

NEWS FROM DOWN HOME

An eclectic selection of news, stories, and editorials from the heart of the Great State of Texas

Special Edition

As you all know, I try to avoid the troubles of the world when I write this newsletter, because you hear about that enough, and *News from Down Home* is supposed to provide a relief from all of that.

With the tragedy that struck our nation on the 11th of September, I feel obligated to talk about it because it affected our family personally as well as nationally. Our niece, Jennifer Kane, was on the 100th floor of Tower 1 of the World Trade Center (WTC), and is among the missing. Also, a nephew of dear friends of ours, Mike and Klive Ianelli (who live in Centerport, NY), worked for the same company that Jen did (Marsh-McLennan) on the 92nd floor and Mike's cousin was one of the firefighters who ran into the building to save others. They too are still missing.

If that's not enough, neighbors of friends of ours (the Youngs) who live in Bartonville, Texas lost a loved one in the murderous attack.

This is a terrible tragedy that affects "news from down home", wherever "home" may be—it affects everyone in this country. However, I want to discuss this tragedy from a perspective of encouragement and hope. Even though we are blessed as a people, we are familiar with pain and suffering because we either experience it personally or vicariously through the pain and suffering of our loved ones. But we often forget that there *is* a battle going on—a battle between good and evil. I'm here to tell you that though evil may win a few battles, the war has already been won.

In the meantime, I want to dedicate this letter to the *families* and *friends* of those still missing in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon; those who lost their lives there and in all the aircraft; and all the people who were hurt by this evil act of hatred.

A Personal Story

The neighborhood looks the same. The trees are a little bigger, a few of the houses have been recently painted, the road has a few more cracks, but basically it still looks like it did a couple of years ago. But something is different. Pulling into the driveway, you look at the house—it looks beautiful—a "Cape" (Cape Cod design) with red siding, nestled into the woods. But on September 11, 2001, this house, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, was forever changed.

Twenty-six years ago, when George and Faye Kane and their little daughter, Jennifer, moved into this house, it became a home. George and Faye knew they had a special daughter when she spoke her first word. They worked and worked to try to get her to say "Mama" or "Dadda" (of course, Faye was trying to get her to say "Mama" first and George was trying to get her to say "Dadda"). One day, after spending a lot of time with her, Jennifer looked at her mom, then looked at her dad like she was going to say something. Suddenly, Jen looked up at the light fixture and said, "Light". Light would prove to be a key word in Jennifer's life for several reasons.

Jennifer grew up full of love. She loved her family. She loved her friends. And they loved her. Jennifer was devoted to her family, and she loved her grandparents. When she was young, she'd get her Grandma Whitehead to get down on the floor and play cards with her. (I think Jen even let her win once in a while.) Jen didn't care whether she won or lost, and fortunately Gram Whitehead didn't either.

She also loved to cook, and even as a little girl she'd get in the kitchen and help both grandmothers cook up something special for the family. Later on, whenever she came home from college or work to visit the family, she'd always make the time to stop by Cranston, RI and visit with Gram Kane.

Jen proved to be a very close and loving daughter. She made her parents proud during her school years, as a lifeguard, playing soccer, softball and, for a time, hockey on local sports teams. Her dad even coached her softball team for a couple of years. This time together enabled them to develop a close relationship. George observed many lovely characteristics of his daughter. "Through these sports Jen developed a lot of close, solid relationships. Even though she was always on the quiet side, she developed very strong friendships. She made a lot of true friends, strong friends, and she was a good friend."

She was extremely traditional—very family-oriented, especially for a young person, and she especially enjoyed carrying on family and holiday traditions. It was so important to her. Every holiday she would come home early and stay late. She just loved to come home. I asked Faye if she, like most college-aged kids, came home to get some home cooking, and Faye said *Jennifer* was the one

who cooked when she came home ‘cause “Mom’s a lousy cook.” (always kidding, of course).

As time went by and Matthew and Tim were born, the home warmed to laughter and joy and fun. And yes, there were some struggles, small hurts, and all the things that go along with a typical American family, but love was there to overcome all challenges.

But this family was *more* than a typical American family, it was a model American family. George and Faye struggled with life and its ups and downs, but they struggled with it together. They sacrificed to make sure their children got the best education. They were great parents, and Jennifer, Matthew, and Tim responded positively by being good kids—good at home, good at school, and good at work. It was a team effort, and it worked.

When Jen was older, her parents noted a maturity beyond her years. According to Faye, “George and I would ask her advice regarding her brothers, ‘As their older sister, what do you think about this?’ We’d look to her for advice, even though she was our daughter.” Since she was a young person herself, she brought a different perspective, and it really helped.

The relationship between brothers and sisters is unique. It ranges between hugs and kisses to pushing, shoving, and poking. Her oldest brother, Matt (24), said, “A brother-sister relationship is a very special thing. We talked about everything. In the last two years, we were both traveling and very busy in our jobs. We weren’t able to get together very often, but when we did it was like no time had passed between us—it was like we’d *just* seen each other.”

She loved doing things with her brothers. Tim (18), her youngest brother, remembers that whenever she came home, she’d want to ride in his car. According to Tim, “She’d always want to talk about music and movies. We’d go down to the rental place downtown and look for movies to rent. We could never agree on which one to get. I’d want the horror and gory movies and she’d want the love stories, so we’d compromise and get a gory, horror, love story.”

Tim also went to New Jersey during the March break to spend a few days with her. They went to Dave and Busters (an adult arcade) a couple of times. Tim remembers, “One arcade game I wanted her to play with me was a game that involved driving an 18-wheeler—it had a huge truck steering wheel and big horn. She didn’t want to play it, but I finally talked her into it. She fell in love with that game. She loved to be ‘Big Bill’. We played until I was sick of it. I went to play other games but she stayed there most of the night. I remember looking across the arcade at

this beautiful little blonde-haired girl, sitting in the huge truck cab, driving that big 18-wheeler around.”

She loved going to her brother’s games, whether it was baseball or hockey. “She really supported me during my hockey games.” Tim told me. “What amazed me is that she told all her co-workers about my games. Whenever I met them they referred to me as ‘the star hockey goalie’.”

Jennifer loved to be with her family every chance she got. Faye describes one of their traditions, “Our tradition that was that we’d talk to her on Sunday. She always made a point to talk to everybody. Every time we talked on the phone, we always ended our conversations with “I Love You”. I can’t remember a time when we didn’t end our conversations with “I Love You”.

Strikingly beautiful, Jen refused to believe it. She was truly humble when it came to her beauty. According to George, “Jennifer was very, very beautiful, and she had no clue that she was.”

One of her co-workers, Tony, spoke of Jennifer’s dazzling looks, explaining that admirers would somehow materialize whenever she was around: “If not oblivious, she was certainly unaffected by the attention.”

Jen was known for her big smile and big hugs. Combine love, inner beauty, gentleness, and character with a fun-loving nature and big smiles and big hugs, and you have a person that everyone wants to be around—someone who just lights up everyone’s life. What’s interesting is that Jen just didn’t realize the effect her smile and hugs had on people. She was truly without guile. Her smile and hugs came with no hidden agenda. Jen’s hugs were *much* more than a greeting. You could feel it. They were rich expressions of love.

After earning a degree in accounting from Villanova University in 1997, Jennifer became a certified public accountant and got a job in New Jersey. When the entire division of that company accepted an offer to go to work for Marsh-McLennan in New York City earlier this year, Jen moved with them to the 100th floor of Tower 1 of the WTC.

She loved her job. Her co-workers, those who’d been part of the previous company, were like family, “like brothers and sisters”, according to one of her co-workers. And six months into her new job at the WTC Jen was still awestruck by the beauty of the city that spread out beneath her on the 100th floor.

Of the 15 employees who transferred to Marsh, 5 were not present during the attack. Jen’s three bosses

were at a meeting at another location, the secretary was on vacation, and Tony, a relatively new employee Jen had taken under her wing, had called in sick.

Tony told the family that Jennifer was the big sister that he never had, the mentor of all new employees, and the person who wasn't afraid to speak up for them with upper management. One of her bosses, Ken Giambagno, explained that she was such a good employee that the three of them "fought" over her. In addition to being a great employee, Jen was also full of fun—she delighted in kidding her New York colleagues about *their* funny accents.

~~~~~



Jennifer Lynn Kane

~~~~~

When Jen was a little girl around 4 years old, she fell in love with the song "You Light Up My Life". She even learned the song and would sing it after much encouragement from her parents. The only problem was that she hated the sound of the phonograph (for those of you who remember what a phonograph is) when the needle first struck the record. As soon as she heard the sound of the scratchie-scratch, she'd run out the door—but as soon as the song started she'd run back in and start singing the song with all of her heart. She'd sway back and forth to the music.

It's interesting that she loved that song, because thoughts of Jennifer lit up all of the lives she touched. Character, inner beauty, love, grace, friendliness, compassion, kindness—all these are outpourings of something greater than ourselves—a reflection of the One who is The Light of the World.

Jen knew and reflected that Light by the way that she touched many lives.

I think her brother Matt summed it up for all of us: "Jen has touched my heart so many times in the past, and will do so many more times to come."

Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Jennifer expects no less of us. God bless you, Jennifer, for lighting up our lives!

Our Sincerest Thanks

Yes, there's a lot of evil around us, and we know the author of that evil. But there is a lot of good, too, and we know the Author of good. Cindy and I were overwhelmed by the concern, outpouring of love, prayers, expressions of sympathy (for us and what the family was going through), and the generosity of family, friends, the people of Plymouth, and e-mail friends, including those who didn't even know her or her family. We want to thank *all of you* for what you did for us and for our family. We especially want to thank the Comfort Inn and Sheraton Inn of Plymouth, who provided rooms for us and other loved ones during our stay.

And talk about unbelievable, George and Faye said that the family had to take a taxi while they were in New York City, and the cabbie refused to accept payment for the fare. When they tried to give him a tip, he refused that also. A New York cabbie refusing a fare or a tip? Now there's a miracle.

God bless him. God bless all of you for your expressions of love to us and the family. God bless our President and his staff. And God bless America!

~~~~~

Many others of you have asked what you could do for the family. The Jennifer Kane Fund has been created to provide ongoing scholarships, funding for local youth organizations, and/or charities. The Kane family made it clear to me that no one should feel obligated to do anything more—your prayers and concern are more than enough. But if you feel led to do something more, you can donate to:

The Jennifer Kane Fund  
c/o Citizens Bank  
20 North Park Avenue  
Plymouth, MA 02360

## From the Editor

### Where True Peace and Hope Reside

Psalm 23 is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible, and it is a tremendous comfort to us at this time. If we put our trust and faith in our Shepard, we can experience true peace and hope. In our hearts, *we will not want* for anything. And have you *walked beside still water*? It truly is a peaceful experience.

If we will turn our heart over to Him, He will *restore our souls* and mend our wounded heart. If we'll walk beside Him, he'll *lead us in paths of righteousness*, which will not only bless us, but give us a calmness in our deepest being that surpasses human understanding.

Even in times like these, when *we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, because He will be with us*. His strength as portrayed by *His rod and staff will comfort us*.

There *is* a battle going on today, and has been for centuries—a battle between good and evil, between God and Satan. “Why?” you may ask. Because God gave us free will. He didn't want us to be robots, who had no choice but to love Him—no more than we want our spouses or children to love us because we tell them or force them to. We want them to love us because *they want* to. It's their choice. Loving and following God; it's our choice.

God took a great risk by giving us, His children, free will, because that means we can accept Him and love Him, or we can reject Him. We've just experienced the depths of depravity man can go, for those who've rejected the One and True God.

So what am I saying? God wants us to love Him. He longs for us to have a relationship with Him. But we've either been too busy doing other things—making a living, going to school, watching TV, keeping up with the Joneses, living the good life—to be bothered by Him. In recent days we've kicked Him out of our schools, out of our homes, even out of our churches, but most of all, out of our lives.

Has the recent tragedy put all our activities in perspective? I hope so. God is still waiting for us. I encourage you to renew your relationship with Him. How? He will speak to you when you read His Word. He will listen to you when you pray to Him. He will be your hope and salvation if you'll only accept Him.

“You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*”

Trust Him. Believe Him. Follow Him. And you will experience a peace and hope that you long for. If you've gotten away from God, return to Him, and He will give you rest. God bless you. God bless America.

*News from Down Home* is a monthly publication created to let the author blow off steam, share personal experiences, and practice his writing. It contains some truth and some fiction; its objective is to challenge the reader to tell the difference. Remember, the author *is* a Texan, and Texans have been known to embellish a little. The *difference* between a Texan and most liars is that when Texans stretch the truth, they're doin' it on purpose, and believe you're smart enough to figure it out.

*News from Down Home* is published by Paul E. Sanders, 3563 St. Francis Village Road, Fort Worth, TEXAS 76036. Phone 817/294-1940. E-mail: bodaddle@flash.net. Feel free to send comments (preferably good) or letters to the editor.



***News From Down Home***  
3563 St. Francis Village Road  
Crowley, Texas 76036

**We will never forget**