

CHAPTER 18

TRAGEDY

Our fourth child, John Mark, was born on November 15, 1955, in Newman Memorial Hospital, Emporia, Kansas. He was little and bright and shiny--a loveable baby, loved by all of us. As fate would have it he would always be *our baby* John Mark. He died December 26, 1956, at age one year, one month, eleven days.

At eight months of age he was stricken with polio. After two months in the Emporia hospital, he was moved to Storemont-Vail Hospital in Topeka, Kansas, for further therapy to recover neck and arm strength. It was there he died.

A memorial service was held Saturday morning December 28, 1956, in Emporia at the Roberts-Blue Mortuary Chapel. We buried him in Sunset Cemetery in Manhattan, Kansas, the same day. Both our parents (mothers and fathers) were with us at the services. Also, Mike's brother Virgil and his wife Minnie, and Mike's brother Clement. Also, Herb and Helen Wunderlich met us at the cemetery.

I THOUGHT WE WOULD WIN. John's death rocked our family, but he was not and is not really gone.

I remember
Two brown eyes
And a little elfin grin
And how I held him in my arms
And how I thought we'd win.

I remember saying:
"Hey guy,"
And firmly proper: "John".
But mostly, always,
In my heart
It was, "The Little One".

How long ago it seems today;
Yet not so long at all--
I swung him up to shoulder high
To make him "Daddy-tall".

Fierce, fierce and sweet
I held him then.
Defying God.
Defying men.
It would not happen to my son!

I'd drive it back,
Nor let it come--
That darkness
To the little one.

I remember two brown eyes;
A little elfin grin
And how I thought;
Yes, how I thought--
How I thought we'd win.

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As St. John Chrysostom (345?-407) once said:

He whom we love
and lose
is no longer
where he was before.

He is now
wherever we are.

St. Chrysostom's wisdom soon became another crushing truth in my life. On January 4, 1957, my father died--just nine days after John died.