

My Brother Dennis

by Jeannie Copple

It is 4:00 AM January 6, 2009. I was awakened and can not go back to sleep. I have been praying for peace, understanding and knowledge of what I should be doing next. My heart is almost broken but also bursting with gratitude. My life has stopped for a moment in time as I'm sure it has stopped for many others.

If I counted the days that have made the biggest impact in my life, yesterday would have been classified as one of the big ones. Yesterday morning, my dear, wonderful, nearly perfect in every way beloved brother passed away. He was my brother but also a best friend. He loved me in spite of my weaknesses. He loved Ken. He loved my children and always looked out for them like his own. Ann and his own family were his greatest treasure but he made the rest of us feel right there too. He loved everyone. He looked for the best in others. He was bigger than life itself. It wasn't his size that made him stand apart. It was his voice, his presence, his love, his laughter, his heart, his caring, his counsel, his hope for a better way. Candice called him "Majestic" and that word is perfect for him.

It is hard to determine when love for each other first starts. I believe it begins before we come to earth. I have been the recipient of great love from many people. I am eternally grateful for the family I was born into. I have loved and honored my parents and I have three wonderful sisters and the best brother in the world. When friends would complain and say they didn't like their brother I didn't understand. I adored mine.

When Dennis was a little boy, he really wanted a brother. The Lord had a different plan for him and gave him four sisters instead. Dad tried to compensate by giving him Harry the Donkey but I don't know for sure that that worked. Mom and Dad taught him early to serve and look after his sisters. We in turn loved him back. I loved to get up early with him on those cold dark winter mornings and hold Granny Girl's tail as he milked her. He always thanked me for the company. He was a big tease and would sometimes say, "Look what is in the bucket" and then squirt us with the warm milk.

Our big ranch home only had two bedrooms so Dennis got to sleep on the screened porch right outside the kitchen window. I loved racing to be the one to turn on his electric blanket so that when he would go to bed he would have warm sheets. (He always thought he was so lucky to sleep out there with his dog.)

I loved how Mom and Dad would ask him to walk beside Jaynie and me during the Mesa parades as we rode our horses to make sure we were safe. He didn't complain.

He never complained. He was happy. He had a big smile that made everyone want to be his friend. He made everyone his friend, just like our dad used to do. It didn't matter where you were, or who it was, he treated them kindly.

We liked to tease him and he liked to tease us. The worse thing we did was one summer's afternoon Jaynie and I watched him sleep and snore in a chair after working hard. We knew pepper made you sneeze and asked, "I wonder what would happen if we put pepper under Dennis' nose?" I made the remark and Jaynie jumped on the idea. She held a heaping tablespoon of pepper under his nose and he inhaled it all. He rose out of that chair, eyes red, coughing, choking and snorting in great pain as if on fire. We couldn't believe we had been so cruel. We felt horrible and so did he.

I was also the one who forgot to feed and water his prize homing pigeons when he went on a scout jamboree back east. They were all dead when he returned. He still loved me and could tell that I felt as bad as he did about the birds.

When Dennis and Ann started dating, they were excited they both had younger sisters the same age. Often they would take Linda and me along with them on their dates. Ann had a way to make Dennis laugh and I loved it. They were a sweet young couple in love and were wonderful role models for me.

When Dennis left on his mission to England we all thought our world would collapse. I cried and cried. I knew nothing would ever be the same and I counted the days until he returned. It wasn't ever the same as we all continued growing up, yet there were exciting things ahead. When he called for Christmas I can still picture us all hovering over that old black phone in the family room.

Ann stayed close to our family and would come over for Sunday dinners. Often she would pick me up after school and take me home. I had the late double session and it was great not to have to ride the bus home in the dark. She and cousin Jim would also take us ice skating at Thomas Mall. We all loved it.

It was a great day when Dennis returned home from his mission. His love of England was felt by the entire family. We all longed to go there and share in his success and love of the people. He brought us sisters home green wedgwood rings and mother a Capo Di Monte glass figurine entitled "The Clock Maker".

I don't remember those teenage details like Kathy and Sue Ann. I just remember funny things like his first date with Patsy Curtis and him being so nervous he either forgot or almost forgot his shoes.

Being disobedient didn't ever seem to be a problem with Dennis except a few incidences with his red rancho. He loved to drive fast and sometimes left skid marks on friend's sidewalks. When dad was Bishop, Dennis kept getting speeding tickets and at that time they published them in the paper, using his given name, Talmage Barney, cited for speeding on this street or that. Dad was getting quite embarrassed as people thought it was him and finally threatened Dennis that he would be driving that red rancho if Dennis didn't slow down. He did slow down his driving but it wasn't until after his Dad got to have a few weeks of driving that shiny truck. To Dennis' chagrin, his dad would love to roar the pipes as he left to his Bishopric meetings.

I was excited when he and Ann got married and moved in the trailer next door to Mom and Dad. I was first sad because I lost Dennis and Sheba his dog, but then I got Ann. Every morning on my way to the bus stop I would stop and knock on the side of the trailer under their window and yell, "Good morning..." I loved saying good morning to them, yet how did they stand that?

When I graduated from ASU it was a pleasant surprise for mom, dad and me to notice on the program that Dennis was graduating too. He hadn't mentioned he was graduating before, but it was quite an accomplishment for him to graduate with four children.

I loved tending Jason and Denny while Ann worked part time. I wondered if I could ever love my own children any more than I loved them. I loved to hear their sweet tender voices sing "Through the still small voice, the spirit speaks to me, listen, listen to the still small voice."

(We continued to rejoice with the arrival of each addition to their family right down to Justin and Lindsey. Our kids just loved theirs. Candice loved each one of the girls and our boys loved their boys. We just loved doing things together. Matt was pretty sad as a little boy that Dennis and Ann didn't have a cousin for him. However one of my treasured memories of Dennis is how he never seemed to forget Matt. Every horse ride, bike ride or outing he went on with his ward's youth, he always invited Matt and made him feel loved and welcomed. Dennis was such a huge role model for my boys. I think they all wanted to be cowboys just like him. We are all so grateful for his influence.)

Eventually our farm days changed. Dad and his partners put up his land to build Citrus Gardens mobile home park. We can all remember trying to help him get it finished. When the time came I liked my new job of cleaning the models.

Around this time Dennis bought me my first car for twenty five dollars, a 1946 Chevy later named Beager. How I loved that car and sharing with my friends that it was my brother who bought it for me.

Dennis and Ann bought their first little A-frame cabin in Pine, Arizona and our family loved going there with them. Ann had wonderful memories of Pine from her childhood and Dennis had great memories of the mountains from Granny and Grandpa's Moose house and the Robson's Show Low ranch. I think this was the start of bigger dreams because we all didn't fit in their little cabin too well.

When Ken and I married, much to my joy, Ken also loved Dennis and Ann. Ken didn't ever have a brother and Dennis became his. In our first years we were their babysitters while they traveled. As we were now living in the famous trailer next to mom and dad we loved taking care of their children and staying in their beautiful home off Brown road. I hope Jason has forgiven Ken for making him wash his hands before dinner.

Dennis started his own carpet business, The Carpet Company, on University between Gilbert and Stapley right next to the Lighting Company owned by Bart Gillespie. When Ken graduated from ASU Dennis recommended him to Bart. Ken loved working next to Dennis and the lighting business. This was also the beginning of many work trips, family trips, and couple trips together. Each one is a treasured memory.

Not in any order...and each one has its own story

- Philadelphia – breaking the axle on the carriage ride
- San Francisco – my first experience at “Market”
- Dallas – “Market” and the freezing ice storms, Yosts, and carpet mills
- Snowflake Rodeos – Jaynie and Tea Tone
- Show Low Parades – Big family and loving Grandma Huso
- Rocky Point in the motor home and Craig bitten by a sting ray
- Nauvoo with the teenagers spitting spit wads through their straws at all the special church sites
- 1997 Sesquicentennial Celebration in Salt Lake City – How he would have loved to be part of the wagon train but we were able to watch them enter the valley
- Conference with each of our kids when they turned 12 and time and time again
- Italy – We have this one on DVD. To Kenny, “How can you lead from the rear?”
- Mazatlan Mexico with teenagers and Dennis dancing on the table at Senior Frogs Cantina
- England – Trip with the LeSueurs to see the Nauvoo Temple carpet in the mills and getting stuck in the elevator
- Nauvoo with the Broadbents to see the temple and carpet. I loved to hear his stories about how it was constructed. We discussed our dream of serving a mission there together. Dennis was going to drive the carriage, Ken was to preach and Ann and I were to bake cookies.
- Florida SeaWorld in 2000 and teasing Kenny, “The one who looks like Bill Clinton”.
- With the kids – soccer games, T-ball games, swim meets, dance recitals, concerts, basketball and football games
- Dune trips
- Hawaii – just the four of us in 2007. We drove all around the island listening to Izzy sing “Somewhere over the Rainbow”. He was so happy and relaxed this trip.
- California and fireworks
- Flying to Newport to buy our Marriot time shares
- Using our New Port time shares
- DeAnn and Kade's wedding in Utah October 2008

Other special memories

- We were wedding reception partners and usually went to dinner afterwards

- Dedication of the Tempe Institute on September 16, 2008 – He loved introducing his family to President Henry B. Eyring
- New Years Eve dinners. We were together for his last in 2008 at Brios (at his San Tan Mall).
- The old ranch house memories shared with the big family
- Trips to visit the progress of the new ranch house – hot chocolate, dinner in Norma’s nook, listening to the elk calls, talking of our children, our heritage, and counting our blessings
- Thanksgiving Day 2008 drive around to our children’s new houses
- December 2008 dinner with the Denna and Steve, the Lamoreaux and other longtime friends
- I was able to give him a copy of the “Saddle Story” I had typed up about him
- He once said that not a day went by that he didn’t think of mom and dad.

I know Dennis took many trips but he didn’t ever love anything as much as he loved going to the ranch. It was there he felt at peace. He felt close to mom, dad, his heritage and his family. He loved to get up early and feed the horses and take a ride and then try to help his children get a chance to ride. His feet hurt, his neck hurt, his body ached but he loved every minute of it.

Dennis and Ann have blessed us in so many ways I can’t even start to record them. Here are a few...

- He helped us build our first house on Gary Street in Mesa at cost. We paid the contractors using his contractor’s license.
- He built this beautiful subdivision that we live in and he almost moved across the street from us. We watered his trees for a year.
- He seemed to always have carpet at cost or if there was extra he just gave it to us.
- Dennis and Ann seemed to always have an extra car that was just sitting in the driveway that needed to be driven when ours were breaking down. The same went with an extra four wheeler if there was a trip to the Dunes.
- He always was trying to give us a horse – unfortunately we didn’t have a place or money to feed one so he would just let us think his horses were ours too.
- He and Ann helped remodel the old ranch house so we could have something beautiful to enjoy too. This past Christmas before he passed away, Dennis, Ann, Ken and I walked from the new ranch house to old ranch house. The snow covered everything and it was white and so beautiful. It was as if he was taking one long look at everything. I remarked to him, “I’m so glad you could build your dream ranch.” I took my last picture of them in front of their new ranch house, standing the two of them out in the snow.
- Ken and I just loved being where Dennis and Ann were.

All of my memories are favorites but several I certainly don’t want to forget. When I had my back surgery at St. Joseph’s hospital in Phoenix we were so nervous to get there that Ken put my suitcase in the truck instead of the suburban. There was a moment of panic but then we remembered that Dennis and Ann were right behind us and were going to stay at the hospital with Ken while I had my surgery. They came in while the doctors were wiring me up and their cheerful chatting and interviewing of the doctors were a great distraction and comfort. They returned every day while I was in that hospital. I knew Dennis didn’t feel well but he and Ann were there to encourage me. When my pain was almost unbearable Dennis gave me a blessing. His blessings came straight from the Lord and the power was real. How I loved those big hands. I looked into his eyes and I could see the sorrow he felt for me because I was in pain. It was as if he was taking it on himself. I hated to see I was causing him pain.

I was working as Stake Primary president when Dennis was the Bishop of Lindsey ward.

Some of my favorite moments of that time were simple gospel discussions we had. I loved it when his ward had ward conference. When he would speak the Spirit was always there. I just loved listening to him and was so proud of him. You could feel the love he had for those he served and for the Lord. He loved the Lord. He loved serving wherever he was called. He looked for the best in others which made others want to be their best. I have

people all the time tell me what a great priest leader, Bishop, High Councilor, and now Stake President he was. Now he is serving on the other side and I know he is serving valiantly.

When he was called as a counselor in the Val Vista Stake Presidency, it was my opportunity to be interviewed by him for a temple recommend. It was a special experience for me. I treasured that signature on my temple recommend. A year later we were all asked to get new recommends that had a bar code on them. Dennis was now released to be the Stake President for the Tempe University Stake. I asked President McClellan if I could keep my old recommend because it was so special to me. He told me they were required to collect all of them. I wanted it so much but I knew Dennis and the Lord would rather I be obedient. I was, but how I loved that signature.

Dennis, Ann, Ken and I would often go to the mortuary to share our respects for those who had passed on. Several times Dennis and Ann would not have eaten prior so we would get fish and chips at Pete's and drive to the temple, park our car facing the temple and just look at its beauty while we ate. The conversation would always turn to something our children were doing or some of the blessings we were feeling.

Another Dennis moment I will never forget was November 2007. First I need to preface why that was so important. When I was a little girl dad and mom owned some property in Wenden, Arizona, outside Wickenburg, that they developed into a beautiful cotton farm with hot water wells. Dad had his own plane and would often fly back and forth to work there. Mother would pack us in the car and follow. Jaynie and I were not allowed to fly in Dad's airplane. While we worked there we lived in an old house close to the train tracks. It was hard work but dad wasn't afraid of that. We have scary stories from that time of snakes, driving in the dark and graveyards. Shortly after it was developed Dad's partner wanted out of the partnership. In trade, dad and mom were left with eighty acres just west of Higley road between Baseline and Southern in Mesa. Dad turned the property into a landing strip and we made many memories farming on it. On many clear nights from there we could look and see the lights on South Mountain and Jaynie and I felt we were seeing year round fireworks. When mom and dad died, we rented that property out and it became a hay field. We kept it for years hoping for just the right buyer. The time came when we needed the money. Our families were growing and Suzie and I were teaching school. We were able to sell it and the money did help us. The land was eventually resold for the future hospital.

Now back to 2007. The Banner Gateway Hospital was just being completed and they were having the grand opening gala, The Festival of the Trees. Ann had worked really hard to find the perfect ornaments for the tree they were going to donate and then buy back for the ranch. Dennis wanted all of us sisters and our spouses there for the celebration. The evening was almost magical. Beautifully decorated Christmas trees surrounded the tables under the big tent placed in the parking lot outside the hospital. Dennis had reserved seats for all of us sisters and our spouses right up at the front. After a lovely dinner, Dennis was asked to give a short history of the property. I wish I had a copy of what he said. He honored mom and dad, shared his love for us and shared a few of his favorite memories of the property. I could just see mom and dad smiling, looking down at their children all dressed in their very best and loving being gathered together. (Years earlier we would have been dressed in blue jeans sprinkled with dirt.) Following his speech there were special musical numbers and then dancing. We all danced. They were also taking pictures for couples. Ken asked the photographer if he would take our group picture. We all gathered under that make shift barn display and smiled. We took a group picture with our spouses and several other poses. We then took one with my sisters and Dennis in the center. He looked so handsome and happy. He was as excited to have us all there as we were to be there. He loved it when we gave him his own framed copy of that picture. Now that picture captures many years of memories all in one.

How blessed I have been to share part of his life. I was always so proud to be his sister. He had nick names for everyone, but we sisters were just "Sister". Yes, I know what I will miss...I will miss, "Night sister", "Sweet dreams Sister", "See you in the morning Sister", "Love you Sister", "Thanks for checking on me Sister." (Those were his last words to me the night before he passed away.) How I loved that man, that brother of mine...but

how he loved everyone. How he made everyone feel like he was their best friend I will never know but he did. He was wonderful that way.

I am grateful he is out of his pain and misery. He went out giving his best. That is what he would have liked. He left a family, extended family, neighborhood, ward, two Stakes, a town and an entire community and world a more beautiful place. He truly was majestic and magnificent. I will look forward to that great reunion on the other side some day. I know he is in the loving arms of Mom, Dad, Granny and Grandpa, Ann's parents, Grandpa and Grandma Copple, Sarah, Ella, uncles, cousins, friends and so many more who are rejoicing for his obedience. He was a man of all men.

I pray I can be the kind of person I know he, my parents and my Heavenly Father want me to be. He was a giant among men but such a humble, caring, loving, magnificent giant. I will love him forever.

January 16, 2009

Today Ann and I walked around the block. The sun was just coming over the trees and there was a chill in the air. Much has changed in the past week and a half but we are counting our blessings. Since Dennis passing, I now have several new cherished memories:

- Gaining quick courage to fly in Cindy Yost's airplane to pick up Ann in Las Vegas
- Visiting the horse farm and watching the kids ride, meet "Piglet" and play in the hay
- Being in the temple with much of the extended family
- Watching hundreds and hundreds of friends and family wait in line two to three hours to offer love and pay their respects for Dennis.
- Ann, with Denny or Jason at her side, standing for six hours during the viewing offering comfort back to those who came.
- The carriage house decorated as a celebration of Dennis and Ann's life
- The amazing tribute given Dennis at his funeral and hearing words of comfort and inspiration from Ann and each of the children.
- Helping a new generation of grandkids sing, "I Wonder When He Comes Again".
- Experiencing an abundance of love and kindness in the way of food, cards and flowers
- Watching ten beautiful children rally around their mother and care for her.
- Reading Elder Jeffery Holland's talk, "The Ministry of Angels" and being reminded that my angelic brother is now our angel brother.

Yes, our angel brother, father, husband, uncle, and friend is not far from us. We may not see him now but he will always be near. How grateful I have been to be one of those many who have and will still continue to feel of his love.