

Glory Days

Love at First Sight

Twamp!!! The rubber toy hit the blackboard next to the college instructor. The toy proceeded to climb down the blackboard toward the ground. The instructor chose to ignore the interruption and continue to write the lesson plan on the board. Even after a second toy landed on the blackboard, he pretended that nothing was amiss.

The instructor's English was inadequate to the point where he did not really speak to the college class. Typically he entered the room and began writing on the board. The entire class time involved his writing on the board and the students copying his lecture. He even communicated homework assignments in this manner. Perhaps insecurity about his English skills in America contributed to his decision to allow the obnoxious behavior by the unknown student.

Unknown to him.

The passage of almost twenty years may have simplified the memory. I honestly remember our computer class instructor this way. On the rare occasions when he spoke, he muttered, making impossible any chance for us to understand.

But the walker toys hitting the board are a true memory as is the thrower, Patricia Long, soon to become Patricia Avery.

I remember showing the room to my children about ten years later. The Romantic in me thought it a terrific idea to take our children to the very room where their mother and I met and later, the restaurant where we first dated.

I am sure I told the story as I told it time and time again. "Once your mother realized that the instructor did not speak English, she looked around at the students,

seeking to identify the one that could help her get an 'A' in the class. Her eyes lighted on me and it was love at first sight".

I smiled at our daughter Jessica, just five, and continued, "But your mother still thought that a college professor should speak English and occasionally face his students. So, one morning they served a brand of cereal in the college cafeteria that contained the wall walkers and *Twamp!!*, your mother let her opinion be known".

Grades meant a great deal to Patricia. She told the undercover sheriff's deputy posing as her hired hit man that she graduated Phi Beta Kappa from college.

Later, eating lunch at the pizza parlor where Patricia and I had our first date, I would tell the children how their mother ate sixteen pieces of pizza that night, so embarrassed at her hunger that she started to move crusts over to my plate to reduce the obvious pile on her own. I would pause a moment and add, "To be honest, your mother did come down with chicken pox the next day and did not eat anything but jell-o for five days".

Then, this is our story, my story, her story, the children's story, and the story of a Machine unable to deal with our reality. Our marriage lasted sixteen years. We experienced joy and sorrow. Patricia's mental health problems created drama and crisis after crisis built around each of our three children. In 1992, a wolf hybrid attacked our oldest son at three years old. In 1993, our daughter spent her first few weeks in intensive care. In 1996, our youngest son was born with a birth defect not seen in over a hundred years.

Each event contributed to our pathos, each day brought us closer to that cold winter night where an undercover sheriff's deputy spent almost a hour in the cab of a

truck attempting to talk Patricia out of paying for my death, out of my murder in the family home with the children in the house.

I met Patricia in that classroom when I was twenty-four years old. The college was Campbell University in Buies Creek, North Carolina. It was 1986 and I served as an infantry sergeant in the 82d Airborne Division stationed at nearby Fort Bragg. My hometown was Albuquerque, New Mexico

Patricia Long was eighteen years old. Her brother Jeff was an alumnus of Campbell and Patricia chose to attend this college and move into the dorms straight out of high school. Patricia's hometown was Concord, North Carolina.

Stephen A. Avery

Colonel Hugh Shelton served as my brigade commander in the 82d, later he was a four star general and Joint Chief of Staff Commander under President Clinton. Colonel Shelton once labeled me the most dangerous man in the 82nd. Not because of my ability to soldier, but because of other talents – mainly I seemed to be able to cut through the red tape and get things done. My nicknames were 'Ave' and Sergeant "Slavery". No one called me 'Radar' to my face.

After Grenada, I decided that a line platoon was too dangerous. During my four years of service forty-seven soldiers died in training deaths in my battalion of typically 500 men. I witnessed stupid action after stupid action. There were the men killed when a sergeant tried a river crossing without following procedures. There were the men killed when a sergeant told them they were stupid to declare a misfire on a LAW (light anti-tank weapon) dragged them over to it and all three were killed in the subsequent explosion. Eight men died in a helicopter crash.

But no one died jumping out of airplanes. I never witnessed a death from a parachute jump. I tell people that I went airborne because the thought of an eighteen year old private from Brooklyn driving a seventy ton tank through the motor pool scared me.

And I was not afraid to jump. A new Sergeant Major came into the battalion and dragged all of the enlisted men behind brigade headquarters to demonstrate that he was the SOB in charge. “And I know every single one of you is scared of jumping, everyone!!” he roared. “Not Ave!” someone yelled. The Sergeant Major looked at me and asked me if this was true. “Yes, Sergeant Major”, I replied meekly. He looked puzzled and told me that I would be next to him on the next bird (plane).

After I vomited all over him, the Sergeant Major understood why I was not scared to jump. I threw up in every plane I flew in. When they opened the door for us to jump, I was just desperate for a breath of fresh air. The enlisted men just wanted the Sergeant Major to feel at home with the rest of the battalion.

I was airborne and airborne infantry. When I was in the airborne that meant 45 push-ups in two minutes, 45 sit-ups in two minutes, and to complete a two mile run in less than thirteen minutes and five seconds. Physical Training was hard for me, but I passed.

I also was not a great ‘garratrooper’, a term for those soldiers who shined on parade. I remember a new member of our platoon who came in during this long period where we did not go out into the field¹. He got to the point where he rode me about how much trouble I got into in the barracks, boots not shined, bad haircut, room inspections, etc...

¹ After going out to the field and deployments for a solid two years, our Battalion Commander was relieved for working us too hard. This resulted in us not going to the field for almost a year and ending up a little rusty.

When we finally returned to the field, I ran him into the ground. Running five miles and shinning your boots never made any sense to me. Marching twenty-five miles walking point watching for the enemy did make sense.

Then Grenada, my company was one of the first elements deployed. Not much combat, but enough to convince me that I wanted out of the front line.

My citizen soldier view of the Army places Grenada as a turning point in the history of the modern army. Grenada is where we finally shook off the ghosts of Vietnam and Collin Powell (and others) created the finest fighting force in history. But it took a while and Grenada, combined with the extensive training deaths, made me decide to seek a desk job. I bought a personal computer, an Apple IIe, and talked my way into a desk job by offering the use of the computer for the benefit of the Army at a time when no units had access to computers.

Subsequently I took my promotion to sergeant, the rank I professionally disliked. I thought I was clever; I took the promotion during the first week of December, went on leave, and returned to Bragg on January 5th with the knowledge that I would be released on January 6th to attend a semester of college at Campbell. My battalion was scheduled to leave for peace keeping duty the first of May, before I was out of school. That left me with garrison duty for the last few months of my enlistment. A sergeant's pay for almost a year without having to act as one.

One final comment, my clever plan, did not quite work. I came back to the battalion to discover that the battalion was waiting for me to finish the paperwork for their deployment to Sinai. Patricia did not even see me for the first week of our marriage as I stayed on post to get the job done. But I was a soldier. I served my country and I

worked my tail off. The release for college was a reward for that hard work, as was the promotion, as was the citations I received while in service. I just wanted a sergeant's pay without being a sergeant.

So off to Campbell I went and into the arms of Patricia Long.

My background differed sharply from Patricia's. When I try to explain to people how completely unprepared I was for Patricia's problems I tell them that I was raised by Ozzie and Harriet. Not quite true, but close.

My parents met in Bible College in Texas: my father from a small town in Missouri and my mother from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Albuquerque was my home and I graduated from the city's second oldest high school, Highland High School in 1979.

I made a couple of attempts at college and various jobs and finally joined the army in 1982, out of the John Wayne syndrome, to pay debts, and to finance college. My younger brother Seth was leaving the 82nd and joining 5th Group Special Forces 'Green Berets' at the same post.

My generation grew up on John Wayne's version of the military, the ideals of heroism and duty. The week before parachute school began I was assigned to type up the Congressional Medal of Honor citations of every paratrooper that received that award.

I noticed that in World War II and Korea, no one received an award for jumping on a hand grenade, but starting in Vietnam the award was common. I grilled the Sergeant First Class, a Vietnam veteran, I worked for about this.



Stephen Avery 1982 while in service with the 82d Airborne

“It’s simple, Avery,” he told me “Before Vietnam John Wayne wasn’t around to show us that we were suppose to jump on them. Before that, we tried to pick them up and throw them back”.

I am the oldest of four sons, two CPAs, a lawyer, and a business owner. My parents have been married over forty-six years. My grandparents each passed fifty years of marriage. Before me, the last member of my branch of the Avery family to divorce was my great grandfather –Stephen (go figure).

So, how in the world did Patricia and I end up married and then married for sixteen years?

I must speak to my perspective as I can not truly speak for Patricia. I was on leave up until the day before I met Patricia, home in Albuquerque thinking about my life and beginning to make plans.

First, I understood I wanted to finish college and the semester the Army was paying for at Campbell would get me back on track. There was never a consideration of remaining in the Army. Since, I did not believe in sergeants, I did not believe in career enlisted men and an officer’s commission required college. I planned to return to Albuquerque and attend the University of New Mexico. I wanted to teach high school history and write novels.

My thoughts also turned to my personal life. During this Christmas in Albuquerque, I reconnected with an old girlfriend of mine, a beautiful lady that children often mistook for Susan Lucci of “All My Children”. We had a wonderful time, I cared for this lady very deeply, and I know my mother was worried that we were getting too close.

But I knew this was our last time together. She had just been through a difficult marriage and was in no mood to be serious about anyone.

I felt different. I felt that I had never really been serious about anyone over the last several years, that I was a typical immature male with little else on his mind but having fun. I felt it was time to grow up.

The personal resolution that arose out of this thinking was a determination to be open to love in my next relationship, to be honest, and to look toward settling down.

Naturally, I met Patricia a few days later.

Patricia Long

There is a moral challenge I face when discussing Patricia's life before her and I met. It is difficult to talk about her past when confronted with Patricia's inability to tell the truth, even in regards to simple matters. And Patricia believes her lies. The moment she tells one, it becomes truth to her. This one trait is universally agreed to by everyone that knows Patricia, (mental health professionals with their own agenda aside). During our sixteen years of marriage Patricia told version after version of her childhood story. She communicated these versions to me, the children, friends, our medical providers, family and others.

Few of the stories Patricia told about her childhood were nice and they never were told the same way twice. The stories covered the range from horrible cooking, to being shot by her father, to a bout with ovarian cancer. But the stories provide insight into Patricia's character and a defense against the stories she latter told about me and our children. For the last several years, I lived in a world dealing with Patricia's inability to tell the truth, accusation after accusation and, as often as not, lies directed at the children.

As time went on, Patricia's focus shifted to our oldest son Glen. Later, the focus shifted to our daughter Jessica.

There is no doubt in my mind that almost all of the stories Patricia told about her childhood are untruthful. In the same manner that Patricia accused me of abuse over the last several years, she accused almost every single member of her family. When I got in contact with Patricia's family after her arrest, I was not surprised to find the monsters Patricia described for almost two decades simply did not exist.

But, Patricia can only be understood, if at all, in terms of the lies she tells. The inability to tell the truth is a defining aspect of Patricia and I believe this personality trait extends back to early in Patricia's childhood. This book is a defense against the lies Patricia told about the children and I. The correct conclusion is not that Patricia acted as she did because of a 'horrible' childhood. There is no evidence of this. Patricia used this same lie about a horrible childhood to win a place in my heart and to excuse her behavior. When she sought to enlist her family in the cause against me, all of the previous stories about how horrible they were simply vanished.

At various times Patricia accused various family members of shooting her with a pistol, raping her, molesting her, stealing from her, and so on.

Patricia was born in February of 1967 in a village outside of Madrid, Spain. Her father was stationed there as part of his service in the US Navy. Patricia was the fourth of five children. The oldest was her sister Donna followed by two brothers, Eddie and Jeff, both deceased. A younger sister Melanie followed a couple of years after Patricia.

Patricia claimed her birth arose out of an affair her mother had with another service member, and that her mother's resentment of the product of that affair was the

basis for a lack of love and abuse of Patricia by her mother. Patricia claims that the knowledge of the affair came out when she was four years old and her father pulled a gun on the mother during a drunken fight. Mom's alleged response was to put Patricia between herself and her husband as a shield. The results – Patricia shot in the arm and a divorce for her parents.

This story about an unknown father came back to haunt us years later after Patricia's arrest as she 'found' her lost biological 'father' who interjected himself into our lives.

There are a couple of truths hidden within Patricia's lies. First, the story of her teenage pregnancy and putting the child up for adoption is true. At various times during our marriage Patricia told different versions concerning that pregnancy. The stories ranged from a simple mistake to a rape involving a conspiracy among various members of her family. At one time she even accused a cousin of being the rapist father. What I do know is that Patricia did give birth to a son and gave that son up for adoption. I also know that she made various attempts to get in touch with the father during our marriage and registered on various websites if the child ever sought her out.

Son, if you are reading this, feel free to contact us. I am sorry about your mother, but there are three wonderful half siblings of yours here, one who would argue that you got the best of the deal.

Second, Patricia did not really get along with her family. She attributed much of this to her 'illegitimate' birth. As the only child supposedly born out of wedlock and to an unknown father, she was somewhat different and separate from her family. All members of the family agree with Patricia that she did not get along with anyone in the family.

She found refuge from her family in another family she babysat for: the husband a doctor and the wife a CPA. To some extent, Patricia seems to have almost moved in with this family during her high school years. Again, this is Patricia's version of events.

Strangely enough, Patricia's family and I are getting closer since Patricia's incarceration as we work together in the best interest of Patricia and the children. While I am just now getting to know Patricia's family, I came to know this adopted family over the years. I say without hesitation that these two individuals are two of the finest human beings on the planet. When Patricia and I decided to marry, it was to this family that Patricia introduced me. Years later, we spent the night at their house on the way home from the funeral of Patricia's brother Jeff. Several years after this, we spent an embarrassing afternoon at their beach house one summer before I realized that we had not been invited. The wife and I spent a little time on the telephone a few weeks before Patricia's arrest. She made clear her feelings that I broke my promise of fifteen years before to look after Patricia.

This family and Patricia's relationship with them provides the first example of one of Patricia's survival characteristics: the ability to derive moral behavior guidance from those around her.

Patricia is amoral, by this I mean that she is incapable of differentiating between right and wrong. I came to understand this early in our marriage. No matter how I explained a moral principle to her, she would just not get it. These type of incidents occurred on a near daily basis throughout our marriage. Patricia would call either angry or excited about something with some harebrained plan for revenge or action. I would respond with a no.

I always had hope, I always believed we grew and improved together.

As I look back, one incident shines as an example of Patricia's inability to distinguish right from wrong, illuminates her temper, and proved the turning point in our relationship.

In November of 2001 I rushed into the study to find Patricia beating our twelve year old son. It was one of those out of control fits of temper that I encountered time and time again during our marriage, but always directed at me. This time Patricia's violence exploded against twelve year old Glen.

Patricia would not listen to me and I physically separated her from Glen. She started yelling at me to tell Glen that her actions were justified, that he deserved the assault. Glen cowered in the corner, each yell and move by Patricia resulting in a nervous start on his part.

This was the first time Patricia assaulted one of the children with me in the house, but I tried the usual actions to calm her and divert her. I told her that we would talk about it later when everyone calmed down. I did not dare comfort Glen for fear that the attack would start anew.

Patricia's anger shifted from Glen to me. Time and time again she demanded that I support her in her actions. I refused. Finally, I told her, in front of Glen, that her actions were not justified, that there could never be a justification for assaulting a child.

Patricia's anger shifted to me and allowed Glen to duck out of the room as the fight continued between Patricia and I. As her anger dropped, her self-preservation kicked in. She knew she could not justify her actions and tired to drop the matter. Others, not knowing Patricia, might attribute her insistence on vindication about assaulting Glen

to pride, but Patricia was not a prideful individual. This incident was just one of many where Patricia simply did not get it, where Patricia could not tell right from wrong. In Patricia's mind anything she did was justified, she just had to create reasons for everyone else to agree with her.

But for me, Patricia breached a line that I had prayed for years that she would not cross-- the irrational physical assault of one of the children and in my presence. I told her that she needed counseling and if she did not receive help then the children and I would separate from her. No more 'free' counseling from the church. I wanted to see a receipt.

Looking back, this proved the watershed, the point of no return. Within a few days, Patricia had a new boyfriend, within three months she filed for divorce, within three years she sought my death.

But it took twelve years for Patricia to cross that line. Up until that day, Patricia employed her intelligence to mimic moral behavior. Amoral individuals do not thrive without intelligence and Patricia's intelligence is without question. Patricia learned, before we met, that she needed an 'outside reference' to mimic moral behavior, someone she could look to for guidance on how to behave. This attachment to moral people provided an unconscious survival trait that allowed her to move among society without creating havoc. Without this survival trait, she would create the very type of chaos she fashioned when she lost her last 'reference'-- me.

This surrogate family in North Carolina served as Patricia's moral reference for years, providing the model and direct guidance that Patricia required to seem normal. They made it possible for her to graduate with honors from high school and receive a college scholarship to Campbell University.

Again, Patricia's decision to employ this surrogate family as a moral substitute does not reflect in any manner on her own family, just as I, in turn, replaced the surrogate family for reasons known only to Patricia. It is doubtful that Patricia understands the reasons behind many of her actions.

Whirlwind

Patricia transferred her moral guidance to me fairly quickly when we met in January of 1986. She was eighteen our first day in class and we began dating within two days of meeting, we married within six months.

Our dating experience seemed typical -- dinners, movies, visits to various member of her family (sister Donna, brother Jeff, and the surrogate family).



Patricia Long 1986
while dating Stephen
Avery

The only movie I remember is *Legend*. I mainly remember her charm, humor, and sad stories of past abuse. She invoked in me pity and the desire to protect her from the monsters of her past.

I do not remember how marriage came up. I seem to recall making it clear to Patricia that I was returning to Albuquerque in August with my discharge. My strongest motivation involved my maternal grandmother. She suffered from both Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. I wanted to be home with her. Another motivation was a

strong desire to leave North Carolina. I admit to a dislike for the state and how the citizens there treated soldiers during that post Vietnam decade.

Patricia and I decided that we would marry and would marry in September in Albuquerque. I would return to Albuquerque on my discharge and Patricia would spend

the summer with her brother Jeff in Rocky Mount. After the summer, Patricia would join me in Albuquerque; we would enroll at the University of New Mexico, and settle down.

I told my parents of our plans and my family sent me my grandmother's engagement ring. We bought a wedding dress and looked at bridesmaid's outfits.

I do remember thinking the planned separation over the summer was critical, that we needed some time away from the intensity to insure our commitment. I had no intention of allowing Patricia to move halfway across the country only for us to break up and leave her alone in Albuquerque.

The plans failed. Patricia called me after only one day of separation from her brother's house and told me that she could not live there. She was not specific, but implied that her brother was abusing her. I asked her what she wanted to do. She said that she could not return to Concord, to either her parents or the surrogate family, and she did not have anywhere to go.

I told her that she was not moving in with me unless we were married. We decided that I would drive up, pick her up and that we would get married the next day.

Sex is not a part of this story; I will not deny that I was sexually active before I met Patricia. Patricia stated that her teenage pregnancy was the result of her only sexual encounter. My decision was not about sex, but about commitment. I did not believe in living together without marriage, I still do not.

My views are complicated and somewhat old fashioned. I saw living together as a lack of commitment, as decision to enjoy the benefits of living together without the responsibilities that should accompany those benefits. I took a male perspective and saw such an unwillingness to commit as abusive and unfair to the woman involved.

In 1986 living together was common, children out of marriage was less so. In 2005, the position seems impossible to defend, so I will not attempt to do so. I drew a line, obviously in my own mind, between sex and living together. I am aware most people on both sides of the argument would consider the line imaginary.

I picked up Patricia without incident on May 30th. On May 31st we drove down to Dillon, South Carolina to marry at the local wedding chapel. We discovered that South Carolina required a twenty-four hour waiting period so we drove home. One June 1, 1986 we married in the production line chapel. My best man was an army buddy and Patricia's maid of honor was his wife.

Patricia moved into the trailer I rented a few minutes away from Campbell and about a half hour from my post at Fort Bragg. I finished my last two months in the military and we moved to Albuquerque.

We settled into an apartment in the northeast heights and started school at the University of New Mexico. Within a few weeks, I got a job part time with a law firm as a runner and Patricia worked at the University's English department.

Marriage

Patricia's first suicide gesture occurred within our first year of marriage. I came home from work to our apartment to find her 'passed out' on the bed and an empty bottle of prescription pills on the nightstand. I do not remember the circumstances. I imagine we fought about something and her suicide gesture resulted.

I sat down on the bed next to her and attempted to wake her. No luck. I suspected that she was faking, so I told her that I was going to call 911 and that if she had taken

something we would have to rethink our marriage; that I was not sure I could be married to someone that tried to take her life over something so stupid.

Patricia stirred and made a miraculous recovery.

Suicide gestures would repeat themselves every three or four years during our fifteen year marriage together. After this initial gesture the others followed a set pattern. I outlined this pattern in a letter to the children's Guardian Ad Litem written in September of 2002:

Every two or three years, Patricia Rae Avery would threaten suicide. Her mother did this and she had one brother commit suicide. These incidents took the form of involving her current best friend in the 'crisis', having the best friend contact Stephen A. Avery and warn of the suicide threat, await Mr. Avery's intervention, and then pretend the incident had never occurred. The children were witness to several of these incidents, the latest in January of this year².

This type of gesture occurred three times during the course of our living together, involving three different friends. After I wrote this letter, Patricia repeated the pattern again in January of 2003, the incident referred to in the letter occurred in January of 2002. My role in the January 2003 gesture was played by the children. In the four years since Patricia filed for divorce, six gestures or actual attempts occurred. The first as noted, followed the pattern, the subsequent actions were more than gestures, but unsuccessful.

My memory and response to this first gesture in 1986 or 1987 indicates that the mechanics of how our marriage operated originated that early. First, I have no memory as to what the fight was about. During the course of our marriage Patricia and I fought

² I wrote this before I came to know Patricia's mother, some eighteen years after I married her daughter. An attempt by Patricia's mother to commit suicide most likely occurred in Patricia's mind only. At this time I did not know this and was trying to get the kids moved in with me.

literally thousands of times. Patricia initiated the vast majority of these fights and the reasons were trivial, repetitive, or both. To Patricia, fighting was a primary form of communication. She often described verbal fighting as necessary for survival during her childhood. At many levels, Patricia was not even fighting, simply expressing her anger on me, a safe way of dealing with her emotions. I do not remember what incident led, in Patricia's mind, to the first suicide gesture because we fought about the same trivial items time and time again. It is difficult to connect the pattern with the specific events.

Second, as early as the first year of our marriage I was disengaged, or found the ability to disengage when necessary. While Patricia is capable of sustaining the emotional energy to fight with me for almost twenty years, I am not. The cold methodical actions on my part during this first incident, outlining the consequences of her supposed action, became a pattern throughout the rest of our marriage. This pattern of detachment and describing consequences actually fed Patricia's anger and can be argued made things worse. Being freed of my ability to 'set consequences' was an often articulated goal by Patricia during the divorce process.

My goal is the truth and there is no doubt in my mind that I could have been a better husband, a better father. When I first met with my initial divorce lawyer and described the pattern of our marriage he wisely nodded his head and told me that our story was not unique. He told me that he dealt with many divorces where the marriage followed a similar pattern. As an afterthought, he added that in his experience, these marriages dissolved in three years or less. Ours was the first marriage he encountered where the parties stayed together for more than five times that limit.

Should have been his first clue of what was to come.

Glen

I left the Army with the intention of being a high school history teacher and writing books on the side, the Steven King model. Patricia initially wanted to major in journalism but changed her major to classical languages with the goal of also teaching school. The Army allowed me to take college placement exams for free and I took advantage of that in the service. The advance placement allowed me to graduate in May of 1988. My degree was in History with a minor in English.

About the same time of my graduation, we discovered Patricia's pregnancy and Glen entered the world on December 31, 1988.

Fatherhood changed my life. There is a scene in the movie *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* that sums up my attitude about parenting.

The movie stars Spencer Tracy, Katherine Hepburn, and Sydney Poitier in a story of a family trying to deal with interracial marriage in 1967. There is a scene where Poitier's father confronts his son about marrying a white girl in 1967. When the son refuses to listen to the father, the father reminds him of all of the hard work he did to allow his son to get where he is. The father lays it on pretty thick, talking about carrying his mail bag 75,000 miles and how his mother went without a decent coat to allow the son to have books.

Poitier's response is a call to all parents. "I owe you nothing, if you carried that bag a million miles you did what you were suppose to do because you brought me into this world. From that day, you owed me everything you could ever do for me just like I will owe my son..."

My entire concept of fatherhood is based on this belief. From the day I knew my first child was on the way, I dedicated my life toward the children. It is my burden that in

many ways I failed. It is difficult to argue that my children's childhood was better than mine.

After graduation, I entered into post graduate study for secondary school education. I finished all of the classes and my initial student teaching assignment. The second full-time teaching assignment without pay is where I was forced to drop the program.

Patricia's pregnancy was not going well. She was unable to work and confined to bed during the last trimester. My GI benefits were gone and I was temporarily working with my mother in drug use prevention. I simply could not afford not to work without pay on a student teaching assignment for a full semester, plus the summer, with a child on the way.

And I enjoyed the drug prevention work. It was educational and important. We worked with secondary school students across the country involving them in drug prevention efforts for elementary school children. Thus, when the opportunity came to extend my work in this field, I chose to do this both because of the financial realities and the belief in the program.

Patricia's pregnancy turned out to be a full time job for both of us. How much of the associated health problems were real I will never know, but I treated all of them seriously. Trips to the hospital occurred at least once a week during the final six weeks of pregnancy. We even spent Christmas night of 1988 in the hospital.

Patricia's temper resulted in our being thrown out of our apartment during her pregnancy. We were living in a quadplex when all of the other tenants in that building threw a joint July 4th party. It was too loud for Patricia and she sent me outside a couple

of times to ask for quiet with no luck. The second or third time I was outside, Patricia appeared at the window with a rifle. She was only a couple of feet from me and the other party goers.

In 1988, in Albuquerque, that cleared the party. Everyone was gone within a few minutes, to include those living in the other apartments. The next afternoon the police showed up. During the police interview Patricia surprised me by telling the police that while I was outside she heard through the wall one of the other tenants telling people in the room that he was getting his gun and taking it outside to kill me for interfering with their good time. During the previous several hours Patricia and I had been arguing about the action, she never mentioned this incident. It was not until the police showed up I heard about it.

A great deal of the chaos and danger of the last several years arises out of Patricia's ability to charm strangers and people that do not spend a great deal of time with her. Even as she approaches forty, her voice and appearance is closer to that of a young teenager and reeks innocence. Her intelligence and humor is clearly evident during any initial conversation. Time after time again, I witnessed people fall under Patricia's spell: at best, people enjoyed the experience, not sure what to believe. At worse, people believed every word she said. They never see the problems behind the charm.

Recent experience with Patricia and the criminal justice Machine indicates that cops are pretty much immune to the charm. My guess is that the cops in 1988 did not believe Patricia's story but used it to dismiss the matter. We were married, professional, and expecting our first child. Our accusers were none of these things. I was just grateful

that my presence outside the apartment during the incident made it impossible to be asked about the magical gun story.

The landlord was another matter. They did not believe the second gunman theory for a minute. Here, one of many times, I brokered a deal to get Patricia and our family out of trouble. I told the landlord about Patricia's childhood, about her father shooting her and other incidents, to illustrate the stress under pregnancy. To close the deal, I offered to move out if they would let us out of the lease. They agreed and we left within two weeks.

Patricia's second husband plays a part in this story. After Patricia's arrest I obtained a court order to pick up the community property from their home. Her second husband placed most of the items in their garage and resting on top of the pile was a copy of the police report regarding this incident with Patricia threatening the neighbors.

The other difficulties during this time related to the pregnancy. On Christmas Eve, I took Patricia to the hospital. This time the labor was real, but some idiot had recorded the wrong gestation age on the hospital chart, showing Glen several weeks premature. Patricia's doctor was out of town and her partner grilled me about the gestation age and Patricia's last period. I was clear on the memory because it was my birthday in April. The doctor decided it was best to try and stop the labor by giving Patricia an IV of morphine. Patricia and I said no, as we were sure of the gestation age. The doctor's office was only two blocks away from the hospital but no one went to get those charts. Instead they drugged Patricia and Glen. The labor stopped.

The next morning the doctor came by with the news that the office records confirmed the gestation age. When Patricia grilled her about why labor had stopped she

admitted using the drugs we had specifically stated we did not want. Patricia and I talked a few moments. I then went outside and fired the doctor.

Glen was born on New Year's Eve: a healthy seven and a half pounds. My first words on seeing my son was to remark that he did not look premature.

Patricia continued with her post graduate studies after Glen's birth and got a job teaching in Santa Fe, at Capital High School. She was not licensed but was able to combine her first teaching job with student teaching to get her license. Patricia's degree in Classical Languages made her a hot teaching prospect, as many schools sought to offer Latin to their students.

School started at seven thirty each morning and the drive to Santa Fe took an hour. This meant Patricia arose at about five thirty each day to prepare for her commute. She tried breast feeding Glen but this proved unsuccessful. Glen developed an allergy to breast milk, regular milk, and soy. They placed him on a special formula that in 1989 cost twelve dollars a can. Glen could eat too; he averaged over seventy ounces a day. Average is half that amount.

Because of Patricia's commute, her work out of town, and Glen as a formula baby, I assumed primary care for Glen. I did the night feedings and I changed most of the diapers. We hired a lady to help with house work and Glen went through the first of a series of day care providers (five is the number that springs to mind).

Equality between the sexes arose as a natural aspect of my childhood. Neither of my grandmothers worked outside of the home, but they raised me to believe this was a *division* of labor, not an equality issue. Grandma's work was simply different from Grandpa's and to a young child, Grandma's seemed more important as it involved cakes,

cobblers, and other goodies. When I was six years old I drew a picture of my home life for a school assignment, a picture my father is still uncomfortable with forty years later. I drew dad washing dishes, wearing an apron. Both my grandparents exceeded fifty years of marriage. My parents approach the same landmark. Marriage, in both my mother and father's families proved a partnership between equals.

So, I took care of Glen while Patricia began her career. My brothers also changed the diapers of their first children, but stopped after that. I also changed diapers with our second and third child.

Strike from the Dark

Patricia taught one year at Santa Fe, one year at La Cueva High School in Albuquerque, and then two and one half years at Mountain View Middle School in what was then the Jemez Valley School District. Jessica's birth in 1993 led to Patricia's decision to stay at home with the children. Financially we struggled until I began my own CPA practice in 1998.

In the same manner I came to nonprofit work to support my family, I came to accounting. I moved from drug prevention to a position as finance director of a 'commercial' non profit organization working in the medical area. I define a commercial nonprofit as an organization that supports its efforts substantially by earning revenue as opposed to donations.

I taught myself bookkeeping while working drug prevention. I taught myself financial management while working as a finance director. After leaving that job in 1995, I took the necessary accounting classes and passed the CPA exam in one sitting. I went from no accounting education to passing the CPA exam in eleven months. Patricia read

the exam scores from the Board of Accountancy over the phone on August 7, 1996. Our youngest son Montie entered the world the next day.

Each of our children faced difficulties during early childhood, each different but each tore my heart apart. Glen's occurred on July 11, 1992 at sunset. Glen was three and one half years old.

I grew up with dogs, Patricia says she did not. In March of 1993 we rescued a puppy from the pound as our first family dog. The dog appeared to be a German Sheppard and beagle mix. We named her Apache Tears after my childhood dog. For those that do not live in the southwest, an Apache Tears is a stone that is glossy black and tan, the same color as a German Sheppard. The stone's name arises from the tears the Apache women cried when brutally marched to the reservation. The tears dropped to the ground and became the black and tan stones. New Mexico is still very much a land of myth.

When I was three, my Apache Tears and I roamed the south valley of Bernalillo County on adventure after adventure. On my Uncle Henry's birthday we wandered out of the backyard and did not reappear. After several hours of searching by the same Sheriff's department that arrested Patricia forty years later, Apache and I showed up at the house soaking wet. I told my mother that I fell into an irrigation ditch and Apache pulled me out.

Glen and his mother went out at sunset on July 11, 1992 to walk his Apache Tears. I was in the middle of reorganizing the study. Suddenly, I heard the front door slam open and Patricia screaming. I stuck my head out of the study and saw her holding

Glen. He was covered in blood. Patricia was screaming about a neighborhood dog attacking Glen.

Presbyterian kept an after-hours urgent care clinic a couple of blocks away. I placed Glen and Patricia in Patricia's car and drove over there. It was closed. I drove to the fire station about a mile further. There the firemen examined Glen and transported him and Patricia to the hospital.

By the time I got to the hospital, Patricia had already been kicked out of the emergency room. I came into the room and found Glen alone at three years of age and tied to a board to prevent the child from touching his face. The memory of my son covered in bandages, tied down, unable to move, and alone still haunts me.

I did not really care what Patricia did to get kicked out of the Emergency Room. Barring her opening up with gunfire or a physical assault on either Glen or the staff, there simply could be no excuse for kicking a mother out of the Emergency Room. I brought Patricia back into the room, told the nurse that she was staying there, and reminded Patricia that she need to be strong for her son. I touched Glen and told them I was going to find out what was going on.

The animal slashed Glen's face, missing the right eye but tearing the tear duct and eyelid. Altogether Glen ended up with sixty-seven stitches in a three inch area from the top of his lip to his eyelid. Long before anyone heard of Harry Potter, Glen's lighting bolt scar received attention. Unlike Potter's, Glen's scar is underneath his right eye and not on his forehead. A great plastic surgeon combined with time made the scars almost invisible.

The animal that assaulted Glen was a wolf hybrid the size of a Great Dane. The owner was a Vietnam vet confined to a wheelchair. He kept the animal in a yard not

much bigger than fifteen by twenty feet. The animal escaped three days beforehand and the owner was out in his front yard hoping for the dog to return when Patricia and Glen stopped to chat.

It was sunset and the animal came out of the west and attacked Glen, slashing his face. Patricia kicked the animal, picked up Glen and ran the six houses up to our house.

The owner confirmed the story a couple of hours later as Animal Control and I talked to him in front of his house, the animal sitting next to him. Animal Control took the animal for impound because of a lack of rabies shots.

I do not think I can express the rage I felt on the assault on my son. Not so much at the animal, but at the owner. The animal acted within its nature



Glen Avery after the animal assault in 1992

and how can you be angry at an animal for that? The owner, on the other hand, was a jerk. He took no responsibility for the act or his abuse of his own animal. Yes, abuse of his own animal. Confining an animal of that breed and size in such a small yard and compounding the abuse with the inability to exercise the animal made the animal as much a victim as my son.

I am a dog lover, I am glad to say that Glen is a dog lover. I believe when his mother later accusing him of animal abuse, this act of hers hurt him more than any other action she took. Again, we love dogs but a wolf hybrid is not a dog.

I shake my head at the stupidity of many of the discussions concerning dog attacks. In Albuquerque, the public labeled Chows as the number one offender for years, today the concern focuses on pit bulls. In other towns different breeds draw attention.

Far be it from me to bring logic into to discussion, but I will as the parent of a child assaulted at a young age. No one knows the population of different breeds in different communities. The reasons why Chows might be number one on the bite list is that they outnumber every other breed in town—bigger population equal more bites, smaller population of the breed equals less bites.

The number one indicator of if a dog will attack someone is not the breed, but the owner. The majority of dog attacks occur with owners that are male and single, such as the owner of the animal that assaulted Glen. The other less well defined indicator is the treatment of the animal. As I read the reports over the years I noticed that most of the time the animal is chained, often in the front yard. What kind of life does these dogs live chained up and forced to watch the world go by? What kind of life did the animal that attacked Glen live, confined to a tiny yard with an owner unable to exercise the animal due to the owner's own confinement to a wheelchair? When dog ownership is a macho image expression and not a love of animals, problems happen.

The *Albuquerque Journal* quoted me as saying I would much rather have the owner put down then the animal. I stand by that remark. But they put the animal down and many people never forgave us for that.

Wolf hybrids complicate the issue. The *Smithson* published an article at the time stating that it was less a question of *if* a hybrid attacked as *when*. Every single animal they studied attacked and Glen's attack fit the classic profile. The animal chooses the weakest member of the party, knocks the victim down, and begins slashing with their teeth.

Frank Herbert remarked that a child matures when they come to understand the mortality of their parents, the inability of their parents to protect them from events. Glen faced that at three. When people ask about the event and its impact on him, I note his love of dogs and shrug. How can anyone know how an event like this shaped his character?

The impact on me was profound. When people ask me how I came to be the Father I am, I respond simply that I am the Father I am because I had to be. The assault on Glen was the first of a series of events stretching out over a decade that shaped me into the person I am.

I gave up my hopes of teaching and writing to support my family. I supported Patricia's decision to stay home because I believed the positive impact would outweigh the financial burden. I went to the office early as early as four o'clock in the morning in order to leave at five. Disney figured into it, the family trips to Disneyland or Disneyworld totaled seven before Jessica turned eleven. My children visited twenty-six states plus the District of Columbia before 9/11. There is a picture of the three of them in front of the World Trade Center in August of 2001. The next week we stayed across the street from the Pentagon. 9/11 impacted Montie at five years old. "Dad, we were just at those buildings".

Domestic Violence

Patricia's temper at times included a physical aspect. Before 1993 I obtained scars from when she threw an old fashioned alarm clock at me and when she threw my grandfather's piggy bank at me, shattering it.

Not once in our sixteen years of marriage did I hit Patricia. Initially, I made no response at all. Unfortunately, this passive stance seemed to enrage Patricia even more

and I began to receive real damage. Attempts at restraining Patricia also proved of limited value. She was not weak and she was very determined.

Frankly, physical assaults by Patricia were rare. We could go years between them. I also learned methods to minimize the risk. I avoided getting close to Patricia during an argument. If she approached, I backed off. I left the house when I could. Sometimes she would threaten me with suicide or destroying personal items. Musical CDs were a personal favorite of her's to destroy. She never, never, threatened the children; but later, she would force the children to call me and beg me to come home. I am sure I tried to 'time' some fights also. If I knew Patricia was going to be upset about something, I would try and deal with it over the telephone so her rage would pass before I got home.

But in 1993, we had been married not yet seven years and I was far from refining my defense methods and there were a lot of stress factors.

Patricia was pregnant with Jessica and working with a boss she disliked. My company was in danger; we had just lost a contract that accounted for forty percent of our revenue. I was forced to work until ten or eleven trying to develop plans that would allow the company to survive but resulted in twenty people losing their jobs.

On top of it all, I had pneumonia as a result of an idiot physician assistant prescribing me a cough suppressant instead of something to clear out my lungs.

The result – instead of being home helping my pregnant wife or taking care of myself -- I was working late at the office trying to save my job due to someone else's mistakes.

I came home a little after six to find Patricia in a rage. I went to the bedroom to change my clothes when she attacked me. I was simply too sick to leave and told Patricia

this. Naturally, she demanded I leave. When I refused, she left, leaving four year old Glen with me.

The next thing I know the police are knocking at the door and I am being grilled about assaulting my wife. I was sick, tired, and naïve. My objectives were simple, get the police out of the house. I had no intention of getting Patricia into trouble and I had no intention of making our problems part of a public police report. Frankly, I did not cooperate.

Unknown to me, Patricia had gone to a neighbor's house and spun a yarn to both her and the police when the neighbor called them. Later, when I heard the tape of the interview between Patricia and the police, I was surprised it took them so long to arrest me. Since there was no physical evidence of violence, a gun magically appeared in the fight. The police never asked me about the gun. If they had there would not have been one to produce.

I was handcuffed and taken to jail. My parents lived out of town at the time so my Aunt bailed me out. There was an automatic twenty-four hour restraining order forbidding contact between the parties. I went to my office near the jail for a while and then checked into a hotel.

Patricia sensed a change in me that I did not; I was still sick and tired. She called me on my cell at least twice, once demanding that I come home to talk about this. I told her no, that there was a restraining order and I was not about to get into any more trouble. I refused to tell her where I was as I knew it was likely that she would show up. I had to get some sleep.

Patricia was right. Our private hell was now public. I remember my father lecturing me for even defending myself from Patricia's assaults, his disappointment that I had allowed my marriage to sink to a level of physical violence. My job and future employability was in danger.

The stigma that is now beginning to be associated with domestic violence was not near the levels we encounter today, but the stigma existed for me. In my mind, a conviction on domestic violence would ruin my life.

I believe discussing this with Patricia was the first time I laid things out without regards to possible consequences or consideration for her reaction. The first time I simply told her what I was going to do with no consideration or allowance for her input.

I was going to hire an attorney. I would take any action ethical and legal to prove my innocence, including establishing Patricia's problems if required. There was no discussion. I would not hear her question any decision I made. If she did not like it we would divorce.

Patricia's response was to completely support my defense. My attorney told me that the DA would dismiss the charges if I went to counseling. Patricia and I went to counseling. The DA said that it had to be an approved domestic violence program. I began to attend one at Zia Counseling.

Patricia took independent steps to insure that we had a future together. First, she refused to go to any hearing, ignoring the subpoenas served on her. She attempted to get me to support this issue but I refused. I told her that she must make her own decision and that I would make mine. She even wrote a letter to the judge stating that it was a terrible mistake and that the officer had misunderstood her intentions.

Domestic Violence awareness had progressed to the point where judges did not listen to spouses that changed their minds about the charges, but you still had to produce the witness in court. After a failed hearing, the DA played for my attorney and I the tape of Patricia's interview on the night the police arrested me. In retrospect, I imagine the DA sought to get me to plead to the charges. I never even considered it. I knew I was innocent and naively believed that the Machine would vindicate me.

What got me off the hook was Patricia unintentionally convincing the DA that the police arrested the wrong person. She did this by calling the DA's office several times a day to talk about the case, hounding them until they realized that my version of the events had merit. They dismissed the charges before I completed the domestic violence counseling.

The telephone proved an essential aspect of Patricia's character. She called me as often as fifteen times a day. I will let one of Patricia's friends describe her experience with the process:

After about three or four months of being friends with Trish I realized that she was calling me at my home not just daily, but as much as five or six times a day. She would call to chat or to tell me the latest information regarding the children. She had a tendency to insist that the school did not understand the needs or the above average intelligence of her older children. On one occasion she called to ask my advice about Glen. I calmly suggested some way of handling the situation, but she still called me back to repeat the whole story. It didn't seem to matter if I said, "Trish, we just went through this..." It got to the point where I was getting so many calls during the day from Trish that I couldn't get anything done at home.

In addition to the DA, my attorney received a like number of calls. Maybe this is why I simply sighed when my attorney explained to me about why the DA decided to drop the case.

The incident also provided my first experience with counseling. Marriage counseling proved a complete waste of time. As is common in all areas where society intervenes in marriage, there is a presumption of parity. The counseling works from the assumption that both parties are bringing problems to the table. Add to this the typical male refusal to talk about his problems and my unwillingness to tell perfect strangers what was going on in our marriage. We ended up discussing trivial matters that did not even begin to approach the depth of the issues confronting us.

The domestic violence counseling at Zia proved entirely different. The model they employed opened up my world and provided insight into Patricia and her behavior. Before that counseling I lived in a world with very little understanding of how Patricia's mind operated. For the first time someone explained to me a little bit of Patricia's world. The counseling opened up my eyes to her need to control.

The model used was the Duluth Model that many men's groups criticize as anti-male. My perspective is tainted by the time. All of the participants in my group therapy were male and I, like pretty much every one else then, thought of domestic violence as a male issue. Personally, I believed the model described Patricia with a great deal of accuracy. I am sure I annoyed the counselors for several reasons. First, I did not progress. While everyone else in the group admitted their status as a batterer, I did not. Every time they wanted me to say 'I' or 'me' I said 'my wife'. Second, Patricia's incessant

harassment of the DA resulted in my charges being dismissed without the necessity of completing the program.

This was 1993. In 2004, we understand that domestic violence is not simply a male issue. I believe society is beginning to look at domestic violence as a family issue. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of reported domestic violence incidents occurred with children present. Seventy-seven percent of these children were twelve or under. Seventy-five percent of the adult victims of domestic violence are women. In New Mexico child abuse reports outnumber domestic violence reports by over five thousand cases annually. Domestic violence is a critical aspect of family violence. We need to stop looking at many of the individual aspects, such as gender, and look at the entire problem.

The only thing stupider than men groups attacking the Duluth model is the defense raised by the developers of the model. This is quoted from their website at www.duluth-model.org:

We still live in a sexist society where women are devalued, where many men still believe they are entitled to be in control in an intimate relationship, and where men who batter believe they have the right to use violence. While it is a goal to change the attitudes of men who batter, the ultimate goal of the Duluth Model has always been to ensure that victims are safer by having the state intervene in an accountable way to stop the violence.

Not sure I disagree; I just wish we would move past the gender issues.

The model adopts eight methods employed by an abuser to exercise power and control over her victims. Each one of these, with the exception “Using Male Privilege” described a close to daily aspect of my life with Patricia.



The Duluth Model

- *Using Intimidation* – The list includes smashing things, destroying her property, and abusing pets. The last item did not occur until after our separation.
- *Using Emotional Abuse* – “playing mind games” “humiliating her” “making her feel guilty”. Humiliation was an important tool of Patricia’s early in our marriage. She knew that I did not wish to air our dirty laundry and for years she used this threat to control me. Eventually it backfired and I stopped caring if everyone knew ‘our’ problems as I came to understand that foremost, the problems belonged to her.

I remember one time late in our marriage when I went to DC for a business trip. Patricia decided that I was treating her poorly and demanded I send flowers. I called an employee back in Albuquerque and asked him

to order the flowers so I could insure they would get there the same day. Patricia never forgave me. I could never understand why forcing someone to send you flowers makes you feel better, until I came to understand the act as a control action.

- *Using Isolation* – There was not a fifteen minute period of time in my marriage where Patricia did not know where I was and what I was doing. This level of control was close to absolute. I remember once I was visiting a client in Idaho and my cell phone was not working. Patricia called the office and demanded the client's phone number. Another employee told Patricia that if I wanted her to have the telephone number I would have given it to her. Patricia found the number online and had called the client at least twice before I even arrived.
- *Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming* – I told the Guardian Ad Litem once that Patricia could be thought of as the ultimate distorted catholic. One of the ways Patricia kept her world together was by the absolute belief that saying you are sorry erased all transgressions. There was no need to change or even promise never to do it again, simply erase all sins with an apology. Denial was Patricia's life. She actually told the bail judge that she had entered into the plot to end my life as a defense against my plot against her life.
- *Using Children* – Whenever I left the house to avoid or reduce a fight, Patricia would use the kids to beg for my return. When the divorce made me a less available target she attacked the children to get at me.

- *Using Economic Abuse* – Every job since my marriage included Patricia bringing our problems to the work place. When I started the firm, she threatened to call clients and tell them what a louse I was.
- *Using Coercion and Threats* – Suicide gestures top this area, other types of threats occurred daily. Patricia would threaten property, friendships, jobs, just about anything she could think of.

I put this information to good use. It allowed Patricia and I to stay together for the next decade. I now understood Patricia's motivation was control and that the majority of her actions and threats only worked if I allowed them to work. I started calling Patricia's bluffs and our lives improved.

My response was not a role reversal; I did not seek to 'control' Patricia. Often she would accuse me of this, of trying to set consequences for her. I believe the difference is motivation; my interest was improving our lives while an abuser becomes addicted to the control. Often, the 'consequences' were simple explanation of what would happen if Patricia acted a certain way. For example, calling my clients and telling them what a louse I was would mean I would have to spend more time at the office to repair the damage and there would be less money to spend.

I am sure at this point in time, any love I had for Patricia was gone. On the surface, the lack of love would appear to make our life worse. The truth is that it improved our lives for the next decade. I did not try to change Patricia and Patricia, once secure, changed her behavior to appear more normal.

So why did we not divorce? Why did I not file? There was a three year old son recovering from a vicious animal attack. There was a brand new daughter in frail health.

There was a father who believed divorce was evil, an abuse of family. Seeing divorce in this way also meant that a divorce so shortly after my domestic violence accusation would prove the accusation valid.

Jessica

Our daughter Jessica entered the world on March 26, 1993. I love my sons, but I grew up without sisters and always wanted a daughter. I picked out a name in high school, Christina Tinuiviel Avery. Tinuiviel is the name of Arwen's great grandmother in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. If for nothing else, Jessica is grateful to her mother for avoiding the name Tinuiviel. Patricia and I argued over the name and finally settled on Jessica Rae Avery. 'Jessica' is a double bonus name. Jessica Atriedes from Frank Herbert's *Dune* is a perfect example of the intelligent, strong, beautiful daughter I hoped for. Additionally, Shakespeare created the name 'Jessica' in an attempt to create a Jewish feminine name for Shylock's daughter in *Merchant of Venice*. 'Jessie' was the father of King David.

The doctor who delivered Glen died in a mountain bike accident a year or so after Glen's birth. We went to one of his partners for Patricia's pregnancy with Jessica. The same difficulties we experienced with Glen's birth repeated with Jessica. The only difference was the doctor. By month seven, the doctor made clear that he no longer enjoyed Patricia's company and when Patricia went into early labor in March he delivered the baby.

Unlike Glen, Jessica was three or four weeks early. They doped Patricia to the point that she was unconscious when Jessica was delivered by caesarean. I held my daughter in my arms and carried her to intensive care. It was the last time anyone held her

until her discharge from ICU. Patricia did not get to hold her until the day, a few weeks later, when they discharged Jessica. I knew Patricia well enough not tell her that I held Jessica.

Simply, Jessica's lungs were not developed. Her cousin Eli, born a few years later was a third her weight and over two months early. He went home well before Jessica. Now they give the mother a steroid shot that develops the lungs quickly.

There is nothing positive about an ICU baby except for those that go home. I visited my daughter three times a day: before work, during lunch, and after work. Each time I scrubbed and put on hospital gowns. By the time Jessica got out my hands were bloody and raw from the scrubbing. I remember they shaved her head to put an IV in and I remember how silly she looked in the incubator. At twenty plus inches and over six pounds, she appeared twice the size of the other children in ICU.

On top of everything else, there was an RSV epidemic and the hospital did not allow children to visit. Glen saw pictures but no other evidence of a sister. I will never forget his expression when he saw and held his sister for the first time. There are days when the two of them fight that I wish he would remember it.



Jessica came home after a couple of weeks and Patricia decided not to return to work. Her stated reason addressed Jessica's frail health. In addition, she was not happy at work. My mother and I did not believe she could do it, but she surprised us and settled down into her chosen role as a stay-at-home Mom.

In order to support Patricia as a stay-at-home mom, I stood ready to provide Patricia with a night out when she wanted one. Just some time to get away from the family and recharge your batteries.

Patricia wanted to see *Jurassic Park* when it came out, but she worried that it was too violent after Glen's attack. I do not like to see movies by myself, but I went to preview the movie for her. I came home and report the movie fine. Patricia went to see it a couple of days later. She came home mad; telling me she found the movie too violent, this from the women with a collection of *Nightmare on Elm Street* videos. I asked for an example of what she objected to in the movie. She named one scene.

“What about the guy the dinosaur ate in the bathroom?”

I expressed my shock, “Patricia, he was a lawyer”.

She stopped, “Oh, okay” and never complained again.

Within a year of Jessica's birth Patricia's brother Jeff committed suicide. His death occurred shortly after he lost custody of his son during a bitter divorce. Patricia and I left Glen with friends and flew out with Jessica. We stayed with Patricia's sister Donna and visited with Patricia's surrogate family for one night before our return.

At that point, I knew Patricia's brother Jeff better than anyone in Patricia's family. Jeff was an alumnus of Campbell College, where Patricia and I met, and lived only an hour away from the college. Our plans for Patricia to spend the summer with Jeff ended when Patricia called me to say that she could not live with him.

In 1988, Jeff visited us in Albuquerque and did a couple of hundred of dollars damage to Patricia's new truck. She did not talk to him for over a year. Their relationship varied on and off over the years, typically off.

They were fighting when Jeff died. After he passed away, Patricia told everyone that she spent weeks trying to get a hold of Jeff, that she sensed something was wrong.

Jeff's death hit Patricia hard and for the first time she listened to me about getting help and attended a couple of support group meetings for survivors of suicide. Out of these meetings, Patricia came to believe that suicide was not forbidden by Christianity or even wrong.

I believe Patricia believed this. I never saw it as a veiled ongoing suicide gesture. Every time we discussed this belief the context was Jeff, not Patricia.

In the summer of 1993 we made our first family trip to Disney, spending five days in Orlando. Glen was four and one-half, Jessica only a couple of months old. Disney proved Patricia's favorite vacation destination, supporting my feeling that Patricia shared the children's childhood. We proved efficient travelers and enjoyed the trip. Patricia stocked in a supply of Mickey Mouse toiletries I believe we are still using.

Glen pestered me for a Goofy hat, the hat with a nose on top and floppy ears down the side. After a couple of days, I gave in, but gave him a warning. "Glen", I explained "you know these hats are magical, right?"

"Right, Dad", the four year old looked up at me.

"Yes, they are", I looked back down at him and then pointed at the hat, "You see the nose? If you tell a lie while wearing the hat, the nose will grow and I will know you are lying".

"Right, Dad", he repeated happy to get the hat.

The hat did not leave his head for the next few days. On day two, I heard Jessica scream from the bathroom and I rushed in on her and Glen in the tub and about an inch of water.

“Glen, did you do something to your sister?”

“No, Dad”, but then he realized he was wearing the Goofy hat. His eyes shot up trying to see if the nose was growing.

Give my son credit; it took only a moment for him to realize that he busted himself.

Montie

1996 proved a big year. I started my last job before founding my firm. Glen started kindergarten. I passed the CPA exam. And, our youngest son Montie Stuart entered the world.

Patricia was determined this pregnancy would differ from Jessica’s, no premature birth this time. She succeeded and Montie was born by scheduled c-section a little after noon on August 8, 1996.

Montie was born with a birth defect and went into surgery his second day. I am not going to talk a great deal about his birth defect; it is his story and his story alone. It is physical and not mental and allows for a normal life. He is as athletic as any of his peers and frankly, does not know the specifics of this issue. All I can say is that it broke my heart and I still grieve over it.

In all respects Montie is an exceptional child in a family of gifted children. Patricia took to his preschool education with a vengeance and Montie could read by the time he turned four. His math skills are exceptional and this is his favorite area.

His older siblings are no slouches either. Jessica is one grade ahead in enriched math and Glen is on a full AP course load in high school. If Montie is further along, they actually are part of his success. Montie proved a family project. He did not walk until fifteen months because his siblings carried him everywhere and picked him up at the least hint that he might fall.

The two years before Montie's birth and the two years after proved the easiest years of our marriage. Patricia made one suicide gesture involving a friend Ruth during this time, but overall life calmed down.