

*FIRST COMPOSED IN SEPTEMBER OF 2003 (by the side of the road in Maple Glen, PA)  
Revision 1 – June 11, 2007 (by the sea in Corolla, NC)*

## **I WISH THAT I COULD TELL YOU**

***For Karyn and Bonnie: With gratitude and appreciation for The Light, Love, and Inspiration that you have so generously given to me, and to the whole world. My love for you is the biggest (and best) part of me, and it will dwell within my soul for eternity.***

It was a beautiful September morning in The Delaware Valley; the sun was warm, but the air was cool and intoxicating. It was the type of morning where you could literally smell mother earth and her harvest. My business was flourishing, and my wife and I had just moved into our beautiful new home. I was filled with a profound sense of gratitude.

Suddenly, and without warning, I pulled to the side of the road and began to weep from the very depths of my soul. I wept for myself (after all it had been more than 10 years, and I had barely shed a tear in all of that time), I wept for my wife, and I wept for my daughter. But most of all I wept because I knew, in that very moment, I was about to be given a precious gift that I had to share with anyone who was willing to listen. It is that very gift that I will share with you today.

The words came all at once, at the speed of light it seemed! I knew that these words were coming “through” me and not “from” me, and that it would be the biggest mistake of my lifetime, if I didn’t record them. I fumbled for a pen and a piece of paper – All that I could find was a small tablet whose pages I filled (one after the other) with “***The Message.***”

A little more than 10 years prior to that beautiful September morning, The Philadelphia area was recovering from what weather experts have come to call “*The Storm of the Century.*” Little did I suspect then, that “*The Storm of the Century,*” would become a metaphor for what was to become of my life, and the lives my wife, Karyn, and my daughter, Bonnie.

The night was brutally cold on March 15, 1993, the day after the blizzard;

the major roads were starting to be cleared by the snowplows. It was a particularly difficult time in our lives – my wife and I had just suffered a major financial collapse, and had filed for bankruptcy. We had lost our home and our businesses, and I was feeling an overwhelming despair for having failed so completely and conclusively. I was 35 years old, overweight, out of shape, and flat broke. At the time, I believed that my chances of reclaiming and rebuilding my life were dismal, at best. Throughout the preceding decade, everything that the “golden boy” had touched, had turned into “instant success,” and now, I was utterly absorbed in my own misery – so much so that I was incapable of offering any comfort to my darling wife, who remained steadfastly by my side in spite of all the hardship.

At about 9:30 that night, Karyn and I decided to turn in for bed. The few hours sleep that I was able to get during those troubled times were a welcomed respite from the “real world” nightmare which consumed my waking hours. A few hours earlier that evening, Bonnie and her boyfriend had gone to retrieve her car from his parent’s house, where she had left it before the winter storm.

About fifteen minutes after we had retired, there was a knock at the front door, and from that moment on, life, as we had known it would never be the same again. When I opened that door, I saw the shadowy figure of a police officer, and I knew in my gut that something was very wrong – that something terrible had happened. The officer informed me that there had been an accident, and that Bonnie had been injured. He suggested that we depart for the local hospital immediately. I thanked him, and closed the front door. I felt a rush of adrenaline in my body, a terrible sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, and my knees literally beginning to buckle under my overweight frame.

Most of the remainder of that night remains a blur in my memory until this very day. Those things that I do remember, however, I remember with clarity. I remember that the first person to greet us at the hospital was The Chaplin, which immediately confirmed our worst fears. I remember the attending physician telling us that our daughter had been hit, “head on,” by a drunk driver in a pick-up truck, and that she had sustained severe brain injury – that she was in a coma, and that the prognosis wasn’t good. I can

also remember seeing Bonnie lying helplessly in a hospital bed, on life support, with tubes coming out of her shaven head to relieve the pressure in her brain. The memory that lives most vividly in my mind from that night was returning home at 4:00 a.m., and my wife collapsing on the stairs, weeping inconsolably from the depths of her soul; I was helpless to comfort her. In that morning twilight, I was driven to my knees in prayer, by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go...

The days and weeks that followed that morning were filled with challenges that seemed, at times, insurmountable. It was decided that I would tend to the practical matters of making a living and keeping our home life in some semblance of order, while Karyn would spend all of her time at the hospital with Bonnie. Through the endless barrage of medical tests, insurance paperwork, and procedures, we remained steadfast in *this* mission. “***Bonnie would recover to the fullest extent of which she was capable.***” Karyn instructed all hospital staff, including the doctors, on appropriate protocol. Bonnie’s high school graduation picture was placed next to her bed, so that all medical staff would be reminded that this was a beautiful young woman who had been “full of life.” Bonnie was never to be spoken about in the third person, and would be addressed by her name. No negative conversations of any sort were allowed to take place in her presence, her favorite music was to be played, and lastly, Karyn constantly read to, and conversed with her.

You can rest assured knowing that despite our daughter’s comatose condition, Karyn and I firmly believed that Bonnie’s subconscious mind was alert and active, and that it had to be fiercely protected. No negative input would ***ever*** be permitted to enter. You should also know that anyone who violated this established protocol, including all doctors, met with the wrath of a blonde lioness, protecting her injured cub.

Oftentimes we were given counsel by “well-meaning” professionals that would cause us to question whether we were being “realistic.” After all, this girl had sustained brain injury; we had to accept the “facts.” One night we had a very serious conversation with the head neurologist. The topic of conversation was for us to consider taking Bonnie off of life support and

“letting her go.” After an agonizing period of deliberation, we decided **NO, Bonnie would recover to the fullest extent of which she was capable!**”

Later that week, a well-meaning minister suggested that we place Bonnie into a nursing home for the remainder of her life, and a week after that, our insurance company informed us that they were no longer willing to pay for her medical treatment, and that based on their evaluation of her condition, there was no chance of recovery. To make a long story short, the insurance company lost its battle with a determined, feisty blond, and the minister’s advice was met with some unholy words, by my little sparkplug of a wife.

Later that spring, I received a phone call from Karyn; it was the phone call for which I had been praying – it was the phone call for which I had been hoping against hope. Bonnie was waking up. For those of you who have never experienced someone coming out of a coma, it doesn’t happen as it’s depicted in the movies. The awakening is painstakingly slow, and happens over many weeks.

On Mother’s Day weekend, we took Bonnie home for a visit for the first time since the accident. She was unable to walk, or talk. She wore a diaper, and we fed her through a tube in her belly. I carried her to her bed, and must admit that based on her condition, our faith and hope in our mission were becoming very weak and frail.

As often happens in life, just when your ready to give up, something is “sent” to strengthen and sustain you through the trials and tribulations; that “something” that you need when you’re so broken, and so tired, and so sick at heart that you’re no longer able to put one foot in front of the other – that “one thing” you need that enables you to take just one more step. On Mother’s day morning in 1994, Bonnie uttered her first word since the accident...“**MOM.**” Her vocal cords were strained, her effort immense, but there it was, unmistakable and pure, and it renewed our strength, and our hope, and our resolve to complete the mission. **Yes! Bonnie would recover to the fullest extent of which she was capable.**

The ten years that followed that Mother's day were devoted to Bonnie's rehabilitation. Those years were filled with tears of joy and of triumph, and also included tears of failure, and of frustration. Some days we were filled with gratitude, serenity, and grace, while others were filled with unresolved anger, guilt, and sometimes even rage. But through all of this we remained a family, and we remained true to our mission.

Today Bonnie is in her mid-thirties. She has become a respectable equestrian within the framework of the physical limitations she inherited from brain injury, and she is married. Her life isn't perfect, but who among us can claim a "perfect" life? Yes, she has some challenges, as we all do, but she has recovered to the fullest extent of which she is capable – **MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!**

It was a beautiful September morning in The Delaware Valley, my business was flourishing; my wife and I had just moved into a beautiful new home, and suddenly, without warning, I pulled to the side of the road and began to weep from the very depths of my soul. After all, it had been 10 long years, and I had barely shed a tear. And these are the words that I wrote on that lovely autumn morning – the precious gift that I knew in my heart that I must share with all of you...

- **I wish that I could tell** you that my initial response to the young and reckless man who plowed his truck into my daughter was one of forgiveness, and compassion, and understanding, and that I never had a moment when I didn't want to seek revenge, and see him punished for the devastation caused by his drunken behavior. But I was not that enlightened then, nor am I now. But I can tell you that I have learned that **wanting** to forgive, always leads to forgiveness, and that carrying resentments hurts us much more than it does the object of our resentment. I have come to believe that anyone who sincerely and whole-heartedly seeks redemption will find it.
  
- **I wish that I could tell you** that I am now free of all worry and anxiety, but that wouldn't be true. I can tell you, however, that

whenever I'm feeling anxious or worried, I remind myself that we have not been given a spirit of fear, but one of power, and of love, and of a sound mind – That courage is not the absence of fear, but the moving forward in spite of it.

- **I wish that I could tell you** that I now have an enormous, unshakable faith, but I don't. I still have moments when all I can manage to do is to hold onto a tiny mustard seed's worth of faith called "hope." But I have learned that that tiny seed is all that we need to the move mountains in our lives.
  
- **I wish that I could tell you** that as a result of this ordeal, I have become a "model" husband and father, but my wife and my daughter will tell you that I'm not, as I often fall short of the standards that I have set for myself. But they will tell you that perfection isn't important to them, because they know that I am committed to excellence.
  
- **I wish that I could tell you** that I have life "all figured out," and that I have a great secret to share with you. The truth is that I know less now than I ever have, and I'm suspicious of anyone who claims to have "all of the answers." I do know that we have been given free will, to do with our lives whatever we choose, and that this magnificent gift can be used by us to reveal incredible Light in this world, or unspeakable darkness. I have also learned that we can't always see the big picture in this Infinite Universe, and that some questions must remain unanswered, at least for now.
  
- **I wish that I could tell you** that success comes without failure – that you can rest assured knowing that whatever you set your sights upon, will be fulfilled. But the truth of what I have learned is that, very often, you have to fail your way to success, and that you can never experience the exultation of the mountain top, without experiencing

the despair of failure. Success is always a matter of persistence...

- Above all else, **I wish that I could tell you** that your life will be free of problems and challenges – free of all pain and suffering, that somehow you will be spared; But I can't make that promise. But I can promise you is this:
- That our problems and challenges contain the seed of equivalent or greater advantage, and we must look for that seed, if we are to grow; that The Light will always be found on the other side of life's problems, and at the end of our time here, our greatness will not be measured by what we have **achieved**, but rather, by what we have **overcome** – that our lives “become better” the minute that we commit to “getting better.”
  - That we are never alone in facing the trials and tribulations that come our way, and that if we **really knew** who walks beside us on this journey, that it would be impossible for us to be afraid.
  - That we can choose to find deeply profound meaning in the struggles we will all inevitably face along the way, or we can choose to allow these struggles to rob life of its joy and serenity.
  - That there is a fundamental goodness built into our very souls, and that we are all inescapably connected to the same, eternal Higher Power, and to each other.
  - And I can tell you for sure that there is both a plan, and a purpose for each of our lives, which will be revealed if we will only seek it earnestly, and that our deepest happiness and greatest fulfillment can only be realized by loving and serving one another...