

10 Years, 1 Year

December 18 marks two anniversaries of immense personal loss – 10 years ago today, my father-in-law passed away from ALS. Though some memories are still painful, a decade of time has numbed the pain of his loss a little, and it's easier to focus on the good times we shared and the countless wonderful things he did for people during his lifetime. Albeit selfishly, I sometimes wish that Vince was here to meet his 7 wonderful grandchildren, to realize our family's growing relationship with God and our spiritual journey, and to see how far his son has come in life. I think he would be so proud. [More about December 18, 2000 was written here.](#)

December 18, 2009 – Last year, on the day that was 9 years to the day after Vince's passing, our family dog Charity passed away unexpectedly. She was almost 12 years old but in seemingly good health. She was fine in the morning, gone by dinnertime. Not enough time has passed to heal the pain of her loss since she was like a child to us, but there is no reason to dwell on such melancholy topics here in the blog.

I'm thankful that I have a busy December 18 this year, that it's on a Saturday and that I don't have to spend it alone. I'm writing this ahead of time and scheduling it to post itself on December 18 automatically in hopes of maybe not realizing this day of personal infamy until it's over. Will the entire day pass without me thinking about Vince or Charity? Probably not, they and other loved ones lost hold a special place in my heart, and I think about them most every day, especially in December. But December 18 this year will have joy of its own as family comes from far away to celebrate the season. I look forward to making happy memories for December, especially for the 18th, which just happens to be exactly one week before Christmas, a day I'm really looking forward to celebrating this year more than ever. Losing Charity last year was an awful thing to happen just before

Christmas time, just as it was even more terrible to lose a parent / grandparent in our family just before Christmas 10 years ago. But when I lost Charity, and I realized that I was more curious about God's plan for me than I was looking to be angry with Him, I knew that I was on my way to having a wonderful spiritual relationship with Him.

For that, I am very thankful, and it makes me want to celebrate this Christmas season for what it truly is: a celebration of the birth of Jesus and an acknowledgment of the glorious love that God has for us.

ALS Is An Awful Disease

Well, ok, what disease is NOT awful? But ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease) robs a person of his or her motor skills and leaves their mind intact. So essentially, ALS victims are imprisoned in their own body. And ALS often strikes at a young age, and most people struggle with it for less than 3 years before it takes their life. We watched my husband's father struggle with it for over 2 years. We watched as it robbed him of his ability to walk, talk, eat and pretty much everything else. He passed away very peacefully, a week before Christmas. We were all in the room with him, and a hospital volunteer was playing Silent Night on the harp as he passed. It was beautiful, but it's still hard for me to hear that song. The reason I'm bringing this up is because the most famous victim of ALS, besides Lou Gehrig himself, is Stephen Hawking, and I was sorry to read in the news today that he is very ill.

Stephen Hawking is a brilliant scientist and an inspirational man – he has lived with ALS for over 40 years. Lou Gehrig had

it for nearly two years before he died at the age of 37. Gehrig's was a New York Yankees player, and he was forced to retire when he was diagnosed with ALS. His record of most career grand slams still holds at 23 today! We watched The Pride of the Yankees (which tells the story of Lou Gehrig) with my father-in-law after his diagnosis, and that was tough. Same thing with Tuesdays With Morrie... why did my father-in-law want to do that to himself? To get a better grip on what was happening to him, maybe? I don't know.

My father-in-law was a remarkable man. He had the biggest heart of anyone I've ever known, second only to my husband. He was kind, generous, smart, and funny. He knew a lot about everything; especially movies and religion – he had the Bible practically memorized. One of my favorite memories of him was when we took him to the zoo. It was after the ALS had already taken hold of his body, but his humor was still intact. As we were wheeling his wheelchair over a bumpy bridge at the zoo, he said, "Ahhhh" – not because the ALS had taken away his speech (it hadn't yet) but because it was a bumpy ride and he was jokingly letting the bumps affect his voice. He was taken from us too soon; I wonder what he would have thought of having 7 grandchildren? He's been gone longer than I knew him now – over 8 years. His funeral was on our oldest daughter's first birthday. But anyway... I don't know why I'm going into all of this now. Let's pray for Stephen Hawking. ALS is a terrible disease.

Tevye No Longer

I had my ultrasound yesterday, and something occurred that has left me in shock; that's why it took me a day to blog about it...

My doctor is a female who has 3 sons. Actually, 2 of her sons are the exact same age as 2 of my daughters, because our dr. was 9 months pregnant when she delivered my 4-year-old, and she was on maternity leave when her replacement doctor delivered my 19-month-old. But anyway, during my ultrasound yesterday, she was talking about how her other dr. friend came to visit over the weekend, and he has 4 daughters. He was wistfully throwing around a football with her sons and she was talking about how into sports girls are in this area, trying to console her friend because he didn't have boys. She was telling this story because we have 3 daughters and one on the way, and my husband is starting to feel like the character Tevye from Fiddler on the Roof who is famous for having 5 daughters. So anyway, the dr. gets to the point in the story where she's talking about lots of girls in our area being active in sports. All of a sudden, she kind of pauses, then she goes, "wait a minute... what's this?" Seems the ultrasound had picked up a certain little "bleep" on the radar that hadn't appeared on the February ultrasound... Seems our little Lyndsey or Evangeline is going to be Christopher Vincent instead!!!

It's especially funny because my dr. has a reputation in the area for being wrong about these kinds of things. I've heard stories of at least 5 of her patients' babies whose gender was predicted wrong; including one from the delivery room nurse I had when I delivered my second daughter. I am glad this "misdiagnosis" happened now rather than at birth, otherwise our firstborn son would be going home in pink – after 3 girls, pink and purple onsies are all I have! And in the past 24 hours since I found out, I've been looking around the house, noting how easily and unnoticeably we've emerged ourselves in pinks and purples over the years. We have pink blankies, bedsheets, clothes, stuffed animals, doll's clothes, furniture, carpet, curtains, pillows... the list goes on and on and on.

We are ecstatic; we've never had a little boy in our house, so it should be interesting to say the least. And my greatest wish of course is for a healthy baby anyway, gender is not a concern. But now that we know he's a boy, I do feel kind of lost. I've never had a boy baby before, and I had gotten into a sort-of comfort zone with my girls... I even had a nice system worked out with their clothes. The clothes that my 19-month-old was growing out of weren't even getting packed away in the basement – I was just keeping them around for the new baby to use! My girls are close enough in age where I was just putting all their clothes in one closet, and they would make the transition to the next size seamlessly – I thought I had it all figured out! The good news about the clothes is that my sister has graciously offered us the use of her boys' clothes. She has a baby who will be $2\frac{1}{2}$ months older than baby Christopher, so if we can keep the transportation line open between her home in Illinois and mine in Ohio, we shouldn't have to put our baby boy into any pinks or purples.

And that reminds me... I got my husband to promise me (somehow, we have both forgotten how!) somewhere between the last 2 baby girls that if we were to ever have a baby boy, I would get to name him Christopher after my husband. Now that it's a reality, he is getting cold feet about the name, but I am not letting him out of this one! People have suggested using Christopher as a middle name, but Vincent was decided upon way back in 1999 when my husband's father fell ill and passed away – I was pregnant with our first child when he was diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease), and we agreed that when we had a boy, he'd have the name Vincent... little did we know it would be 9 years later!

So anyway, I just wanted to share our happy news with everybody... Doctors can be wrong, and it seems our family is the latest victim of our doctor's reputable gender inconsistencies. And here is the poll we took way back when in February (before our first "gender revealing" ultrasound –

or so we thought!) of some of our family and friends' predictions. It was just for fun, no prizes or anything, but the people who thought they were right really were not (including our whole family except Taylor – good job, T!), and vice versa!

Gender Prediction – Feb. 2008

GUESSES:

Mommy – g
Daddy – g
Taylor – b
Sammie – g
Mary Beth – b
Great Grandma and Great Pa – b
Shirley – g
Keith and Trudy – g
Linda – b
Jamy – b
John – b
Elizabeth – b
Jenny – g
Tracy – g
Gerry – g
Tim and Kim – g
Austin – b
Sharon – b
Lilly – b
Vickie – g
Kristen – g
Sue – b
Megan – b
Carol – b
Grandma B – g
Cathy – b

12 guesses for girl – 14 guesses for boy

FEB 11, 2008 – ULTRASOUND / DR. says IT'S A GIRL!!!

JUNE 3, 2008 – ULTRASOUND / DR. says IT'S A BOY!!!