

# *Woven Memories*



### THE UNREAD LETTERS

Five years ago I sometimes helped my husband clean out the mobile home rentals that he owned after the people had moved out. One day my husband told me there was an empty trailer to clean, so I went there. I was surprised when I went in and saw that almost everything was still there. People usually leave things everywhere in piles like trash. In this one some clothes were on the floor, but the place looked almost clean. It seemed to me that the people who used to live there took their important things and just left. Who had lived here—a man or a woman? I continued my inspection in the bedroom. There were all kinds of baby dolls and different sorts of toys for baby girls. I started feeling sorry for them because everything I saw appeared to be placed there with love.

That day I did not move anything. I just left the place and went to find my husband to ask him about it. He said that the girl had just called him and said that she and her husband were through and that she had to go to her father's house to live.

My husband hired someone to take everything out of the house and burn it. But before it happened, I went back. I still had the same sad feeling as I had the first time I was there. I decided to take the baby dolls with me. As I was leaving, I saw some letters with different dates on them. I assumed she had written them, but I was unable to read them because I didn't know English very well at that time. I took them with me, too, because I thought somebody might come back for them, and I could return them. But nobody ever came.

During the next three years I went to Hocking College and took two quarters of English. After that I went to the ABLE class in New Lexington, learned more English and passed the

GED test. This past summer I took a two-month break, so that gave me the opportunity to do a thorough house cleaning. When I was cleaning the basement, I found the big bag with the baby dolls in it. The letters were there, too.

Immediately the memories came back to me of the day I had that sad feeling in the mobile home. I picked up the letters, now able to read them. One by one I read them and cried because I could picture myself in those letters. My own past was there. I remembered being married to my first husband and my struggle as a young bride and mother. This girl was so deeply in love with her husband that everything she did was for him and her family. She used to write him letters, as I used to write in my diary and say the same romantic, silly words. She had two girls, and I had two boys. It was amazing to me that we were struggling with the same feelings. I had no way of knowing those many years ago when I was looking through my window waiting for my husband to come home, that in another time and another place a young woman would feel the same way. Cultures view romance in different ways, but love is universal and the fear of losing love is the same the world over.

I really don't know what happened to this family. I wish them the best wherever they are. But one thing I know is that I will make some dresses for the baby dolls and find a little girl who will be a mother to them.

*Emily Nutter*

## JAVIER

December 23, 1979, a gorgeous baby boy was born. His name is Javier G. Lara Jr. He has two older sisters, and a brother, from a previous marriage on his mom's side. The mother that gave birth to him didn't go to the hospital, like most people do. She stayed at home to have the whole family there for this blessing. She was full of grace and joy to see her baby boy. The Father that was there to see the whole thing come into light says that he wants to give his son his name.

Years have passed and now Javier Jr. has three younger sisters, all as beautiful as he. He has grown into a handsome man, a father, an uncle, and a FRIEND.

Javier had his hobbies. He loved to go fishing and loved to listen to music. He even loved spending time with his children.

Unfortunately, life takes its toll on all good people. On May 18, 2005, I received a phone call from my sister. She told me the bad news that our baby brother had been murdered. Just weeks after my birthday and the day before, my oldest daughter had a miscarriage. The day we buried my brother was the day that my cousin had died, just two years before.

Now this December will be a sad one. No Javier to celebrate his birthday, no Javier to celebrate Christmas, or all those joys of being a DAD.

All gone in a split second. No one knows how short life is until you lose one of your own.

Don't take life for granted, spend time with the ones you love, tell the ones you love that you love them, and most of all, pray for the ones you love dearly.

Merry Christmas and Happy Birthday  
In Loving Memory of  
Javier G. Lara

*Tomasu Nuñez*

## THANKSGIVING...MY FAVORITE HOLIDAY

Thanksgiving with my family is the best holiday for me because the food is wonderful and my three sisters and I do all of the cooking. My mother once cooked everything but now she enjoys sitting back and letting us do all of the cooking, which is just fine for us! The kids are running around and having a good time wondering if it is time to eat yet. We reply, "It's almost ready. It will be ready when Aunt Sherri and her family show up!" She's always late for everything and does not cook!

Lo and behold, there's Sherri and her family coming in the door. When we see her we say, "Come on everyone; it's time to pray over the food and give thanks." Our family has a tradition. We have everyone say what they're thankful for.

All the kids are really into giving thanks. They love it when it's their turn. The kids say things like, "I am thankful for my mother, father, sisters and brothers." It is really cute. The adults give their thanks. Then my father says a prayer over the food, and it's time to eat.

We always have different kinds of meat: turkey, ham, chicken, and roast beef. These are some of the sides: macaroni and cheese, greens, sweet potatoes and green bean casserole. The list goes on and on. An hour later everyone is full of food and can hardly move. Then it's time for games like...Family Feud, Name that Tune and Dancing Off. Then all the kids form a line in front of each other. The first two dance and go to the end of the line. The second two dance and it just goes on and on. It's a blast!

So, last but not least, guess what time it is now? "It's cleanup time in the kitchen." I yell out who gets the cleanup duties. My sister who doesn't cook doesn't clean up either. So it

usually will be me and my mother. This is why this is my favorite holiday to spend time with my family and have lots of fun.

*Tina Wagner*



## THE BIG COUNTDOWN

As a child when summer time came around, I would come home from school for summer break, and my father would have the camper packed and ready to go. I would run to the house jumping over toys, bicycles, and anything I needed to in order to reach the door of the house. From outside I could hear my father yell, "Hurry up! Let's go!" I would run to my bedroom and grab my sleeping bag, fishing pole, and tent.

Loading it on the camper, I could imagine the smell of the wood burning in the campfire, although I was still over twenty miles away. Rushing my father to start the truck so we could go, I'd hold my breath as he turned the switch and we were off. I was so excited to get there, it seemed like it took days.

Over halfway there I would count down the miles, starting at fifteen. Climbing over my sister and mother to the passenger door, I could see the river. We were almost there! Counting down to ten miles, we passed little streams with fish, crawfish, and crystal clear water. At five miles, I could see the smoke in the air from hundreds of campfires. At three miles, we were beginning to see signs that would say "Blue Rock State Park." As we were pulling up, looking to the right I could see over the campgrounds, where all the kids were playing in the streams. Some were my friends.

As soon as we reached the campsite where we set up the camper every year, I jumped out of the truck and grabbed my fishing pole and took off for the lake. As I was running down the road I would hear my mother say, "Be back in one hour for supper." Popping over the hill and reaching the lake, I could see people to the left swimming at the beach. To my right there were people fishing, scattered out across the lake. I usually didn't catch anything, but it was fun. As I headed back to the campsite, I walked the creek, splashing through the water and climbing rocks along side the creek.

Back at the campsite, I played in the creek behind the camper. I grabbed big rocks and placed them in a circle about three feet wide in the water so I could keep my catches fresh until we cooked them.

I played at the park, in the creeks, at the beach and went to the movies day after day. Every Friday night the camp ranger would set up his equipment to play a movie for the kids. The movie always had something to do with wild animals. I remember being there every week because I love the wild.

It went on for weeks, and then we would pack up the camper and head home. As we drove away, I'd have my eyes glued to the window, saddened because we were leaving. I would cheer myself up by saying, "There's always next summer."

*Steven McCord*

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## THE OLD DOGTOWN SCHOOLHOUSE

When I was a young girl, I heard my dad tell my sister and brother about things the older boys would do to their teacher when he attended the Old Dogtown Schoolhouse. The school had eight classes in one room. My dad was in the first grade when all this happened. His two brothers and one sister were also attending the school. My dad told us that there were 5-6 children in each class.

Here are some things that those older boys did. They would take the rope from the belfry, so the teacher couldn't ring the bell for them to come in to class. One time those boys put a snake in the teacher's car. The teacher had to stay at school all night.

Another time something funny happened was when my aunt (his sister) rode a pony to school. At recess, the boys put the pony in the belfry. My aunt couldn't get the pony down. Those boys really got into trouble for that.

One time those older boys told my dad to run from the teacher and jump in the ditch across the road. He did, and he landed right in water. He had to put on other clothes. When he got home, both grandpa and grandma gave him trouble. The next day grandma went to school and told the teacher what those older boys put my dad up to. The year was 1921.

As the years passed, dad finished school and married my mom. They had two boys and one girl. I came in 1950. In 1951, my parents bought the old schoolhouse. They remodeled it in 1957 by adding two bedrooms and a garage. Then my dad added a basement under the building. At first, he started with a spoon, then a pick and shovel. It took a long time to dig out the basement, but we finally had a basement. My dad let me help him with the digging. I liked to help.

Our home, the Old Dogtown Schoolhouse, was where my dad went to school. He had many memories of the school and the trouble some kids got into.

*Carol Adams*

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## MY TABLE

My table used to be full of laughter.  
My table used to be for homework, eating meals,  
making school projects.

My table used to be where we sat and talked and laughed  
about the day or what was going on for the weekend.  
My table used to be where we ate our Thanksgiving,  
Christmas and Easter dinners.

My table used to be for repairing scrapes and cuts  
of the children of the neighborhood, to patch up the wounds  
and make the tears go away.

My table used to be for happy birthday parties where  
everybody would stand around and sing the birthday song.  
My table used to be used for coloring books and drawing  
pictures, to make Valentine boxes and cards, and to make  
things like Christmas cookies or popcorn balls for Halloween.

That is how my table was used.

Now that they have all grown up, my table is used  
for setting things on or just for writing letters.  
Once in a while my table is used for my grandchildren,  
and I listen to them chatter away.  
It brings back memories of the good old days.

*Brenda Carroll*

## BERRY PICKING

I can remember berry picking on the open country road as if it were yesterday. Dad and I would go berry picking every summer in late June. I could hardly wait to get there. I would have the white five-gallon buckets ready. Dad and I would hop into the old blue truck, which had a strong aroma of nicotine and dust. The floorboards of the truck were rusty and gritty sounding. Down the road we would go. I was Daddy's girl, and there was nothing more special than to be right beside him.

We would get out of the truck, grab our buckets, and dart down the side of the dusty, gravel road. I can remember cars coming by and the thick cloud of dust whirling through the air, leaving a gritty taste in my mouth, but I never once complained. Dust was the least of my worries. Berries upon berries were always growing everywhere along both sides of the road and on the fences. We picked for hours and usually filled both five-gallon buckets. I always seemed to get my fingers poked and my legs scratched up, but I never noticed it until I got home.

When we got home, I would pour the berries into the sink and wash them. By the time I was finished, my fingers were wrinkled from being in the water and had a sticky feeling in between them with a purple stain on them that lasted for a few days. My brother and sisters would help bag them and put them into the freezer. We would always leave out enough so Mom could make a blackberry cobbler. As she would boil the berries you could smell the sweet aroma from them. She would put all her love and care in that cobbler, and that's what made it so darn delicious.

*Sara Fox*

### TICKLE ME GAME

One evening I was sitting on the couch with my son and his five-year-old, my grandson. My grandson was lying beside me with his head on my lap, and we started playing a little game called the Tickle Me Game.

“Let me see your underarm. I won’t touch it; I just want to look at it. I won’t tickle it,” I said. I would slowly try to raise his arm with him holding it tight to his side, so I couldn’t lift it up. Then he would slowly start lifting his arm while laughing so hard that it made us all laugh.

He would say, “Don’t tickle it. Just look at it.”

I would repeat myself and say, “I won’t tickle it; I just want to look at it.” Finally while trying to get him to raise his arm, he lifted it up, and I tickled him. He laughed and laughed and laughed. We laughed until our bellies hurt.

While playing this little game with my grandson, my son reminded me of a time when I would play the same game with him when he was a little boy. I couldn’t believe that he remembered it. He had never mentioned it to me before. It was like going back in time and playing that same little game with him, my son, who is now a grown man. It was like a memory had been awakened. Maybe someday when my little grandson is grown up and has a child of his own, he may play the same game with him. I felt joy in my heart that day because my son had remembered a time when he was small and we had played the Tickle Me Game together.

*Linda Darlene Nelson*

### PETE AND HIS BEST FRIEND BOB

Once upon a time there was a boy named Pete who had a best friend named Bob. Bob and Pete would spend all their time together everyday, except when Pete had to attend school during the day. Pete loved school, but he couldn't always keep his mind on what he was told to do by his teacher. Pete didn't have many friends in school, so he spent a lot of his time thinking about Bob.

One day when school was almost over, the teacher told everyone in the class to bring something in for Show and Tell the next day. Pete got very excited! The first thing Pete thought was, "I can bring my best friend Bob in for Show and Tell."

The next day, Pete and Bob got dressed, rushed down stairs to eat, and caught the bus for school. Bob was so excited; he was finally going to school with Pete. Since Pete brought his best friend in, the teacher told him to start Show and Tell first. Pete walked his best friend around the room for the whole class to see. Then he told the class how he and Bob play different kinds of games after school. Pete told them that they often pretend to go on safari hunts in the African desert. They also go fishing at the creek behind their house and camp out at night in their back yard.

The whole class was so excited that they all wanted to play with Pete and Bob after school. Pete had finally made friends at school. Sometimes his new friends would ask him to come to their house and play. He would always say, "Yes, but only if Bob can come too!"

He told all his friends that his dog, Bob, goes everywhere with him because Bob was always his friend when nobody wanted to play with him.

*Margaret Ison*



## LOST AND FOUND

In the town where I live, I was very fortunate to find a nice place to live. We are surrounded by families with lots of children running around. It seems that almost everyone has a pet of one kind or another. I have lived there for two and a half years, and I think because of the location, it is an excellent dumping ground for misfit animals. I use the word misfit because the ones I have seen running around here lately are looking pretty rough. I have already taken in three cats and a dog. One cold night in December one of my neighbors decided they were tired of the puppy they had gotten and just threw her out like yesterday's trash. A couple of neighbors helped out with making her up a bed in the breezeway, and we gave her some food so her belly was good and full for the night.

The next morning, when I came home from class, our grounds keeper was in the courtyard trying to sweep up some trash on the sidewalk and she was jumping around and he spoke up and said, "You need a puppy!" I laughed at him and said, I bet my cats would really love it. So I told him I would take her in and give her a bath and clean her up good, but that was about it. I really did like her but my apartment was filling up fast. Well, the longer I kept her the more I was getting used to having a dog again. I started taking her out to potty and before I knew it we had a routine.

She is 5 months old now. She has turned out to be the best dog. Now, keep in mind that I already have all these cats running around, and by the way they love the dog.

I got a knock on the door one afternoon. It was the maintenance man, telling me they need to see me at the office. I got over there, and the first thing I saw was a box on the floor. His son was out cleaning the grounds and when he was loading the dumpster with trash, he heard whining coming from inside. He got up in there and moved boxes around and sure enough someone had put a baby kitten in

the bottom of the dumpster. He dug her out and of course, I was the first person he came looking for. As you can see, I can't say no.

My animals are very healthy. They just look sort of funny. You see, both my new puppy and the kitty from the dumpster had broken tails. We now call this my home for misfit animals. They are the best pets on the planet. All they needed was some TLC.

*Susan Crabbe*

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## HONEYMOON NIGHTMARES

This is a story about a honeymoon which started out happy but before long, turned into a nightmare.

On June 25, 1954, Don and I were married. We had a small wedding. The next day, we got up early to go on a tour of the northwest states and to visit his sister in Wyoming. The car was a nineteen-year-old Pontiac Ferrio. We drove until 11:00 PM, then stopped to get something to eat. After eating, we thought we would drive a little longer. Wrong! The car died. So now what?

We were in no man's land with no motel in sight. There was, however, a garage. We saw a man there. Don asked him about the car, and he said, "We'll check it out tomorrow." Now to find a place to stay.

The one motel was full. The desk clerk called a few places in Atlantic, Iowa. He found us a room at the Hawkeye Motel. We asked about a taxi or some way to get there. The man said he would take us. It was a 15-mile ride.

The ride was very interesting. It was in the back of a pickup truck with some chickens, tools, and dirty rags, but it was better than walking.

We got up the next morning to see the town a little better. It had a small shopping center and a McDonald's. Meanwhile, the man called from the garage to tell us about the car. It would take a few days to get the parts, so we walked to McDonald's for some breakfast, then later, for lunch and dinner. Also, I could tell you all about the K-Mart there (in the shopping center).

Finally, after five days, the car was ready. Don asked me, "Are we going to go back home?" I said, "Yes," and he was happy about that.

So we were on the road again. We were in Indiana on the interstate. Guess what happened? You got it. The car broke down again around 10:00 PM. A nice highway patrolman stopped and called a tow truck for us. Now we

worried about how much this was going to cost, plus finding a place to stay. We were running out of money. So I had to phone home and ask my kids for money. Daughter Patti said she would get us \$500.00 and send it Western Union. So we got the money, got the car fixed, and started again.

Finally, back in Ohio, I said, "If it dies again, I will call someone to come after me, take a bus, or walk home." Later that evening, we arrived back home. I was so glad, I almost kissed the ground. Oh, by the way, we no longer have that car.

*Nancy Johansen*

## REMEMBERING AMY

Amy and I grew up together in Vinton, Louisiana. We were the best of friends. Every weekend through junior high and the first years of high school we were at each other's houses. When we were in the tenth grade, she moved to Galveston, Texas. She had a boyfriend who lived there, so she decided to move closer to his family. I was sad, of course, but we wrote and talked often.

A year later she moved back home. We went out every weekend to the clubs. And then, a year after that, I moved to Macon, Georgia, with my boyfriend, and we had to say goodbye again. We talked and wrote quite often, and when I moved back home, we had a lot to catch up on. We got jobs together working at Boudin Kitchen in Louisiana. That was the most fun I ever had working. We worked from 11:00 A.M. until 7:00 P.M. After work we always did the same thing – get into the car, crank up the radio, light a cigarette, and go home by the back country roads. There was nothing better in life than that particular place and time. There was nothing that we didn't do, and we always did it together.

During that time I had a boyfriend and ended up pregnant. Three weeks after I told him, he decided it wasn't his. I was living with my dad, and Amy was living with her mom and brother. We were both twenty-one and full of energy. She would pick me up for work every day. We worked six days a week. Amy was my rock when I was down. It was pretty hard being pregnant and trying to accept that the father was not going to be in the picture. I tried hard to get him back, but nothing seemed to work.

Around my seventh month, Amy found a boyfriend. They got close real fast. In my eighth month I went on maternity leave. Amy and I didn't get to spend a lot of time together. But

when she wanted to go out drinking, I would drive her, pregnant and all, going to the clubs. I would have done anything for her, and I did. I had my first child (Hayden) on February 5, 1997, and shortly after, Amy got pregnant. I had my own apartment, and so did she and Aaron. After her daughter Alannah was a year old, they split up, and Hayden and I moved in with her to help out on bills for both of us. We were both waitresses.

Amy liked to drink margaritas, and she drank a lot. I usually worked graveyard shift. One evening she came into my restaurant with a friend after she got off work. She had a margarita in her hand. She told me it was her first. I asked her what she was going to do that night. She told me our friend Chris was taking her home to rest, so I didn't need to worry about it. Around 2:30 that morning some guy came into the restaurant out of breath and asked if anyone knew Amy Laughlin. Of course I said, "Yes, that's my best friend." He said she had been in a wreck. I decided to go check on her. By the time I got there, the ambulance had already rushed her to the nearest hospital. When I got there, her mom and sister were there and said they needed to put her in a better hospital, but didn't even know if she would make it there. They ended up flying her to Lake Charles Hospital where she stayed on life support for a week. The first time I saw her, I brought a picture of Alannah with me. This would be the day that would change my life forever.

I walked in and all I saw were tubes running every which way. As I held Alannah's picture close to my chest clutching it tightly as though I was fixing to fall off a building, I walked slowly to her bed. It seemed like it took an eternity to get there. Her skin was a pale, yellowish color. Her eyes were somewhat open, but not responsive to movement. The left side of her long, flowing, beautiful hair was shaved off. All I could see were staples upon staples on her beautiful head. She had a tube running out of her mouth on her lifeless

bottom lip. I was told that her left side was paralyzed, and that if she did pull through without life support, she would be a vegetable for the rest of her life. It never hit me at that particular time that I was going to say goodbye just hours later. Everyone had said she had been unresponsive for a week. I sat next to her bed and started talking to her about bringing a picture of her baby girl. I held it up and showed her, and then I put the picture on her chest. I grabbed her hand and told her how much I loved her, and how she was going to come home, and we would get through this together. When I looked up at her quiet face, to my surprise, a single teardrop rolled down the left side of her cheek. Maybe that was her way of telling me goodbye and that she was going home, only it wasn't the home I would ever have expected.

Three hours later they made the decision to take her off life support. The feelings that came across me were overwhelming, so much so that I couldn't cry and I couldn't talk. I felt like I had no heart because I couldn't cry. My body was in shock. My thoughts were, "What will I do without Amy? Why did God have to take such a beautiful young girl who had a baby to raise? Who's going to tell her 'Mommy's not coming home—ever'?" I learned that we should never ask why. God just needed another angel to help pour out the rain. I found it unusual because just two weeks before she passed away, we had sat on the porch and these were her exact words: "Only the good die young. We will live forever." I guess she spoke too soon. She had sat there after that and told me exactly what she wanted to be buried in. She wanted to be comfortable – hair in a ponytail, blue jeans and a T-shirt. She never wore dresses and hadn't planned to wear one when she was gone. Needless to say, her mom wouldn't listen to me and buried her in a dress and put this bright-ass red lipstick on her. Hello! Amy never wore red lipstick!

The cause of her death was drinking and driving. She hadn't stayed home. Chris brought her there, but she had left shortly after. That had been her second margarita, not her first, and there were double shots of tequila in them. She had gone to a restaurant where she used to work and drank some more. Well, then she had started annoying everyone, so they had asked her to leave. She was very intoxicated at this point and couldn't find her key. Guess who had helped her? The Vinton Police Department. The keys had been in her truck and the police, who happened to be in the restaurant eating, let her drive home. I know Amy Joe so well that I know she had been mad because she had to leave, so she was coming to meet me at work which was about five miles away. She almost made it, but ended up falling asleep at the wheel. She lost control, hit a culvert, and flew out the window. Somehow she had made it to the road before she collapsed.

It's been almost six years since Amy's death. I now have moved on and live in Ohio. Alannah is six and currently living with her father, Aaron. I sometimes wonder and hope that he tells his daughter what a wonderful and outspoken woman her mother was. I haven't seen Alannah since Amy's death, but I'm sure she is the spitting image of her mother.

*Sara Fox*