

A MOTHER'S HOPE

By: Betty Lineberger
Bereaved Mother
Ocala, FL

When my son died I hoped it was a mistake. It was not.

I hoped it was a dream. It was not.

Before my son died, I hoped for enough time in that day to clean my house, provide my family with clean laundry, taxi service and healthy meals. I loved dinner time with my family. After my son died, I did not know what day it was, cleaning our home or doing laundry were things I no longer thought of. I did not cook. I did not shop for food. I did not eat.

I hoped he would come back. He did not.

I hoped I would gain understanding. I did not.

I could not understand how I could wake up on a perfectly normal morning and my son was gone from his room, gone from our home and gone from our lives.

I hoped for acceptance. I found none.

I hoped those around me would understand me. They did not.

How could my beautiful, vibrant, healthy son be gone?

I hoped for peace. I had none.

I hoped for sleep. I had none.

I hoped for courage to resume my daily life. My life was out of my control. The only thing I was sure of in the early days of my grief was that I knew my life would never be the same again.

I hoped this empty feeling would go away. It did not.

I hoped that some day my family would be normal again. We were not.

I hoped I could stop looking for our son in every young man I saw that was tall, slim and had sandy colored curly hair. I could not.

I hoped I could become the parent to my surviving children that I knew they deserved. I could not.

I knew how much they were hurting but I could not help myself and I could not help my children. My younger son needed my comfort. My daughter, expecting her own child needed my comfort. I was their mother but there was no comfort in me to give.

I hoped I could be a wife to my husband. I could not.

I never hoped for laughter. How could I laugh when my son was dead?

I hoped the feelings that consumed my every waking moment would somehow change so I did not feel as though I could never again be in a public place without crying.

At 6 months after my son died, I hoped for a reprieve. I no longer could stand the pain and I saw my doctor. I knew he must have an answer to my question, "how long will I feel like this". He did not.

I had begun attending Bereaved Parents meetings and hardly spoke a word at the first meeting. I could not stop talking at the second meeting. I had found the glimmer of hope that I had been searching for. I hoped this all consuming grief would never again happen to my family. But it did! When my daughter-in-law was 6 months pregnant, my son told me their baby had died. How I grieved for my son. I knew what he was feeling. I hoped to be able to help him and his wife. I could not.

I then realized that all of the things I had hoped for had begun to come about but had taken a lot of time. I hoped my son and his wife could hold on long enough for time to help and heal. They have.

When my son died, I never hoped for joy. I could not imagine joy as part of our lives ever again, but there is joy.

When my son was a baby, a toddler, a young child, a teenager and a young man, I watched over him. I thought I would watch over him for my entire life. I was wrong. I hope with all my heart that he is watching over me.

I now have the understanding I hoped for. I have peace. I finally sleep. I find joy every time I see a tall, slim young man with sandy colored curly hair. I do not cry as often.

So there is hope. We all have a future; we have memories. No matter how long our children were part of our lives, we have memories. The first time I realized that joy would one day be part of my life was the day I remembered a trick my son played on his little brother. He gave him a glass of buttermilk instead of regular milk and pretended it was a mistake. We have laughed so many times about this little story. I can still see the twinkle in his eye. I can hear my son and daughter as he made up names for her to tease her. Oh, how he loved to laugh. I remember the look on his face when I discovered the snake he put in my garden terrarium.

I know the joy I feel every time I think of my son, share a memory with someone or look at pictures of him will never change.

My hope as a Mother is that we all will find peace and cherish the joy our children have brought to our lives.

