

People





BOO

My name is Billie Jo. I have this cousin named Vance but everybody calls him Boo. He is my best friend. He is always with me and even stays with me in the summertime and on the weekends. My daughter, Paige, loves him to death. He does a lot with her. You would just have to see him with her to really get the picture.

I was sitting at home one day when I got a call that Boo had been in a car accident. I instantly started crying. Nobody knew how bad it was because the police wouldn't give out any information until they talked to his mother, my Aunt Tammy. The family got together at my grandmother's and waited to hear something. Then the phone rang. It was my Aunt Tammy saying Boo was gone.

"Oh my God!" My life just crumbled. I couldn't believe my 16-year-old cousin and best friend left me. I cried for three days before the funeral. The day of the funeral came, and I thought it would be worse on me. To my surprise, the funeral turned out really nice. It helped me. After seeing that he was at peace, I came to terms with the fact that he was really gone. I bought him a flashlight because he was afraid of the dark.

Well, it's been five months since Boo's death, and it's getting a lot easier. I still miss him everyday of my life. I know he is still with us in his own way. I go out to the gravesite and talk to him often. It kind of eases the pain.

Billie Jo Eakle

ANNABEL LEE

A rap inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's poem

Annabel Lee, ooh wee, died near the sea
Her boyfrien' was so hurt he wept endlessly
Many rushing tears
She lived just a few years
A fine young maiden made his heart filled with glee
But she had to go, yo
Her family couldn't find
The doctors had no reason
What the wind had in mind.
Oh she passed away, oh the cold was unkind.

Open your eyes, tell me what did you see?
My GED teacher ran a copy for me
I had to find out about the tragedy
It reminds me of the death of John F. Kennedy
I read the poem oh, yo
It made me cry too
If I didn't know better I'd be mad also.
Why she had to go
I really don't know
I wish I had the cure to clear her throat though.
I saw in the poem that Annabel Lee
Meant so much to her whole community
I have to tell her family to still live in peace
Because Annabel Lee rests near the sea.
Her boyfrien' will always live in grief
That's why my freestyle is surely so brief.

Jessica Crawford

GHETTO GIRLS

Female, Ghetto Female
What does this means?
Do you really understand?

Hard and tough
Acting a trip
Wanting to flip

Gotta lay low
Gotta make a show
Puts on a smile
If she wants attention
Puts on a frown
To keep you away

Cigarettes for a nickel
People out and about
Six people in two bedrooms
Too much conflict inside

Better handle your business
Take care of yourself
Keep everything in check
Know how to protect

Be bout it about yours!
Life's too short, just roll some dice!

Tonshal Butler

THANK GOD FOR GRANDMA

I was only two years old when my mother passed away. I can't really remember her because I was too young. My grandmother used to tell me stories about my mother and what a great woman she was. She always went out of her way to help others.

After my mother passed away my father and my grandmother raised me. I wasn't really told anything until I was old enough to understand. I loved my grandmother and always thought of her as mom. She was there for my sisters and me and loved and took care of us like we were her own.

I'm twenty-seven now, and my grandmother passed away in 2001. I wouldn't trade my childhood for anything in the world, thanks to my grandmother.

Judeleena Wenning

MY HAPPY DAY

The day my father came home from a prison was the happiest day of my life.

In 1975, after the Vietnam War, South Vietnam was lost. The Communists imprisoned my father because he was a Second Lieutenant Policeman of South Vietnam. At that time, I was seven years old. I missed him so much, and I prayed for him everyday with the hope that he would come home soon. Day after day, month after month, year after year, my mother, three brothers and I waited for good news about him. We hoped and prayed that the Communists would discharge him. We didn't hear anything; we didn't know how long or when he would come home.

One day in December 1980, my father came home from the prison. I was very happy! When I saw him, I could not say anything. My eyes were tearing although I was smiling. I thought my heart would burst with joy.

The day my father came home, my grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, and neighbors came to our house to visit my father. Everyone was very happy. My father was busy talking with his guests. Our house was filled with many people and much joy.

After everyone left our house, we had a family dinner together. My father told us many stories. We ate and talked joyfully. I felt so happy because for a long time, I hadn't had a dinner with my whole family.

That was the happiest day of my life. From that day until now, my father stayed with my family. We now can always have dinner together to talk with each other and to share many things.

Anh Phuong Nguyen

GRANDMOTHER'S FLOWER GARDEN

I came from a large family of four girls and two boys. Our grandparents lived in the downstairs apartment, and we lived in the second floor apartment.

During the times that our mother worked out of our home, our grandmother took care of us. We loved and trusted our grandmother, who was a very dear, sweet, Christian lady. We were expected to obey her wishes. She often told us that if we did not obey her, she would report our behavior to our parents and we would be in big trouble and get a spanking.

One of the many restrictions we had was to not go into her flower garden. Her garden was very well kept. She would work the ground; she kept the weeds pulled and kept the larger bushes trimmed so that enough sunlight could get to the blooming plants. It was so well kept that it was very easy for her to tell if anyone or anything, for that matter, had been among the plants.

During the early spring, often after a light snow, the crocuses would pop up in different spots in the yard, showing their colors of bright yellow and purple tones. Soon thereafter, the Lilies of the Valley, with their fragrant little white bell shapes, would appear. We always thought of them as pretty little things; however, they made cute little chains to put around our necks and bracelets for our wrists. We were reminded that they were not to be touched; however, we did not obey and we were in trouble.

Then came the tulips, tall and slender, with little egg shaped blossoms on top. Each day the blossoms seemed to open a little more than they had the day before, then close as the sun went down. They were a mystery to us and, of

course, we had to examine them by pulling the petals off to see the inside. When our grandmother saw petals on the ground, she knew that we had been in her flower garden. She warned us again to stay away from the flowers; however, we were in trouble again.

As the summer months came, we watched the roses grow daily as they climbed the fan-shape trellis. Roses were her favorite. By then you would think that we had had enough scoldings and spankings to just let them bloom and enjoy their beauty. Not so. Who could resist plucking a red rose, smelling a white rose, or putting a yellow one in your hair? What fun it was to pluck the petals, put them all in a box, then throw them up in the air and run under a shower of petals. That did it! We were in worse trouble than ever before. When our parents finished with us, our little butts were so sore we couldn't sit down, and we had to stand at the dinner table that evening.

Now that I am older, I realize the pride and joy our grandmother had in caring for her flower garden and the beauty of it all. It truly was not a place for six mischievous children to explore. I'll never forget my grandmother's flower garden.

Rose M. Buckner

THE FIGHT SHE COULDN'T WIN

It was two years before my sister planned to get married. We were getting things ready and helping her plan for the big day. Betty was feeling really sick. She kept going back and forth to the doctor, but they always said nothing was wrong. Then about a month later she started throwing up blood. We took her back to the doctor, and he found a tumor on her liver. In November of 1991 they took the tumor off and 60 percent of her liver. The doctor said she wouldn't live six to eight months. Betty decided to put the wedding on hold for a little longer. They said she had liver cancer. They started her on chemo right away.

Three months later Betty came home from the hospital. That was February of 1992. She had a tube in her chest. My mother, father or I gave her medication through the tube. We always had to give her medication so her blood would clot and she wouldn't bleed to death.

In July of 1992 the family took a trip to Florida. We went to Cocoa Beach. Betty and I watched the sun go down. The following day we went to the alligator park. A week later we went home. Betty just kept getting worse.

One night Betty, my other sister Jen, and I talked about the past and how we used to sneak guys in our bedrooms. Betty and Jennifer would blame it on me. We made a videotape of us singing and playing around. Then Betty would get sick and start hurting. My mom would make Jen and me go to bed. I would be in bed crying and hear Betty yell and scream in pain. It went on for months. After that, October came along, and it was my sister's 17th birthday. She was in the hospital having chemo done. We had a party for her in Children's Hospital.

December came and we were getting ready for Christmas. I fell asleep one night and woke up having a nightmare of my sister dying, so I went down to her room and watched her sleep. Then Christmas day came, and we all opened our gifts. Betty had to get ready to go back to the hospital for chemo.

The New Year came in 1993. We were all at the hospital getting ready to come home and have a party. Betty, Jen, and I stayed up all night watching scary movies and eating popcorn. We talked about everything, Whoever fell asleep first would get their underwear taken off and put in the freezer. Needless to say I lost that one. My underwear ended up being put in water and then the freezer. Betty and Jen then took them and put them on the tree in our front yard for everyone to see. Everyone and their brother saw my underwear. I have never been able to live that down to this day.

On April 13th, Betty became very ill, and we had to call the ambulance to come and get her. She fell into a coma on April 16th. She woke up long enough to tell us she wanted to go home. I was by her bedside all night and all day. Then on April 18th I was holding her hand; she opened her eyes and looked at me like she was telling me goodbye. I grabbed her and said it's going to be all right and said, "I love you sis." She grabbed my hand tight and died in my arms. She never gave up; it was just a fight she couldn't win.

Paulina Foor

I AM

I am a man who is looking for a job.
I wonder if anyone has read my resume?
I hear the sound of my phone like the ring of hope.
I see the open doors of a company welcoming me.
I want to get a comfortable interview.
I am a man who is looking for a job.

I pretend once a day that I got that job as a designer or
drafter.
I feel so happy as if I won a special lottery.
I touch my keyboard to draw an object like a pianist plays a
song.
I worry if the company will keep me working for them or not.
I cry when I hear of people losing their jobs and businesses
after September 11th.
I am a man who is looking for a job.

I understand it takes a long time to get a job.
I say to myself, "Calm down, you will get it later."
I dream I will become a good designer.
I try to do my best to get and keep that job.
I hope to get a job that will use my newly acquired computer
skills.
I am a man who is looking for a job.

Cong Luong

THE LONELY OAK TREE

The oak tree stands proud among the other trees in the woods. But on one lonely day, the oak tree stood alone even though the other trees were there weeping with sorrow. For the oak had lost a precious child, a little girl.

She was brought into their cruel world and taken away breathing only one breath of air. Does the tree shake or weep with sorrow, or does he stand strong to keep the other trees from breaking down and falling with despair? The mighty oak stands alone, strong for the other trees, although he was trembling and weeping inside for the loss of his precious child.

I know of the oak, for the oak is me. I stood alone with a sorrow in my heart for my precious little girl I'll never forget. Every time I see a mighty oak standing in the woods, proud and strong, it will remind me of the day I lost my precious little girl.

In Memory of Kayleen Chevelle Eaton
Love, Daddy

Louis Eaton

A SPECIAL LADY

You are a star shimmering in the night;
Upon the dark lake's waves you shine so bright.
You cradle my hope in your hand when my life seems so lost,
Like a flower's relief escaping the frost.
Life is like nature so cold then warm;
On a sunny spring day along comes a storm.
The wind so harsh, the rain so cold,
Coming down like needles until the green leaves fold.
You have taken the baby birds and taught them to fly,
Yet you know the day will come when they all say goodbye.
You'll set them free perched up so high
Like a beautiful orange-lit sunset leaving the sky.
Leaving with a smile, memories of a happy face,
In your heart they all hold a special place.
You've touched so many lives,
Yet you've chosen this life of obstacles and strife.
You teach your students to never give up.
If you only taste the tea grounds, you'll never drink the cup.
No one can ever repay you for everything you give,
They can only use what you taught in the way they live.
This instructor who cares for so many,
This goes out to a special lady named Jenny.

Thank You!

Wendy Martin

A SPECIAL GRANDFATHER

I wish I could spend a day with my Grandfather So. In my native country, South Korea, my grandfather was a hero. When the Japanese took over South Korea, my grandfather was beaten to death in a concentration camp. He was only thirty-five years old. Every March first, the Korean White House sends a gift to my family in honor of him. There is a six-foot cement plaque honoring him in Kang Yong City, which is near my parents' home. The plaque tells the story of my Grandfather So, and how he fought for his country. Other men he fought and died with are also honored. When I was little and would pass this plaque on the way to school and the market, I would feel special because I was his granddaughter, the granddaughter of a South Korean hero.

Because I never met him, I wish I could spend time with him so I could tell him how proud I am of him.

Kum Sun Kim

MY GRANDMA AND GRANDPA

My Grandma's name is Dessie Pearl Clark. She was born in Kentucky on April 13, 1913. My grandma was saved at the age of 13. She loved going to church. She loved to read her Bible, and she loved to pray. My grandma did a lot of praying.

When my grandparents met, my grandpa was not a Christian, but my grandma changed that. They were married, and my grandfather worked and worked. My grandfather became a minister, and he preached all over. My grandma told me that when my mother, Jeanine, was little they lived in a tent for a while. My grandma told me when they lived in the tent, she was praying and she saw a vision of God. And all of us grandkids believed her. That was amazing to us.

All of us grandkids called our grandparents Nannie and Pa. When my grandparents bought a house, my grandfather built his first church. The name of the church is Pleasant Valley Church of the Nazarene.

All of us grandchildren loved to go to church and listen to my grandfather preach. And when they sang, you could hear my grandma. She had a high voice. I liked to hear her sing "Amazing Grace."

When my grandparents went to Kentucky, I would go with them. I loved that. One time, my grandma had an old dog. It chased me around the house, and I screamed. My grandma gave me honey to calm me down.

My grandfather became a life insurer. I remember one time we were driving, and you know how some highways have a road going around? My grandpa said, "Susie, I went roun' the ben'. Did you see Ben?" I laughed.

My grandparents were married for 50 years. They lived a good life. My grandma died August 16, 1989. She had a disease called Parkinson's. It is a disease in the bone that eats up the bone. It will make you shake. That disease was what took my grandma.

My grandfather suffered badly when he lost his wife. We took care of him. He became sick, and five years later he died. There is something I will never forget. When my grandpa was sick in the hospital, Saint Elizabeth's, we went to see him. I told the nurses if anything goes wrong call me. One week later I got a phone call about 3:00 in the morning: "You need to get here." I tried everything. I had no money and no way to the hospital. I went to my friend's house. She gave me money for a taxi, but it took too long so I had to wait for a bus. By the time I got there, he went into a convulsion and died. The doctor said he didn't suffer. This lady asked me if I wanted to see my grandfather. I said yes, I want to say goodbye, and I did for me and my mother. I kissed him and hugged him and said goodbye.

Susan Fisher

CHILDREN

They make you laugh
When you want to cry.
They give you comfort
When you have pain.
They keep you awake
When you want to sleep.
They bring you up
When you are down.
They keep you going
All day long.

Shalisa Nash

MEET SARAH. SHE IS SPECIAL, JUST LIKE YOU

Let me introduce someone special. This is Sarah. She is eight years old, an individual with special needs. Do you know who I am? I am the mother of Sarah.

Oh, you saw her at school. Are you asking who is that person usually with Sarah at school? She is Mrs. Red, the educational interpreter. That means she is a qualified sign language interpreter. She helps Sarah learn at school, just like your teacher Mr. Blue or Mrs. Yellow does, but in a different way.

Oh, you see Sarah playing with her hands a lot? Those particular hand movements, fist brush down against her hair from top of head to over the ear, are a sign for her name, "Sarah". And bending fist up and down a few times means "yes". She must be saying that she was agreeing with someone or something. As you see she can say some words but saying the sound of /s/ is hard for her. Well, not only the sound of /s/, she has great difficulty saying many sounds or words. When she can't articulate words or sounds, she uses sign language. Maybe you can help her learn to speak by talking slowly and clearly.

Do you wonder is Sarah deaf? No, she can hear just like you. She can hear well--even little whispering that I did not hear. I found out by a hearing test at the University of Akron. She just can't talk like you. Sometimes she does not respond right away as you do. But don't feel bad. Sometimes it takes her a while to understand what she is hearing, so you need to wait for her by counting to ten. It will be helpful if you talk to her when she is looking at you, so she can understand you better. She is a visual learner.

Huh, you think it's not fair Sarah has her own computer toy at school? Well, that dark pink square with the touch screen is not a toy. It is an Alternative Augmentative Communication tool. That device named "e-talk" is programmed with words, sentences, or music. Sarah uses it to communicate with people just like you use your voice.

Do you know how many ways she can ask for something from me? She can say words, which are hard to understand. She can ask in signing or finger spelling where she spells every single letter with her fingers. She can type words in the computer (or on the typewriter) just like the way she takes spelling tests in her 2nd grade class. She may be able to write with a marker, but her handwriting is not legible. She can use "e-talk" to speak for her. Or she can take my hand to show me what she wants, just like your little sister or brother does.

There are different ways to talk. What is the most important thing to communicate? I think it's from my heart to your heart, your heart to Sarah's heart. When I look into your eyes, I can see how you feel. You can see how Sarah feels. Sometimes, you don't need to say it. Sometimes you might be able to feel when someone needs a gentle hug, or a big bear hug. Treat others as you want to be treated. Is it hard to do?

Sarah likes to play, to dance, to do 200-piece puzzles, to go to school, to take field trips especially to the aquarium or beach! She likes to go swimming (even though she can't swim); she likes walking in the park. She enjoys reading books, listening to music, and watching movies with popcorn or candy. She loves McDonald's or Burger King, Sailor Moon, Powerpuff Girls, Digimon, and Disney. Do you like those things just like she does? Then you could do the same things together, as friends. Helping and sharing

something with someone is very special, and it makes you feel happy.

You are special. Sarah is special. Each of us is someone special.

Fumiko Adair

YES, JOHNNY, THERE IS A SANTA CLAUS

My 9-year-old son and I had just snuggled up together within our oversized easy chair to watch the classic animated Christmas show, *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*. As we watched with familiarity, knowing exactly how it ends, out from his lips popped the inevitable question, "Mommy, is Santa Claus real?" Thinking quickly, I remembered how I had handled this situation when dealing with my older daughter's curiosity.

All the while, I was aware of the fact that I would be asked to reaffirm my response with a "Promise to God, Mommy?" You see, in my house when we must know if a person is being truthful, we often check by asking the person to promise God; you *never ever* break a promise to God, so if the truth cannot be told, then the promise to God cannot be made.

As I stammered and searched for my words, I felt his wide eyes intently fixed on mine. I said, "Yes Johnny, there *was* a Santa Claus, and that story on TV is true; but you know that no one lives forever. Santa Claus lived for a long time, and he did many wonderful things for both children and adults. People were so sad when he died that they started doing the things that Santa had done. They began to help other people and sneak toys and gifts into children's socks that were hanging up to dry on the fireplace. Then, it just kind of took off from there."

Johnny's dark brown eyes were swollen, damp, and still beckoning with question; I knew I had to continue.

"As the years went on, parents everywhere just kept tradition going in the name of Santa Claus and all that he stood for."

"So... YOU are Santa Claus?" he asked with revelation.

"Yes, and isn't it wonderful that it keeps going on and on?"

As he agreed, I quickly chimed in as I could tell there were hints of doubt or sadness, "How would you like to help me play Santa Claus this year?" His eyes lit up like a Christmas tree.

"Yes!" he squealed. I explained to him that there is a family nearby that did not have much, and their children would not be able to have very many Christmas presents that year. We could be Santa and buy some toys, wrap them up, and put them into a red bag. Next, Johnny's job would be to leave the bag at their door, ring the bell, and run as fast as he could before being spotted. The mere thought of this idea excited him so much that he couldn't wait to begin.

I will always remember the Christmas of 2001 as the year that Johnny learned that there really is a Santa Claus, and Santa will live in Johnny's heart from this day on.

Rebecca Morehouse

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

As I was leaving for school, I started out the drive. I forgot something, so I pulled back up. I got out of my car. I heard a tire squeal and looked up and saw a car flip in the air. I took off running to the vehicle. There were two vehicles – one upside down. I ran to one and the person inside was alive. I told him not to move; I had help coming. I ran over to the other vehicle. I noticed it was a young blonde-haired girl. She wasn't moving. Her car was torn in half. I felt for a pulse and could not get one. I looked around for someone to help me, but no one was around yet. I felt scared, but I knew I had no time to lose. Every minute was critical with no time to waste. I began to talk to her, rubbing and patting her leg, telling her to hold on. I was going to help her. I had air care coming. I felt this closeness to her and yet, I felt so helpless. I tried to do CPR on her. I believed her neck was broken and her condition was very serious.

I looked up as I heard a voice say, "There's nothing you can do, she is dead." It was a neighbor who came out of her house. She had paramedic experience. I told her this was someone's child, and I couldn't quit. I had to try and save her. I continued to talk to her and pat her, assuring her I was there with her in case there was some kind of chance. The life squad and the police came and asked me to move away from her. I told them I couldn't leave her yet. I still needed to do something. The police walked me away from her, and I began to pick up all the things that were thrown from her car – her air freshener, her make-up, papers, stuffed toys, deodorant, broken items. I gathered them together and went to hand them to a police officer. He told me they didn't care about that junk. I felt hurt because, as a mother, I knew those items would mean something to her mother.

I stood there in shock and felt so helpless. I kept retracing my every step in my mind and asking myself if I could have done something different to save her. I cried all day and was so distracted and felt so empty. I went to my doctor's office and told her the story. She told me the girl was a patient of hers, and she was her mother's only child. She then asked me if I would talk to her mother, that she would want to talk to me.

I told the mother I gathered up all her things in a bag and had them at my house, along with a picture of her I found in the ditch later. The mother had a lot of questions for me. I answered all of them the best I could. She asked me how soon I got to her. I told her as soon as the car landed. She said, "God bless you. I didn't want her to die alone." I assured her that she didn't, that I was there with her. She thanked me over and over again and told me I was her daughter's guardian angel, sent to be with her as she passed through this life so she wouldn't go alone. I told her I was there holding her hand and God was on the other side holding the other. Later I had learned that I had fixed her hair for last year's prom and the picture I found in the ditch was her prom picture.

I don't know the reason for me being there, but I'm now glad I was there to be her guardian angel. I will always wonder if I was sent from God to be with her.

Vickie Hargraves

A FATHER'S LOVE

Before you bring a child into the world, the love of its father is already present. During the nine months of pregnancy, a father can feel the baby's love close to his heart.

As a newborn takes its first breath of air, the joy of happiness runs down a father's face. As friends and family come to see the new child, a proud happy father shows him off to the world for the first time.

The first time a father holds his child, you can see the love of the child and feel the bonding that occurs. As he holds his child and they make eye contact, you can see the bonding occurring.

When the day comes to take the new family home, the new father's love for his child is so great that it looks like he is walking on air.

After a long hard day of work, a father comes home to his child, sits down, and rocks him to sleep. As the child sleeps in a father's arms, he sings to his son, a song of his love for him.

When a child takes his first steps, a loving father is there to help him so he doesn't fall. As the child learns to walk, his father is always there for him.

When a child starts to talk, a proud father is present to listen to him. It's one word, then two, and then it's a small sentence. If a child becomes sick, a father is there with his love to nurture him back to good health.

As a child starts to ride a bike for the first time, a father is there beside him to help if he is needed. All summer long that

father watches his son play and ride his bike so if his son needs him he will be there.

Now it is the first day of school, and a little boy gets on the bus for the first time. Tears run down the father's face. He knows that his little boy has grown up, and he can't be by his side to help him. The little boy may look back and say, "It's OK dad. I love you."

After the first day of school is over a little boy runs up to a father with a book in his hand. "Dad, can you read to me now?" "Yes, son," as the young boy jumps into the Dad's lap with a book. The Dad starts to read to his son like he did before. Then the boy says, "Dad, are you sure that's what the words are on this page?" "No son, I can't read very well." "That's OK, Dad. I will be by your side to help you, if you need me Dad." As time goes by, the love of a father and son grows as they learn to read together.

Dale D. Sherman

