

Down By The Berry Patch

"On Top of the World Today: What Will Tomorrow Hold?"

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It is June 11, 1994 and we feel like we are on top of the world. As we stand on the mountain tops in Colorado and take in the beauty, we marvel at God's creation. We are staying in a beautiful area in Estes Park, attending a conference on Quilt Appraisals taught by the leading experts in the country, enjoying the beautiful weather, and feel very relaxed and free.

We have both retired after a combined total of 66 years with the school systems--34 years for Lorain who retired in 1992 and 32 years for Judy who retired in 1990. The schools were good to us; we pray that others say we were "good for the schools." Just ten months ago, Lorain survived a heart attack and weathered by-pass heart surgery. Our Lord has been so good to us.

Our sons are all well. Christopher works at Whole Foods in Ann Arbor, Michigan and is currently in Las Vegas for a four day weekend; Steve is teaching at Delta College; Mike is running the fish farm; Janice is enrolled at Saginaw Valley University in the Occupational Therapy program; Alex is six years old and an absolute delight--the very sunshine of our lives. Life is wonderful; we feel so blessed.

We return to Estes Park in our rented car. I am anxious about the return drive through the snow covered overpasses in the mountains and choose to take "the long way around". It is a leisurely trip and we feel like we have no cares in the world. We have dinner with the other members of the Quilt Appraisal workshop and share the day's experiences.

We return to our room, prepare the materials for the workshop the next morning, and retire.

Then tomorrow arrives; June 12, 1994. Our world changes with a 5:30 A.M. phone call from Mike in Michigan telling us we are to call the coroner's office in Clark County Las Vegas. Our Christopher is dead; he is only 35 years old. How can that be possible?



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Photo Caption: Lorain and Judy Berg on top of the world, 11 June 1994

The coroner says, "Your son is a very handsome young man. We need your help. It appears that he died very suddenly in his room. There was no sign of foul play; there was no indication of suicide; there were no drugs or alcohol. Can you help us?"

My immediate response was, "Check his heart!" My father and brothers, Andy and Bruce, had all died of sudden heart attacks at young ages in their 40s. Christopher's dad had survived a heart attack less than a year ago at age sixty. I explained all this to the coroner. I felt that this perfect world was falling apart. I felt like it was a dream. This was happening to someone else and not me.

My husband called the airport to make arrangements for an immediate return to Michigan. We called Mike back to tell him of our plans. He said, "Then if you are coming back so soon, I better tell you the rest of the things that are happening. I just spent the night at the hospital with Janice. She is fighting for her life in intensive care from a stab wound."

We traveled across the country in first class passage provided by the airlines. As we traveled, we did not know any of the details of Janice's accident that turned out to be an arrow wound that would require a transfer from West Branch Regional Medical Center to Providence Hospital in the Detroit area for a surgery that would save her life. The day of Christopher's funeral, Janice survived a seven hour surgery; she lost one of her kidneys in the repair process. But she lived. Mike was not at the funeral; he was with Janice. We were caring for Alex.

On June 11, 1994, we were on top of the world. On June 12, 1994, our world turned upside down. Now, as I write this on March 8, 2000, the pieces are all fitting together; life goes on. But life is never the same.

I miss Christopher every single day; I say prayers of thanks daily that Janice survived. God is with us holding us in his loving arms. What would I do without my faith when my world turned upside down?

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