

TO: Tommy Nelson  
FR: Gary Heartsill  
SU: Jeanne Heartsill's Memorial Service on March 8, 2014 – "I Can Only Imagine"  
DA: 8 April 2014

As we walked out of the memorial service, hand in hand with my two loving daughters Kelly and Lisa, I shook your hand as you walked with us toward the reception and I told you, you had nailed it. The service with about 400 people attending, given the slide show video the girls put together, Jeanne's eulogy, Jan's Scripture, and your personal message for Jeanne was, well, it was just nailed. Jeanne would have been proud...and she is.

This note is to say thanks to you and the staff (especially Paula) for the kind, considerate, and lovely memorial service for Jeanne Heartsill. It went far better than I had expected. There was a feeling in the air something special was going to happen. You directed the special part...actually it was Holy. I did not know how Holy until later but this is what this memo is all about and has to do with the Crown, Cross, Crucifixion painting.

For the Memorial Service, we have gotten more than one "Wow" remark – especially from non-believers.

I will admit to you I was dreading this service; for sure, I just did not want to see everyone and especially see them at Denton Bible Church – I did not especially want them to see me cry either. I did not want to have to go through more pain and say goodbye to my wife of about 54 years because I didn't believe she could have died like she did and quite frankly I still am having problems believing; however, the girls wanted a celebration for Jeanne's life and, by God, we were going to do it up right. The girls wanted this service for Jeanne as this was her program and not ours. It was designed for the still living on earth folks and a celebration for Jeanne. And they did it.

It was nailed.

Thanks again to you for driving some of the nails. Your line "that darn stewardess [sic<sup>1</sup>] did it!" was a classic example of the humbleness we all should strive for (I will end this memo with this splendid example).

It has taken me over a month to listen to the audio and even after the first time I tried to listen to the recording I would have to shut it off...your line during the introductory remarks went "and then we will cry" was as far as I could get. Yes, we will cry. We did. Yes, we still cry. The question is when will we stop crying? I know the answer. For me and my girls it is probably never...

Half way through your talk you were saying how Jeanne's joy was in spreading the human spirit and how she had left her memories; that her memories are here. You mentioned having an Ebenezer Scrooge turn-a-round. Then you stopped and turned to your left. You paused. At that moment the

---

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew for the American Airlines word "stewardess" is "flight attendant" and depending on which airline this title varies as, for example, my ole airline Braniff Airways our flight attendants were called "hostesses."

light, life, and love of Jeanne was brought forth and you asked “Did you arrange these paintings for a certain reason? Was this the husband’s idea?...No, he can’t be that sensitive.” I want to come back to your artful insightfulness as you really nailed this with your comments on color, youth, life, and art but first some history as to how she got sick, the ordeal of 99 days, pulling the plug, and finally seeing the vision in her painting; of course, this will be the rest of the story.

### \*\*Quick History

Her illness began 14 months before she went into the 99 days at Regional in Denton, Big Baylor, rehab, and the Medical Center of Plano. She complained to the doctors with “it hurts in my throat” and the doctors diagnosed allergy, asthma, pneumonia, walking pneumonia, to mold in her lungs causing, after two bioscopies she had an open lung biopsy on November 21st. Then she got worse. She called me at 04:30 on the 26th and said "I am dying." She was placed on a ventilator with a tube down her throat on December 4<sup>th</sup> and this was the last time we could really talk with her. She was transported to Big Baylor on December 6<sup>th</sup>.

### \*\*Marked from the Beginning?

Sometime in Denton or during the ambulance transfer to Dallas she had a loss of oxygen and this event set up the downhill and unrecoverable route she took. We did not worry about this as she survived on December 13<sup>th</sup> a pulmonary thromboendarterectomy (33 staples) and we knew then she could make it. We were full of promise about Christmas (“¡Celebremos!” after the trach was put in as she was opening her eyes, sticking her tongue out at the doctors, and saying with her lips to the girls “I love you.”

“This is not a sickness unto death, rather it is for God’s glory...” (Jn 11:4).

We were told by the lead neurologists on January 1<sup>st</sup> there was no reason why she could not have a recovery. So we watched her laying on her back with tubes, probes, wires, connections, needles, monitors, bells, horns, and doctors, nurses, and technicians prodding, poking, turning, changing – while listening to the constant annoying ICU noises – while Jeanne’s body continued to be swollen, bruised, bloodied, scarred, abused, and...we just cried. We cried for her. We prayed, cried, and asked. “How much more Lord? Why does she need this? Why won’t she snap out of her state and wake up? Why won’t she get past having to use the ventilator? Why is it taking so long?”

As my journal notes reflect she could have been healed. Just one hand on her forehead and she would be well. Or, as in Mark, "He took her by the hand and said to her, '*Talitha cum,*' which means, Little girl, get up!" " As Josh Ross says in his book *Scarred Faith* “All it would take was one word from your lips” (p. 53). The Prayer Warriors were kept apprised of her weakening state toward the end as we went with “Jeanne you can make it! You are a Rock Star!” for the first 94 days. Then the loss of oxygen, in spite of her taking seizure medication we missed the signs, the doctors missed the signs and she went back into ICU and the big one (a terrible seizure it was) came and her brain was irreparably damaged. After spending 94 days of her squeezing our hands, letting us love her and take care of her, 94 days knowing she would survive we spent five days undoing her life. She had passed the tests, the EKGs, the CTs, the blood tests, and was all up to speed except for her little brain. She no longer kicked her little feet and wiggled her toes for us...she was so proud. She was doing the best she could.

But God won. We lost Jeanne. We watched the three lines on the monitor zero out as she died in my arms...and then she turned white. She was gone...God, you will have some explaining to do. Why

didn't the prayers work? Why did she have to suffer for 99 days? God, did you know all along she would not make it? God, did you tell Jeanne?

Tommy, I read your *Walking on Water* book one year before Jeanne went into the hospital back on 4 Nov 2012. You said:

“What have you hoped in that has let you down” (p. 5).

“It was the lowest point in my life” (p.66).

“If we perform well, we will live well. But guess what. It's a lie” (p.104)

“My wife was there with me through the hospital stays, the MRIs, the chest X-rays...” (p. 125).

We share a similar struggle and you won your battle over stress. Praise God. God will win in the end.

**\*\*In rehab about day 85 of 99**

At 0700 I bounced out of my bed next to Jeanne's gurney as I could see in the mirror reflection, through the still hanging Christmas lights, that Jeanne was awake. I rushed to see her looking up and she was moving her lips. She was looking up and talking to God. I knew then something was up. I knew then something was happening as I could see the tranquility in her facial expression. I knew...and it liked to have killed me. I knew she was getting her orders...she and God were talking...and I cried my heart out...God, this really hurts.

**\*\*Back to the Service – When you turned (Light, life, and love...)**

You said “I had no knowledge of her art...she is artsy. I didn't know she was this good...Every picture is the same: young ducks, young girl, young boy, flowers in bloom. The paintings are all bright” and with 18 minutes to go on the audio you said “Except for the one that is central.” You explained hanging for six hours in torture, shattering the trivia, and strangling in your own juice. You pointed out the bottom was dark, the top was light with the crown of thorns “odd in between ducks and children, this implement of torture...the centrality of her life” and you said she died and came to life.”

And now the rest of the story. In the dark you can see the Sheppard leading his sheep. Top left shows perhaps a heavenly scene with a dove, rays of light, angels' maybe, and a face (a face of God or some one?). The cross with drops of blood. And then a young lady – with maybe her reflection?

I want to share a clip of my journal in this area and say (in part for my girls too – we fought this battle together and I love them more now than the day they were born – we grew close to Jeanne in these 99 days and we hurt. We cry. We hurt and we cry and we walk with a limp. This is deep grief. We have had our faith scarred by God. As Ross said (p.46):

*I can hardly wait to understand all this  
God...you've got some explaining to do*

My journal says:

“It happened about 2:00 o'clock today (Lisa's birthday - March 21<sup>st</sup>). I came as close as I have come to losing it. This time it was a “Pow!” Have been able to cry a bit, and go on or maybe respond to a trigger event and sob awhile, but today took me to my knees. I should have paid more attention to Jeanne's work – and I didn't.

I was moving her paintings back where most of them belonged starting with the three of the grandkids in the hall way and then picked up the crown of thorns on the cross and hung it on the yellow wall remembering someone (Lisa maybe?) saying there was a face in it. I stopped to find it. Yes, the girl's face is looking up. I remember I had seen this before! Yes, I have seen that face.....Oh, my God!....It is Jeanne! It is Jeanne and she was talking to the Lord! Early that morning just after I woke up at the rehab I saw Jeanne talking to the Lord - it was this same expression. Damn near killed me to see her...This was Holy. Something was happening. I knew then something was going to happen. I cried then - and I am crying now.

Jeanne had painted the scene four years before she experienced this cross event. That is her face. Those drops of blood are hers. She is looking up at Jesus...she knew this was going to happen...Please Jeanne forgive me...I should have asked, I should have looked, I should have cared - but didn't. She spoke to me through her work and now I am humbled. And now I am sick. I am so ashamed of not listening and loving her more. She was there all the time and I wasn't.

"God Bless you Momma Jeanne...Oh God, I am so sorry."

\*\*Postlude

I know where Jeanne is and I know what she is doing. In a written note on her night stand she asked God to heal his sick servant. Well, he did. If you want to see her you can. She is watching the greetings at the west entrance at church across from her greeting partner Bill James. Jeanne is standing bare footed in her hospital gown (tied in the back) waving to every one with her bruised right hand while her swollen left hand steadies the roll-along portable that is holding her oxygen bottle. She is standing a few feet north out of the way but she is smiling her smile and you can see the twinkle in her eyes - you can even see the top of her resplendent scar on her chest. She is so pretty and still not a wrinkle on her face. She is so happy!

Jesus is standing behind her. He has come for her. Her mission here is complete.

One card sent to Kelly, Lisa, and I, said:

**"We wish time spent with those we LOVE could last FOREVER...and in our HEARTS it will."**

Another said

**"Jeanne went from your arms into the arms of Jesus"**

while inclosing a letter asking to **"please wipe away that tear: For I am spending Easter with Jesus this year."**

And

**"Each one of us must release the hand of one we love into the hand of One we have not seen."**

Finally,

***There simply are no words...***