



In the Presence of Angels!

By Nan Zastrow

In 1995, I wrote an article, and I said, “I can’t say I’ve ever seen an angel; but I do believe they have intervened in my life, without showing me their presence. I continue to feel and believe in the presence of angels and could relate countless times that at least one of them has soothed my tears, given me courage, comforted me when I felt hurt, protected my loved one, guided me with direction, renewed my faith when I had doubts, and just held my hand.

Angels are everything I want them to be, whether they are the heavenly or real-life kind. I confirm that both kinds of angels exist! I can see visions of angels in the bright morning light, in the essence of my dreams, and in the realities of life’s experiences.

That article still intrigues me because it was written at a time when angels brought me lots of hope. I collected Seraphim angels. I created an angelic Christmas tree. I felt comforted by the thought that these heavenly beings existed and brought goodness, protection, and peace into the souls of grieving people. They were symbolic to some, but real to me.

On more than one occasion, I was also reminded about the real-life angels and the messages they sometimes brought to me when I really needed them. Some brought messages that comforted me after my son Chad died—because I missed him so much. I’ve received messages like these:

On a misty autumn day, I visited Chad’s grave to say a prayer. I needed a place to go to be all alone. Just a short time to gather my thoughts and strengthen my sense of hope. Some place where I felt close to God. Planted in the wet soil, near the stone, were two fresh carnations, tied with a bow. A message on a card read, “I miss you, Chad.” The young woman (I’m assuming a woman) who left this thoughtful gift is still a mystery to me. But she brightened my day with a ray of hope. She still missed Chad, just like me. It was nice to know that even people I didn’t know missed him.

Only a few days later, I received a phone call from one of Chad’s friends. I missed his friends. Someone was always at the house getting ready for the next hunting trip, gathering camping equipment, raiding the refrigerator, or watching movies, sprawled on the floor. The first year after his death (1993), it was common to see one of them at the door or on the phone, but as the years went by, life got busy..and in the natural sequence of things, we didn’t see his friends any more. But on this particular day, the phone call was the message reminding me how often they thought about Chad. Even from Marlboro, I received messages that Chad existed! For several years, after his death, he received a birthday card. I guess they finally quit when he wasn’t sending in any coupons anymore.

Even years after his death, I encountered people who knew Chad and made a point to tell me about their relationship with him. What better day could there be than someone out of Chad’s past who was willing to speak his name and let me know he was not forgotten?

In recent years, I’ve been especially intrigued by angels of the earthly kind—those that happen into our lives, just because. These angels can touch, feel, see, and manage to know us on a very

intimate level. We may actually know our earthly angels by name! We bond with them. We experience life with them. There is no question about their existence.

I’ve also met a lot of special angels during my journey through grief. Many of them I’ve met through our grief work and called them “friends.” Like me, they were people struggling to make sense out of this turn of events in their lives that changed who they were and what their purpose was.

I’ve been blessed with countless angels who have served as my mentors. Oh, how significant that has been! God placed you in my path; and I had the sense to value all that you gave to me. Your encouragement and connection are priceless!

With great humility, I want to acknowledge all my angels. I can’t name you by name because the list would be too long. And, more than one of you would protest, saying you don’t feel worthy of your name being on my List of Angels. That’s what makes you so special. You don’t have to feel like an angel to be one. But, in my heart, I believe you are.

To all my angels: You were there when I needed you. You were there when the day wasn’t as bright as I wanted it to be. You were there when the news I received wasn’t as good as I wanted it to be. You were there when I didn’t feel as good as I thought I should. You were there to pat me on the shoulder with a sincere pat that meant, “it’s okay.” You were there in tragedy and triumph. You were there.

You may have come to me in your own grief and allowed me to feel your pain. I felt humbled by the raw emotion because I thought I forgot my own pain/loss. You graciously allowed me to share my stories about Chad—because you really wanted to know about him. We shared the burden of buried grief. You allowed me to teach you about grief and welcomed my support on your own journey. What you didn’t realize was that listening to your story and your grief only served to continually heal my own spirit. In those times, we were angels ministering to each other, bearing witness to life changed by loss.

Even on great days, my angels were there. You gave me accolades on something I wrote. You flattered me when I shouldn’t have been flattered. You were there to laugh with me. You even found fun in laughing at me for my comical blunders. You were there to enjoy good times, fun times...great events. You were my past and my presence. You shared old memories and helped me create new ones.

You are family. You are a friend. You are a relative. You are my spouse. You are a neighbor. You are a casual acquaintance. You are a co-worker. You are someone I’ve recently met or someone I’ve known forever. You know who you are...but you don’t know that you are an angel.

Let your light continue to shine. You radiate with goodness not only to me, but you bless those around you. You are special. You are appreciated. You are loved. You’ll always be my angel. I’m honored to live in the presence of angels. God Bless Them, Everyone!