

Remembering Aunt Ann

by Michael Peterson

Aunt Ann died this week. Although it is a time for sadness my emotions are anything but sad. Let me explain.

Ann married my father's younger brother in the spring of 1962. They started their life together in rural western New York, had four children and were beginning what looked to be the typical American dream—work, home and family.

In January 1973, this dream was cut short by a devastating auto accident caused by two teenagers drag racing on a country road at night without their lights on. In one car was my uncle, his two younger children ages six and two, and a friend who was driving them all to help a neighbor. In the aftermath, the driver, my uncle and my six-year-old cousin were all killed—along with the teenage driver of the other vehicle. My two-year old cousin suffered traumatic head injuries which left her in a coma for several months and resulted in permanent brain damage.

Aunt Ann was suddenly left as a widow, mourning the death of her husband and son, caring for a child in a coma and faced with having to be a single mother on limited income raising three chil-

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dren, one of which was now denied any normalcy in life.

Somehow she struggled through the emotional turmoil, fear, stress, worry, pain and sadness. After a time she recovered, went on living and remarried some years later. Life was beginning to look up again. She had a partner to share her life, a support in times of need, and a stepfather for her children. Life was good. Then, out of the blue, her second husband was killed in a freak tractor accident.

Once again she relived the pain

and loss of a loved one, and she faced the uncertainty of the future. Her children were now grown and independent, and she was left alone.

Aunt Ann still moved forward and still lived life. As time progressed, she found herself caring for her aging mother—she took on the role of caregiver and dealt with the stresses and strains—and the self-denial that often encompasses the lives of adult caregivers. Along the way she had to battle breast cancer and underwent a double mastectomy. The outcome appeared successful.

When I last saw Aunt Ann, it was at an extended family reunion. She

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was there, smiling and laughing, interested in the lives of all those she had not seen, happily surrounded by her immediate and extended family.

I did not even know that she was suffering from a brain tumor. Within five months, the cancer took her life. Prior to her death she gathered her children around her and said that it was time to go. She was not going to fight any more, she was ready to go—then she did.

I am not sad at Aunt Ann's passing, because I also know and observed throughout her life that she was a woman of faith. She had a deep conviction and belief in God. I never heard her complain, although she had every right to want to curse God and die. Her life was one major trial after another.

It is in her life and death that I am encouraged and have hope. She was a wonderful example of how God works in us and strengthens us through his Spirit. I also know that God has given her peace, and she has encouraged me to stand fast and keep the faith.



She ran the race in faith with perseverance and longsuffering, and I know that Jesus is greatly pleased.

Let's all remember our "Aunt Anns." □

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