

A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS – 15

APRIL – JUNE, 2009

Saturday, April 4, 2009. If you offered to give me a penny for my thoughts right now, I would tell you that for the past few weeks my mind has been occupied with the resurrection. There are several reasons for this, the main one being the time of year. Tomorrow is Palm Sunday and on April 12th, Lord willing, we will celebrate Easter. My son George and his family plan to give an Easter worship service here at Sky View, so when we had Scripture and Prayer with Verna and Friends two days ago, I focused on the crucifixion. That way our two services would work as a set. But I can't think of the crucifixion without having the resurrection in my mind; to do otherwise would be unbearably sad for me. George always plans his programs by using materials I have previously written, though he always says I am free to write some fresh material if I wish, and I try to comply.

Now you know WHY I have been thinking about the resurrection, but WHAT, specifically, have I been mulling over? It all began with a part of a verse from 1 Corinthians 15 that I love so much: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." Back to my memory came a story that illustrates the idea of being swallowed up. The year was 1947. I was 14 years old and my brother Harold was 12. Our family was living in Florida that year, much to our delight. There was a lake within walking distance of our house where Harold liked to go fishing. Sometimes I would go with him. My job was catch bait for my brother. I would stand at the beginning of the pier where minnows gathered in the shallow waters below. I had a string with a hook attached, which I baited with a little ball of bread. I dangled my hook over the railing, tempting the minnows. When I caught one, I would take it to Harold who was fishing at the end of the pier in deeper waters. He would immediately use it to bait his hook, as fish were far more attracted to a minnow than to a bit of bread. When the minnow was swallowed up by a larger fish, our mission was complete, and we were glad!

As I continued to muse on these things, suddenly the resurrection took on new meaning. It grew much, MUCH larger than just the return of Jesus from the dead. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection AND the LIFE. Those who believe in me will LIVE, even though they die." There is LIFE and VICTORY ahead for believers who die, life so full of possibilities that it makes death seem like almost nothing. Then I looked again at 1 Corinthians 15 to remind myself of the setting for verse I had been thinking about. Here it is:

1 Corinthians 15:50-57 – *I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."*

*"Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"*

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus stood before his followers after the resurrection, he was in an imperishable, immortal state. Everything was in place for the ascension, the return of Christ, the trumpet call that will change living believers into imperishable beings capable of rising with Jesus, all the end time events, and the blissful eternal state to follow! What a TREMENDOUS VICTORY was won when Jesus came out

of the tomb! Death, which had SEEMED to be the winner, had indeed been swallowed up in a huge VICTORY, as if my minnow in Florida, representing death, had been swallowed by a whale!

And then, perhaps for the first time, I looked up the Old Testament reference that Paul used when writing to the Corinthians. Here's what I found:

Isaiah 25:7,8 – *On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears from their faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.*

What a stunning word picture this is! Isn't it true that death is a common bond for all people everywhere? Isaiah, 700 years before Jesus was born, uses the image of a shroud covering all of us. This would be a depressing thought, were it not for the promise that the Lord will swallow up death forever. Paul says, "*The last enemy to be destroyed is death*," but assures us, as we have seen, that this WILL happen. Meanwhile, we cry at times. I love the fact that Isaiah in his prophecy and John in his Revelation both say that the Lord will wipe away all our tears. What a tender touch! Oh, how he loves us!

Well, that is some of what I would tell you – if you were to ask me what I'd been thinking. *Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

Tuesday, April 14, 2009. Today I had one of my rare trips away from Sky View – a visit to an Ear, Nose and Throat doctor about five miles from here. I had nothing to do with planning this trip. Apparently the doctor notified Sky View that it was time for me to have a follow-up appointment. Two of us residents were scheduled for back-to-back checkups; we would go there together and the same Sky View aide would take care of us both. After all the arrangements had been made, my daughter Marty was notified of the plans, and she, in turn, told me. All this took place about three weeks before the appointment.

When I heard the news, I was NOT pleased. First, I couldn't imagine that a year had gone by since my last visit. What was the doctor checking? Whether my ears needed to be cleaned? Then my mind flooded with questions and criticisms:

- Why wasn't I consulted as to whether I wanted to see the ENT? I am still able to make decisions about my health care.

- The appointment was far too early in the day. I knew how difficult it was for aides to make drastic changes in their schedules. What's more, Tuesday is one of my shower days! Whose responsibility was it to see that I was ready in time?

- What would be the mode of transportation? If two of us were sharing a vehicle and an aide, would we split the cost or each pay the full price?

- Was the time I was given the time of the appointment or the pickup time? The reason this mattered was that I am tube fed at night. I would have to go to bed early the night before the trip so I could get most of my feeding before getting up.

Eventually my mind settled down and I decided to go along with Sky View's plans, much to Marty's relief. I got the answers to some of my questions and decided to let others go. On the positive side, perhaps this appointment would solve a mystery that had been bothering me for several years. After I came to Sky View, some lumps formed inside my left nostril. I had one request – feel the lumps – and one question – what are they? – which I had presented to five doctors already, including the one I was scheduled to see again today. All of them merely looked and basically said they were nothing

to worry about. That was not enough to satisfy me! So yesterday I went to the computer and typed my concerns, especially about the lumps. But when I pressed "print," nothing happened! I would be going to the doctor minus a sheet of instructions. So I went to bed early and practiced leaving the whole situation in God's hands.

This morning everything went smoothly. In the waiting room I typed to my aide that I wanted my ears cleaned and wondered about the lumps in my left nostril, a message she relayed to the doctor when she came for me. In the office the doctor looked at her chart and mentioned that I had brought up the subject of the lumps last year. Of course, I couldn't say anything. She looked in my nose and cleaned my ears. Then I noticed an amazing thing: the doctor was putting on a plastic glove! Sure enough, she felt inside my left nostril and found the lumps! She said the irregularity was caused by cartilage and said, "Don't fret about it." Just that quickly my request was fulfilled and my question answered, without any written instructions from me!

This was just the latest of many times when God gave me the information I needed in some unexpected way, so I would know it came from him. I was so grateful! But this time there was more: God also spoke to me through the doctor's words, specifically the word "fret." That sounded to me like a Bible word, and I could easily see that I had been fretting for several weeks. God was not scolding me; he just held open his arms to me and I ran into them.

Saturday, April 18, 2009. Today I am 76 years old! I ended that sentence with an exclamation point because I am surprised to find myself still living on earth at this age. Someone from the activities department brought me two balloons, their customary gift. I had them tied to a chair in my room rather than to my powerchair, because I was due to get a haircut in the afternoon and I didn't want the balloons to be in the way.

It's now 8:30 PM. In half an hour my aide will come to begin getting me ready for bed. This has been a good day. I always feel loved and remembered, but tonight, after I am tucked in, I will have some special memories to process in my pondering. Thank you, Lord!

Friday, April 24, 2009. About 2:00 this morning, a night aide that I hadn't seen for a couple months came in to take care of me. What good news she brought with her! She gave a copy of my poem "God's Special Valentine" to her pastor, who liked it so much that she made 300 copies and gave one to every member of her congregation! I was so happy!

There have been a couple changes in my medication lately. I became concerned about the vitamin E oil that I was taking mixed with a spoonful of pudding, because sometimes I would have a coughing spell after swallowing the mixture. My doctor discontinued the vitamin E yesterday, and I am glad. Now I get nothing by mouth, and I don't mind that at all.

About a month ago, I was surprised when my morning nurse poured into my tube a substance that reminded me of orange juice. I had no way of asking what it was before it was in my stomach, but I did check it out afterwards. It's called Pro Stat 101, a protein supplement that was prescribed for me when a recent blood test showed I needed it. The numbers 101 on the product made me think of introductory college courses. Did the use of these numbers mean that this was a basic protein mixture which could be enhanced, if necessary? When I read the label on the bottle of Pro Stat, I found the surprising answer to my question: one dose of this yellow liquid contains 101 calories! (There is also Pro Stat 64 for diabetics, I was told.) The nurses said Pro Stat will not make me gain weight, but I am not so sure. Time will tell. Meanwhile, I will try not to fret about it!

Friday, May 1, 2009. Catch-up time! It seems to me that the signs of spring came early this year. The flowers have been blooming for a month or more. Janet and George brought to the Easter service a lovely bouquet of daffodils and jonquils, all cut from their yard. Later, they also showed me a miniature variety of daffodil, also from their garden. How beautiful they were! The trees started budding a couple weeks ago. Now they are fully arrayed in their light green, pink, and white spring clothing. What a view I have from my window!

Writing about springtime has brought a happy memory to my mind. In 1956, when I was a second grade teacher in Willow Grove, PA, I got permission to take my 32 students for a walk outdoors to look for signs of spring. The results were so successful that I decided to do the same with the 35 first graders I was teaching in Tucson, AZ in 1957. The walk was delightful, but we found NO SIGNS OF SPRING at all! I was the one who learned a lesson that day: seasons are not the same in the southwestern states as they are in the northeast!

A couple days ago, George was telling me about how strong his 6-month-old niece Selma is, especially emphasizing how quickly she rolls over from stomach to back. I smiled as I visualized the action. It has been more than six years since I have been able to turn over in bed! I start the night lying on my back, with a contour pillow under my head and regular pillows under my knees, between my legs, and under my left arm. Then, using the bed control, I raise the head of the bed to a degree that will help my tube feeding enter my stomach and adjust the foot of the bed until I am comfortable. At that point, I am set for the next few hours. I can turn my head and move my arms, but little else. Several hours later, two aides come and turn me on my right side, using a pillow behind my back to hold me in place. Still later, they put me on my left side. The last couple hours of my stay in bed, I am turned onto my back again. George has given me a lovely image to help me enjoy my turning routine: Go, Selma!

On Tuesday of this week, the 4th floor had a party to say farewell to David, a social work intern who has been studying under Diane's guidance. Diane is both Director of Social Work at Sky View and the 4th floor social worker. She wanted us to give a gift to Dave, so she asked us what advice we had to pass on to him. She also took pictures of some of the residents with whom he had worked. Then she took the elements home and turned them into a book from us to him. Here is a copy of my contribution to the book:

Dave, I didn't get to know you while you were at Sky View, but I observed you and I enjoyed the friendly greetings you gave me when we passed each other in the halls. I wish you well in all you do in the future. All of us were once your age, and – chances are – some day you will be our age. Time goes fast! Remember what you learned here. Keep your eyes on the goal, and, above all, keep smiling!

Sincerely, Verna Kwiatkowski 413.

At the party, Dave expressed deep appreciation for the gift, calling it one of the finest he had ever received. He plans to go on to higher education now. Eventually, I'm sure he'll make a fine social worker.

Sunday, May 17, 2009. This past week there were two occasions where I wanted to send special greetings to people I know. (There was another occasion, as well, for family celebration: our grandson Evan had his 20th birthday last week. However, Leo faithfully sends cards from the both of us to our children and grandchildren, so I knew that was handled.) The first of the two involved Maj-Britt (pronounced MY-Britt) and Fred Lyons, parents of our daughter-in-law Janet. Both their birthdays AND their wedding anniversary are in May. For my birthday greeting last month, they sent me an email written in English and Swedish. I could imagine their smiles as they wrote it! I don't know any other language well enough to do the same for them, but an idea began to formulate in my mind that brought me joy. Here's what I wrote for them:

Your bilingual birthday greetings brought me a smile! :)
I can't respond in kind, though, for that's not my style.
But I'll write a new poem with you as honorees
And hope that you'll smile as if I'd said, "Say cheese!"

"Happy birthday to Maj-Britt!" "Happy birthday to Fred!"
"Happy anniversary to both of you!" There! Now I have said
The main things. Let's see now how this poem ends:
God bless you! I love you! I'm glad we are friends!

PS:

I can't close without sending you my favorite Bible blessing
Along with the reference. No need to keep you guessing:

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
– Romans 15:13*

After I had finished writing the poem, I realized it could be sung (more or less!) to the old hymn tune "Immortal, Invisible" and that further increased my joy. I have instructed George and Janet to deliver this message in both singing and written form and they said they would.

The second special occasion was my husband's birthday. Leo is 2 years and 1 month younger than I. In the time between April 18 and May 15, Leo has often teased me about being so-o-o-o much older than he! I don't mind the teasing, but this time a poem came to me that teases him from MY perspective:

Each year you try to catch up with my age
Since the very first time that we met.
You tried it today – Happy Birthday to you! –
But you haven't caught up with me yet! :))

I concluded the greeting by giving him the same Bible verse I gave to Fred and Maj-Britt, calling it the finest birthday wish I could make for him. In fact, I can't think of ANY occasion when Romans 15:13 would NOT be appropriate. Can you?

Monday, May 18, 2009. Oh, what a way to start my day! I find evidence of God's presence everywhere, even at my bedside. This story actually begins on Friday, when Kathy, our nurse supervisor, came into my room and told me I would be getting a blood test Monday morning to check whether I am getting the proper nutrition. "I just want you to be informed," she said. I appreciated that, for I had asked for that very thing. Though I don't really like blood tests, as my veins are small and sometimes collapse, I was able to put it out of my mind and relax by thinking, "God will be there with me, holding my hand" and "It will soon be over. Nothing to worry about."

Shortly before 8:00 this morning, someone knocked on my door and then entered, bringing with her equipment that reminded me of my appointment. As she prepared to do her work, the technician began to sing a mixture of spiritual songs and old hymns like Draw Me Nearer, pausing only to say, "Now you will feel a little pinch." And that's all it was – a little pinch! She was really skilled! As the blood drained from my vein, she continued to sing, encouraged by my smiles and gestures of appreciation and understanding. There we were, two people gathered in the name of Jesus, and there he was, meeting with us, as he said he would!

The last hymn the technician sang was No, Never Alone. She looked directly at me, changed the words slightly, and sang, "Christ promised never to leave you, never to leave you alone." I nodded,

smiled, and clapped. And then, although she was gone, my mind and heart continued the worship that she had stirred up. I thought of the blood Jesus shed for me from brutal, ugly, painful wounds so vastly different from the little pinch, lovingly given, that I had endured to get my blood to flow. The gratitude I felt while still in bed has remained with me all day. Thank you, Lord!

Tuesday, May 19, 2009. Last night there was another problem involving my feeding tube. In the end, it turned out to be a valuable lesson for a nurse, an aide, and me. It will never, ever happen again, at least to this extent, while I am able to think and to participate in my treatment.

My aide tucked me into bed and the nurse hooked up my feeding about 10:30 last night. I was all set to eat for the next 10-and-a-half hours, when the machine would beep, indicating that my bottle of food was empty. Almost as soon as the nurse left, I heard a popping sound, wondered what it was, and then forgot about it. Big mistake! I dozed as I watched a late baseball game from the west coast. Meanwhile, the day shift went home and the night shift arrived.

At 12:30 I awoke, sensed that my arm was wet, and rang the bell. The little side vent on the end of the tube had opened, no doubt with the pop that I heard, and food had run out of it onto the bed. My night aide changed the bed linens and my gown; then the nurse hooked me up again, this time taping the little valve shut. They left and I went back to sleep.

At 5:30 I woke again to the same scenario. After the bed and I were changed and more tape was wrapped around the tube, I asked the nurse if the reconnected tube had stopped leaking. "No," she said, and showed me evidence on the washcloth that she had put around the tube connections. Then I indicated that I wanted the machine turned off. What was the use of going through this a third time? The nurse complied, and disconnected me from my food supply.

On the other hand, I wanted to eat! At my request, the nurse inserted the tube used to give me medicine and water flushes, filled it with food from the bottle, and prepared to let it flow by gravity into my stomach. Imagine our surprise when the food would not go down! The nurse held the tube higher and then exclaimed, "NOW I see what the problem is! The clamp is shut! I didn't even know you HAD a clamp on your tube!" And she smiled. The aide and I did, too! Then she opened it, and easily I received my first food of the night. Before I was connected with a new bottle for the few remaining hours, I asked for one more tubeful from the original bottle. I didn't get my full allotment of food last night, but I haven't been hungry today, either. Praise God!

Thursday, June 4, 2009. Yesterday I went shopping in the Jefferson Valley Mall, thanks to my friend Carolyn and our wonderful Paratransit system. Actually, I had not been looking forward to this trip, as I was quite content with my indoor routine. Besides that, my last trip to the mall had been quite a chore. This one was pleasantly different! The ride took me into familiar territory, as the mall is less than 2 miles from the house where we raised our family in Yorktown Heights. Within minutes of our arrival, Carolyn and I were each warmly greeted by someone from the past that we were glad to see. Our shopping was unhurried and productive, and our visiting together was satisfying. I have happy memories as I write this!

Today we held our June service at Sky View. Since I spent the better part of the past two weeks writing new material for the service, I'm going to quote from that material as a way of catching you up on my doings. The main subject was "grace." Listen:

While thinking about such exciting topics over a period of several days, especially during the night, I felt the urge to compose a new verse for the Jesus Loves Me song I have been writing and sharing with you. This verse would be the first verse, having to do with

God's saving grace. Finally the poem was complete! God enabled me to remember it through my dozing. When I got to my computer, I wrote the following:

Jesus died upon the cross, Saving me from lasting loss.
Awesome grace has captured me, Paid my debt, and set me free.

The lasting loss I mentioned means spending eternity in hell, separated from God. Because of God's grace, his children are saved from that destiny and are guaranteed a place in Heaven. No wonder I have been captivated by his grace! Jesus paid my sin-debt and set me free – to do what? To live in relationship with him! Listen again to verse 2:

Jesus is my valentine. I am his and he is mine.
Jesus loves me – that's his part; I love him with all my heart.

This verse expresses not only a mutual love, but also a togetherness, a constant awareness of each other. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command," so obedience and trust on our part are also implied by verse 2. It is a strong verse, indeed! Now listen to verse 3:

Jesus loves me as I age, And life's billows 'round me rage.
He will love me when I die. I will live with him on high.

The love of God is a constant in our lives, and so is his grace, no matter what we have to go through, even old age and death. All God's children, for whom Jesus died, will arrive safely Home and live with him forever. Isn't that good news?

(At this point Cliff, the reader of the above, with Earl at the piano, led us in a rousing rendition of Jesus Loves Me – Sky View Version. It sounded so good! We sang the regular chorus to Jesus Loves Me after each verse. Both the words and the tune for the old song are in the public domain; I really have enjoyed watching a new song rise from the old! Cliff then continued:)

After we are saved by grace through faith, God's grace continues to operate in our lives in many ways. All of God's blessings, that is, his favor, are GIVEN, not deserved or earned. Thinking this way will keep us in awe of God, a desirable state indeed! The Bible says God LAVISHES his grace on us. There's PLENTY to go around! And how are we to respond to the grace we receive? Besides being thankful, we are to pass it on by being gracious to others! With all these wonderful thoughts in mind, on Friday, May 29, ANOTHER poem about God's grace was composed in my head while I was still in bed! Leo will read this new poem to us now.

GOD'S GRACE

Written by Verna Kwiatkowski, who defines God's grace as undeserved, unearned favor. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding" (Ephesians 1:7,8). A Sky View poem.

Splash! Splash! All over the place –
Splash! Splash! – God showers us with grace.

Lord, how could I complain,
when blessings fall like rain?
And how could I grouse,
while living in this house?

I can't! I won't! I'll be grateful instead,
While sitting in my chair, or lying in my bed.

Lord, help me spread your grace
until I see you face to face,
Until I sing with loosened tongue
the heavenly angels' song.

For now I'll sing within myself until my course is run.
Please join me with your voices. Choir practice has begun!

Splash! Splash! All over the place –
Splash! Splash! – God showers us with grace.

Thank you, Lord!

When I wrote "Choir practice has begun!" I was thinking of the singing that we do on earth, whether with our voices or in our hearts, as preparation for the heavenly singing to come. I had the book of Revelation in mind, especially chapter 5, verses 11-14, where John says:

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshipped.

Once when I was thinking about the angels who encircled the throne, I multiplied 10,000 times 10,000 and was astounded to find out the answer was 100 million! And that's besides the thousands upon thousands of additional angels in the choir John saw and heard! What a treat lies ahead for God's people!

Tuesday, June 9, 2009. This morning I had Lavonne as an aide. I have had her many times before, so I wasn't surprised when she asked another aide, this time Pam, to help her get me onto the lift and then onto the shower chair. First she had to put me in a sitting position at the edge of the bed. She asked Pam to pull on the bed pad under me while she lifted my upper body. On the count of three – whoosh! In a FLASH there I was, sitting upright on the bed, with my feet over the edge! Knowing I was completely safe, and exhilarated by the sudden ride, I began to laugh. Lavonne was frightened at first, but when she heard me laughing, she joined in, as did Pam.

You may recall that my laughter is abnormal, to say the least. Due to PLS, it is noisy, uncontrollable, and contagious! Several times while Lavonne was giving me a shower and getting me dressed, I broke into laughter at the thought of the incident, and each time Lavonne laughed with me. Finally she said, "You should put this story in your book!" I agreed, and now I have done so!

A week or more ago Rachel, a night aide whom I hadn't seen for a long time, came into my room. We greeted each other warmly, so happy for this brief reunion. Then she said to Margaret, my regular aide, who was there taking care of me, "I remember one night we laughed so hard while in this room. I don't remember what was so funny, but I remember the laughter!" I thought that was very interesting. I don't mind if my room is known as a place of laughter. In fact, I like it! Thank you, Lord.

Monday, June 15, 2009. Today Leo and I are celebrating the 52nd anniversary of our wedding. Among my many thoughts on the occasion is this one: somehow God took the lifestyle we formed through the years and made it work out for our good, preparing us for living apart. While we did many things together, there were also times when we deliberately separated. Church dinners serve as an example of the latter. Neither of us could imagine why we should sit together when these events gave us perfect opportunities to talk with others. At home we shared with each other what we learned at dinner. While we enjoyed going to the movies together, we went alone if the film interested one of us but not the other. There were also years when we went to different churches. This, too, worked out well for both of us. I'm so glad I can sit here, quite content, in my single room, knowing my husband is also content alone in his apartment. Neither of us is upset with God about the way things worked out for us. Indeed, we count our blessings!

Leo comes to see me 5 or 6 times a week and stays between a half hour and an hour, sometimes more. He reads to me, takes care of various chores, and we catch up on news. He greets me warmly and kisses me goodbye as he leaves. We love each other!

Tuesday, June 30, 2009. Time to complete another issue of the Penny essays! Many things happened at Sky View this month in quick succession. I'll mention a few of them in this closing entry. First there was the publication of the Sky View Newsletter, Volume 1, Issue 1. Under the title is this description: Facility Information and Literary Magazine. Casey, director of activities, and Diane, director of social work, were both involved in getting this long-desired project underway and bringing it to fruition. They asked me if I would like to be involved, and I agreed to help where I could. My contribution to this first edition consisted of an encouraging meditation on Deuteronomy 33:27 (God's everlasting arms) and my poem Trees. Looking forward to the next issue!

Then Pam, a resident of the 4th floor, died. She had been dying for a couple months, though no one knew why. While her death was not a shock, to some 4th floor residents who had befriended her, it carried a special sorrow. They knew something the rest of us didn't: Pam had no family. No one ever came to see her from the outside; hence, there would be no funeral for Pam. Determined to do something about the situation, the friends went to Gloria, one of the assistant directors in the activities department, to see if they could hold a simple memorial service for Pam at Sky View. The service was set for Thursday, June 18, three days after Pam died. Gloria would moderate, giving the friends a chance to speak.

When Gloria told me about the plans, I knew that I would be attending the memorial, and that I would help in my own way. Back in my room, I printed a sheet of general Scriptures, songs and prayers that would be appropriate for most memorial services. On Wednesday, when I went downstairs to give the paper to Gloria, I was given news that shocked us all: Gloria and three other staff members had just been "let go" from Sky View for economic reasons. She already was gone! The next day Casey did a fine job of moderating the service for Pam. She used everything on the sheet and everyone had a chance to speak. Pam's friends were satisfied; they had done what they could for her.

Then we got news that the schedule for our aides was going to change, beginning July 1. No longer will we have the same aides for long periods of time. Now they will rotate every month! I suppose, after a while, this new routine will seem normal.

A closing note: Last week I was given a comprehensive blood test. A few days later, I saw my doctor in the hallway. Smiling broadly, he said, "All your blood test results were excellent! All excellent!"