

A Blessing after the Loss of a Loved One

I share a very special story with many messages—some are clear and others are still a mystery.

Maybe my story can touch someone who has also suffered the loss of a loved one and give you hope that there are angels who can touch us when we least expect it.

Thirty-two years ago, my family lost my younger brother, John, in a fatal car accident. He was 21 years old. It would be the most devastating and heartbreaking loss in my family. We would never again be our large family of nine.

John was a really special brother. He smiled all the time and was kind to everyone he met. I don't think he had any enemies and he was truly the salt of the earth. He was the guy who always made you laugh.

It has taken a lifetime to heal from John's death but our family would learn to turn a negative into a positive by never forgetting John's free and giving spirit. We would overcome and become strong, compassionate people with our angel John guiding us.

Our new life's motto became "live life to its fullest." We had learned first-hand that there are no guarantees in life. "One day at a time, sweet Jesus," was my Mom's favorite song, and it resonated even more strongly after John's passing.

My three brothers went to **Power Memorial Academy High School** in NYC. It was a great school where they would meet lifelong friends.

Recently, my brothers, Alex and Patrick, went to a Power Memorial Alumni Dinner where several alumni including one of our local guys, John Lovett, was honored. Congratulations to John Lovett! What a well-deserved honoree.

Patrick met one my brother, John's, classmates, **Dennis Mooney**. He was racing around in his wheelchair selling raffle tickets. He had been paralyzed in 1987 from a car accident. My brother John also had his car accident in 1987. He proceeded to tell my brother, Patrick, that he and John were good friends. He shared a very poignant daily act of a warm friendship between two teenage kids. John would buy and read the NY Daily News on the subway on the way to school, and he would do the same in the morning with the NY Post every day, and every day they would swap papers for the read on the train ride home.

What a lovely gesture between two friends at a cost of twenty-five cents.

Dennis also told my brother last week that when he left the hospital in 1987, after nine months of treatment and rehabilitation, he called my family's home and one of John's sisters answered the phone and became very upset when he asked to speak to John, perhaps feeling that it was a cruel joke. He had no idea John had passed away on July 14, 1987, which was the same day that he was in his car accident. His parents had been aware of John's passing, but because of his serious accident and rehabilitation

challenges, they did not want to upset him more, so they hadn't told him about John. Years later, Dennis would ask a good friend of his why he didn't tell him about John's passing. His friend responded, "I thought you figured it out during your nine months in the hospital since John would have visited you."

This new information that John's friend shared generated so many warm feelings in my family. When someone gives you new information about your loved one who has passed, it feels really nice to hear. It feels like a gift that brings them back to life in a way. It also brought to light how Dennis survived a terrible accident on the same day that John had passed, and overcame all odds to "live a life worth living."

He continued with his education and became a teacher. He is a great role model. I only wish I had known him throughout his entire life. I can only imagine what he and his family went through when he lost the ability to walk at age 22. He is truly remarkable in his life of service. I have not met him but I plan on reaching out to him to introduce myself as the sister who may have picked up the phone.

Maybe upon hearing of John's death, one of his emotions was gratefulness to be alive? One never knows the journey ahead in life but if we are receptive, we always seem to cross paths with angels. He had the deeper suffering and yet he rose above it all. He's an angel who touched my family thirty-two years after our loss.

This column is dedicated to all those who suffer from the loss of a loved one. May you know that there are angels everywhere and you never know when they will show up in your life.

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