

# A Swary Family Reunion With A Voice From Beyond

Today was Aunt Carol's memorial service. It was really difficult but a very nice way for friends and family to gather to celebrate fond memories and the long, hard fought battle she waged for a remarkable 7 years (even more remarkable knowing that her original diagnosis was 5).

We arrived at the funeral home around 2. After consoling Alicia and Stacy, Mom decided to sit in the most comfortable seat she could find which happened to be in the back corner. By the time the service began at 4.30, the section we sat in turned into a Swary gathering with some very old friends in the mix. I was getting tired of sitting in the rather uncomfortable chairs and Mom and I both decided that it would be nice if I went up front and sat with Diane (one of Carol's close friends and my boss) since she was all alone as her husband had to work. Good chance to pick on her.

Behind us was a woman who has seemingly completely channeled Emily or knows her just as well as I do... or more likely, both. A few weeks ago, Aunt LuAnn commented on my facebook post wishing everyone a Happy New Year by posting "What Would Mrs. Curtis Say?" (kind of like the old bracelets people would wear asking "What Would Jesus Do?"). Today, I was reminded of an escapade I undertook that ended after I exited the Ohio turnpike and came back home. How those two told me to take three months and see where I ended up. Work at McDonald's or some other job and see what happened. I told her that I am not dead yet. Let's see if this brings out some lurkers and you know who you are ☐ ! It was just scary... I swore I heard Emily talking to me in Lu's body.

Back to the service. Just like Emily, Carol had the entire thing planned. Except for a letter written by Alicia that was

so heartwarming that I lost it. Carol fought tooth and nail until her work on Earth was complete. I think the time really came to her final breath when she said she was ready to "go home."

After the service, I had to quickly pull it together as I had to song lead at mass. I was really amazed how well I did. More help from above? It was the end of the Christmas season as the Baptism of the Lord was celebrated. Thus, I sang "Joy to the World," "What Child is This?" and "Go Tell It on the Mountain." Tomorrow following 10.30AM mass, the decorations will be taken down for another year.

So... something to consider while remembering someone who was loved so greatly. Alicia and Stacy both commented how much they loved my previous post. Maybe I can get a few more comments ☐

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## **I Could Not Hear Much Of What She Heard**

Quite a switch actually sitting and watching others perform on the gem that is the Huber Opera House. Joshua had his Jr/Sr High music program tonight. Sitting in the audience, I still am in awe what a treasure we have in our neck of the woods and not too long ago it was an eyesore. Both the band and choir directors made mention of the gorgeous venue and the delight it is to perform on it (I could not agree more!).

I must commend the decision for both the Jr. and Sr. High bands to perform together! That takes some bravery. I asked Joshua how often they all practice together. They only had two rehearsals together and for that they did not sound

awful. I did enjoy "Sleigh Ride" with the whip crack and the horse whinney! "Coventry Carol" was good, too.

From what I could hear of the choir sounded pretty good, too. Unfortunately, only half of the soloist's portion of "Do You Hear What I Hear" could actually be heard. Then, suddenly, the microphone was turned on. The final two pieces, the choir's favorites, were the best. "Sleigh Ride" again and a jazzy *acapella* version of "Holly Jolly Christmas."

Following the combined High School band/chorus finale, I stood up and slipped all around the floor because a certain 6 year old accidentally spilled her popcorn.

Check out the classy shot:

✘ Tux which the music department provides. Not sure how I would feel about that but now I think it looks sharp. It sure beats having no dress code and having the few who show up in raggedy jeans and t-shirt (of course, SOMETimes that is no fault of the children).

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## The Holiday Season Can Now Begin

I have seen *Miracle on 34th Street*... not the 1947 classic, not the made for TV redux, nor the most recent big screen treatment. Tonight, I treated my sister and her two little angels to a live production. I absolutely **LOVED IT!** The entire cast was magnificent... from the smallest child, to the briefest cameo, to the big guy himself. The set was a stroke of genius. The entire production flew by. Everything that makes the classic film such a treasure was in place along with

a few added bits that were pure delights.

Since purchasing the tickets on-line Tuesday, I had been overwhelmed by shrieks of anticipation by a certain 6 and 4 year-old. Finally, the night arrived and I treated everyone to McDonald's before going to the theatre. A miracle in itself was that the girls actually were done eating BEFORE the time I said we had to head out.

During the show, Sydney was on my lap the whole time and was totally enthralled by the magic on stage. Alyssa, on the other hand, was asleep before intermission. After going down to the "confession" stand (as the 6 year old calls it), Sydney began to share her M&Ms with Megan and I. How cute was that? And on the other side of me, Alyssa was again sawing logs.

After the show in the reception line, I told the girls to go sit on Santa's lap but they wouldn't... until I apparently moved down the line. I didn't see it.. I saw some fans in the audience who asked why I was not on stage and I put in a plug for a little show coming up in a mere 5 days. **I CANNOT WAIT!!!!**

Once again... brilliant job one and all. You created the Christmas spirit in everyone in the audience and made us all believe. **BRAVO!** My favorite part as it is in the movie... I just love the little Dutch girl who hasn't a friend but sits on Santa's lap and they begin singing a song from her native land.

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# Family Time

This morning, Mom and Dad and I went to pay our respects at the funeral home. None of us could go last night so we went for the gathering before they processed to the church. We KNEW that the rather small church would not hold many people and with 10 children, 38 grandchildren, and who knows how many great grandchildren, there would not be many places available for other than very immediate family members. I was hoping to catch Britt there but she must have been running late.

After, we returned to watch Elizabeth play basketball. A riot watching the young girls begin to develop. Autumn was great although she missed a shot and her mother yelled "**USE THE BACKBOARD!**" Yep, definitely her father's daughter ☹️. I thing Elizabeth did more sliding across the slippery floor. More than once, she got the ball and OOPS... whistle blows and traveling called.

I was also asked if I would like to get tickets to *Wicked* coming in April. Of course... most musicals are worth at least a try.

And tonight, I am taking my sister and two young ladies to see the [Santa Claus](#) play. They have been asking, and asking about it and finally it is almost here. I must say that I am pretty excited myself.

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## Toboggan... t-o-b-o-g-g-a-n

Just found out that my nephew, Joshua came in second place in his school's spelling bee putting him on the next step to the National Bee. As you might have guessed, he misspelled

toboggan. As his father so eloquently pointed out, Joshua did not inherit his spelling and grammar skills from him. Definitely his math and computer knowledge.

I just am curious as to when they started taking the top two finalists on to the next level. I would have progressed not only my 8th grade year but at least my 5th grade year when the champion and I went back and forth until I finally incorrectly spelled *illegible*. My sixth grade year, I had an unfortunate slip of the tongue when I put a *g* in pajamas (still remember that). I do not remember how far I got my 7th grade year nor do I remember the word I won on my 8th grade year... go figure.

Anyway... good luck Joshua in January.

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## Back On The Hardwood

So much for retirement, eh? Tonight, my Uncle Bob returned to take command of yet another high school basketball team. He coached the high school girls for 12 years and retired. Last year, he co-coached the boys team and retired after the season ended. Finally last summer, he got the itch again while on the golf course and is now coaching the varsity girls team of his alma mater's biggest rival.

I really get a kick out of watching him perform. Very emotional, vocal, and BOY CAN HE PROJECT (of course, I have known that most of my life ☹)! Most of the family went to his return game tonight to support him... fun times, although... His team did well until the final act when the girls could not hit the broad side of a barn (the girls scored two points in the fourth frame) . The score was tied 28 a piece at the end of the third act and even through the first two or three minutes of the final period. I think the three pointer by the

opposing team took a lot of the wind out of their sails. But as Uncle Bob said, they have a lot of work ahead of them.

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## Holiday Fun & Chaos

The chaos actually began Wednesday morning. Mom was working in the beauty shop... **UNTIL 11** at which time she wanted the kitchen. At ten, Dad decides it is the perfect time to strip the counter top off. Granted, it is pretty old, worn, and could stand to be replaced... but the day before we have company over for Thanksgiving?! Oh, MY... am I glad I had to go to work from 12-9.

After my 9 hour shift, I returned to see him still at it. Mom was already in bed, but I can imagine the scene at home. I would not want to have been there ☹️. At around 11.30, he decides it is good enough and **THEN** decides to run the vacuum. At 11.45, Mom comes out, gives him a dirty look, and walks back into the bedroom... nothing even needed to be said.

Thursday morning, I got up at 8 in time to shower, bring the table and chairs down from upstairs, then watch the Macy's parade. Ironically, my favorite part of the 3 hour extravaganza is not the floats, nor the balloons. It is watching the performers from Broadway shows and singing groups seeing how badly they can lip sync. Who is Boy Likes Girl? I must be getting really old! Did anyone see Gloria Gaynor and her 30 year old "I Will Survive?"

After the parade came (not the dog show) the traditional immediate family dinner. Ma and Pa, siblings and their families. I did not indulge too much because I had two other meals to attend. I did get to see Chad and his pumpkin pie (or was it Cool Whip with a bit of pumpkin).

After digesting a bit, I ventured to another gathering. I knew I had a good amount of time between the afternoon and evening gathering so I went to the home of my wonderful friends and had smoked turkey and other delicious food. We have never had smoked turkey, but I find it enjoyable. Carol brought a game that I swear I did not cheat at. I read a few cards without looking at the answer and put them in the back of the box. It's only cheating if you look at the answer ☐ And I was treated to The Potty Movie... thanks girls. I found it quite odd that a 3 year old had a strangely deep feminine voice.

Finally, I returned home for our traditional Thanksgiving celebration with my mother's family. In total, we probably had 20-25 people in the house. It's always good to be surrounded by family and loved ones but something about the holidays makes it even greater. Maybe it's the constant ribbing Chad tries to dish out about sports but knows he is fighting a losing battle. Outnumbered about 16:1. But the Cowboys again won their gimme. Maybe that's why they always play on Turkey Day. Sorry I can't say the same for the Lions.

Finally, about 10, everyone was gone, tables and chairs put back. and I was pooped. I wanted to go back for a game night, but I did have to be at work at 6.30 this morning and I almost did not make that! Hope everyone had a great holiday giving thanks for the many blessings we receive every day!

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## Happy Post Halloween

Unless of course you are reading from some part of the world which is still living in October 31st. My holiday was EXCELLENT even with the working part. Friday, I got into my

vampire costume complete with double-layered cape, full facial makeup, tuxedo, the whole nine yards. I even got to frighten my young nieces. Poor Sydney may not speak to me for a while. As always, I had an awesome time with friends playing games all pretty loud and late, but great times!!!!

Today was another long Saturday at the store. Unfortunately, no costumes allowed... What crazy place is this?! However, I was allowed to sit on the ledge in front of the store to hand out candy... as long as I did not go overboard. Hopefully, a bag of Starburst, Baby Ruth, and an assortment of kisses, Rolo, and Reese's PBCs was not too much. I did get to see the nieces and nephews in their get ups. Shelby was a sorceress of some kind; Joshua was the ULTIMATE NERD; Elizabeth was a dark ninja; Alex was a police officer; Alyssa was a 50s chick complete with poodle skirt and a "leather" jacket I seem to recall from a show or two in years past; Noah was a skeleton; little Sydney was a cowgirl. All adorable.. here is 5 of the seven.

☒ Unfortunately, the 50s chick is not wearing the black jacket. Hope everyone had a spooktacular Halloween. And The YANKS are up 2 games to 1. 2 more wins and they will win their 27th WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP! My favorite part of Game three: pitcher Andy Pettite had a hit, RBI, and was nearly passed by Derek Jeter as the two made their way home! Final Score: Yankees 8... Philllies 5.

Now... I can enjoy my extra hour of sleep. Don't forget to fall back!

☒ Not to be outdone here are little Chloe and big sister Kyli all the way rom Alaska.

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# Spooky, Great Fun In The City

Not one, not two, but **THREE** hauntings were on tap in the Windy City Friday night. It was soooooooo cool... (so maybe not the hour long wait in the line that never moved that went on and on my friends) but even that did not damper my excitement.

First stop was the Ditka Dome for the [Haunted Mansion and Asylum](#). Our group of six was divided in half and Mare, Derek, and I went in second. This was more focused on the jump out and scare you approach... been there done that, but it was still fun. A 12' man on roller blades was interesting. As we made our way through, I was once again amazed that the inhabitants kept saying my name.

We then made our way to [Eleventh Hour](#) where we had VIP tickets. There were four attractions in one: a corn maze (nothing special), and a three segment haunted house. Even outside the haunted house, we were entertained by actors being pused in wheelchairs and a crazy British woman giving orders who was unwilling or unable to take a photo of another couple who braved the terror. The haunted house was really amazing, full of actual scenes in which the actors stayed in character the entire time. I enjoyed the "Sweeney Todd"esque character who greeted us with a history of the house. The stairs then lifted a la the Munster case without Spot the fire breathing dragon. Also inside was the much mentioned little screaming girl, a walk in freezer, a live rock band, a very disorienting maze, and an elevator of doom.

Our final stop was [Evil Intentions](#). The story line for this one had to do with an old coffin factory (if memory serves that was the actual location... was it not?) This was the spot for the dreaded wait of doom. When we finally got in, we were all placed in separate coffins before being led through the terror. A locker room separation, a crawl through vents (I was half expecting a creep to come at us), and by the middle

of the haunt, 4 of us had been led away leaving Chris and I by ourselves and eventually being required to sing a song to leave the haunt.

If I had to choose, I would say that Eleventh Hour was the scariest house of horrors because the whole thing was so elaborate that we all could tell that so much time had been put into the extravaganza. Evil Intentions minus the wait was very cool, too. And while not as memorable, I'm glad we went through the Haunted Mansion and Asylum. A frightfully good time with ghoulishly cool friends.

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## Highway Tuneage

Our two day Chicagoland adventure began yesterday around 1PM when Mare and I hopped onto the 'pike and headed west. It was amazing to me how fast we flew there. We arrived at our hotel around 3PM (according to my chauffeur's cell phone time... she did not realize that her device automatically accounted for the change in time zones).

Our journey was seemingly made even more quickly with our listening variety. I brought along my *Carousel* Score. Mary I believe said that she played the part of Cousin Nettie Flower in a production of one of my favorite musicals back in the early part of the decade. REALLY! WHERE WAS I when they staged it?! Then, we popped in some Josh Groban and by that time we were very close. So... we let "Vera" guide us the rest of the way. Little to no traffic. Surprisingly, very little construction on our side of the highway. A very fun, easy trip.

Coming back, Megan joined us on the return trip. We made a slight detour to South Bend and took a drive-by tour of the

perimeter of Notre Dame. Since it was rather rainy and a home football game, a more close up tour was out of the question. We did get a glimpse of the golden dome and Touchdown Jesus. Very fun!

One of the most interesting music selections in Mare's catalog was a CD of [Beatles](#) hits recorded by some interesting actors. Imagine Robin Williams and Jim Carey giving voice to "Come Together" and "I am the Walrus". There were lots of very interesting Beatles classics including a strangely bluesy rendition of "Hard Day's Night" by an even more interesting actress choice who none of us could figure out was Goldie Hawn. But no recording of the classic William Shatner take on "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." A very fun if at times a bit strange tribute.

All in all, a very fun trip on the road. Stay tuned for my take on the big fun in the city.

The final selection on the Beatles tribute was by the best Bond that seemed a bit odd because he stated his dislike of the Fab Four in *Goldfinger*.