

Dear Friends and Relatives,

While my wife, Cindy, is making every effort to send out personal thank you cards and letters to as many people as she can, I know there are literally thousands of people from around the world who have shared love and prayers with our family. Therefore, while this is not as personal as we would like I want to reach out to tell you all how important and valuable your support has been to us. We want to thank you from the bottom of our currently broken hearts. Each and every one of your flowers, cards, emails, phone calls, donations, condos, food, hugs and prayers have strengthened our family during this time of grief.

When Cindy and I arrived in Lexington on Sunday, the day of Connie's death, I went to the coroners' office to hold my baby. I have never done anything more difficult yet there was nothing that could have kept me from hugging her and kissing her one last time for the whole family. We had spent most of the time between the phone call from the hospital late Saturday night and the memorial service on the University of Kentucky campus crying and holding each other. It took the amazing power of the love we felt by the hundreds of students, teachers and friends who assembled with only a few hours notice to honor Connie. The strength Cindy and I drew from the love in that room and from the hugs of so many who stayed to share with us a moment of the joy that they had shared with Connie during those short seven months in Kentucky. My special thanks to all of you who accepted Connie into your hearts during her first year at college.

The support that began with the UK Memorial service expanded rapidly as news of Connie's death spread through the media and word of mouth. People reaching out to our family with love and prayers continued to add to our strength. The Memorial service in Park City with more than 700 people in attendance was an amazing outpouring of love and prayers continued to give our family a sustaining strength.

Connie was a very special girl with energy and passion that enlightened and sometimes challenged us all. She had a smile that was infectious and constant. The quote on her website was truly the motto she lived by: "Smile! It is the simplest way to share joy." She had time for everyone she met and was always trying to help someone, somewhere, somehow, whether playing matchmaker for a friend or towing someone out of a ditch with her monster F350 turbo diesel, which she manhandled like a pro. Connie was independent and yet very close to her family. I don't think there was a day that I did not have at least a half dozen phone calls or text messages from Connie sharing her day with me and always asking me about mine.

I would love to tell you story after story from Connie's short but amazing life, but I will only share two brief stories that share her bravery. When we were in Durango, Colorado, Connie was just nine and her older brother Thor who was twelve had gone out riding on our ATV while Cindy and I visited with friends. About 30 minutes later Connie came running back to the house screaming for me to come save Thor. We jumped in the truck and raised off in the direction Connie led us as she gasped to get her breath. We got as close as possible by truck and ran the last half mile. When we got to Thor is he was

sitting on the back corner of the ATV holding onto a tree as the ATV teetered on the edge of a small cliff. Connie had run a mile and a half through unknown woods to get help for her brother.

More recently, as a senior at Park City High, Connie was driving down the street by our home and saw a neighbor's Border Collie that weights about 35 pounds being attacked by two large Akitas. Without thought of her personal safety, Connie stopped her car in the middle of the road and lunged into the fray of fangs and fur. Within seconds she was holding the bleeding Border Collie in her arms protecting it from the attacking dogs.

Connie may have been small and sweet, and always smiling, but inside of her body was a heart, spirit and passion that seemed more like a case of dynamite when exposed, as many a horse and teenage boy quickly found out.

Our family is struggling with the conflict between the body and the spirit, as I am sure you are as well. Our earthly being is grieving from the immense loss of a very special loved one while our spirit is joyous that Connie is in heaven. Our faith assures us that Connie is not only in heaven but that she is surrounded with the heavenly love and joy of God that we cannot fully comprehend. We all ask ourselves, "Why?" We all ask ourselves if there was something we could have done to have prevented this tragedy. I have no answers for myself, for my family or for you, except the answer God gives us in the Bible. Psalm 139 clearly tells us that God has a plan and that in his Book his plan was written for when Connie would go to him. Faith, not logic or wisdom, but faith is what brings us to God. As a math major, an engineer, a computer guy, it is easy for me to think in terms of mathematical formulas and logic, but the Bible reminds us in 1 Corinthians 1:17 where Paul tells us, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect." God saves those who believe. So while we don't understand, let our faith be strong. And while we grieve, we must also find the time and the strength to celebrate Connie's presence with God for eternity. And through that faith we know that Connie will be waiting to greet us with that same beautiful, powerful, infectious smile when God's plan for us is also realized. Revelations 19:11-14, "Now I saw heaven opened, behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True...His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean followed him on white horses." When Jesus returns, Connie will be with him, dressed in white linen, riding a white horse.

Thank you for letting Connie touch your lives, and thank you for touching ours.

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