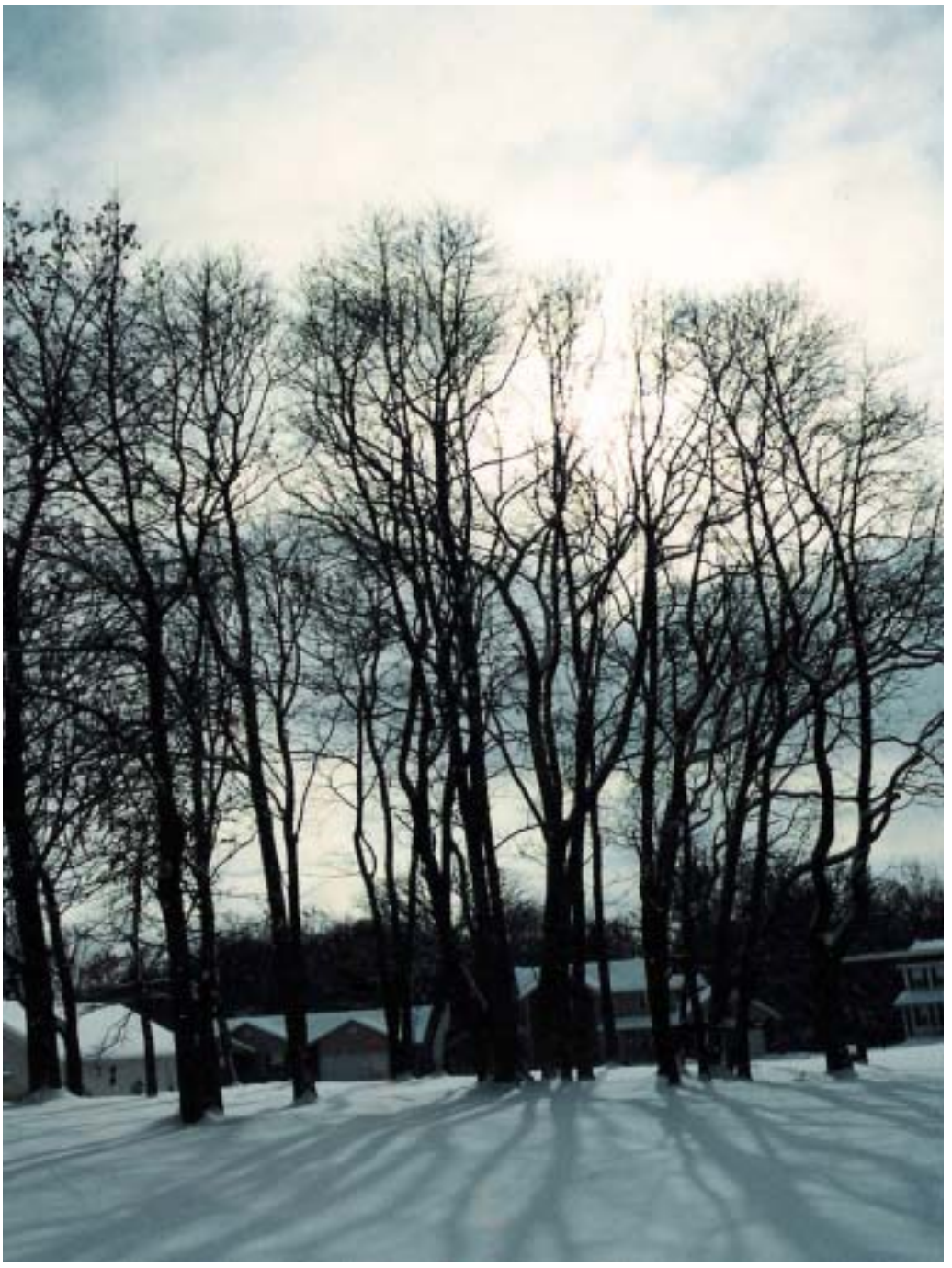
Marilyn Freeman

I used to dwell on it a lot.
His doctor kept telling me to be thankful for what we have now and not to worry about the future.
I had a hard time accepting that because I wanted Stephen here always.
But the possibility that Stephen could have been dead in one month bothered me a great deal.
He wanted to be a happy artist.
How did I deal with it?
Stephen.
He saw me through it.
When he was happy, I was happy.
Stephen was in the hospital nine of the last 14 months.
I often heard people complaining if they have to stay a day or two in the hospital.
He actually liked going there.
He knew he could die at any time
Where did I get strength?
I sometimes found strength from tears from the heart.

As a mother, I saw my son at his highest and lowest points.
When I saw him smile, I swelled all over.
Stephen brought a lot to my life.
He will always be Stephen Freeman first.
The little boy with cystic fibrosis second.

Marilyn Freeman reflects on her son Stephen. Stephen's battle with cystic fibrosis ended June 25, 1992. Prior to his death, he completed the fourth grade at Louisiana Middle School.

A cold reality



I have lived a wonderful life.

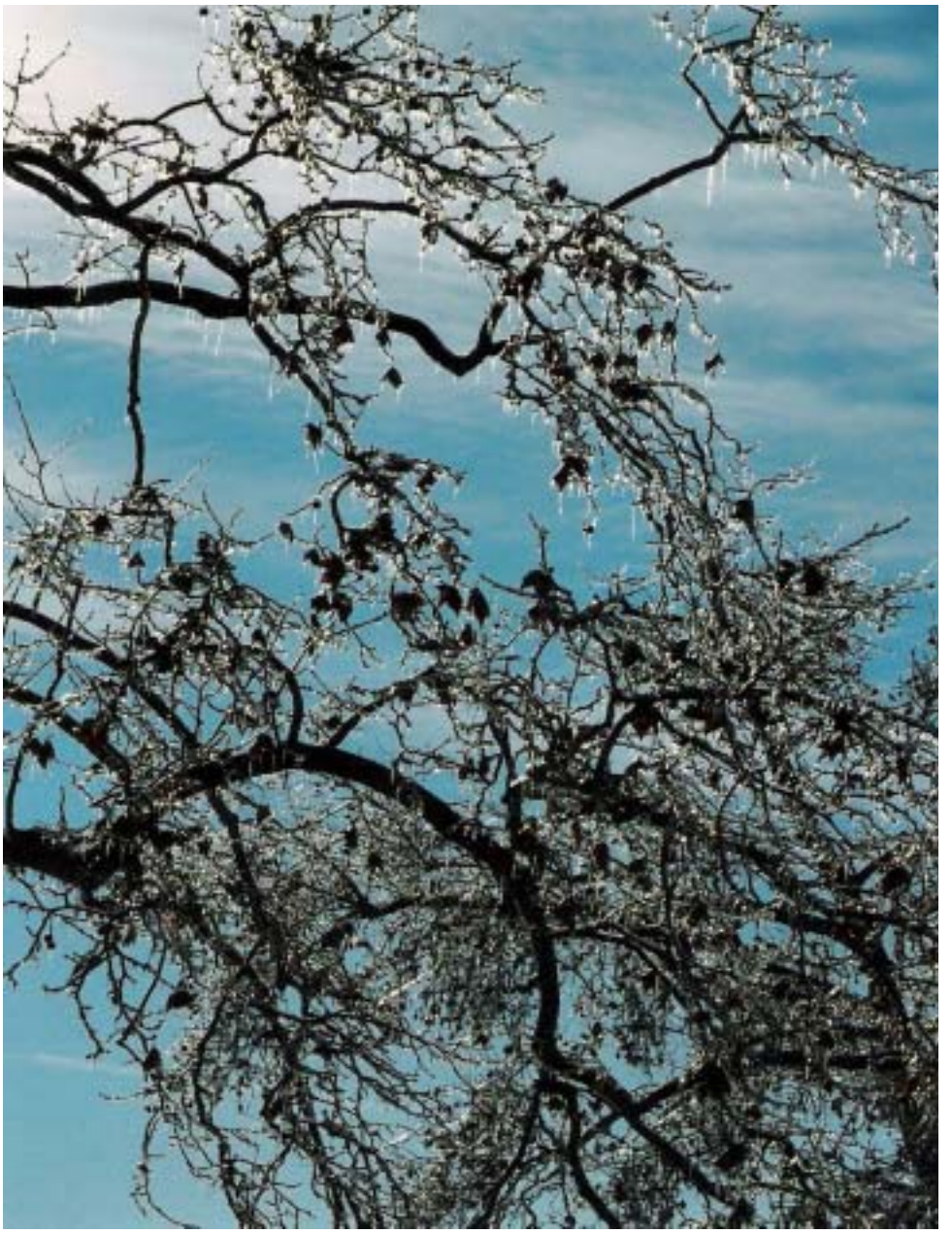
Ed Fulton

Life is terminal.
Everyone who has came before us 1000 years have all died.
Everyone who comes after us until the end of time will die, too.
None of us know when God will take us home.
I have lived a wonderful life.
I learned so much from this battle with cancer.
But it's a shame cancer taught me how to learn these things.
I have no idea why God gave me this disease.
But He's my hope, my salvation.
Cancer taught me five things.
--- Never to give up.
That's an easy thing to do.
--- Convince yourself that you can fight this disease with God's help.
---- When you get home today, look at your mirror and frown. Turn that frown into a smile.
---- Tell the people you love, you love them. Do you know what the three most beautiful words in the English language are?
"I love you."
If you can't say those three words, learn how to say them.
And those people who mean so much to you, tell them that every day.
---- Develop a relationship with God.

You need to talk to him everyday.
Put him first in your life.

Ed Fulton speaks at a church service shortly before he succumbed to brain cancer. He was 49.

Who is your hero?



Am I hero? No. Vietnam prisoner's of war do not consider themselves heroes because we were ordinary people who were put in a place during extraordinary circumstances.

Richard Anchus

Am I hero? No.
Vietnam prisoner's of war do not consider themselves heroes because we were ordinary people who were put in a place during extraordinary circumstances.
Sometimes, when I gave a speech in the past about my military experiences my blood pressure might have gone up.
But not now, I'm getting too old.
I'm very fortunate because I still killed Vietnamese when I was captured.
I was lucky they didn't kill me.
But in the back of my mind I knew I wanted to get back to my family and tell them I love them one more time.
I was a monstrous 22 years old when I got captured.
I had a 43-year-old platoon sergeant call me the old man.
I now look forward going back to Vietnam and seeing how it has changed in 25 years.
I want to show my wife how beautiful parts of Vietnam really are.

Richard Anchus on March 8, 1971, was captured after his helicopter was shot down near the demilitarized zone. He remained in captivity until the last POWs were released March 27, 1973, according to terms of the Paris Peace Treaty.

What does your past tell you about your future?

Nobody wants to talk about the devil too much. You have to realize how much the devil works with you, too.

Josh James

I don’t know what God has in store for me next.
Maybe, I’ll start all over again.
Maybe, I’ll kill myself.
Maybe, I’ll kill somebody.
But God obviously doesn’t want me drinking and driving.
I believe God gives you everything in life.
He gave us free will, and along with that the devil.
Nobody wants to talk about the devil too much.
You have to realize how much the devil works with you, too.
Alcohol was the devil that nearly destroyed my life.
It’s scary to think about all of the bridges that I have burned, the family members and friends I hurt.
I guarantee you, with love and faith in God, you will find your best friends in those environments.
I think I have used up all of my chances.
God has told me three times to stop drinking.
I don’t know what God has in store for me next.

Josh James, 22, attended his first AAA meeting March 21, 1999. He says it took him several weeks after he was released from jail to make this decision. He was put in jail following his second DUI arrest.

Words to ponder

Dwell thankful now wrong future hard true accepting here always possibility happy artist deal happy complaining die strength tears heart highest lowest smile life terminal God battle cancer hope satisfaction fight help love develop hero extraordinary ordinary old monestrous changed devil free-will alcohol destroyed burned hurt faith friends jail arrest

A special relationship

I feel if you can do one good thing, you have to do it.

Doodles

We're on earth for such a short time.
I feel if you can do one good thing, you have to do it.
This is my opportunity to do it.
I look forward to the day when Brianna can walk out of Shriner's Hospital.
That's the day I want to be there.

One year later
Do you remember me? I asked Doodles.
Aren't you the young man who I talked about a year ago about a little girl, he replied.
Yes, you introduced me to Brianna.
That's right, the clown replied.
Do you know if she ever received her prosthesis?
Yes, Doodles said.
In fact, she is standing right over there.
Doesn't she look great?

Doodles the clown developed a special relationship with 3-year-old Brianna Hamman at the O'Fallon Mayfest Parade. Brianna was diagnosed with a rare form of meningitis in May 1995. Prior to her prosthesis, she had both of her legs amputated, and underwent nine additional operations within 10 weeks.

Life: Something to be thankful for

I keep hearing people say it must be pretty nice not having to work. But I don't see what they are seeing. I just want to get out of my house.

Troy Crocker

Every Thanksgiving I pass is a plus.
My doctors have never come out and say the word.
They only say I have a terminal illness.
But I always figure it could be worse.
I'm doing pretty good so far.
However, I keep hearing people say it must be pretty nice not having to work.
But I don't see what they are seeing.
I just want to get out of my house.
I just want to be able to drive across town and see my grandma.

Troy Crocker, 29, died Jan. 4, 1999. He had a serious seizure Nov. 20, which he never fully recovered from. At his funeral service, the Rev. Gene Mauck said there are a lot of questions "that we can't answer. "It's hard for me to take, " said Mauck, who also had a brain tumor earlier. "It tries my faith. It makes me wonder why. Why did Troy have this deadly brain tumor that wouldn't quit migrating until it destroyed him physically? Why did I have a kinder, gentler one that a surgeon could pluck out of my skull."

Telling Charlie's Story

I'll always carry the nagging feeling that somehow another child will be incorrectly observed as brain damaged, treated as such, and doomed to a life and robbed of his or her potential.

Mary Kay Richter

Facing the dilemma of a rare genetic disorder can be difficult. However, learning from the experience of others can remove fears and answer pertinent questions.
Now, my concern is for other children and their parents who face the same problem.
I'll always carry the nagging feeling that somehow another child will be incorrectly observed as brain damaged, treated as such, and doomed to a life and robbed of his or her potential.
It has only taken an instant for our son to grow from child to man.
Our path has taken some interesting twists and turns.
But from the beginning to the end, we have been a team.
Charles as always known he could count on his mom and dad and vice versa.
That sense of trust has served as a solid foundation for each obstacle that we encountered.

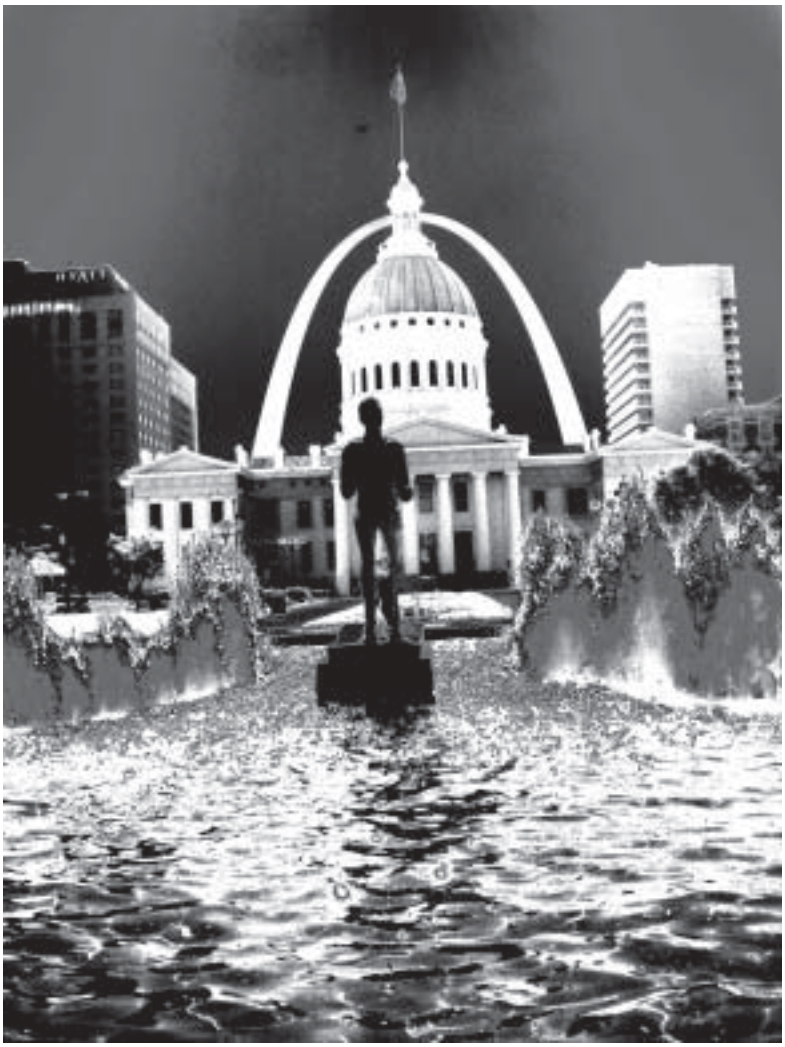
Mary Kay Richter and her son, Charlie, received the first Patient Advocacy Award at the 50th National Institute of Dental Research Convention. Charlie has Ectodermal Dysplasias.

Keeping the flame alive

He fell four times before he eventually crawled to second base. *Janice Worland*

What pleased me most today was watching Charles being able to run again.
Just a week earlier, Charles struggled running to second base during a baseball game.
He fell four times before he eventually crawled to second base.
Late last month, he came down ill.
At first, I thought he had strep throat like his two other brothers.
But after awhile, I knew something was more serious wrong.
After having x-rays his doctors diagnosed Charles with lymphoma.
So far, no cancer has been found in his bone marrow or spinal cord.
I am confident my happy-go-lucky son will recover.

Janice Worland watches her 10-year-old son, Charles, carry the Olympic Festival Torch June 22, 1994, in Lebanon, Ill.



Returning to a simpler time in life

After spending eight and one-half months away from his family in Saudi Arabia in Operation Desert Storm, Chris Brown's life has returned to normal.

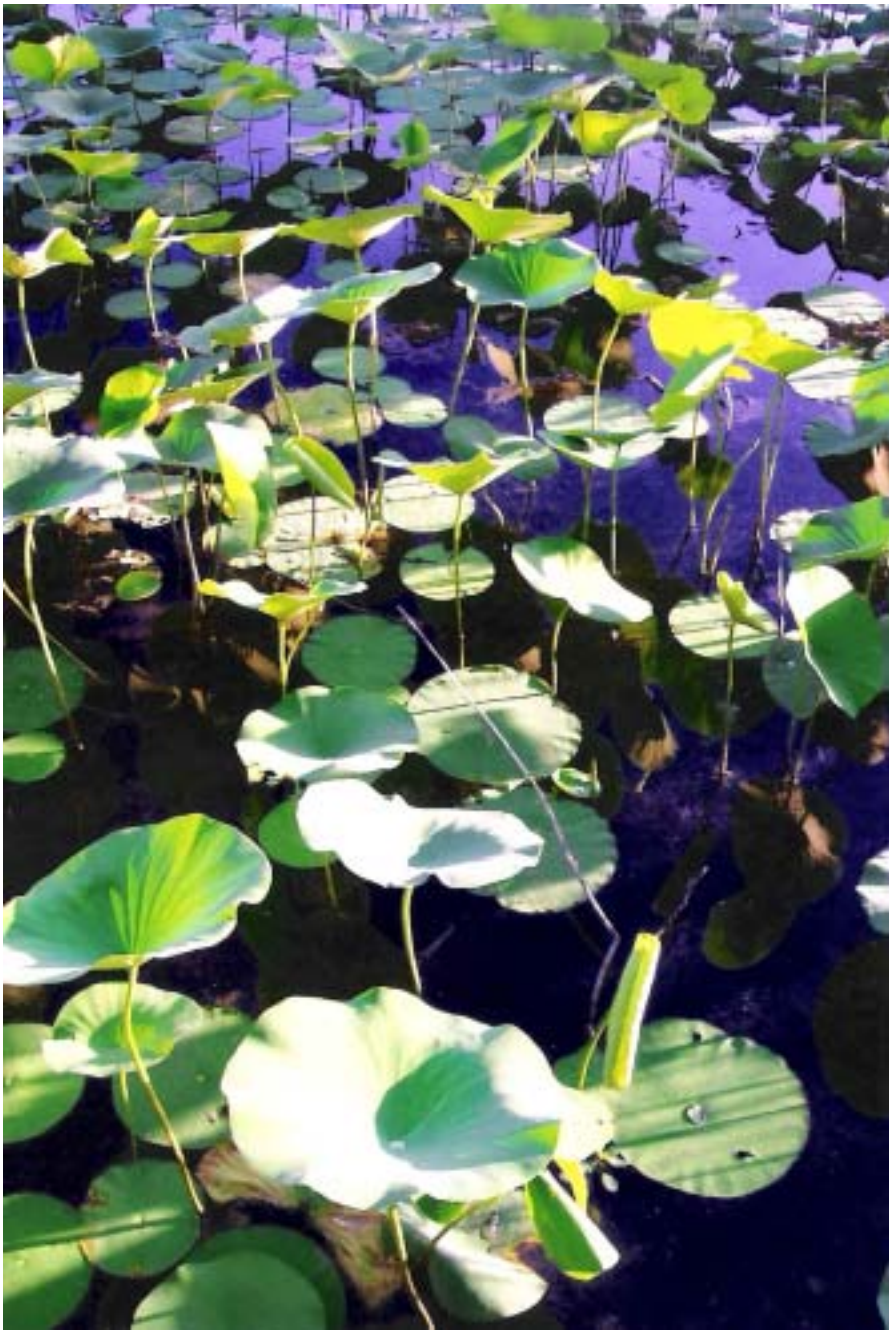
Hi Daddy.
Hi buddy.
What's that?
A socket wrench.
Why are you making that for?
I'm not making the motor. I am taking it apart.
Why are you taking it apart?
It needs fixed.
How do you fix it?
You repair it.
Can I watch?
You are doing that right now.
What's that bucket for?
It's for oil.
Can I help?

Fighting a war was the furthest thing from Chris Brown's mind when he joined the Army four years ago. Chris, 22, had the following conversation with his 3-year-old daughter after he returned home from Operation Desert Storm.

Words to ponder

Earth short time good walk remember introduced prosthesis great pass work see house drive grandma difficult questions concerns feeling observed damaged treated doomed path twists turns beginning end team foundation obstacle encountered pleased struggled running fell crawled serious happy-go-lucky recover watch help

‘He means everything to me’



“He’s our special boy, and we love him.
Sure every dad wants a ball player.
But I am pleased with what Tommy can do.
Things could have been a whole lot worse.”

Larry Henry

I do not know what I'd do without Tommy.
He means everything to me.
Tommy has cerebral palsy, and has really changed my life.
I am looking forward to spending Father's Day with my wife, and our five-year-old daughter, Elizabeth and Tommy, who will turn 15 next week.
Father's Day means having those two (kids) right here.
Tommy was a handful earlier.
But he's what it's all about now.
I had a hard time accepting his diagnosis.
It was tough in the beginning because he couldn't communicate with us.
Sure, every dad wants a ball player.
But I am pleased with what he can do.
Thing could have been a whole lot worse.
Tommy's our special boy and we love him.
On Father's Day we will take a long walk. Won't we Bud?
We waited 10 years between children because we were afraid what could happen.
We were lucky on both ends.
Tommy is capable of doing a lot of things, and Elizabeth turned out to be wonderful.
I look forward to the day when Tommy can enjoy life on his own.
As long as he is happy, that's the main thing.
We try very hard for that.
And for Elizabeth, that she turns out to be an angel.

Larry Henry looks forward to spending the day with his children on Father's Day. He shares this story while sitting on his front porch, holding Elizabeth on his lap, and massaging Tommy's back.

My five sons

There was no particular secret on what kept me going. But I kept plugging away.
I continue to be motivated by my late wife.
We made a commitment to each other when we got married in 1976.

William Thomas

Sometimes, the best gifts are those that come from the heart.
I know that first hand.
Instead of requesting something extravogent for Father's Day, I am looking forward to receiving the perfect gift.
That gift would allow me to spend the day with my five sons.
Family time is a precious gift.
That's especially true after my wife died.
Elaine was five months pregnant with our first daughter when she developed a blood clot in her lung.
Elaine and our unborn daughter died.
We were saying good-bye to what was a normal household, to being a single parent.
I have continued to raise my children with the help of God, my family and extended family.
There was no particular secret on what kept me going.
But I kept plugging away.
I continue to be motivated by my late wife.

I reminded of that commitment by looking at a picture.
The picture was taken of me 10 years ago, with our five boys at my 43rd birthday party.
This picture shows how much we have continued to grow over the years.
Maybe our priorities have changed.
What's important to me, may not be as important to somebody else.
The top priority of my life is my family.
Following Elaine's death, we attended a grief counseling program offered by Father Dennis Voss, who also was one of Elaine's cousins.
I initially didn't feel like I needed counseling.
But I highly recommend it to anyone who may have lost a loved one.
I believe counseling made me a stronger person.
My sons have also played a major support role.
In their own way, they have look out for each other.
Sometimes, it is pretty subtle.
But I think they looked out for each maybe more than you'd at first realize.

William Thomas talks about raising his five sons after his wife died June 9, 1990.

A life-time love affair

In the three-mile ride to her farm home, I went to the moon, Mars, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury and others. *Jim Carr*

She was everything I hoped for and more.
I dated 11 different girls before I met Stella.
But when I picked Stella up at the Belleville bus station Dec. 24, 1930, I knew I found my special girl.
I was dating Stella's sister at the time, when her mom asked if I could give Stella a lift from the station.
Upon arriving at the station, I saw Stella talking on the telephone.
She turned and smiled at me.
My hat flew off, and I said Ms. Special.
A clerk asked me to repeat what I just said.
I said I was just talking to myself.
... I was still in a daze when I escorted Stella out to my Model A Ford.
When I got to the car, I took another good look at her and I went into orbit.
In the three-mile ride to her farm home, I went to the moon, Mars, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury and others.
There were bumps in the road, but I was floating.

Jim Carr, 88, reflects on Valentine's Day about the first time he met his future wife. Jim and Stella were married 64 years. During that time, Jim says Stella cooked him more than 70,000 meals.

The power of prayer

The last thing I remember is gripping the steering wheel and being thrown back.

Charles Trimble

I believe the power of prayer saved my life.
I just had finished unloading hog feed at another farm and was heading home.
The last thing I remember is gripping the steering wheel and being thrown back.
I lost consciousness for a few seconds, but I don't know how far I was thrown backward before I was thrown forward.
But by the time I regained consciousness, I was trapped underneath my International 966 tractor.
There was diesel fuel dripping on top of me, and the tractor's motor was still running.
I remember being about a foot from the big wheel.
I could hardly move.
I was afraid the rear would hit the ground.
If the rear wheel would have hit the ground, the tractor would have gone in circles around me.
I knew I was in a bad accident.
Fortunately, the fire fighters arrived quickly, and saved my life.
They immediately gave me some much need oxygen.
Prior to their arrival, I was gasping for air.
A helicopter airlifted me rom the scene.
I will never forget that helicopter ride, and seeing a few stars.
But I had no idea what happened to the people behind me.

Charles Trimble was involved in a car/tractor accident Feb. 9, 1999. The driver of the car suffered a fractured wrist; the passenger was not injured. Charles, who has since returned to farming, was diagnosed with a punctured lung, and a broken bone near his pelvic region.

The best is yet to come

While growing up in a foster home, I remember praying for two things.

Barbara McNeese

While growing up in a foster home, I remember praying for two things.
First, I asked God to take care of me.
Second, I prayed to have a large family when I got older.
All my prayers have been answered.
I have six children, eight grandchil-dren and one great grandchild.
But my life hasn't always been easy.
I was placed in a foster home with my brother after my mom died while giving birth to my sister.
My dad, who was active in the Army and later in the Army Air Corps, died suddenly after having a massive heart attack.
My brother died in Korea. Seeking some answers, I wrote then- Sen. Lyndon Johnson.
My husband and I also had a son die when he was one month old.
I think God sent us an angel, and he had to go back.
I have tried to live a good life.
Over the years, I have had the oppor-tunity to speak with a number of people who fear dying.

But I have no fears about death because I have placed all trust with God.
The best is yet to come.
Everything else is icing on the cake.

Barbara McNeese and her husband, W.C., were to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in 2001.

Words to ponder

Everything more found smiled special daze orbit power prayer life home consciousness trapped running move fire fighter quickly gasping forget remember answered easy seeking answers angel opportunity dying trust

Oscar’s fishing adventure

You can’t explain the feeling the flood victims are going through. It’s like a death of a close friend.

Oscar the Grouch

Kids call me Oscar the Grouch.
I had visions of fishing at Ted Shanks Wildlife and Refuge.
But after seeing approximately 10 inches of water standing on Highway 79, I changed my plans.
I decided to throw my lines in at a nearby flooded cornfield. I never did fish in a cornfield before.
I never even dreamed about it.
I have seen devastation before.
I survived the Great Flood of 1973.
You can't explain the feeling the flood victims are going through.
It's like a death of close friend.
One day the real devastation sinks in.
You're numb.
Some people work a whole lifetime to get what they got.
A whole lifetime.
Sometimes you think there is no justice.
Look at all of those crops.
They are gone.
What can you do?
You hope for only the best and see only the worst.
I hope only the best for the flood victims.
I like that positive attitude.

After spending close to a half hour fishing in the cornfield, Oscar Williams had not even had a nibble on his line.

She ‘just dances’ in her mother’s shadows

I feel so honored to be her daughter.

Cabrini Bierbaum

I don't walk in my mother's footsteps.
I just dance in her shadow.
My mother is Roslyn Waite.
My mother's mixture of fundamental Catholicism and a radical equanimity of charity sometimes were seen as a social and civic liability.
Long before Cario's racial tension erupted late in the 1960s, she broke the town's color line simply: by ignoring it.
In 1947, she purchased a downtown Cairo, Ill. hotel, which she managed and operated 37 years.
My mother never turned anyone from its door.
In fact, a section of the hotel ha always been for elderly residents.
At one time, it became a refuge for unwed mothers in the area.
I hope to continue with the hotel as long as it can economically support itself.
But by no means is the hotel a money maker.
It's a legacy.
Like my mother, I continue to accept the elite of skid row tenants.
It's evolved to that.
I feel like my mother would expect me to do this.
I feel so honored to be her daughter.
She always was a caring person.

A fire forced Cabrini Bierbaum to close the top floor of the three-story building. "Fortunately there was no injury or loss of life," Cabrini says."The fire could have been tragic."

Finding true happiness

I never worried about myself. I was only concerned with my family, and my husband who I wanted to make happy.

Geraldine Stablebacher

I never worried about myself.
I was only concerned with my family, and my husband who I wanted to make happy.
I had eight children, 21 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren.
I also had five miscarriages, and lost one son, Carl, in World War II.
Carl was captured by German soliders and was starved to death.

One of the happiest days in my life occurred when I met Leo at the post office.
Leo and I enjoyed taking rides in our buggy.
We lived on a 40-acre farm in rural Cobden, Ill.
On the farm, I canned most of our vegitables, while Leo butchered all of our meat.
I also made all of our children's clothes.
I even cut up the soles of my wedding shoes, and made my first child's shoes with them.
Days were different then.
That's old time survival.

Geraldine, who turned 99 Feb. 14, 1999, shared these stories at her birthday pary.

Shortly before his death, Leo wrote the following note to Geraldine:

Though my hair is turning gray,
I still love to stray back to a moonlight night in May,
when a brown-eyed girl so sweet, dressed in orchard soft array, closely nestled by my side in an old-fashioned buggy that we loved so well.
...Now, today,
She is still going down life's road, close beside me
...Her brown eyes, still shine with love
as the years have grown more dear.

‘We will see him again’

I think Mark is watching over us right now.
Katie Shepherd

Mark was precious and adorable.
Before he was diagnosed with cancer, I thought he had an ear infection.
One day, while Daddy was away Mark was in a lot of pain, and had to go to the hospital.
I will never forget the night when mommy told me there would be no treatments for Mark, and that he would die.
On the day he died, my grandma and grandpa were staying at our house.
My mommy called, and told grandma that Mark had died.
I could sense what she had said.
I was talking to grandma earlier in the day about Mark.
I asked her what Mark would look like when he died.
She said he'd look like he was glorified before he died.
I now know where he has gone.
We will see him again sometime.
But I still think of him, especially when I'm going through a tough time.
I think Mark is watching over us right now.

Katie Shepherd, 11, mourns the loss of her 2-year-old brother. Mark died from neuroblastoma, a malignant tumor, Oct. 24, 1994.

Words to ponder

Changed never dreamed devastation survival explain lifetime justice hope positive attitude walk footsteps dance shadow charity liability tension erupted broke never legacy elite evolved expect honored caring worried concerned happy starved death enjoyed different survival old-fashioned precious adorable forget sense glorified tough see sometime

There is a principle in grief counseling that states “In telling the story the healing takes place.” The book entitled Tears from the Heart by Mark Hodapp, provides a springboard in which the healing can begin. Death brings grief which is a response to loss. The whole person, physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally reacts to this loss. If the loss is not addressed appropriately it often times goes underground and can cause further pain. God created the human person to deal with loss, which is a part of the human condition, by giving the human person the ability to share their tears and their story. This work which is a collage of stories that covers the whole spectrum of ages from the child to the senior citizen as well as varied types of deaths, provides the reader an opportunity to tap into his or her own story which can lead to healing. The season of grief, which each person experiences differently, can last for a year or more. The various seasonal photos selected in this work takes this grief reality into account. Important to the grief process is the healing role of faith which the author brings to the forefront by his use of photos and grief story selections.

This work would be an excellent gift for anyone undergoing the grief process. No matter was stage of loss the individual maybe in this book could assists them in the process. It allows them to go through the valley of tears and sadness and rise to the mountain top of hope and joy.

Reverend Monsignor Kenneth Steffen, DMin, JCL, PH, KHS