

Family Assistance Foundation Symposium 2008

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I also want to thank Carolyn for inviting us to the 2008 FAF Symposium. We appreciate the opportunity to share with you how we managed to regain some sense of normalcy in our lives since our daughter, Beth, age 21 was murdered. She was returning home on Pan Am Fl 103 on Dec. 21, 1988 after a semester at Regent's College in London.

Carolyn asked us to give you a review of what we have accomplished since then. I will talk about our lives on a more emotional, personal level. I prefer to see it as not so much what we have accomplished but what we did to survive and find a way to go on living without Beth while honoring her memory.

20 December 1988

"Thank God I'm leaving tomorrow. I don't thin I can take much more of these 'good-byes'.

Well, guess I'll finish my packing and give mum and dad a ring and then see what Elyse is up to. We plan to stay up late, so we can sleep on the Plane!

Gee, the next time I write in this journal it'll be on American soil... well, actually it'll be in my room at home...

Home. (Sigh) I just can't believe that in less than 24 hrs. I'll be on a plane bound for the good Ole U.S. of A.!"

But that was not to be.

At 7:03 p.m after reaching a cruising altitude of 31,000 ft. and just 38 minutes into the Flight, Pan Am Fl 103, Maid of the seas, exploded over the quaint, little village of Lockerbie, Scotland.

I can only hope that she was dozing and not fully aware of what happened.

Let me tell you a little about our Beth. She was every mother's dream of what a daughter should be, I assure these are not the words of a grieving mother with selective memory. She was a loving, dutiful daughter.

Daddy's little girl.
A caring sister to her two brothers.
A joy to her whole family.
And a confidant to her peers.
She also played 14 musical instruments.

Needless to say, it was very difficult to go back to work. I was a community nurse and now limited my field to being a hospice nurse. I was no longer uncomfortable with the dying process and it seemed I was able to give comfort to the families as they knew that my Beth had died. In Feb. of 1989, we learned that a group was being formed who had loved ones on Pan Am 103. We went to the meetings which were about a six or seven hours drive. But that was fine as we gained great comfort from talking with other families and for me especially other mothers. Think about it, we all lost our children at the same exact moment, in the same plane. We truly did share the same pain. We met about every six weeks. We came home rejuvenated and looked forward to the next meeting.

On the home front, we set up scholarships at the College that Beth attended, they are still being awarded. We bought 2 pianos for the college's music Dept. That first spring we were invited to the College for a tree planting ceremony. The students remembered me saying in an interview that the last words Beth said to us was: "Make sure all the lights are lit on the house when I come home for Christmas". That tree is quite large now but it is still lit up every Christmas.

There have been many memorials in Beth's name by others as well as us. We are currently working on 3 major ones. We donated money for a children's reading room in the small town library where we lived until Beth was ten. That donation inspired the library board to dream that maybe "We can build a new library". That was in 2000. The target date for completion of a new much larger library was 2010 which is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the present library. Well, with lots of fund raising, a grass-roots effort with most of the town involved, writing grants and getting some and help from us. The Library is currently under construction and should open this fall, 2 years ahead of schedule. The Beth Ann Johnson Children's room is going to be spectacular.

We also are funding a large part of a program for underprivileged children that involves art, music, and drama therapy; three of Beth's passions.

This past Dec., The Early Childhood Development Room Dedication, which we sponsored, was held at the grammar school Beth attended. That picture is outside the room. We are finding out that it truly is more blessed to give than receive.

We have a full life with many blessings. For one, our grandson, Colin, 13 who has his Aunt Beth's musical talents. When Carolyn said that she'd like us to talk about what we have accomplished over the last 20 yrs. I had a flashback that I want to share with you. I was speaking with a lady who knew what had happened. This was a few days after the bombing. She told me that her son had died 20 yrs. earlier and she still had his football. All I could think was "He's still dead" and "you are still alive. I just couldn't understand how that could be.

Another blessing is our granddaughter, Caitlin, who is 16, has many of Beth's attributes. We are so fortunate that they live very close to us. We spend a lot of time with them. Caitlin and I do the special things that Beth and I did. Going to the mall and getting her ready for the Prom. She also put together the pictorial part of our presentation.

Well, it is almost 20 yrs. later. Beth is still dead but her spirit is very much alive. I'm still

living.

Another blessing is being here with “y’all in Atlanta”

Thank you