

The Unexpected End

I visited a family whose single adult son had taken his life the day before. I offered my sympathies which were graciously received. But it was not until I told them of my brother who had died the same way that they looked upon me as someone who could help them understand.

George D. Durrant

Chapter 1

A HOLE IN MY HEART

A dear friend, to whom I have sometimes expressed the feelings of my inner soul, wrote this to me, “George, after pondering what you have told me about your brother Kent, I have come to the conclusion that his troubled life, and his suicide represent a major hole in your heart and life.”

The words of this perceptive man caused me to realize just how often I think back on my brother. I shake my head in wonderment and wish things for him could have been otherwise. I hope that in his eternal future things will be otherwise.

It is difficult to assess just what it is that makes us happy. But surely feelings of hope are a major ingredient of joy. Looking forward to something good, that we feel will happen can cover much of the pain of the present and give us hope in the future.

In the case of Kent, it seems to me, that he just plain ran out of hope. But I have never run out of hope for him. And that does so very much to help heal the pain of the “hole in my heart.”

In an effort to help myself, and to help you the reader, to understand all that has and will happen to Kent, I have written three brief essays. In these writings I have attempted to describe my feelings and hopes for Kent. I have titled these three stories:

How Things Were--Fact

How Things Might Have Been--Fiction

How Things Will Be—Faith, Hope And Charity

Perhaps reading these deeply personal accounts will help you as much as writing them has helped me.

Chapter 2

How Things Were--Truth

Big Kent Durrant

Many Durrants were athletes. Some were stars. As talented as the other Durrants had been, none could compare to Kent.

It was Kent who put American Fork on the map. In Kent's day (the mid 1940s) if you thought of American Fork, you thought of Kent Durrant. And if you thought of Kent Durrant, you thought of American Fork.

There has never been a more sports minded town than American Fork was in those days. Back then the focus of almost every citizen of this small central Utah town was on the high school teams. There was no television to draw fan attention to some distant team. There was not much interest in college sports. It was toward the local high school gym that the locals looked for the success that would prove that their boys were superior to the boys from anywhere else.

The main interest was on basketball. All of the three to four thousand citizens longed to win the state basketball championship. Never had they had that honor. They had been second three times, but never first. They wanted to be first. That would be a way of proving that they were better than Lehi or Pleasant Grove or any other town in Utah.

From his childhood on, rabid sports fans had their eyes on Kent. I recall when he was in the seventh grade, I was walking up the Alpine road with him when a car full of men stopped and called him over to shake hands with him. As they drove away, I heard one of them say, "You are the one who will win for us the state championship."

It was in my mind, and everyone else's in town, that Kent Durrant was foreordained to do as the American Fork High School song said, "Bring the honors back." The only honor that mattered was the state crown.

Kent was the next to the youngest of the nine children of Bert and Marinda Durrant. He was born long—long legs, long arms, and long fingers. As he often told me when he was in high school, "I have the longest big toes in captivity."

Growing up Kent was never in big trouble, but he was often on the edge of trouble.

Kent didn't excel in classes, but he was the star of recess. He could lead any team that he was on to victory in any sport. Paul Peters was Kent's best friend. Paul, though not large like Kent, was a super athlete. Paul and Kent on the same team always dominated!

Even when these two were in the sixth grade, the towns sport's nuts just knew that the two of them would surely bring the honors back. There just was not any question about that. Through the next four years, lack luster success in sports caused all to say, "Wait until Peters and Durrant get up there. Then we will win it all."

I loved Kent as much as any brother has ever loved a big brother. I can never recall having any arguments with him. He was my hero. Every since I can recall any memories of anything, he was my hero. I don't really think Kent ever had any arguments with anyone in our family or anyone anywhere. He was sort of easy going and fun loving.

Kent attended church until age fifteen, But then he lost most of his interest in going to church.

Kent and I used to sleep out in the back bedroom. He would go out with his friends at night. I would go to bed and lay there real scared of all that loomed in the dark. I would never go to sleep until he came home. When I'd hear the door open, I would know it was Kent. All fear would leave me because I knew no robber, monster or maniac would ever dare attack when Kent was there.

When we would come home from the movies it would be dark. We'd walk up through the Old Mill Lane. That place was really spooky, but if I was with Kent, I was not afraid.

There were no gyms in church buildings in those days, so we'd have to practice basketball outside. We never had a really good hoop. We just nailed a barrel rim up on the side of the barn and would play there. The cow was often there, and so we never dribbled much, but we did learn to pass and shoot.

We would have to clean out chicken coops every Saturday morning. Kent was real strong and he could clean coops really well. After we finished the coop, Paul Peters and others would come up to our place and we'd have some rousing basketball games. Kent and Paul would be on opposite teams just to make it fair. I was usually on Paul's team. He would tell me, "George, when you get the ball throw it to me because I'm more sure of my shots." You can't imagine the good times that we had playing ball like that. Oh sure, we would have liked to have a gym to play in, and a little league team to play on, but no kids anywhere had as good a time as we did. And Kent always made sure I got to be part of the fun.

Kent was, as I said, a long baby and he never quit growing. He was always a head taller than the other kids his age. He dominated the games in the PE classes

and the coaches started to wish time would hurry by so that he could be on the varsity.

Kent was not afraid of anything. At the gravel pit, our swimming hole, he would jump off the highest bank into what we were told was a bottomless pond. I don't even think he thought of the Old Mill Lane as being scary. Nothing was scary to him. It seemed to me he was not afraid of anybody on anything. He never got in a fight because it was sort of understood that he was tough. He never had to prove it because of his reputation, and because there was no reason to get upset at good old Kent Durrant.

Not only was Kent tall, he was strong. At the local feed plant, he could hold two large bags of chicken feed out, one in each hand with his arms stretched way out. He never lifted weights, nobody did in those days. But he just had strength that was given to him as a gift from God.

Finally Kent Durrant and Paul Peters became sophomores. The big show was about to begin.

The football team was mediocre that year. Nobody cared much. Basketball was the game that the locals lived for. American Fork had a fine team. But there was a team up in Heber City that had won the championship the year before and it was known that they would be hard to beat. No one really dared believe that this would be the year when the dream would come true. American Fork made it all the way to the finals. Then Wasatch with a world class player named Kent Murdock beat the Cavemen in the finals. Disappointing but not heartbreaking! After all, the next year was the year when we would win it all in a breeze.

Kent Durrant was now much more than a household name. He was a town hero. But there was a cloud in the western sky. It was just a little cloud, but still a cloud. Kent was not used to being the big hero. He didn't let it go to his head, but he did feel he had certain rights to go along with his responsibilities. Some older guys started wanting him to party with them, and he did. He became acquainted with tobacco and alcohol. Not too bad, but too much.

There were not any summer leagues or any camps in those days. In those days basketball started just before the first game and ended with the last one. I don't think Kent even touched a basketball between seasons. Kent was now a big man-6'7." He had broad shoulders. He was a handsome man and the local girls liked him. To me he was perfect physically, athletically and in every way. But he really wasn't.

He worked on construction that summer, and became even stronger. Everywhere he went people wanted to talk to him. They told him that they could not wait for the season to come; then the tournament, and then the championship.

That was all anyone wanted to talk to him about. People in the town almost bowed down to him.”

Kent told me that he kind of resented his fame. He said, “The other guys, can do what they want and nobody cares. But me! They all want to tell me what to do, and how to do it.”

I really think he would have been happier being like the others. But he was not like the others. He was wonderfully different. In those days big men like Kent were not nearly as common as they are today. People are much taller now than they were then. Today Kent would be just a bit above average, but not really big. In these days, the men his size or even larger were known as being clumsy. If you were big others would say, “He is big, but he is clumsy.” It was as if the bigger men believed that and went right out and proved it by stumbling around the court. But Kent was different, Kent was not clumsy. He was graceful. He could run with the fastest, jump with the jumpers and shoot with the marksman.

So the stage was set. But off stage things were not as bright as they were out there in the spotlight. Kent was a bit troubled. Alcohol and tobacco were a bit more common for him. He was no longer a church going sort of man. He also was not as certain of his moral status as he could have been. But he was a star in the part of his life that he was destined to live.

Now the time had finally come. It was basketball season. As a young ninth grader I could scarcely think of any other thing than how my brother Kent could beat every other team all by himself. I was not alone in these thoughts. American Fork was on fire with dreams of the coveted state championship that had eluded them for more than fifty years.

The preseason was just a formality. We all gathered at the local high school gym for each Friday night’s funfest. The school gym seemed like a really large building to me. There was a balcony and then bleachers were set up down stairs alongside the court. I thought everyone in town came to the games, but in reality there just was not room for more than five hundred fans. But each fan made enough noise to represent one hundred others. I would get there early, get right in the middle of the balcony and lean over the rail. When Kent would jump center at the beginning of the game, I could almost reach out and tip the ball myself.

I felt like the king of the world because I was Kent Durrant’s little brother. Everyone in town shared that same feeling of pride. It was a glorious few months, but all wanted the season to end so that we could get in our cars and go to Salt Lake City for the formality and fun of winning the state crown.

These excerpts from news papers describe the season and tournament of his Junior Year Season.

The Season

Six foot seven sensational American Fork center is far out in front of all region three scorers with an average of well above 20 points.

Kent Durrant 6'7" center, probably the outstanding prepster in the state today kept his team in front during most of the game with a steady basket shooting that accounted for 25 points and passed it to teammates for several other counters.

Kent Durrant the Forker pivot man set the league record as he dropped in 39 counters through the hoop. The exact same number achieved by the entire Pleasant Grove team.

The Tournament:

American Fork, without Kent Durrant, is just a nice little ball club playing in the state tournament. But with him they are the favorites.

Kent Durrant, American Fork center, who stands head and shoulders literally as well as figuratively above all the other players at the big event, averaged 24 points a game during the season.

Durrant is a marked man, the player who will get the most attention from opposing players, spectators and talent scouts in Utah is the big kid, the high scoring, All Stater from American Fork. He makes American Fork the favorite to win the title.

Game One

Durant scored 21 in three quarters against Manti.

Game Two

It seems that nothing can prevent American Fork's great pivot man from setting an all time scoring record for the state tournament. After scoring 30 points in Friday night game he now has scored 72 points. He is well on his way to the all-time scoring high.

Durrant's assault on the basket was the whole story of the game. The lengthy pivot man gracefully lived up to his reputation as the greatest player in the state as he scored as many points as a whole Dixie team.

Durrant scored enough points (30) himself to defeat the Dixie club. The highest individual scoring performance ever in the tournament.

Game Three

Kent Durrant again sparked American Fork to victory over Bingham as he poured through 24 points in three quarters to set the highest individual scoring mark

Game Four

American Fork drops 38 to 37. The score was tied at 35. But Johnson hit his first field goal of the night to give Grantsville the edge 37 to 35. This was followed by Durrant's phenomenal tip in from a wild under the basket scramble. This tied it up to 37 and 37. But a Grantsville foul shot won the game for the Cowboys in the final seconds.

The defeat was heartbreaking for the Caveman.

All American Fork was in deep mourning. Before the final game the local fans had unfolded a large banner which read, "American Fork, the next state champions." All American Forkers cheered and gloated. But all other fans from all over the state began from that time on to cheer for Grantsville. It was everybody against American Fork, and for the underdog Grantsville team. Their main target for their frenzied hatred was Kent Durrant.

That loss took something out of Kent. Fans then were like fans today. They liked winning; and when they lost they were a bit unmerciful in asking why? Of course every fan in town had the same question for Kent. "What happened? Why did you let those guys beat you?" I'm sure Kent was asked that a hundred or more times.

The locals did not blame the others on the team. Each of them got their four, six or ten points. It was Kent who didn't get his twenty-five who was to blame. I don't think any one will ever know how Kent felt.

He was sensitive. He cared deeply what people thought of him. He cared so much that he tried to cover it all up by acting like he did not care at all.

Thank goodness there was another year and the fans began to look forward rather than back. "Next year," they knew, "we will win it all." I'm sure Kent hoped so too. But for Kent, the cloud in his sky turned a bit more grey and ominous.

Kent was not bad in his conduct; he was just wild. He didn't drive fast because he had no car. He didn't cause trouble in school. He would miss class, but his class mate reported, "Kent would never study, but when we took the test he was always the highest score in the class." He, I believe, was brilliant

Early in his senior year of high school Kent began to date Colleen Bennett. There was some alarm among the coaches, the family. Many towns people thought that Kent being involved romantically could get in the way of the town dream. However, no power, organized or unorganized, could keep Kent away from Colleen. Any opposition merely made Kent all the more determined to do as he chose. He was not now the humble guy had been when he was a sophomore. The thrill of being an athlete had waned. He resented the pressure that he felt. He did not want to be a hero. He just wanted to be off, not on stage.

Everybody admired him, but no one counseled him. Perhaps they tried, but if they did he would not be counseled.

He was now becoming more acquainted with alcohol. He had his drinking buddies. He liked them better than any other kind. He and Colleen were not wise in their relationship. People could see the destruction that lay ahead. However no one could turn it back.

In the late fall, Colleen announced to Kent that she was pregnant. Many felt that the two of them should not marry. However in those days it almost always followed that when the girl became with child, a marriage soon followed.

So Kent and Colleen were wed on November 16 1946. It was like two people, each without direction, coming together. Neither was good for the other. It was chaos! Their marriage was troubled from the first.

On that ominous note the 1946-47 basketball season begun.

An early season game was in Bicknell, Utah. I could not figure out just where that place was. It seemed as far away as Europe to me. Recently I talked to man from Bicknell who had been at the game. He told me how excited they all were down there when big Kent Durrant, the giant, the freak, came to town.

Yes, Kent was referred to by those who hated him (and it seemed to me that ----everyone in the state hated him) except the fine folks of American Fork. But to all others he was the enemy. They all wanted whoever played American Fork to defeat them. Because they could not beat Kent, they called him a freak.

From Bicknell to season's end American fork never lost. There was no way anyone could take down the mighty Kent Durrant and his Cavemen.

American Fork had invited Grantsville to a preseason game and the Cavemen won in a blow out. But in their division Grantsville kept winning. Not by

many points, but they just kept winning. I worried a lot. But I don't think Kent did. Maybe he did, however he never talked about it. Things just were not the way they had been last year.

That season the newspapers were full of Kent Durrant. He was loved in American Fork and was famous in every sports loving family in Utah.

His Senior Year Season:

Durrant who tossed in 38 and 39 points in two games this season and boasts of seasonal average of 24 points.

American Fork wins 22 straight.

Kent Durrant is the top star on 1946 all state list."

Tournament

The sterling play of the sensational pivot man from American Fork causes the folks from down south to say their boys will claim title honors at the close of the tournament.

First Game.

Manti

Durrant who only played three quarters tossed in 21 points.

Second Game

Dixie

The only question then was how many points Durrant would score. He is a standout among galaxy of players at the state meet. All try to figure out how they can prevent American Fork's super center from scoring a record number of points.

Third Game

Springville. American Fork trailed for more than half the game against a determined Springville team. Again it was the sensational Kent Durrant who led them back into the lead by scoring 24 of his team's 37 points.

Fourth Game

Grantsville upset the dope sheet which had generally favored American Fork led by the great Kent Durrant. The Cowboys took command of the game at the start and never were headed. Led by their sensational forward Bill Ray Jeffries who scored 11 field goals, nearly all of them from far out on the court. Grantsville's smooth flawless passing game allowed them to amass 22 and 15 advantage at halftime .Jeffries hit 10 o f 16 long shots. Every time American Fork would try to make a game of it Jeffries would hit another one from near mid court.

Durrant was a sadly disappointed boy after the final game.

After the Tournament.

Like last year Kent Durrant was named All-State.

Durrant was the center of the tournament game after game. The uniform discussion had to do with whether or not the 6 foot 7 inch tip in artist would hit for more than his usual 20 points. The big boy hit for 22 points per game for the first three days and there was nobody around to stop him.

One of the most highly publicized high school basketball players ever to ride into Utah's prep cage scene is without question is Kent Durrant of American Fork

Durrant is considered the best College prospect in the Intermountain West. This rare cage prospect was a topic of conversation at the state tournament whenever hoop enthusiasts gathered to discuss the sport. Unstoppable, terrific, amazing, and colossal, are just a few of the adjectives used to describe him and he lived up to most of them. His movements are free and easy shots get away with a fluid motion and although not fast is extremely agile for his size coordination is also a favorable part of his game. Definitely a good ballplayer and an outstanding college prospect. His potentials are unlimited and he could be made into one of the best.

This likable ace also has numerous good points but these have been expressed all season. It should be remembered that this lad is a human being with some faults like everyone else. We believe the young man will make a name for himself in basketball circles

A basketball player who does all things well besides being coordination has the sagacity to make a great name for himself in college. The college that lands this player will be going places for the next four years

The praise did not mean as much to Kent as it did to all of us who loved him. All that mattered to him was the loss.

It is my opinion that that loss brought so many clouds over Kent Durrant that he never really ever saw the sun again. The local fans were more disgusted than disappointed. Again they assaulted Kent with their painful questions of, "What happened?" I'm sure Kent had a great dislike for such questions. He probably felt disappointed in their disappointment. But there was no one more disappointed in him than he was in himself.

He never talked about it to any one that I know of. Kent kept things inside. His main escape was alcohol and a supposed good time.

His marriage to Colleen was rocky. Their most frequent activity was to argue. They did so with great volume and very little reason.

Kent of course was highly sought after by the local university. Recruiting in those days was much quieter than it is today. There was not much attention to where the stars would go to college. Kent was given a scholarship to BYU. He played well on the freshman team. Freshmen could not, in those days, play for the varsity. The Y got him a job working for Bennett's Paint and Glass. He did well on that job and soon was known as the best glassier in the area. Some said he could install windows without ever having to use a ladder.

In November, 1949, three years after their marriage, Kent and Colleen had their second child. Their first child was Kent B. Durrant. Due to a medical condition that was then called the RH factor, this little boy, named Michael, only lived four days. With the death of this child, a bit more of Kent died.

Kent, in his second year, started at center for the Cougars. He had a great game in the early season and it appeared Kent Durrant was on his way to stardom on the college level. But in other games he struggled, his heart was not in it.

In December, the team was invited to a preseason tournament in California. As the time for the team to leave came near something that will never be understood occurred. The night before the team was to leave, Kent was shot in the foot. He said he just put the twenty-two rifle down on his shoe and wondered for a while, and then, because he dreaded going on the road trip, he pulled the trigger. That shot ended that trip and his basketball career.

Disappointed! I'm not sure of that--more like relieved. Withdrawal from BYU allowed him to do what he wanted with the general public not giving a darn. He continued to work for Bennett's.

Two years later, a longed for baby girl was born on October 31, 1951. The baby seemed to be perfect and hopes and love soared. Three days later the baby girl, Michelle, died. Kent was ravaged with sorrow.

For the next three years, Kent continued to work for Bennett's. Then he got his own little paint and glass business. He did not have any money nor did his partner. Neither had good business sense and often spent money from the cash register on pleasure and fishing jaunts.

By the mid 1950's, Kent was in despair. The clouds were dark and a storm in his soul was in full swing. There was no joy in the life of Big Kent Durrant. And nobody, except some very dear friends and the family cared. However, even those who cared were helpless in trying to help.

Kent's father, Bert, knew of Kent's anguish. He often went fishing with Kent. He bought a boat for their journeys. Some wondered about Bert going along with Kent life style. I feel Bert knew that he had to be there for Kent. He had to help, and the only way that he knew how to help was to be there.

Kent and Colleen divorced but they came back together. Kent tried to give up the drink, but he could not. His strength was gone.

By now the distressed and deeply troubled pair, with their son, Kent B., who was now ten years old, could not really find a place to live. Bert, a deeply caring father, borrowed money and did much of the labor to build them a house on the family property.

Marinda worried and cried and cared for little Kent as if her were her own. She loved all eight of her children--but perhaps her despondent son Kent the most. But she knew not what to do. Kent's journey was taking him down and not up and no one could change that except him, and he did not seem to have the power to really care.

Kent came to see sister in law, Wanda. He could talk to Wanda. Of those visits Wanda told me, "He was so sentimental. He cared so deeply about what people thought of him. He had great compassion for others. Sometimes he would cry in response to his inward pain."

One day, he asked Wanda, and her young son Bert, who he loved, to go with him up to Cedar Bench. To support him, Wanda and young Bert went along. Wanda reports that on that occasion Kent fired his gun many times at some cardboard ducks. Then he walked over to the edge of a steep hill. He called her over and told her that this was his favorite place in the entire world. He pointed out to her the high school and other buildings in American Fork. She sensed that he really loved American Fork. Perhaps that was because Kent Durrant's world was American Fork. He left for a week or two, and he lived for a short time in Provo; but he never really left American Fork. American Fork with all its ups and downs

and its' not won state championship, was his home. He had laughed and loved and cried in American Fork.

The next day he came to see Wanda. He seemed more jovial than he had for a long time. He asked her to go out to the truck with him (dad's truck) and in his own way; he told her that he loved her. He then rode up to where John, his brother, was working on construction. John told Kent of his new food freezer and suggested Kent might want to get one. Kent replied, "I don't think I would ever use one." He got in the truck and rode away.

As far as is known, that was the last contact that he had with anyone. He drove to Cedar Bench. Perhaps he left the truck for a time and walked to the high hill that overlooked his life. Perhaps he smiled. Perhaps he cried. He returned to the truck and placed a hose in the exhaust. He started the truck engine. A few minutes later, he said good bye and was gone.

So many things had gone wrong for Kent. He had defeat after defeat. Finally he just ran out of hope and he died "unexpectedly."

So, is it any wonder that I have a "hole in my heart?" A painful hole left there with the vacancy that was created by Kent's decision to go on his way.

Perhaps you could tell a similar, although different story of how one of your dearest loved ones departed "unexpectedly. And thus left a hole in your heart that seems everlasting.

Among the great regrets from such a loss are the sad words, "What might have been?"

That which follows is my feelings of what could have been for Kent if he had had just a spark of hope, and could have held on until a brighter day.

Chapter 3
THINGS AS THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN
Fiction

The year 1958,

It was not unusual to have a snow storm in American Fork, Utah in mid May. But the ferocity of this storm rivaled the worst of January's storms.

At exactly 5:30 p.m. Kent Durrant left his work at Bennett's Paint and Glass in Provo, and drove his ten year old International truck north on Highway 91. He was headed toward American Fork where he, Colleen and his young son called "Little Kent" or more commonly "LK" lived. The intensity of the storm increased as he made his way through the long, skinny town of Orem. He turned the windshield wipers control to high to keep his vision clear, but nothing happened as that speed had not worked since the year before. He cursed the wiper and the heater-less truck with some of his most profane words. Although he lived recklessly lately feeling that a fatal accident would make things better rather than worse, he was forced to slow to twenty five. In a low voice he uttered, "It is six thirty; I'm usually home by this time." Then he added, "But who cares if I ever get home?"

To his left the blowing snow was so thick that he could barely see the neon sign on top of the Wasatch Inn. He noted that the sign read, "Hamburgers seventy five cents." That was a far cry from the twenty five cent hamburgers he had eaten there twelve years earlier after each victory of 1947 American Fork Cavemen basketball season.

Ten minutes later, he entered the underpass just south of Pleasant Grove. Ahead he could barely make out the beer sign that marked the location of the Red Hut. He turned off the highway, and as he so often did, pulled, into the small beer

parlor. He inwardly told himself that he could wait out the worst part of the storm inside. “Besides,” he reasoned, “What does it matter what time I get home?”

As he approached his usual parking spot, the snow was almost blinding. Suddenly a dark figure appeared in his headlights. He pressed hard on the brakes, but the car skidded and the man fell. Kent jumped from his truck and cursed the fallen man for being careless. The body lay motionless. Kent, in the shock of thinking he had killed someone, knelt and lifted the man’s head. As he did so the stranger looked up at him, smiled and said, “Thanks for trying to kill me. Next time you hit me, speed up a bit and you’ll answer my long time wish.”

The heavily falling snow was now covering the head and shoulders of both of them. Kent spoke, “I’ll help you up and we can’t get inside.” Lum Nelson, the owner and bar tender, hardly looked up as Kent shouted, “Hey Lum, I just hit this guy. Could I use your phone to call the ambulance?”

The man, brushing the snow off first from Kent and then himself, shouted, “No, no! I’m not hurt. Just buy me a beer. That will be all the medicine I need.”

The man quickly sat at the counter, took out a handkerchief, and wiped his bald head dry. Then he looked back at Kent and said, “Hey you look as pale as a ghost. Don’t worry. I’m not hurt. Besides it wasn’t your fault. Sit down.” As Kent stood motionless, still in shock, the stranger looked at Kent’s head and slowly moving his gaze all the way to his feet said in amazement, “Good heavens man! You are at least seven feet tall. You might be the tallest man I’ve ever seen. And you are so skinny you make the “Thin Man” look like Charles Atlas.”

Kent, finally moved forward, sat beside the man and said, “You ain’t exactly muscle-bound yourself. When I helped you in here I thought I was grabbing onto a hundred year old skeleton.”

“Hey hold on! I might not be nothing but skin and bones, but I’m no hundred years old. If I had a mop of hair like you got instead of this old bald head, I’d look twenty years younger. Try sixty three.”

Kent had an instant liking for the spunky stranger. Maybe it was because he was glad he had not killed him. Plus, he didn’t seem too upset at being run over.

Kent looked over at Lum who seemed more interested in the news paper than he did in tending bar, and shouted, “Give us a couple of beers.” For the next minute neither of the two spoke. Finally Kent looked out the window and said, “Looks like it is letting up out there. I better get on my way.”

“Don’t go yet. The stranger said as he sat back on his bar stool and looked into Kent’s eyes. Then he added, “There is something I need to tell you.”

“Oh yeah! What’s that?”

“I discern that you’re quite a guy. Remind me a bit of myself in the way you look. Not that we look alike, but I think we just sort of look at things alike.”

Kent sat back down and asked, “Just what do you want to say to me.”

The stranger thoughtfully paused and then almost apologetically said, “Naw! I guess I got nothing to say to you.” But then as the two of them starred at each other the old fellow added, “Not yet anyway.”

“Well if you have nothing to say to me; I got nothing to say to you. So I’ll be on my way, I’m glad I ran into you.”

Both laughed out loud.

As Kent shook hands with his old, new friend he sensed that the man wanted to say more, but he remained silent. Kent felt awkward, and without saying another word turned, walked out the door, and hurried to his truck. As he opened the door he paused. He had a strange feeling that he needed to go back inside. The stranger did not look up from his half empty glass as he said, “Took you longer to come back than I expected.”

“You knew I’d come back?”

“Oh sure.”

“How?”

“I know who you are.” Then after a pause the older man asked, “By the way, who are you?”

Kent stuck out his hand and said, “Kent Durrant.”

Then as the two shook hands Kent asked, “Who are you?”

“Doesn’t matter who I am. All that matters is who you are? I don’t mean what your name is. I mean who you are.”

“Man! You are one confusing guy. My name is who I am.”

“Okay. Okay! Don’t get upset. I’m just an old fool who doesn’t make any difference any way.”

“But what the heck is your name?”

“Oh me. My name... Well, I’m Reuben Drayer. Now that does not tell you anything does it?”

“Tells me a lot more than I knew before. Where do you live?”

“Now why do you care about that?”

As Kent looked at the old fellow with his pointed, grey beard, bald head with patches of white on both sides, and sunken and steely blue eyes he could see a certain glow about him that he didn’t understand. Kent asked, with a touch of empathy that he had not felt in a long time, “Do you live around here?”

“Oh no I’m just passing through on my way to nowhere.”

“Why here?”

“You are nosey aren’t you? I came to see a fellow who lives in American Fork. But when I got here I learned he is back east studying to be a doctor.”

“Who is it you are looking for? I know everybody in American Fork.”

“Eldon Meyers.”

“I know Eldon. We went to high school together. How do you know him?”

“I met him in California while I was canning sardines?”

“He and another young fellow came to the boarding house where I lived. They announced they were Mormon missionaries. I have always been intrigued by the Mormons, so I listened to them. I liked what they said--answered a lot of questions that I had wondered about. Their answers made sense. I wanted to join up with them, but I could not give up the alcohol and never made it.”

“I really respected both of those young Elders, but one of them was the finest young man I had ever known. He was Elder Meyers. He told me to come and see him if I ever came to Utah. So I’m on my way to Kansas and I decided to look him up.”

“So are you leaving for Kansas tomorrow?”

“No, I’m not in any hurry. I rented a motel room just down the road and I’ll be here for a week.”

“Well hey! I’m going fishing tomorrow after work. Want to come with me. We could get a couple of bottles of beer and have a good time.”

Kent sensed that Reuben was a bit disappointed as he asked, “Are you a Mormon Kent?”

With just a tinge of embarrassment Kent replied, “Well I am, and I’m not. I was raised a Mormon, but I don’t know anymore. I can’t say I’ve been inside a church since the funeral of my little girl Michelle and my little son, Michael.”

Reuben looked at Kent and said in a bit of a shock, “Two kids died at once?”

“No the little girl died and then two years later the boy died.”

Kent sensed that Reuben wanted to know more, but did not want to intrude on his privacy. Then he could see a tears form in Reuben’s eyes and then flow down the wrinkled face, Kent said, “Come on I’ll give you a ride to your motel.”

Kent and the Reuben got in the truck. The snow had now stopped falling, and it was a surprisingly warm night. The two rode in silence the few blocks to the motel. As the older man got out, Kent said, "I'm glad I didn't kill you back there. You are quite a guy. I don't know what to call you. I respect my elders and so I don't want to call you Reuben and calling you Mister Drayer seems too formal."

"How about you just call me Brother Drayer."

With that they both laughed.

Kent felt a tinge of happiness as he drove home. There was just something about Reuben that made him feel good. But those feelings only lasted until his entered his little house on seventh north and second east. The house was a cluttered mess. Colleen sat watching TV. No food was prepared. Twelve year old, Little Kent was asleep on the floor. Kent didn't complain. He did not want another fight. The fridge was empty except for two cans of beer, some hardened cheese and a boiled egg. As Kent peeled the egg, Colleen did not look up. She was as sick of Kent as he was of her. He put his coat on and went out to shovel the snow. He knew it would all melt tomorrow, but he just felt like shoveling it any way.

The next day as Kent drove home from work he looked forward to going fishing. Somehow he felt happier when he was fishing than he did at any other time. He wasn't real happy fishing--just happier than he was doing anything else. He went home and got his pole and another one for Reuben and headed to the door. Colleen shouted, "About all you do any more is fish." Kent did not answer.

Soon he knocked on the door of the motel where Reuben was staying. As the old fellow opened the door Kent could see a big white paper or something. He asked Reuben. "What you got in there?"

"Nothing!" Reuben said as he hurried and closed the door. "Let's go."

The two were not as talkative as they had been the night before. They stopped at Storrs Market and bought six bottles of beer. As they got back in the

truck Kent said, "Some how the fish seem to bite better if they can smell beer." Reuben smiled, but he did not laugh as Kent expected him to do.

After riding down the straight two lane road that led to Utah Lake, the two friends pulled to a stop not far from the dock. Kent reached into the truck bed of the pickup and pulled out of a two fishing poles. He handed one to Rueben who looked at it with approval. Kent asked Reuben to grab the handle of a five gallon bucket that was stuffed with two coats and a blanket and said, "We'll need these later."

Reuben replied, "You are a good scout--always prepared."

When the two were sitting in the wobbly boat, Kent used an oar to push the boat away from the dock where he kept it tied up. After the snow storm of the night before, the weather had turned much warmer. Now it was comfortable although a bit cool

They were soon out about ten yards. Kent pulled a rope and the small motor kicked in. They headed toward the center of Utah Lake. The speed was not great, but Kent's wavy hair blew until it was as if it had never been combed. Blowing hair was no problem for Reuben whose broad smile showed two gold teeth.

Out beyond the bull rushes about 200 yards Kent turned the motor off and let down the anchor. Rueben announced, "You know I have not been fishing since I was a boy. You'll have to give me a few lessons." Kent liked to hear that. He loved to fish and nothing pleased him more than help a non fisherman learn to bait a hook, fix a line and cast our ten yards into the cool water.

There were just two benches in the small boat and two men sat facing each other and watching the "bob" attached to his line to see if it went under. "What will we catch?" Reuben asked.

"Catfish," Kent replied.

"Channel cat?"

“No just the small ones about 11 inches long. But I did catch a five pound channel cat here last month. They are pretty scarce.”

The two watched their lines expecting some action. But ten minutes went by and they had no luck. The mid May sun was falling fast in the orange, western sky. It would soon drop out of sight just beyond Saratoga Springs. A half hour later the lights of Geneva Steel Plant, located on the eastern shore of the lake, were visible as the night sky darkened. It was a peaceful night. Only the lapping of the water against the side of the small boat broke the silence.

“Want a beer?” Kent asked.

“Sure. And I think I’ll put on one of those coats.”

The two of them each took a few swallows. “Not bad,” Reuben said. “Not bad at all.”

“Yeah, I love coming out here. A lot of times I come alone. Just need time to think. Just need to get away.” Both men were silent for a few seconds and then Kent added, “Life sure ain’t what it ought to be, is it Reuben?”

“Why do you say that? We got it pretty good out here on this lake in your little yacht fishing just like rich folks do.”

Kent did not acknowledge the humor. He just forged ahead with what he wanted to say. “I don’t know. It’s just that almost everything that I have anything to do with seems to end in ... Well any way we are here to fish not to talk about the failures that seem to come where ever I go.”

“Failures?” Reuben asked.

“Yeah! I’m the biggest failure you will ever meet. How does it feel to you Reuben to be out here on this lake fishing with the world’s greatest failure?”

“Well, to be right honest with you it feels pretty good.”

Both men laughed and each took another swig on his beer bottle. Kent felt comfortable with his new friend.

Reuben spoke, "You might be a failure, but don't call yourself the world's greatest failure. That title belong so me." Kent acted like he had not heard what Rueben said. He was not nearly as anxious to hear Reuben's woes as he was to express his own.

Reuben spoke again, "But you Kent... You look like a movie star and you've got it all. You are married. You have a good job. You got a young son. You ought to be on top of the world."

"How about the bottom of the world? Wishing I could cancel out gravity and just fall off into space and be gone forever."

Just then Reuben's bob when out of sight and Kent shouted, "Hey you got one!"

Reuben was excited as he pulled the fish closer to the boat where Kent lowered a net and scooped it up. They put the flopping fish into a bucket of water that Kent had scoped up from the lake.

"Hey! This is great!" Rueben said with the excitement of a little child.

"You did better than me, and I come here three nights a week You must be one lucky guy."

Reuben laughed with a laugh that seemed to fill the whole lake, "Ha, Ha, Yeah! Just call me lucky." Kent joined in the heart felt laughter.

This was the first time that Rueben had seen Kent really happy.

He asked, "What does your wife think of you coming out fishing so often?"

"She doesn't care. She is glad to get rid of me so she can watch TV."

"Do you ever bring your boy?"

"Aw, he is too young. Besides, Colleen does not trust me to take him out on the lake."

"So things are not so hot at home."

“That is putting it mildly. The only time we really get along is when we both go out drinking together--like we usually do on Saturday night.”

“What do you do at your job?”.

“I install windows in houses.”

“You good at what you do?”

“Well they tell me I am. With my long arms, I’m ten times faster than the other three guys.”

“So you have a good job.”

“Not really. Doesn’t pay much, and I hate going to work. The other afternoon I stopped and got a beer at the grocery store and one of the managers saw it. The next day the boss told me that if I did that again I was through working for them.

Reuben stared at Kent until Kent looked away. Then he looked back and said. “I don’t know... Reuben, can I call you Reuben?”

“Sure, I’d like that.”

“Sometimes I feel like there is no point in me going on. I don’t think anyone would miss me if I just up and left. A week ago I was really on the verge of doing that.”

“Where would you go?”

“No where. I’d just leave and that would be it--maybe the cemetery. Folks there ain’t got no problems.”

“You mean you would.....”

“Well I’ve thought about it. Sometimes I feel like doing it. Like I just said, I think about it a lot lately. I’m really discouraged Reuben. Really discouraged! And there is no way things will ever get any better.”

“Don’t talk like that. With your looks and personality you could end up being the president of the United States. Tall guys like you are always successful. It is short guys like me that have a hard time getting anywhere.”

“Tall! That is my problem.”

“What do you mean?”

“That is why they wanted me on the basketball team when I was only a sophomore.”

“Were you pretty good?”

“Well not so much at first, but then being so tall I could get rebounds and block shots. So I was pretty valuable to the team. Then as a Junior I learned to shoot. I could hit from anywhere and tip in all the shots that my teammates missed. I started getting so many points that my name was in the sports page every night. I was famous. Our team was rated number one, and I was called the greatest player in the history of Utah.”

Reuben was amazed and said, “That should have made you happy. Nothing as great as fame!”

“Maybe it should have made me happy, but it sure didn’t. Misery is more like it. I got feeling I was pretty hot stuff. Some of the older guys wanted me to run around with them because I was famous. They did a little drinking and they got me started.”

“Did that hurt your playing?”

“Yeah a little, but I was still good enough that our team seemed unbeatable. The people in American Fork had never had a state championship team and they all told me that with me starring on the team, they would be so happy when we would win it all. It meant so much to them. I was their hero. I didn’t like being anybody’s hero. I just wanted to be me.”

Every body felt I was perfect and I was far from it. I had gone to church up until that time, but then, to my mother's distress, I stopped going. I started going out with girls, and doing things I never thought that I would do. I was a real idiot."

Reuben sat silently, Kent added, "I've never talked to anybody like I'm talking to you. And I'm sure you wish I would shut up and fish."

"No! Don't stop. Tell me more. Did you bring the town their first championship?"

"No! That was one of the problems. We won the first three games of the tournament and the town went wild. Our final game was against a little town called Grantsville. We knew we could beat them. But that last night I just did not have the strength, and they had a guy who shut me down. We lost by one point. I've never been so disappointed in my life. There was a picture in the Deseret News showing me crying like a baby. I could tell the people felt I had let them down. A lot of them started talking about me saying I was gifted player, but just did not have what it took to be a champion."

Kent quit talking and Reuben spoke, "I can see what you are saying--pretty tough!"

"But they all said that next year we could do it. Well the next year I had a girl friend—Colleen. She was as dumb as I was. We took a lot of freedoms morally and soon she was going to have a baby. We got married because that is what people in that situation did in those days."

"Neither of us was mature enough to have a decent marriage. I still had a great year playing basketball. I could score more points than the entire other team. But again we lost in the finals—to Grantsville again—I hate that place. It seemed like to me that the people of American Fork hated me even more than I hated myself. I resented them and they resented me. I had let them down and they had let me down."

Reuben asked, "Did you play in college?"

"I went to college. But I did not keep the training rules there and did not do well. After the first year I dropped out. By then our baby was a year old and I felt I ought to get a job and support the family. Colleen and I had drinking friends, and we got worse and worse."

As Kent talked, even the water seemed to be subdued with sadness. All was silent.

Then Kent continued, "We had our second baby. I thought that would bring meaning back into my life. But because of a medical condition call the 'RH factor' the baby died two days later. When I heard the baby had died a part of me died. I couldn't see why so many terrible things happened to me. I could not comfort Colleen and she could not comfort me. We just didn't seem to have faith in anything. I drank even more and so did Colleen."

Reuben said with deep emotion, "Boy! That is tough. I don't know if I could go through something like that--losing that baby girl and all."

By now the fishing was not even a part of what the two were doing out there on the lake. They were just sitting there bobbing up and down with the gentle waves talking heart to heart. The sky was now dark as pitch. It never occurred to either of them that they should call it a night and head home. It was like they were in another and better world.

Reuben could feel all the pain that Kent felt, "Kent, my friend, I'm glad it is dark because you would see my tears. I'm so sorry."

Kent sensed that this man was truly his friend even though they had only known each other two days. Kent then added, "I hate to say any more. But two years later we had another baby, this time a boy. And because of the RH thing, he died the same day he was born." By now Kent could say no more. It had been several years since this last sad event. Now for the first time in his life, he began to

sob uncontrollably Reuben wept inwardly in unison with Kent's outward sobs. The little boat seemed to rock in rhythm with his sobs.

Finally under control, Kent spoke again. Since that second death I have never been the same. I resented Colleen and blamed her for the health thing. I blamed her for our failure. And it seemed to me that she did not care at all. We continued on together even though there was no love there. Drinking seemed to be the only thing that gave us any relationship at all. And we allowed Little Kent to do and have what ever he wanted. We were terrible parents."

Just then the moon began to rise over Mount Timpanogos. Both men sat in silence and watched it until it was a full circle in the sky. Now they could see each other more clearly.

Kent looked up and said, "I wish the moon could come up in my life. But there is no light that can take away the dark feeling that I feel. Reuben what do you think? About the only thing that keeps me here is Little Kent. But sometimes I feel that he would be better off without a drunken father like me. And his mom is not any better. But at least I think she has some happiness in her heart, and I don't have a lick of happiness in mine."

Reuben leaned forward and said, "Kent I know you don't feel like hearing this right now, but I know how you feel. You think there is no one who has ever felt like you do. No one has ever been as purely and completely miserable as you are. But I tell you I have felt all the feeling you are telling me you feel. I've known some dark times where I wondered if there was any way out other than to just leave this life for either oblivion if there is not God and to a far better life if there is."

Kent could sense that this guy did understand. Both felt that it was now Reuben's time to talk.

He began his story.

“I’m Rueben Drayer and I’m 62 years old and I’ve pretty well wasted my life. Born in 1894 in Kansas and grew up there on a small farm. My father farmed and drove the school bus. I was the only child. My father was a demanding man and I felt he was continually disappointed in me. He wanted me to help on the farm, and I hated that.

“I was a dreamer as a child. I was irresponsible when it came to doing farm work and chores. My parents were semi active in the Lutheran church, but I refused to attend saying that I did not believe in that stuff.

“I had a mild case of polio as a boy and had one leg that always felt stiff and caused me to walk in a manner that brought me some ridicule from the other children in the area. I became a loner and often walked out beyond the farm to a small lake. I liked to go there and sleep the night looking up at the stars. I became an expert on the stars. I was drawn to astrology and read a bunch of books about that. The only thing I was good at in school was drawing and dreaming.

I left home at age seventeen. I went to Kansas City. There I got work from an uncle who was a plumber. I served as an apprentice and after a few years became a full fledge plumber. I fell in love and nearly married, but the woman jilted me. I really loved her more than I had ever loved any one, and from that time on I refused to ever be romantically involved.

I wanted to serve in WW I but was not physically able because of my bad leg.

After 15 years as a plumber, I tired of that work, and caught a bus and headed west to California. There, I became a wanderer. After a year of being on the road I was I was out of money. While catching a box car to head from northern to southern California, I slipped and fell and hit my head on a rail road tie and was knocked out. I was taken to a hospital and three days later I woke up there.

I could remember my past and things like that, but I sensed that after that blow to my brain, I was different than I had been. I longed for different things than I had before. I had always liked popular music, but had no interest in the classical stuff. Now I couldn't get enough of Beethoven and Bach. Each Saturday morning I listened to the New Your Philharmonic Orchestra on my small radio. Listening seemed to send my mind to a new world. A world filled with hope and love. A world where I felt I needed to use my life to help others feel the joy I felt.

I decided to return to Kansas and to my old home town. My father and mother were pleased to have me back, and I had a great desire to make them happy. I took a job as a custodian at a small college that was just three miles away in the county seat.

As Reuben talked and Kent listened, the night air was now a bit nippy, but neither of the two men seemed to feel that. The moon was now high over head. Reuben asked, "Kent, am I boring you with all this?"

"No! No! Go on I want to hear more."

"Well, here is where the story really gets interesting."

"I was assigned to help in the humanities building. As I swept the halls I was enthralled by the paintings on the walls. It was hard for me to get on with the work because I was so touched by the art work. Each painting was different. I tried to decide which ones I liked best. I was drawn to the ones showing people in real life situations. I wondered just how each artist had proceeded from the first brush stroke to the last.

I went to the campus book store and bought some oil painting supplies. I read in a little paperback art book how to stretch my canvas. I picked up my brush, set up my easel, and decided to see what I could do. My first painting was of my

father and mother sitting on the porch of their old farm home. Somehow I could see their images on the white canvas even before I began to paint.

I could not work fast enough. Ideas of color and composition flowed into my mind and then down my arms into my hands and fingers, through the brush, and onto the canvas. When I painted I felt like time stood still. It was like I was holding the brush but someone else was doing the painting.

Then the next day I was fearful to show the finished work to my parents. But when I did they both became so emotional that they could not speak. They hung it in the front room and started calling people on the party line to come over and see it. Those who came were amazed and each said it sure had a likeness to Arnold and Maud—my parents.

After painting two more scenes, one of the feed mill and another of the city hall, I took the last one to work and approached a teacher and showed it to him. The teacher's words amazed me, "You did that? I can tell by that work that you must have studied in France." He didn't believe me when I told him I had no training in art in France or anywhere else.

As the months passed by, I was able to paint and sale paintings for a modest sum. So I quit my job as a custodian and made a good living putting my work in a gallery and selling them for surprising amounts of money. Articles about me began to appear in the art section of both of the Kansas City news papers.

Then things changed. I didn't know if it was the effects of the fall at the train or what. But every once in awhile, I started to have dreams. The dreams were so vivid that the next day I was able to paint, in real detail, the scene exactly as I had seen it in my dream.

The scenes I painted were so vivid and so perfect that my paintings sold as quickly as I could paint them. I became one of the most famous painters in the

nation. Most of the scenes were of the rural area and people who lived in my little town.

Then a most amazing thing happened. I dreamed of a young couple getting married. The next day I painted the young man and a young lady as I had seen them in my dream. They had just been married by the Lutheran Minister—Reverend Heinz. The newlyweds had come out of our country chapel and were standing near an old model A Ford convertible preparing to leave on their honey moon .

Now Kent here is the amazing part of all this. You may not believe this. But when I painted the painting this couple did not even know each other. She did not move into the town until a year after the painting was completed. By the time they met and fell in love and got married, I had long since sold the painting to a fellow from back east. So the couple had no idea the painting existed. But when they got married I attended that wedding just as I had three years earlier in my dream. When they came out of the church I was amazed at what I saw. It was the same scene I had dreamed and painted. The couple was dressed just as I had painted them. The Model A was exactly as I had painted it. It was exactly the very scene in every detail that I had painted three years earlier.

Kent was so fascinated by this amazing story that he forgot where he was and stood up in the boat. The boat rocked from side to side and nearly threw both men overboard. He quickly sat down and said, “Sorry Rueben. But for just a minute there I thought that I was home listening to the Twilight Zone on my radio.” He then added, “You telling me you could see into the future and paint the future?”

“I guess that is exactly what I am telling you. You can believe it or not. But that is what happened.”

“Well I know you would not say it if it wasn’t so. But you’ll have to admit. That is quite a story.”

“But Kent that same thing happened more than once. That is what really convinced me that I had some power or maybe just a broken brain that let me see into the future.”

“You mean it happened again?”

“Yes! Time after time! I was mystified at this and did not understand.”

In 1937 I met a young man to whom I gave art lessons. One night I dreamed that this young boy grew up and was sent to a war. I saw him on a bloody beach on some strange island. It was not anywhere in Europe where I thought there might soon be a war. In the dream I saw the young man and others raising the American flag on a craggy hill. They were standing in such a way that the composition was perfect.

The next day I painted the scene as I had seen it in the dream. The painting was glorious. I knew it was the best painting I had ever done or would ever do—a once in a life time masterpiece. It was so sacred to me that when I looked at the finished work, I could not hold back the tears. I put it in my closet behind all my clothes and determined to never reveal it until sometime in the future.

Then eight years later, in 1945 various artists were asked to display their best work in a show in Kansas City at an international art show which had as its theme, ‘the cost of freedom.’ I knew this was the time I had waited for. I drove to Kansas City and left the painting with the curator.

A week later I was notified through a registered letter that the painting had been rejected because it was plagiarized in detail from a famous war photo taken on the Island of Iwo Jima. Five men including my young friend had raised the flag in the very scene I had seen eight years earlier.

Kent asked, “Didn’t you know that when you saw that famous photo in the news papers?”

“I was kind of a hermit in the way I lived. I never read the newspapers.”

“Wow! That is the most incredible story I have ever heard. What did you do?”

I tried to defend myself. My honor was a stake. I considered my integrity as more important than my life. The last thing I would ever do is copy someone else’s work and claim it as my own. I drove to Kansas City and made an appeal to the board there. They were kind, but I knew they had no doubt that I was guilty of this terrible misdeed.”

Rumors spread throughout the county that I was some kind of a nut and was a big crook. I could not bear what had happened. I became so depressed that I could not stand it. I decided to take my own life. I went to the little lake of my boyhood days and swam out. I then went under with no thought of coming up. But my body did not go along with it. I became desperate and out of breath. I came to the surface and swam to shore.

In the months and years since that time I was so wounded by this accusation of dishonest that I refused to paint again. I would not work. I began to drink. I was a lost soul. I wondered if life was worth living. My honor was gone. My parents had both died and I had no one in my life. All I could see was darkness. I wondered about what you have wondered about. But I could not do it. I returned to my life on the road.

I lived almost homelessly in California working part time on Cannery Row and living, when I could afford it, in a boarding house. Then in 1956 I met the Mormon missionaries. They taught me, but I could not give up my alcohol, and so I never was baptized even though I wanted to be. Like I told you earlier, one of the

missionaries lived in American Fork. I like the sound of that place. I sounded like a place in a cowboy show.

When that missionary, who was like a son to me, left to go home from his mission he told me that if I was ever in Utah to come to visit him in American Fork. As I told you last night; that was why I came here. I went to his home but his mom told me the Elder was back in Minnesota at Medical School.

So I decided to stay in American Fork for a few days figuring that was as close as I would ever get to Heaven. And then you ran over me and nearly killed me. When you lifted my head and I looked up and saw your face I knew that you were the reason I had come here. Sort of like you was a soul mate from another world. I knew right off that you were a different sort than anyone else I had ever met. With my special gift I could see that there were things for you to do in this old life.

When Rueben finished talking, Kent was silent for several second and then he said in a laughing tone, “Well I’ll be... We both are quite the failures. What do you say we just punch a hole in the bottom of this little boat and let the water cover us over until we both are out of our misery?”

“No, No! That’s not the answer. Besides, I found out long ago that doesn’t work. The time for me to do that sort of thing is long gone. And you... Well you have things to do before you sleep!”

“Rueben I like what you say. But you got the wrong guy. What you say just does not apply to me. I’ve been considering that this is going to be my last week. I just need to get up enough courage to do it. You have been around. Don’t you think God understands people like you and me? Don’t you think He would understand if I took my own life. Don’t you ...”

“Oh sure He would understand if you ended it. But he wants you to keep on living.”

“For what?”

“Because you have a future Kent. You have a future and it is right here in this town with Colleen and Little Kent. You can’t leave here. There are things for you to do. Like I told you, when I first met you, I could tell you were a man who could do things—things that matter--things that no one else could ever do. Besides who is going to keep these cat fish company if you aren’t here three nights a week?”

“They are the only ones who would care.”

“Don’t be so sure. Colleen would miss you and little Kent would never be the same if you were not here. You might not be anywhere near a perfect parent, but you’re still his dad. He needs you.”

“I’m not so sure.”

“And Kent, it would break my heart if anything happened like that. In just one day you have become the best friend that I have ever had.”

“Me?”

“Yes you! Besides that, your destiny demands that you stay here. I know it will not be easy, but you can do it. You need to do it for a lot of people, but mainly, you have to do it for you. You know you aren’t through yet. There is a lot more fight left in you. I can sense that right now you can feel it. You can feel the real Kent Durrant. You can feel something deep down in your heart. You can feel a little glimmer of hope. And when you have that glimmer of hope you have the makings of a fire that you can kindle and it will flame up and you will be what Kent Durrant really is.”

“What are you some kind of a minister?”

“You bet I am! And right now I’m ministering to you. And God up there is ministering to you. People talk about being saved. Well I’m here to save you. And if that makes me a minister then so be it!”

Kent sat silently. The fiery lights of the Geneva Steel Plant glimmered on the gentle water. The moon had moved across the sky. There was a bit of light in the east. Just a glimmer! The two had been out on the lake for a large part of the whole night. And it would soon be dawn.

“Let’s go in,” Reuben suggested. “When you get on shore and have this new day I can promise you that by nightfall tomorrow something will happen to you that will add a bit more to your glimmer of hope. So go home and hug your wife and tell her you love her, and grab that little boy and hold him closer than life itself. Then you go to work and when you get home come to my motel. I have a gift for you there.”

Back at the motel Kent stayed in the truck as Reuben got out. He looked at Kent for a long time and Kent sensed that this man was looking into his soul. A tear fell from his face as the old man said, “I’ll see you tonight. I’ll see you tomorrow. I will see you forever.” Then he hurried away. Kent watched as the motel room light came on. Then he slowly pulled away.

On the way home Kent stopped at the Owl Inn to get a hamburger. That had always been his favorite breakfast. He decided to get one for Colleen. He hurried home. As usual she was sitting by the TV. But this time she was asleep. Kent went to her side, gently touched her on the shoulder and softly said, “I brought you something.”

“What?”

“A burger and fries and a chocolate milk shake. I know that is your favorite.”

“Oh good! I’m starving.”

“What are you watching? I’ll watch it with you.”

He sat at her side and they ate as they watched Good Morning America.

An hour later Kent left for work. He was tired, but he worked hard. As he headed to a house under construction, he could not get his mind off Reuben. All that day, he kept thinking of all that Reuben had said. He had never heard of a story as amazing as the story of this kind and wise man. He kept hearing over and over again the story of the paintings showing the future. Surely that could not be true!”

After work Kent drove straight to the motel. He was excited to see his old friend. He had decided to try to get him to stay in American Fork. He could even live with Colleen and him. When he thought that he wondered, “How could he do that if I’m not here?”

Kent almost ran from his truck to the motel door. He knocked, but no one answered. He was puzzled. He went to the office and inquired about Reuben. He was told that the gentleman had checked out that day at five saying he had a bus to catch at five thirty.

Kent could not accept this. He hurried back and knocked again. He was frantic.

The lady at the office came to where he was, and said, “I told you he is gone. Oh by the way! I just remembered that he left something for you.” Kent went into the office, and she handed him a large, flat package. It was just little larger than the size of his car door so he had to lay it in the bed of the truck. He covered it with a blanket.

He hurried home. He hurried past Colleen who shouted, “Oh good you are home. I’ve prepared a hamburger loaf and potatoes.”

“I’ll be right there,” he said. “I just need to wash up.”

He went to his room, laid the package on the bed and looked for some scissors. He carefully cut the paper away. Inside he found a flat cardboard box. He opened the box. And to his amazement there was a large oil painting. A small note

down in the corner said, “Careful. This is still wet. Don’t smudge this are you will not be able to recognize that It is you.”

Kent carefully put the painting against the wall and stood back as far as he could.

His first realization was that this painting was a masterpiece. Then he looked more carefully. He could see an honor guard. He could see the American Fork High School band. He could see a convertible car. There was a banner on the side of the car. He read it and it said, “The Grand Marshal.” And below that he could see a name. He read and it said, “Kent Durrant.”

He came closer and he could see that the man on the passenger side was an older gentlemen. Then he could not believe his eyes as he could see that the man was him.

He carefully picked up the painting and headed back toward the kitchen. The painting slipped a bit He grabbed to keep it from falling. He touched just a little bit of the painting. He excitedly showed it to Colleen. She had a flare for art. Her first words were, “It is a bit smudged. Did you rub it while you carried it? See on the face and also the name of the grand marshal. You can’t read who it is supposed to be... But other than that it is the most beautiful painting that I have ever seen”.

After dinner Kent took the painting and hung it in the front room. I covered almost half of the wall. He was overwhelmed at all that had happened. The painting almost seemed magical to him. What did all this mean?

“The painting is amazing! I love it. Who did it?” Colleen asked.

“Just some guy I met over at the Red Hut a couple of nights ago. He and I talked. I guess he liked me and he gave me this.”

“Who was he? There’s no one in this town who can paint like that.”

Kent did not want to say more. How could he ever explain Reuben? “Besides” he reasoned, “She would not believe me anyway. She would just add it to the long list of lies I’ve told her in the past.”

So the discussion ended. Colleen in her excitement was soon on the phone to tell her sister, Lova, of the incredible painting.

Kent had as many questions about the painting as Colleen had, but his questions were of a different nature than hers. He wondered, “Was Reuben really who he said he was? Did this strange man know how to paint the future? If he did, then what was the meaning of this painting?” These and seemingly hundreds of other questions filled his mind. For the next few confusing days Kent worked and fished and wondered. And in an indescribable way, he felt hope.

Then on a Wednesday afternoon in June of 1959 as Kent was placing a large piece of glass in the front of Taylor drug, He had the distinct impression that he must find Reuben and ask him the answers to his questions. But how could he find him?

That night, on his way home from work, Kent pulled his truck into the Law office of Devere Whooten. Devere was a friend of the Durrant family and in the past had done some legal work for them. He was considered the most intelligent man in the town. He was a great fan of high school sports, and had watched Kent play.

The kindly, grey haired lawyer seeing Kent enter the outer foyer quickly came from his office and asked enthusiastically. “Kent, I have not seen you lately. Come in and sit down.” As the two sat together Kent felt nervous to be in the company of this well known man. Devere asked, “Playing any ball lately?”

“No I gave it up a few years ago.”

“Well you were the best who ever played in this state.”

“Thanks.”

“What can I do for you?” Devere asked hoping it would not be about a divorce. He like many in the town knew that Kent and Colleen were not doing well in their marriage.

“It is hard to explain. I’m not sure anyone could really help me on this, but seems like if anyone can it would be you.”

“I’ll give it a try. What you got?”

“Well the other night I met a man. He said some things to me that meant a lot to me. I wanted to talk to him more but he took off on a bus. I need to find him.”

Devere asked. “Did he say where he was going?”

“No, he mentioned Kansas-- someplace in Kansas.”

“You know the city?”

“I really don’t, but from one thing he told me, I know it is near a small college named Foresight or Foremost.”

Devere called in his secretary, and asked her to get him a list of the colleges in Kansas

She replied she could get it, but not until the next day when she could call BYU and ask them for such a list.

Devere told Kent, “Come back tomorrow, or call me and we’ll see.”

Kent added, “He used to work there as a custodian and he lived in a small town a few miles from the university.”

Devere thought for a few seconds and then said, “I think they would have a list of former employees. Do you recall his name?”

“Reuben. Reuben Drayer.”

“Tomorrow we can also get a list of the towns in that area. Maybe you will recognize the name of his town when you hear it?” With that Devere arose and said, “Well I’ve got to go Kent. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

As Kent drove home he was excited. He knew he could have no peace of mind until he had located Reuben. With all his concerns about finding this strange man, the idea of ending his life was no longer on his mind.

The next afternoon Kent was back at the Whooten law office.

Again when the lawyer saw him, he almost ran out to greet him, "I've got some information for you." Devere said excitedly. "By the way, there will be no charge on this. I love your dad and Mom. I'm glad to help you for free. I'm almost as curious about this guy as you are."

The two then went into the office and were seated. Devere requested, "Before I tell you what I have, tell me more about this man?"

"He was this guy I met at the Red Hut. He said he was traveling though. He asked me if I wanted a beer. Normally I would have turned him down. But he was the most interesting looking guy I've ever seen. He told me his name was Reuben. He was friendly and so we talked. He said that he was an artist. I was amazed when he gave me a painting. Really beautiful! I just want to stay in touch with him."

"Well here on this note is the name of the college. It is indeed Foresight University and it is in Pell Kansas. I called there and the personnel man said that he remembered Reuben. He told me that Reuben was as strange a man as he had ever known. He added that Reuben was an artist that got in some kind of trouble for copying paintings and denying he had done it.

"That is Reuben." Kent said as he smiled broadly.

"The records show that Reuben lived in a small town ten miles to the north called Trentville. The personnel guy even had Reuben's address. Here it is on this note, 'Star Road 14, Simmons Lane.' His mailing address is Rural Route 2, Box 364. Trentville, Kansas.

Devere gave Kent a paper containing all this information.

Kent was so filled with appreciation and excitement that he could hardly speak. After several seconds of silence he said, "Mr. Whooten, I don't know how to thank you. This means so much to me. If you ever need any windows you call me, and I'll do it for just the cost of the glass."

The two stood and shook hands. As they did so Devere looked deep into Kent's eyes and said. "Kent I sure do love and respect you. I'm so glad you came to see me. If you ever need any help on anything, you let me know."

Kent sensed that this great man really did care about him. He thought that no one in the town cared anything about him. As Kent turned to leave Devere said, "Let me know if you find him. Keep me posted and, like I said, if you need more help you just let me know." He added, "I know you get sick of hearing this but you were the greatest basketball player this state ever had."

As Kent drove the mile home, he wondered, "He loves and respect me. How about that--a man like that respecting me!"

That night Kent cleared all the papers and stuff off from the battered card table in the corner of the bed room, tore a sheet out of a spiral note book, found a ball point pen and wrote this letter.

Dear Reuben,

I hope this letter gets to you.

I'll never forget you. You are my best friend. I know I just met you, but you touched my heart like no one else ever has. And the painting—I've never seen anything so beautiful! Colleen feels the same way; and she is kind of an artist herself--nothing like you, but she tries.

But what does the painting mean?

I just don't understand. Is the man in the parade supposed to be me? He looks like me except he is a whole lot older than me. Maybe that is the way I look to you because of the dumb things that I have done that caused all these baggy wrinkles and stuff.

I just don't know what to think of all this. I can't get all this off my mind—you and painting and the things you said! It all confuses me.

And I was wondering. When are you coming back this way? I need to see you. I really need you. I don't know why, but when I think of you I feel like I'm okay. Why don't you move out to Utah? It is a better place than Kansas. You and I could fish every night. I could help you find a job; and maybe we could build a room on our house, and you could live there.

I know this might not be what you want. But I sure do miss you.

If you were here I think I could get my life together. I'm getting along a little better with Colleen. But I still get so discouraged. I guess I'm just a sad kind of a guy-- seems like I just feel bad about things. Colleen is no better. We try, but we can't seem to quite understand each other.

The only time I feel real good about things is when I look at the painting. There is something all most miraculous about it. I don't know why I feel the way that I do.

Anyway, call me 225 6464. Or write to me. My address is on the envelope.

If you can't come, you just send me a note and give me some encouragement like you did in the boat that night. Maybe I could come out there and see you.

Anyway thanks for the picture. Some people tell me that painting is worth a lot of money. Course I would never sale it even for millions.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Kent Durrant.

After a week, each night when Kent returned from work he almost ran into the house to ask Colleen if any mail had come that day.

Four weeks went by and there was never a letter from Reuben.

Kent became more discouraged. His job was in jeopardy. The business had slowed and Mr. Bennett had told all the staff that it looked as though there would have to be some layoffs.

Kent got so discouraged that he could not bear to look at the painting. When he tried to do so he had to turn away and tears filled his eyes. Could he go back and ask Mr. Wooten what to do? Then he knew there was no more that this lawyer or anyone could do. There just was no way to find Reuben. There was no hope. For the first time since he had met Reuben, Kent asked himself, "What is the use?" I'd rather be...."

Three weeks later Kent was still going through the motions of life. He worked, but without any interest in doing well. He agreed with Colleen in all she asked, but inside he agreed with nothing. Not even with life. He was like a bass that was hooked, and that had fought and fought; and now was motionless in the water ready to be netted.

No longer did he inquire about the mail. Then one night when Colleen was at her monthly get together with her friends, Kent felt too tired to go fishing. Even that seemed a bit dull lately. He crossed the room to turn on the TV. As he did he saw a large brown envelope on top of the TV set.

He thought it was some sort of advertisement, or a bill. He received plenty of those, He picked it up and written on the corner of the envelop where the return address was normally written, there was just one word, "Reuben." It was a letter from Reuben. Kent almost tore the envelope in two in his excitement to open it. He could see a piece of white thick paper with a black and white drawing. He cast it aside without looking at it. There was also a hand written letter.

He sat down; and with both trembling hands he held the treasured message. He read:

Dear Kent or should I say, "Dear Cry Baby."

I'll never come back to Utah. I can't stand having the mountains so close they look like they could fall down on me at any time. Besides I'm heading east on this homeless tour. But if I do come back there it will be to kick your butt. I'm now in North Carolina and headed up the coast. Who knows where I will end up? I keep in touch with my hometown post office. That is how I got your letter. But don't try to find me. They won't tell you. If you want to reply to this letter just send it where you sent the last one.

Don't ask me what the painting means. I never know what those sorts of paintings mean. All I know is that they mean something. Someday you will be able to tell me what it means.

All I know is that it will never mean anything until you start treating Colleen the way you ought to treat her. If you want her to change you need to change yourself. What she needs is a good "Kent Durrant" not the sorry sight that you are. If you try to make her as happy as much as you want to catch a big fish then things will get better.

Maybe that painting was too much for you—too far out there for a short sighted man like you. Things have to happen today or next week or you feel like there is no hope. So just to humor you I ate some raw turnips so I could have another dream closer to now. I don't paint anymore so I just drew the things I saw in black and white. So here is what I saw in my dream. Show it to Colleen. I've never seen her, but this is the way she looked in the dream.

So quit whining and get on with it, and I will see you in my dreams.

I love you Kent. You just need to wake up. It's all in there you just have to bring it out. I hope this letter is not too harsh. I write it with more love than I have ever felt before.

Reuben.

Kent looked on the other side of the paper to see if there was more, but there was no more.

He picked up the drawing and looked closely. It was a woman standing at a fruit vender cart. The most beautiful woman Kent had ever seen. The man standing across the cart was wearing a large round straw hat. There was a huge cathedral in the background. Standing at the side of the woman, with her arm around his waist, was a very tall man. Kent looked more intently to see the woman more clearly. It was Colleen as she had been when they were first married. She was beautiful. He could not take his eyes off from her. For a minute, he felt again his former love for her.

Kent put the drawing and the letter back in the envelope and took it to his room and placed it in the bottom drawer under some old T shirts that he used to like to wear when he looked more fit than he did now.

For the next two days the picture never left the drawer, but it never left Kent's mind. What did it mean?

That night, on his usual fishing trip to Utah Lake, Kent was anchored and waiting. The moon came up just as it had when he and Reuben had fished together. For a moment it seemed as though Reuben was there with him. He spoke out loud, "Oh my friend Reuben, what should I do?"

Then in a flash of intuition he heard a voice within say, "Take her to Mexico."

Kent laughed out loud as he considered such a ridiculous idea. Did it mean Take Colleen? She would not want to go anywhere like that with him. Still she did love Mexico. She talked about going there someday with her friends. "But why not?" Kent remembered that they had never had a honeymoon. The night they got married, they had driven to Evanston. They felt it best to keep things simple because everyone in town knew their situation.

So one night in a cheap motel room in Wyoming they had their honeymoon. A surge of pain went through Kent as he considered this. He was such a poor catch. Colleen deserved a rainbow trout and all he was a mud sucking carp. Kent knew he had to start fishing in different waters or life would never be any better than it was now. He pulled up anchor and pulled the rope, the motor roared and he headed for shore.

As he parked the boat, and got in his truck; he paused and looked up at the moon and stars. Why not take her to Mexico? No money. What about the boat. He could sell it. It was worth at least two hundred. That would do it! He felt a surge of excitement. What would Colleen think of his idea?

As he drove home, he thought things through. He would need a few days off. He had long since used up his vacation. He could at least ask. Maybe he would get fired. He was close to that anyway. Maybe he would be better off if he did get fired. He could get a job with less pressure. Maybe Lum would hire him at the Red Hut to be a bar tender.

When he got home he saw Colleen watching TV. He sat down at her side. She said nothing. He moved closer to her. She looked at him saying with her eyes, "What is with you?" He asked, "Could we turn that off for a minute, I have an idea."

She seemed a bit upset as he stood, went over and pushed the off button. He then sat back down. This would take all the courage he could muster. He took a deep breath and began to haltingly speak. "Colleen, remember our honeymoon in Evanston?"

Her answer was to not respond. Sadness filled her heart as she considered her many broken dreams.

Kent continued, "Then and until now I've been the worst husband any woman ever had. I'm so sorry--so sorry!" He was so choked with emotion that he could say no more.

She put her hand on his hand. He gained courage and continued, "I want to take you on a proper honeymoon. I want to take you to Mexico."

"Mexico!" she said in surprise. Then she added, "I love Mexico. I've wanted to go there since I was a little girl."

"Well we are going?"

"How can we afford it?"

"I'm sick of fishing. I'll sale the boat. My friend Walt will buy it. He wants a boat. I can get at least two hundred, and we can use that."

"Really?" she said as she leaned forward so that she could look into his eyes to see if he was serious.

"Really!!!" He replied.

"Oh Kent!" she said half laughing and half speaking. "Are you serious?"

"I'm serious," he said with more conviction than he had said, "I do," at the long ago wedding.

"How about work? Will Old Man Bennett give you time off?"

"We'll see. If they don't, I'll quit. This is more important than any job."

That night Kent and Colleen did not turn the TV back on.

The next day at work Kent looked into Mr. Bennett's office. Seeing the big boss was alone, Kent walked closer and asked, "Sir, could I talk to you for a minute?"

"Sure Kent, I've been going to talk to you soon. Come in."

"Have a seat. What is on your mind Kent?"

Kent, in his nervousness, blurted out, "I know I don't deserve any favors. I've tried to do well here; I know I could do better. But Colleen and I never did have a honey moon. We went to Wyoming and got married there and came back the next day. I feel awful about that. It is no wonder that Colleen is disappointed in me. I have never given her what she deserves. Anyway, I want to take her on a honey moon to Mexico. And I need three days off."

"You have already used up your vacation."

"I know. I don't deserve what I'm asking. But this is so important to me." With that Kent lowered his head and silently sobbed. After a brief silence Kent spoke again, "I just have to treat her better?"

"Can you afford it? It will cost a lot of money to go down there. Prices are high."

"I'm going to sale my boat."

"Sale your boat! You love that boat. You love fishing more than you love life"

Kent pulled his wrinkled handkerchief from his pocket, wiped the tears from his eyes and blew his nose. Then he spoke, "Well I used to feel that way. But something has got to change."

"So you'd sale your boat. Sounds like you are serious?"

Kent lowered his head and mumbled, "I'm serious."

There was a long silence. Then Mr. Bennett leaned forward and said, "Kent look at me."

Kent looked up, and the two looked into each other's eyes. It was to Kent as if this man was looking into his very soul.

Then Mr. Bennett relaxed, and sat back in his reclining chair and said. "Sale your boat to go to Mexico? I can't believe this. And you're serious. This sure does complicate matters. I was going to fire you tomorrow."

Kent's heart sank. "I know," he said, you deserve better than I've been giving. I'll leave today."

Mr. Bennett looked at Kent and Kent looked away.

Then the big boss said, “Kent you’ve got more talent than any of the men in this organization, but you seem content to do a subpar job. You could do so much for this company if you would straighten up and fly right. I love you and I have great respect for you.”

“I know you’re right; and if I was you I would fire me, but... I just can’t seem to do any better than I have been doing.”

“Well today I see a different man in you than I have ever seen before. I think something has happened to you. I don’t know what it is, but something is different.”

Again there was silence. Finally the older man stood and came around his desk. He stood beside Kent and said, “Stand up.” Kent towered over the small Mr. Bennett.

“Kent, I’ve got an idea. If you’ll promise me that you will start giving Colleen the best you have in you, then I will keep you on. And you can have the time off for your honeymoon. Furthermore, I’ll pay ever cent it costs you to take her to Mexico. But I want you to go the city in Mexico where I served as mission president. There is a man there who is a vendor. Find him and tell him that you are a friend to Elder Bennett. He will take you all over the town and you’ll have the time of your life.”

Kent could scarcely breath. He took a deep breath. Mr. Bennett continued, “Then when you get back we will see how serious you are. But it all starts with you making Colleen the happiest woman in all of Utah County. Will you do it?”

Kent was in shock and could not speak, but he nodded his head up and down. Without speaking he turned and left the office; went to the back of the store, got several large panes of glass, got in his truck, drove to his work site and started putting up windows with more pride and enthusiasm than he had ever done before.

Two weeks later Kent sat again at his card table desk in his bed room. Colleen had taken LK and gone to spend two days with her sister Connie in Cedar city. Kent tore a sheet of paper from the spiral notebook sat down and began to write.

Dear Reuben,

I've got more evidence to prove that you are crazy. It is no wonder those art officials did not believe you. No one in their right mind would ever believe a guy like you.

Speaking of believing... You won't believe what I'm about to tell you. I got your letter and that drawing. It was so good to hear from you. I thought I would never hear from you again. Anyway I couldn't figure out why you sent me a picture of a Mexican guy. I thought you must have got confused and sent me the wrong drawing.

But the thing that really made me wonder is how did you know what Colleen looks like? You have never seen her. But the woman in the picture looked just like her. It was amazing.

Your letter criticizing me kind of upset me. But then I got to thinking about things. You were right in all you said. I went fishing and somehow you were there with me. You said you would not come back to Utah, but you did. You were there in the boat with me. I was feeling real bad until you came. Then I heard your voice saying, "Take her to Mexico." That thought had never come into my head. But after that I could not get it out of my mind.

To make a long story short, I have now been to Mexico. I took Colleen to Mexico and she loved it. And so did I. I did not know she and I could still have fun. And it was not because of the Tequila we drank there. We did do some of that, but it was so much more than that. It was like a honeymoon—a real honeymoon like you see in the movies.

And guess what. My boss paid all our expenses to go there. That is another story.

But here is the amazing part. My boss told me that he had been to Mexico on a mission. He said he knew a man there in this town and that we were to go there and find this man who had a vending cart near the large Catholic Church. Well we went there, and this is something that even you will have a hard time believing. As I met this man, I knew I had seen him before. I had seen him and his cart and the church and Colleen there talking to him. Then I realized that it was the very picture you had sent me. Can you believe that Reuben? Of course you can you crazy old fool!.It was one of your dream drawings.

Even now as I tell you this my heart fills with wonder. How do you do it Reuben? You really can paint the future!”

You have got to come to Utah. I want Colleen to meet you. She would love you, and you would love her. She is a lot happier than she used to be. The trip is all she talks about. When she tells others about it she mentions me with a kind of love for me. Oh we still have a long ways to go, but she is coming around. And Reuben, I don’t want to brag, but I’m getting to be a pretty darn good husband.

“She even told me she felt it would do young Kent good to go fishing with me. We went a couple of times and he really likes it. We talked a bit about his school stuff and that. But he sort of went silent. He is a pretty troubled young man. Maybe I can help him, but I haven’t been able to really talk to him yet. Maybe next time we go fishing we can talk. I’d like to be a good dad, but maybe I have waited too long.

Hey tell me where you are. I won’t come there. I just need to know where you are and what you are doing.

The only sad note is that I sure have been feeling sick lately. Nothing serious, but I just don’t have much energy.

Write to me as soon as you can. You mean so much to me.
Love Kent.

A week later LK came home from visiting his grandparents. He told his mother that his Uncle Randy, who was just two years older than him had given him a drink of beer that he had found. He told his mother that Randy drinks his dad’s beer all the time.

Colleen was upset that her little brother would drink and that he would give some to LK.

That night when LK was out playing with some neighbor boys Colleen told Kent what had happened. Kent was shocked. He could not believe that his twelve year old son would do something like that. He called LK in from the street; He told his son what he had heard. LK responded, “You and Mom drink so why can’t I?”

Kent said, “Because we are adults and you are a little boy.”

“You don’t act like adults. Randy told me that you and Mom will probably get a divorce soon. So what do you care about what I do?”

“We aren’t going to get any divorce.”

With that young Kent said, “I’ve got to back out. They haven’t got enough for two teams.”

With that LK was gone and Kent sat down. Did people really think they would get a divorce? And he wondered, “Where is LK headed? I hope he doesn’t become like me. What kind of a father am I any way?”

For the next few days Kent couldn’t focus on his work, and he was silent even when Colleen tried to talk to him. It was like he had suddenly gone backwards and was back to being the old Kent. Dark feeling came into his heart. He felt, “Maybe it is too late for me to change.”

Kent went fishing. But he did not take LK. He wanted to be alone. On the lake he tried to imagine Reuben was there, but there was no Reuben and there was no hope.

That night Kent felt completely out of energy. His mind was filled with doubt. In the middle of the night he awakened Colleen. He had a pain in his chest. She drove him to the hospital. There the nurse explained that Kent had likely had a heart attack. An hour later young Dr. Meyers came into the room. Tests were performed. Kent wondered and waited. He could tell that Dr. Meyers was deeply concerned.

The words, “Heart attack,” were the most frightening words Kent had ever heard. He imagined that he was going to die. Never before had Kent felt his death was near. But up until now death was what he felt he wanted. He had even planned ways to die. But this was not the way he had planned. He did not want to die this way.

Colleen was at his side. She was obviously worried and held his hand tightly. Kent was asleep now. She felt his breathing was lessening. He gripped his hand and said, “Kent you can’t go. I love you. I love.”

It was the first time in ten years she had said these words. But Kent did not hear.

Grandmother Durrant came at noon. She had gone to the mail box and picked up her mail and the mail for Kent. She brought it with her. Kent was awake now. Colleen told grandmother, “The doctor does not know what will happen. He says he will know later when some tests come back. But I can tell he is worried.”

Kent took the mail and saw that there was a big brown envelope. He was tired, but when he saw the name Reuben he became excited and had a difficult time breathing. Colleen told him, “Give that to me. You don’t need that now.”

Kent said softly, “Open it and read it to me.”

Colleen read.

Dear Kent,

How are you doing? You told me in your last letter that you were a bit out of energy. I hope you are back to your usual ornery self by now. You got to have energy to pull that big channel cat out of the water. I loved what you said about the Mexico drawing. It sounds like I still have the touch. Your story even amazed me. How did Colleen feel about her being in the drawing? Did she think that it looked like her? She is a beauty. I have never drawn a woman who was more beautiful. I guess you could call your wife my dream girl. Now don’t get jealous

Colleen broke in and asked, “What drawing?”

Kent said softly “I’ll tell you later. Keep reading.

Colleen read on,

“So you actually saw the place and the man. I wished I could have been there. Your boss must be quite a guy. Seems like everybody who knows you loves you. I can’t see why. You are the most unlovable creature I have ever known.

Keep treating her good. And young Kent will come along. You neglected him a long time it will take time. Just keep doing little things to show him you love him. He is a good kid. Any son of yours has a lot of good blood in his veins. Is he getting tall? Can he play basketball? I hope he is better than his old man. I still can’t believe that little old Grantsville with only six boys in the whole high school beat you two years in a row.

And give Colleen a kiss for me. Tell her I said she is a lucky woman to have a husband like you... And you sure are lucky to have a beauty like her as you wife.

Well I got to go. The soup kitchen is about to open. And a guy like me has to eat you know.

I hope you like the enclosed drawing. It was such a short dream that I could only make a small drawing. Don't ask me what it means-- makes no sense to me. But here it is for what it is worth.

Well I got to go. Keep in touch you big tall, gangly, ugly friend. Until then, get up and get going.

Love Reuben.

PS: A longtime ago the missionaries had me read something called the Word of Wisdom. It was in some special book they had--something about walking and running and not fainting. Could you send me that? I'm getting old and slow and I need to read that again.

Colleen put the letter back in the envelope and said, "Who is this guy? Not much of friend the way he talks about you."

"Oh he is just old Reuben being old Reuben," Kent said as he smiled and laughed softly.

"Here is the drawing he mentioned."

"Let me see it. Let's see what the old guy is up to now. "Looks like a bunch of runners. The one in the back is tall and gangly and a little ugly."

"It looks a little like you," Colleen said as she smiled.

Doctor Meyers came into the room. "Some good news Kent--it is not as bad as I feared. You'll have to take it easy for a couple of weeks, but you'll be all right. There is no heart damage. But the danger is that it could happen again. So get up and get dressed. Colleen will take you home. Come to my office in two days and we will talk more on what you could do to get your strength back."

When they arrived home Colleen went to the bed room and put new sheets on. She wanted the bed to be comfortable. Then she told Kent to lie down and that if he needed anything to let her know. Kent had never seen her as attentive as she was that night. Kent was soon asleep, and he stayed that way for the next twelve hours.

Two days later Kent sat silently as Dr. Meyers listened to his heart. After almost a minute of intense listening, the Doc. Said, "Sounds good Kent."

'Oh good! This whole thing scared me to death. I thought I was a goner.'

"You could have been, but there is someone up there looking out for you. So you are lucky. Now what we have to do is make a plan so that this never happens again."

"Yeah! Let's do that. What do you suggest?"

"Well one thing is for sure. You have to get more exercise. Putting windows in is good and so is fishing. But you have to get some cardio vascular exercise."

"You mean running and stuff like that."

"Yes you ought to do some running."

"I see those dumb guy out there running with a look of pain on their face like they are about to die. I think they're nuts. You don't expect me to do that do you?"

"I sure do!"

Kent laughed and said, "Come on. You are just saying that because you won the mile run at the state track meet when you were a senior. If you had played basketball like you should have we would have beat Grantsville. We needed someone who was in shape."

"I left basketball to you giants. Anyway you have to get some exercise and a little running will do it. You don't have to go far at first. You can even walk in between running. You can build up until you can run a long ways."

"Come on. Are you serious?"

“Do I look like I’m joking? I run every morning. Meet me up by the high school tomorrow morning and we will run together a little bit and walk some.”

The next morning Kent and the Doctor took off on a slow pace up toward the cemetery. Kent felt fine at first, but then began gasping for air. The two sat down on the foot ball field bleachers.

The doctor put his hand on Kent’s shoulder and said, “Kent, don’t take this the wrong way. But see that cemetery up there. You’ll be there within five years unless you quit smoking, Smoking is killing you.”

“I’ve been smoking since I was a senior in high school. It hasn’t killed me yet. I just don’t think that I can quit. I think I can get in shape and still smoke.”

“No way!”

“Really?”

“That is just the way it is.”

Kent sat up really straight and looked up at Mount Timpanogos and announced, “All right. I’ll quit.”

“You don’t need to decide right now. Think it over. Consider the cost and then decide.”

“No! I don’t need time to think it over. I quit.”

Kent did quit. Colleen was amazed. She smoked at parties and that, but not like Kent who had smoked a pack a day for years. She told LK, “Your dad has quit smoking.”

LK was amazed and asked, “Why did he quit?”

“Because he loves you and me, and he wants to be around for fifty more years.” Colleen could tell that LK was impressed.

Kent wrote to Reuben,

Dear Friend,

I've been sick—nearly died. Had a minor heart attack. Scared me to death. I thought that I was a goner.

Guess who the doctor was who saved me? It is someone you know. Remember Elder Meyers. He was your missionary and he is the one you came to see when you came to American Fork. Well he is a heart doctor now right here in American Fork.

He has taken a lot of fun out of my life. You know how much I love cigarettes. Well he told me to either quit or die.

So I quit. I quit just like that. For more than a month I have not had a single one. It was tough getting used to not having one of those in my hand--made me nervous. I longed to have a deep drag. But it was not as hard as I thought. It really helped because Dr. Meyer and I go out running every morning. I can go nearly a mile now.

You ought to try running. Maybe it would make you so you were not so ornery. Hey you said you wanted a copy of the Word of Wisdom. I asked my mother about that and she went out and bought you a book called The Doctrine and Covenants. She said it is in section 89. So I'm sending you the book and you can look it up yourself. I read it and it is pretty good.

I sure wish that I knew where you are. I need to see you. I'm doing real good, but if I could just talk to you once in awhile it would really help. I still get discouraged.

Doctor Meyers remembers you real well. He says he loves you. He wants you to come back here and live. So catch a freight train and come on.

LK is tall. I go out by the barn and play him one on one. We use the rim up on the side of the barn that I played on when I was his age. Except the cow is not there any more and so we can dribble more. He's getting better and he loves it. I told him about Grantsville and so when we play he says he is AF and I am Grantsville. I let him beat me. But he can almost do that on his own. I told him to never smoke if he wants to be a champion. He promised me he would not. I wish you could see him. I think he has a future. He has a lot more sense than I ever had. He goes fishing with me. We take the doctor every once in awhile. He is a good man.

Well old friend. You take care. If you need any money you just let me know and I'll sure send it to you. And I still say like Brigham Young said, "Utah is the place for you." I want Colleen and LK to know you. Without you, I would still be wishing I was... Well you know.

With love, your friend and brother,

Kent

One morning when Kent was running with Doctor Meyer he was amazed when his new friend told him that after Kent went home each morning he ran another ten miles. Kent couldn't believe anyone could run that far. Doctor Meyers said, "You just have to build up to it. You could do it. I would take awhile but you could do it."

Kent wondered about that and decided to see if he could do it. Each morning at five he ran further. In six months he could run ten miles.

He and the doctor ran together. The doctor said, "I'm going to run in the St George Marathon in October."

"What is that?"

"It is 25 miles."

"You've got to be kidding? It kills me to run ten miles."

"No! You could do it too. We have six months to get ready. You want to go for it?"

"Do you want me to have another heart attack?"

Kent took the challenge and began to be a serious runner. People often saw him running around the streets of American Fork. One day to the amazement of Mr. Bennett and all the employees at the paint and glass store Kent ran all the way from American Fork to Provo to come to work.

Young Kent was amazed at what his father was doing. He liked to run with his dad for a mile or so.

Kent couldn't quite get to twenty miles. The doctor told him to do so he would have to give up beer and all alcohol and even coffee.

Kent decided he could do that until after the race

Kent felt better physically and his moods were better—a lot less discouraged. He was better to Colleen; and she seemed proud of him. She was supportive when he turned down drinks at parties.

Kent did run the St George marathon. His picture was in the Provo Herald with the head line, "Local Man Takes Fewest Steps In History Of A Marathon." I went on to talk about Kent's long stride that made it possible for him to finish in the top twenty of three hundred runners.

Doctor Meyers told Kent that his goal was to run in the Boston Marathon. Kent got excited and said that he wanted to do the same. Each knew that he had to lower his time to qualify. They ran together every day and ran in several marathons around the state. Both finally qualified for Boston

Kent wrote to Reuben,

Dear crazy old guy.

How would you like to know someone crazier than you? Well it is me. I now run, and run, and run. I've run in six marathons and in ----- I will be running in the biggest of all races. I will run in the Boston Marathon.

Can you believe it? I never dreamed I would do that. Hey just a minute, I have got to look at that picture you sent me when I was in the hospital. I've gone to my room and have it in my hand. I never noticed before but on one of signs along the street where I am running is written, 'Boston Times.' Hey you old fool; you drew the picture of my future. You keep doing it don't you?

Hey! You are back east somewhere so you could easy come to Boston. When I run there, I will look out for you. You better be there or you'll be in big trouble. You could see Doctor Meyers. He is coming with me.

You'll never know how much you mean to me. You gave me hope. Where will it all end?

Love your little brother,

Kent

Kent did not receive a letter from Reuben for the next six months, each day he would eagerly search through the mail, but never a letter from Reuben. He was convinced that he would never again hear from his old friend.

He often felt sad. He did not know why. He did not tell anyone of his feelings and he never had any desires to move on from this life. It is just that he felt his life was not really going anywhere. He hoped young Kent would be an athlete. But he seemed to have stopped growing, and it was obvious that he would not really be a great player like Kent had dreamed..

He wanted to have a better relationship with Colleen, but she still wanted to be with her mother and sisters a great deal of the time. And she often kidded him about his "goody goody" life style. He went with her to parties, but he no longer felt comfortable there. He was a bit tired of putting window in. It was as if he could do that in his sleep. There was no challenge in that. He took no pride in the fact that it was well known that he could put in five window in the time it took others to put in one. He even lost his desire to fish. He still went, but he felt no challenge in that. Many times he only went because he knew how much LK liked to go.

The only thing that seemed to keep him going was running. He felt a great exhilaration in running. He looked forward to the Boston run. It was really the only thing that he looked forward to.

His best friend was his doctor. Frequent physicals revealed that his heart was fine. That pleased him, but he did not fear death as he had when he had had the attack.

He wrote to Reuben each month-- hoping. But no response. He wondered if his letters were too sullen, and if Reuben felt he was whining. He would try to write a happy letter, but he couldn't. Reuben was the only one to whom he could reveal his true feelings. And his feelings were often discouraging. He was not a happy man. He ended each letter with, "I'll see you in Boston"

Finally came the big race--the Boston Marathon. Kent built up a great desire for the race to begin. In his heart he hoped that somehow he would see Reuben there. If he could just do that he felt all would be well.

As he lined up with the thousand others to begin the race it was a damp and rainy day in Boston. He felt lonely there. Should he really be there? Did all this running really make sense? He looked at his long and thin legs. They were nothing but bone and muscle. He was truly as fit as a fiddle. He was glad his dear friend, Dr. Meyers was there. He could sense that running in this race was a fond dream for this good man. This man who seemed to be so happy. This successful man. He wondered, "How would it be to be like him?"

The race began and Kent was off. For a few minutes he fantasized that he would win. That would be success and then perhaps he would feel good in the part of his heart that always seemed to be thirsty. Then reality set in. He didn't feel so good. He no longer thought about winning. He just wanted to finish.

Tens of thousands lined the route to cheer the runners on. Many shouted encouragement to him. A few laughed and pointed at him and said, "Just fall down and you will be the finish line." He ran and ran. He looked at every person along the way. He longed to see Reuben. Some men along the way looked at a distance like they could be him. But when he drew closer they were each just some man with a beard like Reuben wore.

Soon all the spectators looked like a blur, and then each one began to look like Reuben. His heart became happy, and he felt he was in a world where all people were like Reuben.

Then reality would return and he would become almost frantic to see his old friend. Kent ran and ran and ran. He felt he could drop, but he pushed forward. He had to finish. What would he tell Colleen? She would not care and would only laugh and say, "You did your best and that is all that matters." What would he tell LK? His young son didn't need a father who would quit. He needed a father to look up to. He needed a different father than Kent.

He ran on and on. Life was hard, and it was hot and what about his heart. Was this enough to cause his heart to give up?

Still no Reuben in the crowd.

Finally he stumbled across the finish line. All he could hear was a buzzing sound as the fans cheered for him. He had made it. Maybe Reuben would be at the finish line. He would be there to say "Well done Kent! Well done! I knew you could do it." But there was no Reuben

The race was over. Now what?

Was this all there was?

Back home Kent's name was in the local paper. Few from American Fork had ever run in the Boston Marathon. Devere Wootton called and told Kent how proud he was of him. They had a Kent Durrant day at his work and he gave a talk on the thrill of being in the greatest of all races. But his heart was still empty.

Then! Then! On a day when he did not expect it, there was a letter. In the corner of the envelope was the most beautiful word Kent had ever read. It was the word, "Reuben."

Kent's eyes filled with tears as he picked up the letter. He took it, got in his truck and drove two miles west to Cedar Bench. This was his sacred grove. He parked, opened the letter and read.

Dear Kent,

I was there. I was there when you finished. I was more proud of you than I have ever been of anyone or anything. You looked so magnificent with your ten foot long legs and your wavy hair and your magnificent profile. I shouted to all those around me, "That tall one is my son! He is my son!" I did not know any other way to tell them how proud I was other than telling them that you were my son.

I tried to get to you, but I could not walk. I have lost the use of my legs. I think they call it Lou Gehrig's or something. But my heart is still good. And my heart is so happy for you. I could tell from the first time that I saw you at that beer joint that you were a man to be reckoned with. You were so pure and good, Oh sure I saw that you had problems! But problems can be overcome and then there is the man. You are the man Kent!

I know you don't like all this praise. You may feel that I am not really Reuben, but rather some fake. So let me get back to my usual self.

Now get on with the race of life. Your last letters made me sick. Course life is hard. It is supposed to be hard. But you can't become what you are supposed to become without trials. How would it feel to play a foot ball game if the other team did not show up?

Get some strength. Go to source where you can get some strength. You are now fit. physically. But it is time to have strength of character--strength of spirit. There is a greater source. Tap into that source. Then and only then will you gain the strength that will get you through the darkest of days.

Oh, By the way! I had a dream. You know that I have dreams. I told you that didn't I?" Well I had a dream. I can hardly control my hand and fingers. But I went to a divine source; prayed for the strength to paint my greatest dream. Of course the dream was about my best and most noble friend. It was a dream of you. I wanted to paint it on a large canvas. It is so big that I could not send it in this envelope, but I will send it parcel post.

I don't know what it means; except I know that it means everything

I think it is time for me to go home. No don't worry. I don't mean there. I mean back to the Mid West. My cousin is there. She likes me. I don't know why she feels that way, but she does. She will care for me. It won't be long.

Don't come back there. I'll write once in awhile, but don't come back there. That would spoil everything. We are as close as we could ever be. If you come here we will be further apart.

I love you Kent.

Reuben.

PS: Have you ever heard this. "And they shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures. They shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint.

That is talking about me and about you.

Kent put the letter in his shirt pocket and looked up to heaven and wondered and then he knew.

Ten days later a package arrived at the Durrant home. Colleen could not wait to open it. She met Kent in the drive way and said you will never believe what came in the mail to day. Together they hurried into the house. There leaning against the sofa was a large two by three feet painting. Without even looking at the details Kent could see that the painting glowed with the light that would surround an angel.

Both Kent and Colleen knelt together to look more closely at the painting. They could see that there were three adults and four younger children looking into a mirror. In the mirror they could see that the two adults were the two of them. Then there was LK. And then Michael and Michelle who died as babies. But who were the two other young children?

They stood up and Colleen reached out and took Kent's hand and tears came down her face as she said. "Why do I feel as I do? What does this mean?" Kent wondered and still he did not know.

Colleen suggested that they hang the painting in the bedroom for it was too sacred to be in the front room where so many would see and wonder.

Kent was shocked and pleased the next Monday to learn that his dear friend Dr. Meyers had become the bishop of the ward. He told Colleen, "I have never met a greater man. I owe so much to him." Colleen nodded in agreement.

Kent decided that though the big race was over he still wanted to stay in shape. He ran with the bishop each morning and they talked. Kent gained a great trust in this man and little by little he told him about Reuben. At first he did not want to say much because he did not want the bishop to wonder if he was speaking of things that are considered to be supernatural.

But finally the whole truth was out. To his great surprised the bishop accepted all that Kent told him. His response was "Why Not?"

And he added, "The Lord moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform." Finally Kent invited the Bishop to his home to see the painting.

The bishop stood in awe. He was well enough educated that he knew this was a masterpiece--the lighting, the composition, the skilled craftsmanship of the pallet and the brush.

For a long time the two friends stood without speaking. Then Kent asked, "I know it is good, but what does it mean?"

The bishop did not answer right off. Finally he spoke, "I've seen a place like that. But I don't know... I think you and Colleen should ask the Lord to tell you the meaning. He did that with Joseph in the Bible to help him interpret dreams and he could do it for you.

Kent was hesitant to ask Colleen to pray with him. She might laugh at the suggestion. But that night they went out to eat with LK. They dropped him off to stay overnight with his best friend. Then they returned home. Kent knew when they were alone that it would be a good time to ask. He hesitated. He then said, "Colleen. Would you do me a great favor? I love you more now than I can ever explain. Could you? Would you be willing to pray with me? Not about anything like religion. We both agreed that would not be part of our lives, but I just feel like if we ask God He will tell us what the painting means."

To his complete shock Colleen agreed. "Sure what would that hurt? I wonder to."

They went to the bedside and knelt down. Kent began to awkwardly pray. "Dear God, we love this here painting. We don't know what it means we know it is important. Could you tell us somehow what it means? Amen"

While they were still kneeling Colleen said, "I think it means...Oh I know it is silly... but I think it means we are a family."

Kent felt she was right and asked, "But who are the two children?"

"Well maybe it is little Michael and Michelle. But who are these two?"

Colleen laughed and said. "Maybe Reuben can't count."

The next night when Kent got home there was the finest dinner on the table that he had ever seen-- corn on the cob, steak and a fancy tossed salad.

He knew something was different Colleen had her hair done, and had on a flowering dress that made her look radiantly beautiful.

After dinner Young Kent went to his friend's house and his parents were alone. Colleen said, "Let's go sit on the couch." She then spoke. "You know how bad we felt when we lost little Michael and then the complete gloom we felt when we lost little Michelle. I just did not know if I could go on. I know you felt the same. Yet you didn't talk. We drew further apart than ever. It was like hell for both of us."

Both sat silently; filled with those sad memories. Finally Colleen spoke again, "I heard on the news a month or so ago that the RH factor that cause the deaths of our two little ones is no longer a problem. Experts have found a way to save such babies."

Kent wondered and then he knew.

They embraced. If the Lord was willing they would make Reuben's count accurate.

Less than a year later a baby was born in American Fork hospital-- a little baby boy. A month later they took him to church. The first time they had been there in ten years. Uncle George gave the baby a name and a blessing the name was Michael. Some wondered about that. But why not? With little Michael there came new rays of sunshine and happiness into the Durrant home.

No one was more proud of his little brother than was LK. Eighteen months later came little Michelle. Oh the joy!!!

Kent wrote to Reuben and said, "You never miss do you?" He told of the first baby and then of the second.

He had no way of knowing that the letters would not get to Reuben. Where Reuben was there was no mail service. But somehow Kent knew that Ruben knew.

Then came the devastating news! Bennett's paint and glass would close its doors for good on May 1st.1965.

Kent knew he could get another job, but he had been with Bennett's for nearly twenty years. He became a bit depressed. Why did things always have to turn sour?

The next afternoon Mr. Bennett called all the people together and told them he would do all he could to help them all find new jobs. He asked Kent to stay behind. Kent wondered why. Mr. Bennett closed the door and they both sat down. He stared at Kent for long time; and then said, "Kent you have become a very good employ. You took charge of that new hotel and I knew all would be well as you put in those thousand windows.

But now it is over. I've been thinking Kent. You know times are tough and we are not making much money. But I think this place could still make it. I'm older now. My wife and I love the church. We want to go on a mission back to Mexico." There was then a long pause.

"Well I need to get to the point. I have no right to ask you to do this, but I will anyway. Kent, would you be interested in buying this place? I would carry you on all the financing. I know you could do it. I know you are not used to running things, but some people just know how to do things. You are one of those. I'm sure some of the crew would stay on and help you. You could do it Kent. You just have to have the courage to try. You are not a common laborer. You are a leader."

With that Mr. Bennett stood and came to Kent and said, "Go home and discuss it with Colleen. Talk to Devere Wooton, and to your bishop. And talk to the Lord. Let me know within a week."

Kent was in a daze as he drove home. He went past the Red Hut. Maybe Reuben would be there. Reuben would know what to do. He drove on. Finally home, he told young Kent and Colleen to sit down. He had something to tell them. He told them what Mr. Bennett had said. Young Kent jumped up and down and said, "Do it Dad, do it. You can do it you can do anything."

Colleen smiled and said, "Did the old guy know who he was talking to? You Kent Durrant the owner of a big paint and glass place?" Then she smiled and said, "Kent lately you have been a different man. In my mind I know you can do anything. Even run a big business like that."

Kent called the bishop and told him about the proposal. The bishop was elated and said, “Kent I’ve always known you could do stuff. In high school you were the smartest one in the school, but you would not try. Now you are trying and the sky is the limit. Go for it.”

Devere Whooten was pleased to see Kent and he asked about Reuben. Kent bowed his head and said, “Thanks to you, I found him and he had been my best friend every since. But he is gone now. So I have come to you for some advice.” He then told Devere about the offer.

Devere said, “Mr. Bennett it the most honest man that I known. If he is behind you, you will make it. Let me know if you need a lawyer. I would be proud to represent you. So go for it.”

Kent did not sleep that night. Maybe it was Michelle had colic and cried most of the night, but maybe it was something more than that.

Kent accepted. All the staff was shocked, but Kent seemed different. He began to take charge. The business gradually got better Kent was into this with all his heart.

Three month later Kent and Colleen went out to dinner with Dr. and Mrs. Meyers. They talked a lot. They were more fun to be with than the former party goers. Bishop Meyers amidst much laughter and fun became very serious and said, “I can’t get that picture off from my mind. I think it has to do with religion. You folks are living good lives-- better than my wife and I. there is just something about you. But there is something missing, you need to have a deeper spirituality in your lives. Why don’t you come back to church?”

There was no more laughter or fun as the four finished their dinners. It was pretty well silent in the car as they drove home. Inside the house Colleen spoke. “What did you think of what the bishop said?”

“It really surprised me.” He added, “We don’t have to do what he said. We decided long ago that we didn’t need going over to church and that kind of stuff to be happy. I don’t know. What do you think?”

Colleen took a deep breath and said, “Well what would it hurt to try it. We can always back out.” Kent was elated. He had wanted to do this but he did not wish to push Colleen.

Kent and Colleen did go back to church. Kent was made an Elder. Young Kent was ordained to the office of a priest. He loved being with the other boys in the ward. He was not as athletic as Kent had hoped, but he made the team. And he was about the most popular boy in the school. Kent was really proud to have a son who did all the good things that his dad didn't do.

Six months later Kent and Colleen went to the SL City Temple. There they were married for time and all eternity.

Then into the holly sealing room came 16 year old Kent and little Michael and Michele. Kent could not hold back his tears. Colleen grasped his hand and held it with all her might. LK was so handsome dressed all in white and the two little ones were as though they were angels. The five of them plus two who were there to act as the first Michael and Michele knelt at the altar.

When the family arose they were a family of seven. They were invited to stand together and look into a mirror that represented eternity. As they look Kent heard the whisperings of Ruben who said. "There you go Kent my son." Kent thought, "Reuben is always right." Now they all knew what the paining and the mirrors meant. They rejoiced. Colleen was right. The painting did mean that they were a family—a family forever.

LK still struggled some. But he was much closer to his father. They both attended every BYU football and basketball game. LK became an avid BYU fan. At one game, the 1951 team that had won the National Invitational Tournament in New Your City was honored at half time. Kent a member of that team stood on the court with the other players of that time. Each player's name was announced. Finally the name "Kent Durrant" filled the entire arena. LK stood and shouted and whistled with all his strength. He was so proud on his father.

As the two rode home from Provo to American Fork, LK said, "You never told me about that team. What was the deal?"

Kent responded, "I should not have been out there being honored. I only played a few preseason games and then I got hurt. I was not on the team that won that national championship game."

"How did you get hurt?"

“It was a crazy accident. During the Christmas break, I was fiddling with my 22 rifle and it went off and the bullet went through my foot .It broke a small bone and that ended the season for me.”

“Wow! I never knew that.”

“It is a sad memory for me.”

As the two drove though Orem they were both silent. Finally Kent spoke again. “You remember what I was like when you were growing up. I was not much of a dad. My problems started when I was about your age. I started to smoke and drink. I didn’t do well in school or in anything. Then your mom and I got married. We were far too young for that. You came along. I was not ready to be a dad. I tried, but I just couldn’t get my life going. You know how we lost the two championship games. People kind of blamed me and I blamed myself. So it was all like a night mare.”

LK listened with his total attention.

Kent continued, “I shouldn’t tell you all this. Kent began to choke up and could hardly continue. “I went to BYU. I didn’t keep all the rules. I didn’t fit in. And then it all ended.”

For the next several years I was lost. I loved you more than I had ever loved any thing. But I didn’t know how to show it. Your mom and I struggled. She tried but I didn’t.”

“Then one day I started to wake up.”

“I’ll tell you more about that sometime. But we are about home.”

As they pulled up to their garage Kent said, “There is just one more thing.”

Kent turned off the key and tuned and faced LK and said, “I’m so proud of you. You are my son. I’m sorry I was not much of a dad. But there was never a time when I did not love you. And now you make me so proud. The other day in the temple when you came into the room I could see you glowing. I have never felt such joy.”

LK sat silently looking at his father. Something went between them that can only go between a father and a son. It was a spirit of understanding, forgiveness and love. As the two got out of the car and came up the three stairs to the kitchen, Kent put his hand on LK's shoulder and pulled him close. LK spoke, "Thanks for telling me all that. I love you dad. I'll do all I can to make it so you can always be proud of me just like I am proud of you."

Inside Kent said, "There is just one thing you can do for me right now that I've never ask you for before."

"Sure dad. What?"

"Would you let me give you a kiss on the cheek? It will just be a little kiss."

"LK looked at his tall, handsome, rugged father, turned his cheek toward him. Kent kissed his son with a holly kiss and they embraced.

Then he said, "Oh my son—my dear, dear son."

From then on Kent and LK were bonded together forever.

LK never forgot that time in the temple. His feelings about the church were so much deeper. He began to dream of going on a mission.

LK played basketball for AF High School. He was not as good as his father had been. But neither was any other player in history.

He was a solid performer and loved the game with all his heart. And his team took second in the state. Kent sat in the stands. So many memories filled his head and his heart. He knew he could never get over the heart break of his two defeats. He felt bad for LK, but he knew other things mattered more than that final score. He went to the locker room. LK was crying. The two embraced. All was well.

In 1967 LK became Elder Kent Durrant in Toronto, Canada. At his homecoming he told the saints that while he served he had become the "best average" missionary in the mission. Kent laughed along with the others, but inside he knew that his son had never been average—he had been great.

In 1974 LK became the head basketball coach at AF High. His father had hoped that he would work for Durrant Enterprises. But that was not what LK wanted and so that was just fine with Kent.

Kent went to almost every practice to help his son coach. The players on the team loved him and called him “Big Du.” He liked to work with the two tall men. He showed them the moves he made back in 1947. The two big guys soon learned that those moves still worked.

He told them that he was the first Utah high school player to dunk the ball. He could tell they did not really believe him, but he still knew it was true.

Then at tournament time American Fork was in the finals.

Kent sat on the end of the bench at the championship game. It was a squeaker. And Kent felt that the excitement could lead to his second heart attack. At a time out, with two minutes to go and the game it was all tied up at 52 all, Kent was shaking so bad that LK told him to go to the bench and sit down. He then said, “We’ll win it for you Dad!”

Kent was in shock. He had wanted to win against Grantsville. But he had not wanted to win then the way he wanted to win now. This one was not his it was his son’s. And to have his son win was far more important than winning himself.

And win they did!!!!!!

There was much in the sports page about the American Fork victory. One side article by a senior sports writer had the small headline, “Big Kent Durrant Finally Wins It All.”

The writer then told of 1946 and again in 1947 when AF was led by big Kent Durrant, Utah’s finest prepster ever, had lost twice in a row to Grantsville. But now “Big Du” as he had been know back then was on the bench with his son as the Cavemen won it all.

Finally the heartbreaking feelings of Grantsville were erased from his heart—well almost.

As the years passed Kent had some financial setbacks. But he fought his way though. Nothing could get him down. So it appeared. But he struggles much internally. He often spent time along with the first painting Reuben had given him. It was like a tonic to him. It gave him hope. His most often silent comment was, “What would Reuben tell me to do?”

Kent was meticulously honest. He was known as a man of perfect integrity. Of course some claimed he had been less than honest with them. He regretted that, but knew in his heart that he had tried to be fair in every relationship.

He became a counselor in the bishopric in 1978. He had previously told the stake president, “Please don’t make me bishop. I just want to support a bishop, but I don’t want to be one.” In 1983 he became a counselor to the stake president. It was while he served there that LK was called as bishop of the ward where Kent and

Colleen lived. It was that same year that Michael was called and left on his mission to his big brother's old mission, Toronto Canada.

Kent was elected to the school board in 1990. The board members revered his judgment and told others that Kent Durrant added a gentle touch of common sense to the school district.

But it was not acting in the positions that he held where he endeared himself to the citizens of American fork. That came because of his friendly nature and his sincere interest in everyone he knew. He knew the name of just about everybody in Utah County.

Both the bishop and the stake president, while he served with them; when they met someone who lacked hope, would say, "Why don't you make an appointment with Brother Durrant." Kent seemed to specialize in giving people hope.

All through the years Kent wrote a monthly letter to Reuben. When he felt discouraged as he often did he would tell Reuben. But he never received an answer.

Then on a bright spring day in 1975, while he was out mowing his lawn the mail carrier came by. Because Kent was outside he gave the mail to him rather than putting it in the mail box. Among the bills and the advertisements Kent saw a strange letter. He looked at the return address and saw it was from Judy Rankin in Bellville, Illinois. He took the mail and sat in the swing chair on the porch. There he opened the letter and read.

Dear Mr. Durrant,

You don't know me. But you will be glad to know that I am a cousin to Reuben Drayer. I believe you know him quite well. He talked of you so often.

I'm sorry to tell you that last week Reuben died. He had been sick for many years and he suffered so much. But he refused to complain. It was a blessing that he was finally able to die.

He had a whole cigar box full of letters from you. He looked forward to your letters so much. He would read each one over and over again. He would hold the most recent letter in his lap as he sat in his wheel chair for many days after he received it. Those letters were his greatest source of joy.

I often asked him if he wanted me to help him write to you but he always said, "No." Kent doesn't need answers to his letters any more. He just needs to write the letters. He now has better answers than any that I could give him. He would not let me tell you where he was.

He did tell me just before he died that he wanted you to put him in the painting he did of your family looking in a mirror. He said you would know what he meant. He loved you so dearly. And because of the happiness you gave to him, I love you too.

With best wishes,

Judy (Reuben's cousin)

Kent went to his back yard and when he knew he was alone, he wept.

In June of 1997 Kent and Colleen celebrated there 50 year wedding anniversary. Kent took her to lunch at her favorite place Taco Bell. They talked of their life together. Colleen had served in many positions in the church. Each calling was with the young women. Priesthood leaders often said to her, “We want you to be with the young women because we want each of them to grow up and be just like you.”

Colleen was now an accomplished water color artist and was president of the Utah County Art Guild. Her dream was to be able to paint like someone she had never met, but who she knew as Rueben.

That night all the family gathered. Michelle and her husband Toby and their four kids, Michael and Kathryn and there six, LK and Bonnie and there five. And Colleen, who Kent called, “the most beautiful and wonderful woman who ever lived.” And of course there standing with and above the family was Big Kent Durrant.

In the summer of 2005, Kent entered the office of his second son, Michael, who was now the president of Durrant Enterprises

As he visited with his son the phone rang. The son answered and said, “Yeah he is right here I will put him on.” Reaching out with the phone he saic, “It’s for you dad.”

“Hi Kent this is Elden Myers the mayor and your doctor. We had a meeting last night and it was unanimous in the committee that we want you to be the Grand Marshall at this Steel Days parade.

“M!!!.”

“Yes you. I don’t know it you know it Kent, but you are the most revered man in this whole town.”

The morning of the parade Kent took his usual long, daily look at the painting on his front room wall. Something was different. He walked closer. The smudge on the face and name was gone. The face of the grand marshal was truly and clearly him. And the name was plain as day, “Kent Durrant.” Somehow he had always known that the grand marshal would someday be him. After all he didn’t want to spoil Reuben’s record of getting the future right one hundred percent of the time.

He called Colleen into the room to look at the painting. As the two stood there he said, “Look carefully. Can you see any difference in the painting?”

“No it looks the same as it has for the past 60 years. But just a minute! The face is different. The smudge is gone.” Then she walked closer and almost screamed in delight as she said, “It is you Kent. It is you! And the name is clearly, Kent Durrant. Did you change it, or what has happened?”

Kent looked at his watch and said, “I’ll tell you later, Right now it is time to go to the parade.”

As the parade passed Robinson Park the American Fork High School band was never better as it played the Stars and Stripes Forever. The members of the honor guard was stepping higher than ever. The Corvette convertible was shinier than any car had ever been. And there sitting by the driver was Kent Durrant. As he rode along Kent looked at every person along the way. Surely if he looked hard enough he would see Reuben.

Epilogue:

What do you think? Is this a happy story or what?

Before you answer there is something you should know. This story is not true.

For you see Kent Durrant took his own life in 1957.

There was no Rueben. And in a sense there was no hope.

We know what Kent Durrant's life was up until 1957. But we can only guess what it might have been thereafter.

So the story you just read was not a story of "what was." Rather it is the story of "what might have been." It is told as if it had really happened.

I am Kent's little brother. I loved him as strongly as any little brother ever loved his older brother.

As I wrote this story, I often felt a bit angry at Kent. How much richer my life would have been had he stayed. How much richer all who knew him would have been had he stayed.

Oh, I know we will see him again. But I wanted to see him become the owner of Bennett's paint and Glass. I wanted to see him take Colleen on a belated honeymoon to Mexico. I wanted to see him and Colleen have other children. I wanted to see him find himself and his God. I wanted to see him serve in the

church and the community. I wanted to see him as a grandfather. Most of all I wanted to see him happy.

I miss him. But I understand. God be with you always my dear brother Kent Durrant. May your time in Heaven be as happy as this life I have created for you on earth.

Chapter 4

Faith Hope and Charity

On Wednesday morning, November 20 1957, I arose from my army bunk in Korea to a cold and gloomy day. I'd had a restless and dream filled night. As I made my way up the small hill to our bath room, I felt an uneasy feeling of emptiness. Something was not right, but I did not know what it was.

As I shaved, Corporal Roberts entered the room, came to my side and said, "When you finish here come over to headquarters. The Company Commander has a message for you."

I only half shaved and then hurried down the hill to my barracks. I dressed and quickly made my way to the Quonset hut that housed our headquarters office. As I entered the clerk said, "Go right in. The captain is expecting you."

The captain, who seemed kinder than usual, signaled for me to be seated. He came around the desk, took a chair next to mine and said, "I've got some bad news for you Durrant. The Red Cross has called and informed me that there has been a death in your family."

"Who?" I asked anxiously.

"They only told me that it was not your wife or son. But beyond that, they did not say. They want you to go down to I Corp to the Red Cross Office. The people there will tell you more."

I was bewildered and asked, "They didn't say who?"

"They didn't. But take the day off from your duties here and head down there. I know you are anxious to know. But I just can't help on that. Our mail man goes down to I Corp at eleven. You can ride with him, or you can go out on the road and catch a ride with one of the trucks head that way."

I arose and walked slowly out the door. I heard the Captain say, "I'm sure sorry."

I walked back to my bunk, and sat down. “Who could it be?” I wondered as I laced up my boots.

Soon I made my way out the front gate. I began to walk down the dry, dusty road. Perhaps a truck would soon come by. But no matter; I had time. I could walk the five miles. I needed time. I needed to think. After a few minutes of walking a truck pulled to my side, and a friendly soldier asked, “Need a ride private?” Without looking at him, I softly said, “No I’m okay.”

“Suit yourself,” he said as the truck pulled forward, and left me engulfed in dust. As I walked along, I wondered, “Is it Dad?--Probably Dad. He’s older, and not really healthy. Probably him.” I thought as I felt emotion whaling up in my heart.

For several minutes, my mind was settled. “It was Dad. He had lived a full life. He had been a great man, and I loved him.”

Another truck approached. I turned and waved him on. I wanted to walk and think about my memories of my father.

Then I wondered, “But if not dad, then who?” As a boy my greatest fear had always been that my mother might die. In those days I could not bear the thought of not having her. “Could it be her?” My eyes moistened at the thought.

I had now been walking for more than a mile. I passed a large rice paddy. My mind was still focused on how much I loved my mother. I was grown now and had a wife and a young son. I could make it now without my mom. But oh how I would miss her!

Then somehow I knew that it was not my mother who was gone. In the most direct personal inspirations’ I had ever received, I was told, “The one who is gone is your brother Kent.” I was shocked. It couldn’t be Kent. He is just three years older than me. His health is good. It could not be him. Perhaps it was an accident. I lost all sense of where I was. I kept walking and thinking.

I remembered my dreams of the night before. One dream had followed another until it was morning. And each dream was about my boyhood and about Kent. As far as I could recall, I had never dreamed of him before. Then as I awoke in the early morning, I knew that something was wrong.

As I considered these matters, I had a confirmation in my heart that the one who had gone on was indeed my dear brother Kent. Then somehow, I knew that his death had not come from an illness. It had not come from an accident. I knew then, as surely as I have ever known anything, that Kent had taken his own life.

Soon I rounded a hill and in the distance, a mile or so away, I could see the buildings of I Corp. My mind was settled. I had already received the message. Upon entering the gate, I inquired of the guard where I should go to find the Red Cross Office. He made a phone call and then directed me to my destination. A few minutes later, I was in the small office. I was then given the news. The news that I all ready knew. Kent was gone.

There was no provision for me to be able to go home to the funeral. In a way, that made it easier. I would not have to see the heart break of my father and mother. I would not be part of the family that was suffering the grief of losing a loved one in such a senseless and awful manner. Instead I was left to suffer my own personal grief.

For the next week, I went through the motions of carrying out my army duties. But almost every minute I thought of Kent and wondered: “Why did he do it? How could he break so many hearts? He could have done so much with his life. What happens to him now? I was so bewildered, so heartbroken, so angry, so disappointed, so lonely, so lost, so regretful.

Whenever time allowed, I went to my private place on a hill that overlooked the valley---the valley that for the past eight months, I had come to love. It was a green valley, a mile or so square. It was full of rice patties and small villages. Small huts dotted the peaceful landscape.

During my time in Korea, I stood a top that glorious hill and prayed hundreds of times to my Heavenly Father. But during that lonely time after Kent’s death, I was there in that sacred spot morning noon and night. There I communed with Heavenly Father and thought about Kent. I thought about his sorrows and his troubles; about his unexpected departure. Gradually I was able to put all the pieces of the puzzle together; and with divine help I finally began to understand. And I had some peace.

Kent's death occurred 57 years ago. Because of being thousands of miles away, I was not able to attend his funeral. To make up for that, I feel it is time now for me to have a private funeral for him. The only ones invited to this funeral are the two of us—my big brother Kent and me, his little brother George. There will be no flowers, no musical numbers, no prayers and no tears. There will only be one speaker at this funeral, and that will be me.

The funeral begins:

Dear Kent, I missed your first funeral. But you already know that. You knew where I was. But here we are now, some 57 years later, to attend your second funeral.

Much has happened to both of us in the past half century. I spent those eventful years here in this mortal world. And you spent them there in the spirit world. We are each much different now than we were then. I know, in my heart, that you have changed. I know that since you arrived in the spirit world, you have been 'born again' in a marvelous manner. I know that you are now a mighty servant of the Lord. I also am different than I was then—hopefully I have changed as much as you have changed.

I understand there are only a few differences between our lives here in this mortal world, and your life in the spirit world. We mortals live here on earth, and I understand you spirits live here also. Both of us, mortals and you spirits, have the same Heavenly Father, and the same Savior. We both are blessed to have the same gospel. We both are given hope by the infinite atonement of Jesus Christ. We both need to have faith in Him, We both need to repent. We both need baptism. We both need to have the Holy Ghost. We both have our agency which enables us to choose what we will believe and the way will live. We both look forward to the Resurrection, and we both hope we will come forth in the morning of the first resurrection. We both hope to attain, with our families, a place within the Celestial Kingdom of our God.

The past 57 years have been good years for me. You know I married Marilyn. You met her a few times before you left us all behind. You also knew I had my first son. Since then we have had seven more children. You know how much I love my family because you have such great love for yours. I've had a good career as a teacher, an administrator, a writer and an artist. I have served in some church in

many callings. I've had a few problems along the way, but The Lord has richly blessed Marilyn, the children and me.

I've told the children all about you. You are a hero to them. My boys always hope that they will be as good at basketball as I've told them that you were. Every Memorial day we all gather at your grave. There I tell my children and my grandchildren, stories about you and me as young boys growing up in American Fork. I tell them how you always took me with you and included me in all you did. They have a hard time believing it when I tell them that you and I never did have an argument. But you and I know that is true. They all want to meet you someday.

So that is my story of the past 57 years. It is because I have had such happiness in this life that I wish with all my heart that you could have had similar joy. And I know that you have.

Now I'll try to tell you what I believe has happened to you during those same years. So here we go. You listen and see how close I come to knowing, 'through a glass darkly,' the reality of your experiences there in Paradise.

I'm sure you were shocked when you first arrived there and found that taking your own life had not changed things as much as you had supposed it would. You were still Kent Durrant there like you had been here. You had the same disposition there that you had here. You still had sorrow and pain in the spirit world just as you had here. I feel that you lived for a time with the most terrible regret you have ever known.

I'm sure that as your spirit left your body and journeyed to the spirit world that you were greeted and comforted there by those who loved you here.

I believe you knew that your unexpected death had brought indescribable heart break to those who loved you here. Your little son Kent, your wife, Colleen, your mother and father and all your family and friends felt betrayed. I'm sure you wondered how you could have ever done what you did. I'm sure you felt that you could never be forgiven.

Those left behind have tried to figure out why you did what you did. We've all been taught that when depression comes into the heart of a person, it is like a cancer or some other deadly disease. So under such conditions the taking of one's own life is no more unnatural than a death by other forms of disease. It also seems

to be true that alcohol and /or drugs can strip a person of his reason so that taking one's own life is not his or her own conscience choice.

Thinking such thoughts makes us all feel a little bit better. However, we all know that any and all sin could be voided if we looked carefully enough at the reasons that prompted the sad acts.

I feel that when you got there you expressed no justification to try to explain why you did what you did. I'm sure you accepted full responsibility for your misdeed. I'm sure your expressed your sorrow and heartbreaking regret for what you did to your own life and to the lives of those who you loved and who loved you.

But all that was behind you when you arrived in the spirit world. What is behind you is behind you. The past is not the foundation of hope. It does not matter what led you to take your own life. All that matters is what is ahead. It is in upon what is ahead that hope lies.

I'm sure that your sorrow for your sins prompted you to repent and long to be forgiven. I'm sure that you, in time, came to know that you were forgiven. And that by now you no longer remember the pain of your sins.

Even though you had a new perspective when you arrived in the spirit world, you realized that the need for faith there was even more essential than it had been here. I don't fully understand all that I'm saying, but I know that you do. I know that you know that it is through your faithfulness in Christ that you can progress there as we able to do here.

I'm sure the pain of your past was lessened when you learned that there was still time to choose. You came to know that the day of this of this life when you are prepared to meet God is still going on.

Your greatest joy came when you were taught of the time when Christ came there to organize his church and to teach more fully of his Infinite Atonement. An Atonement that if you chose to accept it with all your heart, would free you from all sin-- even the great sin that you had committed. You became aware that Christ has opened all the doors for you. That it was up to you to go through those doors. I'm sure that you sensed that you would be engulfed in mercy as you chose to follow the Savior.

I fear that I'm being a bit too serious in this funeral talk. I'm sure there is much happiness and laughter there. I'm sure that you have many good times in that holy place.

I think back on the things you and I did as youngsters and I smile. You were such a leader to me. Oh sure! Many times you led me into trouble. But I'll have to admit I gladly followed.

You remember The Spring day when we headed for school, but you suggested we skip school and go over to the creek bed to catch lizards. You further told me that we could throw rocks at enemy ships which were really boards, limbs of trees and empty bottles that we threw in the raging river. I know we got in trouble for what we did. But being there with you was one of the happiest days of my life.

Then on a rainy, summer day when we found in our beloved thicket that we could not build our bonfire outside to cook our potatoes, you suggested we go into our neighbors barn and build the fire there. That little bon fire led to the biggest fire American Fork had ever had. The big barn, several chicken coops and a grainery all went up in flames.

When we were out west, you found the dynamite stash in an old mine and we blew up an old log cabin. I guess I should not bring these things up in a funeral but they are still true.

Yes you were a leader Kent. But why did you always have to lead such a good boy as me into trouble?

Of course you also led me to church. And you insisted that I treat mom with respect. You led me to do so much that was good. And it was not just me that you led. You were a leader with your peers over at school. Everybody was willing to follow big Kent Durrant.

So I'm sure you took your leadership talents with you to the spirit world. I'll bet when you finally got going the right way over there that you became a pure leader of righteousness. I'm sure that you have now served at least a 50 year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Spirit World Saints.

I'm probably biased; speakers can be biased at funerals, but to me you were such a good person. And I know that mom felt there was no body as good as her boy Kent. I've never known a kinder gentler person than you.

Then as you grew into your late teens, problems came. But these problems were just the surface. Underneath you never did stop being good.

I'm sure you have learned, as have I, that the Lord often provides a plan B for those who did not do as well as they should have in plan A. He does not disregard sin. But for those who show their faith in Him, through a broken heart and a contrite spirit, He provides a way. He provides a way for those who choose to follow. For those who are willing to run to catch up, he provides a way to attain all that was promised.

When I get there in a few more years, I want you to be my teacher. I long to hear you express your testimony of Christ. I long to hear you tell the story of your repentance. I long to tell you of mine. I long to be at your side as the two of us strive to endure to the end.

I stood in for you in the holy temple when you received your endowment. I was your proxy when you and Colleen were sealed for time and all eternity. I know she is now there. I know you loved her here--so why not there? I know young Kent is there. I'll bet you have done some great missionary work with him. I hope he accepts all that you teach him.

I know your son Michael and your daughter Michelle greeted you when you came there. They will be yours eternally. If that is what you and they choose. The possibilities are all there. There is no door that is closed to you. Jesus under the direction of Our Father has opened them all.

Now, as I near the end of this talk I have one matter that I have thought about so often and so deeply. It is the heartbreaking thought of how much you have lost by choosing to unexpectedly depart at such an early time in your life.

I have even written the story of what your life might have been had you lived in mortality to old age. I suppose I wrote that story because it would have meant so much to me had you lived the life you were intended to live. To have the joy that you could have had.

I received some comfort to this great regret, when I read something that was said by Elder Gerald Lund at a funeral.

Missed Opportunities

“Latter-day revelation teaches us of another dimension of the Atonement that is only hinted at in the Bible. One of the things I learned as a bishop was that not all suffering and sorrow comes from transgression or violation of the laws of God. Yes, there are sins, and these bring great sorrow to individuals and to those they love. But there are also such things as simple mistakes.

“In other cases, we may face suffering and tragedy that are part of this fallen, mortal world in which we live. Some of that tragedy comes when people sin against others. And there is also the suffering of illness, handicaps, natural disaster, and loss.

“I think of a young woman in her early twenties whom I came to know as a new bishop. Her name was Christie. She was born with cystic fibrosis. Throughout her short life she suffered considerable pain. She endured years of therapy and medical treatment and spent countless days in the hospital. All of that was the natural consequence of something that afflicted her body. These consequences did not come about because of any sin on her part or any foolish choice she had made. They were the natural consequence of living in a fallen world. Yet the suffering for her was very real, and she sacrificed much of normal life because of it. There was pain; there was deprivation.

“After years of suffering and struggle and sacrifice, she died. Hers was the first funeral I conducted as bishop. As I considered her life and what she had endured I wondered, ‘Who makes it right for Christie? She missed the fun of courting and dating, which other young men and women of her age enjoyed. She desperately wanted to serve as a missionary, but her health would not permit it. She was denied the privilege in this life of being a mother, something she longed to be. In those years of pain and debilitation, she was denied many of the opportunities that the rest of us take for granted. So who makes all of that right? In the eternities, if there is truly justice, won't something be done to recompense her for all she endured?’ If not, couldn't Christie say, ‘Life isn't fair. My life was so different from others. Why should I have to give up so much when others do not have to?’

“The book of Alma teaches us that the Savior suffered not only for our sins and transgressions but also for the other things for which we suffer: ‘And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death, which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with

mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.’ (Alma 7:11-12) Alma notes that Christ suffered for the sins of the people (v. 13), but he emphasizes that the Atonement is much broader than just payment for transgression. Here is a principle to comfort every soul. Not only did Christ suffer for our sins but he also took upon himself other things—our pains, afflictions, and temptations of every kind—and suffered for them as well.

“I do not know how it will be brought about, but it is my deep and abiding faith that at some future point in the eternities (if it has not already happened), Christie will step forward and bow before the Savior and say to him, ‘You have rewarded me well. I am satisfied that there is perfect justice. I was deprived of nothing by my cystic fibrosis, but I have been amply repaid for everything I lost,’” (Gerald Lund, *The Redeemer – Reflections on the Life and Teachings of Jesus the Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000], 323-327.)

I liken this story to my feelings about you, Kent. You missed out on having more children. You missed out on being a grandfather. You missed out on being able to use your talents to the fullest. You missed out on the joy of church service. I could go on and on with a list of what you missed out on. You were not like Christie. She had no choice but some say that neither did you.. But still it is the same. In regards to all that she missed and all that you missed.

Now I take great comfort in using Elder Lund’s words and in putting your name, Kent, in place of Christie’s

“I do not know how it will be brought about, but it is my deep and abiding faith that at some future point in the eternities (if it has not already happened), you, *Kent*, will step forward and bow before the Savior and say to him, ‘You have rewarded me well. I am satisfied that there is perfect justice. I was deprived of nothing *by taking my own life*, but I have been amply repaid for everything I lost.”

Well I don’t like long funerals so I’ll close now.

I love you my brother Kent. At long last, the hole in my heart is healed. All is well with you. And all is well with me.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.