

A Little Door, A Little Light

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with
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Introduction

This is not my book. It is instead a collection of stories that were told to me by people who had been given wondrous gifts — visits from loved ones who had died and so left the world of the living. In other words, these are stories about contact between living and dead people, contact across the barrier that is death. They are proof that there is life after death and that death is not an absolute barrier to be crossed only once and in only one direction. Instead, it is a gateway, a door across which there is traffic in both directions.

That should not really be too surprising since humans have long attempted to determine the exact nature of death and failed miserably. We are no closer to a definition of death than we were ten thousand years ago. Even the medical community cannot provide a definition. The doctors can provide a set of conditions that they use to determine if a person is dead or not and that is sufficient for their needs but it begs the question. Death is as mysterious now as it always has been and anyone who professes to know the solution to the mystery is fooling himself. Only those who have died know what it is. In a way, this book speaks with the voices of the dead. Perhaps by listening to them, we can gain some understanding of that ultimate mystery.

Some people will approach this collection of stories with skepticism and suggest that the individuals telling the stories were being less than truthful or that they were delusional, imagining things. Perhaps some were made up or make-believe but there are far too many stories too similar to one another to be coincidental. I am convinced that the contacts were real, that they did indeed happen the way they were told to me. The stories were not told for personal gain or even for recognition. Many of the people who talked to me had never before told anyone about their experiences but agreed to talk to me only because I wanted to show those who have recently lost a loved one that the dead person was not lost to them after all.

The most difficult part of writing this has been my own story. Each time I attempted to write about my son, I found myself in tears. I could appreciate even more how much it took for so many of those I interviewed to sit with me and talk about the death of a loved one.

My son, Justin Jarred Jason Braun was born on April 3 of 1972. Jason and I lived alone. We had moved to a new city and started a new life. I took on a challenging job and Jason began his Grade X. My work place and his school were a block apart and we could drive down to work together then he'd walk over to the school. We had experienced some tough years but finally everything looked good! Jason got involved with two track clubs and was a joy to watch as he ran. He loved running. His coach convinced him he needed to try out as a triple jumper, something Jason was not keen to do but he reluctantly tackled the training. He was outstanding and was soon winning competitions in both events.

Jason finished his Grade X with Honors. In Grade XI, he met a girl he became very fond of. They were sweet to watch. He'd surprise her as she got off work with a rose. I remember

the day he asked me to take him shopping for aftershave. He picked out the most expensive bottle. It was Polo. I explained to him that as a single parent I didn't think I could afford it. Jason said, "Oh Mom, I need it for my self esteem!" Yes, I bought him the aftershave!

Jason was so full of life and he had a respect for others. He'd talk to me about even the youngest athletes in the club, bragging them up and telling me their personal bests. He had completed his Grade XI with Honors and was still involved in track and field that summer of 1989. In July he entered the Provincial competitions and won a gold medal in the triple jump. He was excited because he knew he was going to be in the Nationals but he wanted to see how well he could do in the Western Canadian finals. So on July 30, he hugged me and prepared to drive to the meet in Sherwood Park. He said he didn't feel very well that morning and I asked him to stay home. He smiled at me and said he wanted to beat his own record. He drove away and one hour later he was killed in a single car accident. The driver behind saw the whole thing and said he was driving fine and then suddenly the car seemed to go out of control.

Jason will never be able to show the world just what a tremendously fine young athlete he is. No one will hear his infectious laughter. None will know the gentleness of his caring heart. When he died that day, we all lost the opportunity of having him touch our lives.

Jason and I lived alone. When he died I knew that I wanted to die too. His death robbed me of my confidant, my best friend, my youngest child, my only son. My existence seemed pointless and I wished many times that I had been with him that day. No. Worse yet, I felt guilty that I had not been with him. I should have been with him. I realize now that Jason took a much more important journey that day and in so doing he has led me,

in a way, to study death more closely and to see that it is an important part of our life.

Three months after his death, my son spoke to me. I was in a church at the funeral of a man who had committed suicide. I did not know the man but his daughter had gone to school with Jason. I went to be there for her. As the funeral ended, we all stood and waited for the church to empty. I was standing next to Jason's girlfriend, Lori, and two of his school friends were in front of us. We were seated next to the aisle and I began looking at people as they moved past. My eyes fastened on a woman and a tall young man. The woman looked to be in her forties and the young man I imagined to be 17. The woman held onto his arm and she looked up at him as he was at least six foot two. I recognized them as a mother and her son and, as I looked at them, I was overcome by immense pain. I was seeing what I had lost. I would never hold onto the arm of my son again.

I felt as though I was screaming out my anguish. The pain I experienced was so great that it felt that my tissues, my organs, every part of me was crying out, grieving for the son who no longer walked alongside of me. I called out in my pain, "I've lost him, I'll never hold my son again." The cry, you understand, came from deep within me and was not vocalized for human ears.

It was at that moment that I smelled Jason's favorite cologne (Polo). I felt his 6 foot 2 inch frame as he stood behind me. He responded to my pain-filled cry with these words: "You haven't lost me mom. I'm still here." When he came to me, I was standing beside his girlfriend, and surrounded by a few hundred people. I can tell you I have no doubt that, by the grace of God, my son returned to comfort me. I felt his presence. I heard his voice. I could smell his favorite cologne. I had no label for what occurred.

I did not think of this as a vision. It simply took place.

The following day as I drove to work I was still elated. I talked out loud to Jason. I said, "Oh Jason I can hardly wait until I die so we can be together." He spoke two sentences but it was very strange. I had this sense that he was some distance away and he had turned and spoken to me. You know when someone is almost a block away and they turn and call out to you? Jason was indicating to me that I must live for today. I realized then that I had to accept his death and do something with my life rather than live it in anticipation of death. I wish I could say that everything was fine after that, but it wasn't.

The trauma of Jason's death affected my memory and I realized one day that I had almost no recollection of two full years of my life. I ran into people who indicated that they knew me and I pretended to know them. I was so confused. I didn't know who to talk to about this. It was not until I quit my job in 1992 and began doing the research for this book that I truly began healing and gradually my memory began returning.

At first I did not trust anyone with the story of that day in November when Jason returned to comfort me. One day I did tell it and, when I did, that person had a story for me. I cried as I heard his story and it was almost like a renewal. It had a very healing effect on me. The time came when I again trusted my story to a young girl and she, in turn, told me a story that she had never told anyone else. It was so beautiful! I cried again and experienced a feeling of healing. It was so strange but I seemed to be surrounded by people who had stories. I do not mean that literally and it wasn't like I was hearing a story every day but there seem to have been a lot of people with stories. I was too excited at the time to wonder about it. I just knew that it was exciting. Actually it was awesome to keep running into strangers (and at that point they were all strangers) who were sharing

with me some extremely precious and wondrous events.

I decided I wanted to write about these stories people were telling me. I felt that such a book would surely help others who were grieving. I began seriously collecting the stories for the new book and then I stopped. I thought: "Wait what right do I have? What if God doesn't want me to do this?" After all these are very sensitive stories. I dropped the idea. More than two years later, in the late fall of 1992, a series of events took place which led me to believe that it was all right to go ahead and write the book. That fall, I was to receive a series of messages but they all said the same thing: "Write the book."

Well, I knew this explanation was going to be difficult and no matter how many times I've tried to rewrite it, I do not feel I can capture the essence of what was happening without seeming to talk in circles. I can only say that each time an event took place I felt something stir within me and I felt it was now all right to write this book. Not only did I want to do it but I feel that I received the full support of God. Perhaps you might call it His Seal of Approval. So let me begin:

In October of that year I had resigned from my job as a Director at a YMCA. I was burned out after six years of long hours. My back was suffering and a specialist had advised me to quit. I decided to take some time and write a children's book while I recuperated. Less than a month after quitting that job, I discovered that I would be writing two books. An incredible chain of events left me filled me with a strong conviction that I was meant to write a book about death and life after death, a healing book of first hand personal accounts of visions, dreams and angels, with special messages, of comfort, predictions and heavenly advice. I had been convinced that there were hundreds of stories that had never been written, stories that had been held precious and cautiously guarded by individuals. These were

disclosed to select and trusted family members and occasionally valued friends usually with urgent requests for secrecy. If these stories could be assembled and presented in a book, I was convinced, many grieving people would benefit.

I still wasn't sure and asked God frequently: "Do You really want me to write this book?" When was the first time I asked that question? It was a Saturday, November 28, 1992 to be exact. I planned on attending a birthday celebration for a good friend. Some fourteen of us were to meet at a restaurant. Brenda, the guest of honor, had been detained due to icy roads. It was suggested that the seat next to me be saved for her. I thought that was quite nice as I had not had a chance to visit with her in quite a while.

My seat faced away from the door and when I heard the women opposite me say "Oh here she is now," I assumed they meant Brenda. I removed my handbag from the chair (which had been set there purposefully to dissuade anyone from sitting there). I then turned around to greet her. It wasn't Brenda. Coming towards our table was Mary Jane. She was still near the door and a fair distance from our table. I turned back and bent to put the handbag back on the chair but before I could Mary Jane sat down. If she had been running at top speed, she might have possibly made it to the chair that quickly but when I'd last seen her she'd been walking. I was momentarily puzzled. How had she managed to cross the room, pull out the chair and sit down before I'd even had time to put my hand on my handbag? Reaching for a bag does not take more than two seconds. I pushed the incident to the back of mind and forgot it until later.

A few of the other guests advised Mary Jane that she was sitting in the chair reserved for the guest of honor so she started to rise to change seats. Now, my next few actions are a complete

puzzle to me. I knew Mary Jane and, in fact, we had worked together on special projects for a culture and recreation department so a visit with her would have been fine. However, I had developed a close friendship with Brenda and looked forward to having her seated next to me. Why then did I find myself pushing Mary Jane back in the chair and telling her it was okay? Soon someone else mentioned to Mary Jane that she really should move to a different chair and again she started to comply. She tried but again I blocked her from doing so. This happened a third time and again I prevented Mary Jane from changing chairs. I wondered about my own actions even at the time but did not dwell on it then.

Mary Jane had heard I'd recently left my job and was writing a children's book. She asked how the book was coming along. Out of the blue, I mentioned that I was writing a book on death as well. Things were beginning to feel strange because I did not plan on writing a book on death. I had wanted to and had even started writing such a book but I had abandoned the project when I began thinking that these stories were just too sensitive and special. I literally felt that I had no right to write about them, that perhaps God might not intend for them to be broadcast in such a manner. Yet out of my mouth pops the statement that I was going to write a book on death and the many inexplicable events which surround it. Where did those words come from?

Mary Jane responded to me with "I have a story for you. It is one my father told us many times as children. If you're going to be home at Christmas I'll have him phone you." I confirmed that I would be home and that I wanted the story. I knew then. I knew that everything that was taking place was happening for my benefit. I do not know how Mary Jane got into that chair that quickly and I do not know why three times I would not

allow her to change seats and I do not know how words popped out of my mouth that were not my own thoughts. What I do know though is that as she spoke I realized she was literally meant to sit there.

The story that Mary Jane told me that day was about her grandfather. She had never met him yet she had much to thank him for. It was a story of a man whose love was so great for his son, Mary Jane's father, that even though he was dead, he was instrumental in helping his son pilot a ship of soldiers through treacherous waters to safety.

As we talked, I said to Mary Jane, "you were meant to sit beside me." She replied, "I know." I left the restaurant that day excited. More than two years ago, I had wanted to undertake this task but felt it was too sensitive. Here now was the message: "Write the book."

I did not know then that I would receive this same confirming message many times over for the next few weeks. On Monday, November 30, I visited Jason's grave. There, I was reminded of the story his father had told me about one visit he too had made to our son's grave. It was a calm day. He was alone in the cemetery, crying as he knelt at the grave. His car was a few meters away. He heard his car door being shut. Considering the way the car was parked and, taking gravity into consideration, it should not have been possible for the door to shut on its own. A breeze could not have closed it — a gale maybe! The distraction caused him to stop crying. He looked around but no one was there. He looked under the car and around it. Then he opened the door and kept it slightly ajar. He tested how much force it would take at various angles to close the door. The more he tried to figure out how the door could have possibly closed, the more puzzled he became.

When he later told me the story and asked me what I thought

of it, I had no doubts about what had happened. He was in the depths of despair and his whole being was crying out. That cry was a cry for help and it was heard. The closing door and the puzzle about how it occurred, pulled him immediately from those depths. I like to think it was Jason who closed the door.

On Thursday, December 3, only five days after the extraordinary event with Mary Jane, I was cleaning through a stack of business files when I came across a phone list. I mentioned that I had just resigned from a job. These were business contacts. I decided to jot down the numbers I might want and toss the list. Well, here we go again! I read the name Betty Stonehouse on that list and I paused. I felt as though I should phone her and impulsively rang her up. I'm not certain why I called her. I had some obscure reason. As I placed the call, I was puzzled by my own actions. Actually the amazement grew. We chatted. We kept indicating that we had to hang up and get back to work but we talked on and on. I had only called her once before and that was work related. I had her number for business reasons only yet here we were talking up a storm as though our lives depended on it.

I do not know how or why but suddenly Betty was telling me special stories, three splendid, astonishing stories, one that involved her, one that involved her mother-in-law and one from an acquaintance. They were wondrous. Both Betty and I were excited. Each of us realized that we were playing a role in something dear. This again was not a coincidence. We were meant to come together. Those words played over again and again in my mind, "You really want me to write this book?"

One of the stories that Betty related that day was about some children in a small town. They were heading for a particular spot to play but they were prevented from reaching their proposed destination by the appearance of something Heavenly.

They thought perhaps it was an angel. They stood transfixed in awe and fascination. Within minutes, lightning struck the spot they had been heading for. Had it not been for the Heavenly intervention, the children would have almost certainly been struck by the lightning.

Not only did I gain more confirmation about what I should be doing from that contact with Betty, but I have since gained, in her, a beautiful and supportive friend. On the following day, I ran into Betty (coincidence you say?) and we were both excited over the chain of events. As we spoke, I suddenly began remembering other phenomena that would need to be included in the book.

That was a Friday and it was the next day, December 5, that I made an impulsive visit to Calgary to visit with my daughter and her family. I wanted to personally sit with my daughter, Debbie and tell her about the extraordinary circumstance that was behind my decision to write this book. As I walked in the door, my son-in-law handed me a video tape and said “There are five stories on here that I thought you might like. They are all about life after death.” My mouth dropped open, and I felt strongly that this was not a mere coincidence. In the 15 years of our acquaintance, Gord had never taped me a program. Why would he choose this topic to record for me? I felt a warmth spread through me as I realized this was just one more indication pointing me in my new direction. I looked upward and said a silent prayer. Was I receiving Heavenly messages? It felt like it to me.

Later in the day as we sat visiting, Gord suddenly remembered something that had taken place in his life when he was fifteen. He began talking about his uncle Philip.

Philip lived in Scotland and had been very ill. His sister, Mary (this is Gord’s mother) purchased a return ticket to fly

home to Scotland to spend time with her brother. Mary barely arrived in time to see Philip and as she sat holding his hand, her brother died. She felt so full of sorrow for all the times that they were separated by miles and circumstance. Now, opportunities were gone. Now it was too late. Her grief over Philip was acute. This was such a hard time for the young woman. As her guilt and sorrow increased, Mary made a decision. Her brother's death had left her shaken and, in her grief, she decided that it would be better to forsake her three children and husband and remain in Scotland to help the family of her brother. In her sorrow, Mary felt she was doing the right thing.

The night before Mary's plane was to leave for home, she was alone in her bedroom getting ready to sleep. Philip opened the door and walked in. "It is time to go home, Mary," he said. Philip let Mary know that everything was all right. Mary returned home ablaze with the beautiful story of her brother's visit after death.

Gord heard this story when he was 15 years old. Gord remembered his reaction at the time.

"You were not going to come home to us, mom?"

As I listened to this story, I was completely amazed. First, Gord gave me a tape on life after death. Then he presented me a story on life after death. In all these years, none of us, Gord's wife included, had ever heard of this story. This revelation was more than a coincidence! I had not mentioned anything to Gord about the events that were now moving me in one definite direction — to write the book. I felt goose bumps on my arms and a conviction within. Throughout Gord's story, I alternated between marveling at the beautiful story and experiencing earthy and warm sensations. Do heavenly messages make you feel warm? I have often felt we become special messengers to one another and I now felt that I was receiving some definite prodding,

through Gord's actions. More Heavenly messages?

By now, I had experienced over a week of coincidences and accompanying excitement and warm joyful sensations. I kept on experiencing goose bumps. Amazingly, almost everyone who came within earshot was talking to me about special stories. I knew I had to get to my computer and start entering all these unusual happenings. I would never remember all this otherwise. I holed up in the basement office in our home and began typing only to be interrupted by a telephone call. Now you might ask if it was another of those famous coincidences. Yes, it was!

While I was typing this into the computer, Dawn, a friend and colleague, phoned to see how I was. I had hurt my back and it was still painful but I was so excited about the events around me that a back injury was just some inconsequential thing that I did not want to talk about. I tried to cut our conversation short. After all, the notes were growing there before me on the screen and I was reliving it all again. Dawn really bugged me. She wouldn't leave me alone and she wanted to know what I was doing. All I wanted to do was type. Finally I realized I was not going to put her off without being rude so I began telling her about what was happening. Suddenly Dawn interrupted me with a story of her own. The story is incredible.

Brian, Dawn's uncle, was a lineman. Once, while working during a heavy storm, he was almost killed. Brian did not hear the shouts of warning over the wind as the others were calling to him that a pole looked dangerously close to toppling. The men watched as Brian's body suddenly lifted backwards just as the electrical pole fell across the spot he'd been occupying a split second earlier. Brian himself said that two things happened. He felt something unnatural and powerful lift and move him and he swears that he heard his father's voice at the same time. His father was dead. Later, when Brian related the incidence to family

members. They recall that Brian gave full credit for the life saving event to his father.

As I began realizing that God did indeed wish for me to write the book, I also realized that there would be forces that would rather I did not write the book and so I prayed for help. A few days later, help arrived, although at first, for seconds, I did not even recognize it.

On Monday, January 4th, a phone call came for my husband who was away in New Mexico. A student, Jana, was trying to reach him. I had never met her before nor had I ever talked to her. She asked if I was Shawn's wife and I answered that I was. "Shawn tells me you are writing a book on death," she said. "Yes I am." I replied. She asked if I minded talking about death and I replied that I didn't. She proceeded to ask me about the book and then told me something about herself.

She was a 26 year old college student with English as a second language. When she came to Canada, she had not been familiar with the Christian faith. However, she met a man, a psychologist, whom she began dating. It was this man who had introduced Jana to Christ. The relationship continued and Jana began going to church. But when she began having trouble in the relationship with the man, Jana felt upset and lost and stopped attending the church. Actually Jana spoke to me on the phone for over an hour telling me about her life in Canada and her recovery following the awful turmoil of her breakup with the man.

"I am going back to Church now," she said. "My pastor asked me if I was ready to do some small thing for the church." she said. She had agreed to do something but did not feel she was ready for anything that would give her too much prominence. "My pastor asked me to pray for someone," Jana commented. I thought, "well that's nice." In the back of my mind, I could see the minister asking her to pray for someone

who was ill or recovering from surgery.

“Do you know who I’ve decided to pray for?” Jana asked. That is something that would be impossible for me to guess at, considering I did not know her. Well, her answer floored me. “It is important that you write the book, Ellie, and you are the person that I’ve chosen to pray for.” My immediate reaction had been to say “Oh I don’t need your prayers” but fortunately it suddenly dawned on me how important this all was.

A few days prior to Jana’s call, I had been praying asking for help to stay focused. I recognized in me the need to always be busy, taking on more and more projects until I was bogged down. I had realized that God wanted me to go ahead with the project. I had certainly been getting some loud and clear messages and I was worrying that I might mess up in some way. I was also worrying about those forces that might work against me. Now, here was Jana offering to pray for me. “I need your prayers, Jana” was what I told her. Then I told her exactly what I had been praying for only a few days before her call. Eventually I met Jana in person as she was to play a bigger role in my life. Nice to meet the people who pray for you!!

Stories continued to come to me without a lot of effort or digging on my part. On January 16, at an anniversary party for my eldest sister, Joan, and her husband, Stan, I sat visiting with my niece, Terry. She surprised me with a story. Later when we got together privately where I could record the story, I heard of the events that preceded the death of her first child. These happenings were a form of preparation for Terry to accept more easily what was soon to come to pass. I’ll give you her story in the section on Children and Visions.

The following day, a woman I had known since we were children told me she too had a story for me. So even those closest to me, family and life long friends, had stories that I did not

even know existed. In the days that followed, I was shown again and again that the stories would come to me and they have. Shawn said it was like I became a magnet for the stories!

This then is not my book but I have been unbelievably privileged and blessed to be allowed to compile it. Working on it has been the experience of a lifetime and likely the reason for my being. It has forever changed me. I know that someday I will hug my son again. I know also that there may be days that I will cry in loneliness for him but the stories, all the stories, have truly helped in the healing process.