

A Day of Passing



23 January 2007
Tuesday

WHAT IS DYING?

Bishop Brent

I am standing on the sea shore.
A ship at my side spreads her
white sails in the morning breeze
and starts for the blue ocean.
She is an object of beauty and I
stand and watch her until at last
she fades on the horizon.

Then someone at my side says
There, she has gone -
Gone where?
Gone from my sight - that is all
She is just as large in the mast,
hull and spars as she was
when she left my side....

The diminished size
and total loss of sight
is in me and not in her,
and just at the moment when
someone by my side says
"She is gone"
others take up the glad shout
"There she comes"

And that is dying.

FOREWORD

This is a collection of accounts written by friends of Stanford Mark Larsen who were present the evening he passed from this life. Contained herein are precious thoughts, feelings, and expressions of love. My hope is that as you read your spirit will be touched with an understanding of the purpose of life and of our eternal nature as children of a loving Heavenly Father.

Included at the end of this document is an article about this whole experience that I wrote for the Ensign magazine entitled "The Hand of the Lord". Although it has been accepted its publication date still hasn't been set.

John Larsen
20 Sept 2009

LISA HANSEN

26 Feb 2007

Dear Brother Larsen,

I am on vacation in Florida and had some time today to think about Stan and that day. I hope this is not too sad for you to read. That day was very emotional for me. Your family means a lot to our family. We feel spiritually connected through all of this time. I am sure we were all friends before we came to earth. Tell Joyce hi for me. I wish you were here. It is warm and no snow. We are in Orlando until next Monday. I am just checking my email infrequently so I will see you guys when we get home.

Give Joyce my love.

Lisa



John Larsen talking to Lisa Hansen with Dr. O'Shea behind. Joyce Larsen in front then John Carl, John Cole, Aly Hansen, Adam Hansen, Jon Wilson covered up by Milt Farar's arm, and Tony Eberhard at the Merrimack Hospice House

Dear Journal,

Today is Tuesday, Jan. 23 2007. For the past two days I have been thinking about Stan. Sunday in church the feeling hit me really hard that I needed to take Mark and Adam to see Stan. All that day I was feeling heavy inside. You see, just two weeks ago my sister Lou passed away. She had cancer. She had cancer in her colon and liver. She was 55. She

was my oldest sister. I loved her very much and miss her very much. You see journal, it hurts that she is not here. She prayed for Stan. He prayed for her. They never met. I have been home for a few days now and I have slept a lot to help the pain to heal. Sleep does that for me. I could not do much but survive for the past few weeks. Today Stan's spirit is calling to me.

We pray for him each day in my seminary class before school. Today we prayed. I thought of him all morning. I will go to I Party and get a Sponge Bob balloon and go see him. I never just stop by. I need to today. A voice is calling inside my heart. Sponge Bob will accompany me to see Stan. I got his balloon. I am now on my way to his house.

I got to his house and was greeted by his precious and sweet Mom and two Hospice nurses who told me Stan was being transferred to the hospice House in Merrimack and he is dying. My heart hurt. I needed to throw up. This is it. We need to be brave and help Stan through his day of pain before he meets our Savior Jesus Christ. It is an important day for everyone. We need to be the strong ones." Can I bring the boys there?" "Yes."

I went to my car and cried a bunch and called my friend Kym Harmon to tell her. She was also very supportive. She knows I love Stan and my sister just died too and my emotional state is frail at best from the months of caring and hoping and praying for miracles. We have miracles. I feel strong. Lou didn't have to suffer anymore. Neither will Stan. He can teach her the Gospel. She will be waiting for him. I can't believe this whole situation is even real. It seems like a bad dream and maybe I will wake up and have things the same. No chance. This day is happening. Time to drive away because the ambulance just pulled into the driveway and I need to drive. I need to run an errand. I drove to Sam's Club and bought a desk and bookcase for Mark and Adam's room.

I drove to school and picked up Adam. Aly had theater until 4:00 and Mark until 4:30. I ordered pizza at Pizza Hut and picked it up. Then I picked up Mark and Aly. I told them we were going to Hospice House and Stan was going to die today. We all cried and then had pizza and drove there. We took extra pizza for any one who needed food.

When we got there we saw a lot of girls going inside with us. I asked if they were there for Stan. They said yes. We all signed in and reverently went to Stan's room.

I hugged Heather and Phillip. Heather was glad to get a hug. She seemed anxious. She needed some pampering. I tried to comfort her. She had pizza with Julia,

Julia was amazingly calm. The spirit was very comforting to her that evening. I was amazed. Phil seemed nervous and so did Bradford. I felt like hugging everyone. Southern people do that in crisis. We hug everyone. Hugs are magic. John needed his Prilosec. He was the same stoic John that I have gotten to know over the past year or so. Joyce is an amazing example of the gospel to me. She is my hero. Some may see a quiet tired mom but I see a woman who can conquer anything. She is so remarkable. I would be falling apart. I see her there patiently stroking Stan with those knitting needles. John is talking to Stan and he is holding his frail little arms up in the air.

I wanted to see Stan. I hugged him and talked quietly in his ear. I told him to teach Aunt Lou for us and she would be there waiting for him. I was sure of it. I think my Dad was there for him too. He would have wanted to be there for Stan if my sister was.

There was a special Godly spirit there in the Hospice House. Mark and Adam and Aly all wanted to see Stan. Mark is really upset. Adam is sad. Aly is nervous. I think a lot of the kids there have all of those emotions. The kids want to be here for Stan. They do not want to leave him alone in his trial of the day he dies. Stan is a hero boy to his friends. He will never know how much he made a difference to these other kids. He will never be forgotten. Stan is really not gonna make it now. I knew Stan would be okay no matter what. I wish he was the one the chemotherapy would cure. Lou was 55. Stan was 18.

Brother Farar was there. I love him. He is like a Dad to me. He comforted us with his conversation. The kids all mingled and helped each other to find a place in their heads to put this situation. Stan was a part of them. They are a group. Almost like the Stan Club. We are a family of a group of people who love Stan and his family. Stan was a person who helped people to feel good about life. He did not dislike anyone. All loved him. His life on earth is short. He accomplished a lot in his life. His website is awesome. People learned of his bravest and awesome family from that website. People are following his progress.

Tonight Stan will have a beautiful visit with Jesus. Wow. I wonder if he is here now in this room at Hospice House? I always wonder if he is the one that comes for us? I hugged Stan again at 7:45. I think his time is close. I can feel it. I am a nurse. I always got to be with those who were going on. I liked that job. It felt special to be the one with a person when they go to meet Jesus. I don't want Aly here when it happens. She is not that tough yet. We will go after Mark and Adam say goodbye to Stan. I told him goodbye and I love him and he made a difference in my life and my kids lives and I will never forget him. Stan moved his lips to "I love you too." Then I turned and hugged Joyce and John and said I would be back.

I drove home and came back with Mark. We got back at 9:00pm. Angela said he passed away about 20 minutes earlier. I was not surprised. I thought it would be soon. Stan was brave. He was amazing. Awesome. Stantastic. Mark wanted to be there with his parents. So did I. We stayed in the room with a few other families. Wilsons, Coles, Carls, Brother Farar, I remember Bradford being so brave but looking as though he needed to cry a lot. He seemed quietly pained. I felt bad for Phil. When I got back into the Hospice House Joyce was in the hallway talking to Sister Ogden. She stood and we hugged. I felt like she needed a Mom. I wanted to be her Mommy so she could cry and feel comforted by a nurturing person who would let her cry all she wanted. She needed that. John was on the phone to family. Heather was too. Julia loves her Nintendo DS. I am glad she has that. It is a real friend tonight. Phillip has lots of people around him.

I called Chris at BYU to tell him. He cried. He wants to come home for the funeral. He is sad. He loves Stan. They were gonna be missionaries together. Stan is Lou's missionary.

We are glad for that. She needs Stan to teach her the Gospel so Aly can do her baptism next January when Aly turns 12.

Chris is going to organize a temple trip to Provo Temple during Stan's funeral. They will be there while we are here doing the funeral. They are going to release balloons for Stan. We are going to release Sponge Bob balloons after the funeral at our house in honor of Stan. He would think it is fun and a cool way to honor him. We will always remember Stan when we watch Sponge Bob or play Magic the Gathering or see a skinny boy carrying around girls on his back giving piggyback rides. Stan did that for all of the girls at Youth Conference at Plymouth State when the cool shoes blistered the feet. He even gave rides to girls who weighed more than him. He was so fun. Kind. Cool. Stantastic Forever. I love you Stan. I will never forget you. I met you at church and worked with you in Boy Scouts and Stake Youth Activities. You are a special boy forever.

Your Friend..... Sister Hansen



High school friends visit at the Merrimack Hospice House. girl, girl, Steve Kelly, Eric Pugliano, Vikas Mangiputi, and Steve Abodili

JOHN COLE

2 Nov 2007

We were privileged to be with Stanford and his family during the final hours of his mortal sojourn. There was a sense that Stanford knew he was surrounded by many individuals who loved him. He seemed to be at peace.

Stanford's final mortal moments were a sacred family time as the family gathered round him and softly sang songs of home, family, and eternity. With those loving refrains resting gently on his heart, he passed softly from this life. He left with a father's blessing, a family's love, and the embrace of friendship gathered near. In some ways, I felt myself an interloper at a sacred and personal family event.

I had a feeling that Stanford had been called and that he should feel free to answer that call. Still, I hoped that a miracle might yet occur that would bring him healing and allow him to remain with us. What joyous reunions will be ours when again we meet with those we love.



The graveside service at Woodlawn Cemetery in Nashua, NH, on Jan 27, 2007. Bishop John Cole in the center. To his left is Merlin Larsen dedicating the grave. John and Joyce Larsen on the left with the funeral home director on John's left. Roberta Larsen to the far right.

TONY EBERHARD

2007

Here are a few thoughts that came to me in the last hour before Stanford was called back to God where he came from.

I felt great joy for Stanford even though he wanted to say here, but I knew where he was going and what it would be like. But there in the last few moments of his life on earth I saw and felt some of the pain his family felt. But as for Stanford I knew the moment he left his body he was an adult male spirit body with many more abilities than he had in his earthly body. He did not cross over on his own. Someone was there greeting him and showing him the way. Most of my thoughts in the last few moments of his life here on earth I spent thinking about the people that were there and trying to read their feelings. Also this scripture came to mind. "I the Lord have decreed in my heart that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death that you may be found worthy. For if ye will not abide in my covenant ye are not worthy of me." (D&C 98: 14,15)

I think you all passed this test with flying colors. The Lord bless you and your whole family.

With brotherly love,

Tony Eberhard

EMMALYNN KATE WILSON

5 March 2007

Well, I don't remember much of that day. I have simple feelings for a simple person. Anyway, when we got to the hospice and saw the condition of Stan, I, of course, felt sad. But I don't like to be sad, so I ate some chocolate. I also felt kind of relieved that he wouldn't be feeling so much pain anymore. And because we wouldn't have to worry about him, because he was in a great place to be. And, well, I don't have much else to say. Sorry.



Emmy Wilson (on her birthday) in front with Julia Larsen behind at the Wake. Jon Wilson is on left and in back are Kent and Jeanine Acomb, Stanford's grandparents..

MIRANDA ELISE WILSON

5 March 2007

What I remember of that day, was I drove to Hospice with the hope above hope that Stan would “rise up and walk.” The place seemed familiar, but I had never been there before. I felt very small, sad, hopeful and scared. I made it to the room and I couldn’t bring myself to get close to Stan. I couldn’t stay in the room anyway, because I didn’t want to remember Stan that way, and I couldn’t stand to look at Stan so much like an old man. So instead I went into the hall and talked with people and played Yahtzee. After a while I heard someone singing, “I am a child of God,” or something like that. After the “hall dwellers” started talking about our first memories of Stan – the first time we met him. After a while I went back into the room and sat and cried and cried and sat. I wished that he was back, but I was also very envious because he could meet all the cool people like Christ, Isaiah, Joseph Smith, Moses. The list is endless. I felt like a great person had gone and was very far away. Ever since then, I don’t think of Stan as being dead, but as being on a long mission.



Dinner very late at Friendly’s after the wake. Jon Wilson, Andrew Wilson, Miranda Wilson, Heather Larsen, Emmy Wilson (her birthday), Julia Larsen, Phillip Larsen, and Bradford Larsen.

MARYANN JONES WILSON

5 March 2007

Being near the veil is such an honored, sacred place, that I was deeply touched that we would be invited to the bedside of Stan's last moments on earth. There is so little to say at such a time, so we watch and wait for the veil to open and softly close again. Emily Dickinson captured what I felt so well:

After great pain a formal feeling comes-
The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs;
The stiff Heart questions-was it He that bore?
And yesterday-or centuries before?
The feet, mechanical, go round
A wooden way
Of ground, or air, or ought,
Regardless grown,
A quartz contentment, like a stone.
This is the hour of lead
Remembered if outlived,
As freezing persons recollect the snow-
First chill, then stupor, then the letting go.

Stan's youth died sometime in June and he lived through middle age and old age so rapidly that my mind could not keep up. When Stan passed away it was so easy for me to see that it was time for him to go. And so it is left to us to keep plodding on, working out our salvation in real time, obviously not on the gifted, fast-track that Stan was. There was always such urgency in Stan's life... and I like to think that that sense of urgency and eagerness lives on with Stan.



Dinner very late at Friendly's after the wake. Gordon Wilson, Maryann Wilson, Jon Wilson, Andrew Wilson, Miranda Wilson, Heather Larsen, Phillip Larsen, and Bradford Larsen.

JENN NELSON

4 March 2007

Stanford's last evening
January 23, 2007

The last afternoon I spent with Stanford was frustrating to me. I wanted so much to help him, but realized that there was really nothing I could do for him. I felt that he knew we were there and was glad we came. I also felt that he wanted to talk to us, but was unable to do this because of his worsening condition. There was a peaceful quiet spirit that everyone observed. While we were in the room no one seemed to want to talk, even in whispers; whereas, outside the room - I did not feel the same spirit. It was a more casual atmosphere. I felt it was all right to converse with people.

I have often found myself comforting patients near death in my profession, yet the feeling in Stanford's room was very different for me. I felt the veil was very close. I felt a quiet reverence that I've only experienced at the temple itself. It was very intense and felt odd - out of place to me. In 23 years of nursing, I have spent many hours with dying patients and I had never felt such an intensely strong spirit, even when comforting my own family members who were actively dying.

I felt sad to see that Stanford would be leaving us. He was a good friend to both Geoff and Scott and was always very kind to me. He always made me feel as if I was a friend as well. The way he always made time to stop and talk to me was most impressive. No other students have impressed me in this way. As you well know, he was a special spirit and I feel fortunate to have known him. However, it was hard to feel sad while I was in his room that evening because of the intensely reverent feeling. I truly felt as if I was in the temple. I am sure we were buoyed up and comforted by the spirit.



Jennifer Nelson, Geoff Nelson, Phillip Larsen, and Chris Gribble at the Merrimack Hospice House



Kids playing a game in foyer area at the Merrimack Hospice House. Clockwise starting in the back: Emily Cole, Angela Rainey, Karen Ogden, Michael Ogden, and Steven Ogden

GILBERT FAVEY

25 February 2007

Bien chers tous deux,

Sachant Stanford a l'hospice je pensais y aller et puis Soeur Pam Eberhard m'a demande de les conduire pour leur montrer la route. Je vous lis et suis surprise. Je pensais avoir ete seule pour ce moment la bien penible.

Je regardais ce jeune frere et je revoyais Marcel. Il respirait comme lui. Vous pensez c'etait normal, mais pas a ce moment la, non. Nous etions tous la, mais je voyais Stanford. Je revivais le matin ou Marcel respirait comme respirait Stanford, pas petites saccades, et mon coeur en souffrait.

A ce moment ses deux soeurs et autres soeurs ont chantonnes un doux chant comme une "douce melodie". C'etait divin pour moi. Le chant fini et il a respire une fois plus fort et c'etait son dernier soufflé. La douce melodie l'a conduit ou ils sont a present.

Je l'ai vu comme j'ai vu Marcel. Je les ai vu tous les deux, apres tant de souffrances et courage, quitter la vie sans bruit. Nous savons qu'ils ne souffrent plus, mais pour nous c'est le vide complet. Je manque rarement la reunion mais prete a partir.

J'etais trop fatigue et je ne voulais pas partir conduire. J'ai manque la reunion depuis 1963. Je ne n'en ai pas souvent manque mais l'age a present me freine plus, les petits coups au coeur qui n'arrangent rien.

Mes biens chers frere er soeur, je suis si reconnaissante d'etre membre de l'Eglise. C'est une richesse pour moi et vous avoir

Dear both of you,

Knowing Stanford was at the hospice I thought I would go there, and then Sister Pam Eberhard asked me to drive to show them the way. I saw you and was surprised. I thought you would be alone for this very painful moment.

I watched this young brother and I recalled Marcel. He breathed like him. You think it was normal, but not at this moment, no. We were all there, but I was looking at Stanford. I relived the morning when Marcel breathed like Stanford was breathing, small panting breaths, and my heart ached.

At that moment his two sisters and other sisters sang a soft song like a soft melody. It was heavenly for me. The song finished and he took a strong breath, and that was his last breath. The soft melody took him where he is now.

I saw him like I saw Marcel. I saw both of them, after so much suffering and courage, leave this life silently. We know that they no longer suffer, but for us it is complete emptiness. I rarely miss meetings, but I am ready to leave.

I was very tired and didn't want to leave to drive. I missed a meeting since 1963. I haven't often missed any, but my current age slows me more, small blows to the heart which do not help.

My dear brother and sister, I am so thankful to be a member of the Church. It is a treasure for me to have you as brother

comme frere et soeur. Je suis seule; pas de frere ni soeur. Alors la aussi je suis bien benie et je vous aime.

Je remercie Frere John d'avoir donne son temps de jeunesse a instruire des Francais; pas toujours facile, surtout a ce moment la. Je sais!! Apres j'allais avec les Missionnaires, les aidais a faire comprendre aux nouveaux interesses, en rentrant, je les invitais a dejeuner avec nous. Apres quand j'allais travailler les enfants a l'ecole et Marcel au travail, ils avaient les clefs et pouvaient rentrer chez nous a leur temps. Il y avait toujours quelque chose au frigo de prêt. A bientot de se revoir.

Bien affectueusement et pour toujours,

Gil

and sister. I am alone; no brothers or sisters. Well there I am also very blessed and I love you.

Brother John I thank you for giving time in your youth to teach the French people; not an easy thing, especially at that time. I know!! After going with the missionaries, helping them teach new investigators, upon coming home I invited them to have lunch with us. Afterwards, when I went to work, the children were in school, and Marcel was at work, they had keys and could come into our home at any time. There was always something ready in the fridge for them. See you soon.

With love always,

Gil



Dr. James O'Shea, John Carl, John Cole, Mark Hansen, Aly Hansen, Adam Hansen, Jon Wilson, Milt Farar, Tony Eberhard, Gil Favey, Sandy Cole, Pam Eberhard all look on at the Merrimack Hospice House

JOHN CARL

23 February 2007

One month after Stanford's passing.

Feelings and Observations from one month ago:

Before going to the hospice that evening I had just got off of work. It had been a long day at work, but it was partly because of the hard news of Stanford's condition.

A little after 6 pm, I felt strongly that we should go to the hospice to be with and comfort the Larsen family.

When we got there, John approached me and apprised me of Stan's condition and urged me to visit with him a bit. My heart was broken because Stan had become so weak and thin.

I sat down beside Stan's bed, and Brad was across from me. My heart was filled with love for these two young men as they both hold a special place in my heart. I've had many experiences with them in the past years.

Humor is a like a release valve for me and I felt a need to express some with Stan.

I brushed my hand along Stan's thin arm and asked how he was doing. It was hard to hold back the tears, but I managed to and told him that I had received an e-mail from Johnny a week before to tell Stan that he said "Ehhhhh!". I heard a few people chuckle at that and that helped lift my spirits a bit. Next I made a little joke about Stan's beard he had grown and mentioned that he had the 'Snoop Dog' look going on. Bradford got a real kick out of that and he had a good laugh over it. Stan didn't react to it, but he was probably too weak at this point.

Watching Sister Favey and Sister Eberhard sitting in front of the Stan's bed led me to think about how much they must love the Larsen family and how we were so sorry that they all had to endure this hard trial.

As time passed that night it occurred to me that I was with my nephew (my Sister's son) in a room just a year earlier to be with him during his passing. I had been his favorite Uncle. I looked at Stan and could tell that he was in the same condition as my nephew and that he would be passing that evening. His breaths were getting further apart and slower. Soon after those thoughts, John approached me and he had also noted that Stan was slowing down and that his time was short. I wasn't surprise that John had made that observation even if he'd never been in that situation before because he is so observant and logical in his approach to everything.

Doctor O'Shea urged the family to gather around Stan and visit with him. A little while after that, John gave Stan a blessing - I thought in my mind that this would be John's final

fathers blessing on Stanford in this sphere of existence. While John gave Stan this blessing, I felt a heavenly host in the room and figured it must have been the welcoming party for Stanford as his time was short. This was a very strong feeling similar to experiences I'd had on my mission years ago.

I heard a faint voice singing "Families Can Be Together Forever" and realized it was Joyce singing. The family joined in and I thought it was so sweet that they would sing to Stanford. I watched Stanford's condition as his life slowed down and it occurred to me that he would be passing any minute. The family then began to sing "I Am a Child of God". Just as they finished the last verse, Stanford passed away. I was amazed by the timing of this and felt in my heart that Joyce was inspired to start singing when she did.

Afterwards, I felt that there was a feeling of relief in the room. The hard fight was over. That the Lord's will had been done.

Although the reason for Stan's suffering and passing still isn't totally clear to me, over the past month it's been easier for me to see the Lord's hand and guidance through the entire process. It was carefully handled by the Lord and I honestly feel that your family conducted yourselves perfectly in the Lord's eyes during the entire trial.

It's also clear to me now that Stanford's purpose here and on the other side of the veil are connected somehow and that there will be souls saved because of it.



John Carl on the left and Deborah Carl on the right at the graveside service.

TERESA NOEL

26 February 2007

John and Joyce:

I have to start by saying that being there that night was one of the most spiritual experiences I have had.

It started for us around 4:00 pm on January 23 as I arrived home from school and the store. I always check my e-mail upon arriving home. I found your two messages and instantly wanted more answers. I started calling around to see if you wanted visitors or to just be with your family. Finally after finding no one at home or those that were, had no answers for me, so I looked up the phone number of the Hospice House and called them directly. The nurse that answered said that she was not working with Stanford, but that many visitors had been coming for the past 2 hours. I said, "In your opinion do they want visitors or do they want to be alone?" Her response was, "There is not much time, come on down!" So, I told this to my husband and he said we would go and just stay for about 5-10 minutes.

Upon arriving around 7:10 pm, there was something about the place that made it hard for us to leave. I asked Russ several times after 15 minutes had gone by and then 30 minutes, if he were ready to leave. (I was not, but wanted to be respectful to your family.) Every time his answer was, "not yet." Dr. O'Shea was talking to Russ as time got closer to his passing, and I could tell that Russ was totally engulfed in the conversation and the things that were happening around him.

When John started to give Stanford the blessing I was not watching, but a peace came over the room and I looked up to see him giving that blessing. Then as each of his siblings talked to him one last time followed by his mother... it was just so neat to watch. Then the singing started, from where I was I couldn't tell if it was just your family singing or everyone close to the bed. I was singing in my heart with you and the angels came and you could feel their presence.

As Stanford passed peacefully onto the other side, a quiet, calm, peaceful feeling hung in the air! You knew that Stanford was already doing the Lord's Work! I am so thankful to your family for letting us share in this very sad event in your life. Russ and I have talked about it and we both feel that through this experience that our Ward Family has grown closer together and that there are those that have been strengthened by this experience.

I still remember the day when Stanford asked for a picture of Shelby, "Because she is pretty", he said.

You have a great family! We are here for you anytime!!! We have lots of frozen soup if you ever need a dinner/lunch...

Teresa Noel

RUSS NOEL

26 February 2007

Memories and Thoughts of Stanford's last days.

As I continued to receive the email reports on Stan's condition I understood he continued to grow weaker. I wanted to visit but I had a slight cough. Nothing much but I was afraid it might be the onset of something worse. I felt that I did not want to expose Stan to that. But with not seeing him for a few weeks I really could not appreciate just how weak he had become.

As word came in the email that his time was near I spoke with my wife and we questioned whether the family wanted to spend these least moments with Stan alone or with others. As we called some people in the ward to get more information on the latest status we were told that there may be many people there and that we may only want to stay five minutes or so. With your family having been so open throughout the entire process we decided to come and lend our support and say a final "goodbye until we meet again" to Stan. As I walked into the room and saw Stan and what the cancer had done to his body, I then better appreciated his strength.

Scanning the room I saw our ward family and felt a closeness and bond with all that were there. As we made our way to each of the family members I felt that we were part of that family, that we were all the same family. When I was made Bishop one of the great blessings given to me was I felt as though my heart was knit with each of the member of our ward. They were never un-knit even after my release.

As I looked on at Stan I ached at his pain but even more crushing was the grief I felt for those close family members Stan was leaving behind. It was a great comfort to watch as each of you, the Larsen family, and the ward family hugged cried and comforted each other. This to me was what the Savior meant when he said, "Comfort those in need of comfort, and mourn with those that mourn."

As I was standing there Stan's Doctor was talking with me. He commented on how good this was for healing, having everyone here. Also he was telling what was expected to happen and what they were watching for, to ensure that Stan and the family were as comfortable as possible. I was impressed at how compassionate and caring he was. He seemed to be just a great man.

Then as the time drew near and the family gather around the bed I saw John talking to Stan, I thought comforting him. Later I found out it was his last father's blessing in this life.

As I stood there I could feel the time of Stan's departure getting very close. I felt the spirit whisper a song should be sung. I thought to myself, "Not me. I can't sing." Number one, my voice is awful and number two I will just bawl. Then I heard humming. I thought thank you someone else got the message. I thought at first it was Sister

Eberhard. Then I heard the words start. Then more joined in. I wanted to, but couldn't and didn't want to intrude. Then as the song was ending Stan took his last breath and left. Sent off with a mother's lullaby, a fathers blessing and a room full of love.

After as each person shared their condolences and Stanford's body lay on the bed it seemed surreal. The energy and presence that Stan brought into a room were gone because he was not there, only his body was. I have long felt a strong impression that Stan has important work there, and is there with close friends and relatives.

In retrospect on all the events, I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to have Stan be a part of my life, and also blessed that your family allowed us all to share our and your loss. Both times my wife and I visited the hospital we came away being comforted and lifted up. Though this is a great tragedy the ward has been richly blessed to see how precious time is with each other and how close we all really are.

At the funeral and wake I was struck again by the outpouring of love, this time by his nonmember friends. I had Dennis Albin with me as we waited in line to make our way past the casket and to the family. As we passed the casket and saw the scriptures opened Dennis asked if the scriptures were opened to any special scripture. I answered yes. He asked if I could read it to him. To this point I had done well at staying composed, but as I read that scripture (D&C 4) I could feel the truth of Stan's calling to preach, not only in the spirit world, but even in his death. Count the number of people there were at the church and the memories they will have the "Mormon" friend they had.

Then as I came and John gave me a big hug and thanked me for being there and continued to talk to me as we embraced I again felt that true feeling of family. At the funeral as the choir sang and I watched so many of them over come with emotion I knew their spirit had been touched also.

Thank you all again. I love each of you.

Russ Noel



Russ Noel and Dennis Albini in line at the wake on Jan 26, 2007

DAVID BURGESS

1 April 2007

Dear John and Joyce,

I will here attempt to write some of the impressions that I remember about the time of Stanford's illness. It is not easy. The most significant experiences are so deep and profound that I simply will not have the language to describe them.

First, I want you to know that I am amazed at how you have handled this. I would not have been able to be as open and forthcoming with such difficult information. I am grateful for the generous sharing that helped all of us work through our own feelings. You did everything possible for Stanford as well. He knew that he was loved and that everybody was doing everything that was known to help him. As I have said before, I think you have done everything just right. You did all that you could do and you couldn't have done anything any better.

All through this Stanford was such a great example. He was somehow able to remain pleasant and upbeat right up to the end. He lived his testimony and that is the best that any of us can do.

I remember the Sunday when Stanford was rushed to the hospital for the first time. We thought he had appendicitis and that was bad enough, but when they ended up doing a different operation it became even more serious. That was nothing, however, to the news that there was cancer in Stanford's liver. That one made every parent groan within in a very intense way. I was at my office when the email came. I cried, shut my door, and kneeled down in my office and prayed for you and for Stanford. This was repeated more than that one time. I particularly remember the time just before Thanksgiving when Stanford was rushed to Dartmouth and it looked like he might not return. That was probably the most difficult piece of news of all. Stanford was still looking relatively good then and we had some hope that the treatments might work, but this was devastating. That was an instance when there was no way to express my feelings. There was love and compassion, but it was mixed with a kind of sorrow that created an intense desire that I could somehow alleviate the pain and difficulty that I knew you must be experiencing. I knew that the intensity of your feeling would make mine seem small in comparison. I really had no idea of how difficult that would be.

But Stanford did come back and even went to a Thanksgiving dinner at the Wilson's! What a kid! During the next while it seemed that there were times of hope, but it was becoming less and less likely that Stanford would be able to beat this.

It was during this time that I remember praying for Stanford while I was working at the Temple. I remember being the officiator during a session and, instead of listening, I was thinking about Stanford. Why was this happening? How would it turn out? I wanted to pray for his recovery. Indeed, I did pray for him during that session. Not by name, because that isn't allowed, but my thoughts were there and I made a special plea for those

who were sick and afflicted. I think I might have told you that I was thinking about Stanford while at the temple, but that it was a hard one and difficult to figure out.

The last time I saw Stanford at Church he still looked pretty good. I remember him giving the prayer at Stake Priesthood Meeting. It brings tears to my eyes as I write this. I'm not sure how to describe my feelings, but what an inspiration.

Here was a young man who was living his whole life of trial and testing in a few short months. It takes most of us 60-70 years to accomplish what he did in those few short months. And he endured to the end. If only we all could be so valiant.

That brings me to his final few hours. When I first arrived at the Hospice House I couldn't see him because there were so many people in the room. But as some of them, it seemed to be a lot of young friends from school, left I did get a glance through the door. I hadn't seen him during those last weeks and when I first saw him it was actually quite a shock because he had lost a lot of weight in a short amount of time. When I first arrived Stanford seemed to still be responding. At least it looked like he and John had some kind of interaction. As the evening came he didn't seem to respond much. It was a difficult time, but we all felt that we wanted to be there. I was struck by the number and variety of people there. There were older folks who had lived long, and in some cases, difficult lives. Notably Sr. Favey, who had lost her husband within a year in a similar manner, was there. I felt compassion for her and was amazed that she would be there. There were some youth and a number of others in between. I will always remember John Carl standing there by the wall and thinking what a good person he is. Indeed, as I looked around I had similar feelings for everyone there. I even felt that way about Stanford's doctor who was standing near me. That was a wonderful thing in the midst of a very solemn proceeding.

I had sat down on the soft chair in the very back when I heard some singing start. I enjoyed the heavenly sound. Others joined in singing about families and other songs well known to us. I stood back up and was able to see into the room. Just after the singing there was a quiet stir. The doctor went forward and consulted with the nurse. It took me a few seconds to realize that Stanford had passed away.

Those were tender moments when there was really nothing that could be said. You were both again very gracious and there was a common sense of love and compassion. I remember leaving and seeing you next to Stanford's mortal body with Bishop Cole and his good wife Sandra waiting in the hallway to support you as you left.

Not too long after that we gathered again to do work for Stanford that he hadn't been able to accomplish for himself. We met in the Temple to get him his endowments. That was a great session. I know you appreciated Milt and Lynette Farar officiating. He has been a great friend to you. I was grateful to be there. When I walked into the room and saw you sitting up front, I was impressed to sit next to you. I hope you didn't mind. It was wonderful to be in a session with so many people that knew each other. What a wonderful experience to surround the Altar together and look around knowing each

person and loving everyone. Then in the Celestial Room it was like a glimpse of heaven. The room was filled with friends and a feeling of love and caring for each other. I know Stanford was pleased. He now has the power and authority to do the work he wants to do and those left behind have the Gospel to support them.

I hope this summary of my experience is what you were asking for. I love and appreciate both of you very much. You are good people. I will be very willing to vouch for your good works before the Bar of God if ever I am asked. I will continue to keep you in my prayers for I know it must still be difficult for you to bear this unexpected burden in life.

David Burgess
April 2007

MARK HANSEN

18 April 2007

Well, let's see...I haven't really given much thought about that night one month ago. I think when I woke up that morning I knew it was going to be a rough day. You know, that sort of feeling in the bottom of your stomach and the back of your mind that you never really notice until after the fact. That's what it was like.

It's funny, having to write your last memories of a friend on paper. Well, type them out, at least. I suppose it really does help.

The first thing I remember is when my mom told me after picking Adam and I up from our after school acapella choir. Most, if not all, of them, knew of Stan's situation. That day back in December my friend Brady actually came with us. In any event, I thought that for sure Stan would pull through again.

But then I saw him. He looked...old. Like my grandfather when he died. It didn't really hit me to feel sad or anything. I just felt really strongly that today was the last day I would be seeing Stan alive for a very long time. Death is a fact of life, as stupid as that may sound. I just tried to comfort people as I could, and I waited to talk to Stan.

I waited a long time, actually. That was probably my fault. But I didn't mind it so much. I remember some of Stan's friends from school – three girls – coming to visit him. Stan always was, and probably is, a ladies' man.

I didn't say much to him before I left. I just thanked him for the example he was to me, through not a few tears. I've always been bad with finding words to say what I want to, so I tried to keep things short to avoid sounding stupid.

We went home and I resolved to return with my mom, and I was more than willing to stay the whole night. When I got there though, Angela told us that Stan had already died. I think I already knew that too. I didn't feel as anxious as I had.

We walked into Stan's room, and the very first thing that struck me was how incongruous that Sponge Bob blanket looked, lying there, with that stupid grin and "Today is the best day ever!" emblazoned across the top and bottom. It was hard to keep back the tears when it came to mind that today probably was the best day ever for him.

Time went on, and I started hearing more and more stories of Stan's escapades, and more and more I realized that everyone – really everyone – loved Stan. It's hard not to, to be honest. He was, and is, an inspiration to us; to me.

I think the thing I'll remember most is something seemingly insignificant. At the wake my parents and I were talking with Stan's band director. He called Stan a 'North Star'. And now every time I think of him I remember this song I sang in church – who knows

what for, or even why I should remember the lyrics after so many years – way back when we lived in Michigan:

*When Gordon B. Hinckley was a boy,
He slept outside for fun.
He noticed all the stars would change,
Except for one.
Be constant as the North Star.
It shines for you and me.*

That's what I remember of Stan's last days. It's not much, but just the memories are enough for me. And when I finally am called to die, I am certain that I will meet him, and he can finally teach me to play DDR.



Mark Hansen, Dr. James O'Shea, Bradford Larsen, and John Carl surround Stanford's bed in the Merrimack Hospice House

KAREN OGDEN

March 2007



(Left to Right) Steven Ogden, Michael Ogden, Karen Ogden in line at the wake

Senior Year Retreat March, 2007

A lot has happened in my life in the past few months. I have been forced to grow up and learn life lessons that no one should have to face while still in high school. I have truly learned that everything happens for a reason, whether it is clear or not.

Last June, while we were taking finals, one of my best friends, Stanford Larsen, was in the hospital having surgery to remove a large tumor, which was obstructing his large intestine. When I saw him, he had not changed from the Stanford I had grown up with. Sure, he had a huge scar that ran across his stomach, but other than that, even on the drugs, he was 100% Stanford. He was full of life, love, and faith. He had plans to serve a mission for my Church when he turned 19, which would be in August of this year. As that week progressed, I just brushed aside the fact that one of my best friends had a tumor. I went on with life, as did everyone else. A happy 17-year old does not die of cancer, so there was no use worrying.

After we found out that Stan did indeed have cancer, they put him on chemotherapy. They did not know what type of cancer he had, but it was still early to tell. Chemo was going well all summer, and Stan had not changed. He was still full of life, and he still treated everyone with the same love he always had. Life went on, and I rarely thought about the fact that Stan had cancer, even though by the end of the summer, he was bald from the chemo.

School started, and I was enjoying my senior year. Stan had graduated 3 days before his surgery in June, so he was working at the company where his father works. In late September, he went for a CT scan. When we got the results, I was devastated... Stan's tumor, which was on his liver, had not shrunk. On the bright side, it had not grown, either. However, this just showed that the chemo was not working that well. They put him on a new type of chemotherapy, and he was stable until Thanksgiving. A couple of days before Thanksgiving, Stan woke up early in the morning with a splitting pain in his stomach area. His parents rushed him to the local hospital, but they could not do anything for him. He was ambulated up to Dartmouth, NH, where his oncologist was. As it turned out, his tumor was bleeding internally, and they could do nothing to stop it. It was time to wait, and they did not think that he was going to live past the end of the week. On Thanksgiving day, Stan had returned home, and was spending that day with his family at a close friend's house. My brothers and I went over to visit him, and to see how both he and his family were doing.

What we found surprised me, after the report that he was not doing well at all and would be dying in a week to two weeks. Stan was lying on the couch, because it hurt too much to move. That was all, though, as he was cracking jokes and acting just like the Stan I have always known.

He was so sure that he would pull through this cancer, as he felt he had not accomplished all he needed to in life. His faith was enough to rub off on me, and as time went on and he deteriorated more, I was still hopeful that he would regain his strength and return to his full health. He was still around by Christmas, which was a miracle in itself, because of the prediction back in November, that he only had a couple weeks left. I started visiting him more regularly, I guess because without realizing it consciously, I knew the end was coming.

Sunday, January 21, I went to see Stanford with my family. I had visited him a week before, and told him I'd return soon, but then I got sick and could not see him, for fear of getting him sick. When I saw him that Sunday, I was stunned. It took all I had not to cry in front of him. He looked so sickly, and he had decreased in health noticeably, even in the week I had not seen him. After talking to him for a few minutes, while he was unable to respond because he did not have the energy to even whisper, I went back out into their living room and just cried my heart out. I realized then that he would not live to go on his mission, go to college, or have a family. He did not have much time left, and I figured that I had better come to see him every day as long as I could. I thought I had a few more weeks, maybe a month. I hoped for a few months, but this was not the case.

Tuesday, January 23 was a day I will never forget. As school ended, I was called down to the office, and my mother was on the phone, waiting to tell me the results of Stan's CT scan that had been the day before. She informed me that the doctors were giving him only a few more hours. My first thought was that they had been wrong before, so they might be wrong again... then I came to my senses and realized what was happening. It felt like my whole world was crashing down around me. At this moment in time, I felt so lost and hopeless, I did not know what to do or where to turn. I can't even begin to describe how I was feeling and what was on my mind. I went home, then as a family, we went to see Stanford and his family at the hospice house where he was staying. When I got there... I knew it was the end. He looked like he was already gone, though I knew he was not. I went over and spoke with him a little bit... he looked like he wanted to answer me, but could not, for he did not have the strength. I was there for a couple of hours, and many people came and went during that time. At one point, my parents wanted to go get dinner. I did not want to leave. I went over to Stan and told him that I was leaving to get dinner, but I would be back. After dinner, my brothers and I went to a church activity, as we do every Tuesday night. I had mixed feelings about going, but I thought that I needed the escape to take my mind off of things. After that was over, I drove my brothers and myself back to the hospice house, prepared to stay there all night if I had to. I just did not want to leave Stan again, because I wasn't ready to lose him yet. When I got back, it was around 9:00 pm. I walked in and saw many people crying, which was not an uncommon sight for that night. It was not until I walked in his room that I realized it. Stan had already passed away. I just went in, and stared numbly at the body of the Stanford I had grown up with. I just stood there, not knowing what to do or what to say to anyone. I was devastated; I did not get to say goodbye. I had told him that I would come back, but once I did, it was already too late. I was so numb that I could not even cry. I turned around, and another of my good friends was standing there, and that was when I started crying. Stan was gone, and there was nothing I could do about it. I stayed for a few more hours, though I was in a daze. I still could not believe it, and pretty much refused to. When people began talking about Stan in the past tense, I couldn't handle it, and refused to do the same. I still have trouble with it....

I went to the wake that Friday night, and I held up well during that. I don't think it had hit me then. It was only at the funeral, when I realized that the thousands of people who were there were there because Stan had passed, that it hit me. I had been crying all week, but this time I did not cry. I got a really peaceful feeling, and I knew things were going to be okay, even without Stanford around constantly. I knew that he was out of his pain, and he was in a better place. Besides, it was kind of hard to cry, simply because Stanford would be the type to come back and tell us to stop crying, because he was such a happy person. He would want us all to move on with our lives, and smile when we remember him.

This was the biggest teaching experience I have had in the past few months, though there have been many others. For example, the day after Stanford died, one of my best friends joined the Air Force, so he will be gone shortly, too. I have also lost a lot of other friends in the past couple of months, for various reasons that I still do not understand, and this hurts a lot, because it seems as though none of them see my pain or even care. It has been

a rough few months, but looking back... there are a few things I wish had never happened, though I am starting to see the good coming out of the bad.

After losing Stan, I realized the importance and value of life. Stanford loved life, even to the very last day. His last words that horrible night were "I love you." I think we could all learn from his example. He lived one day at a time, making the best of every circumstance. He loved everyone, not just those he knew personally, and was kind to everyone in his life. I have never heard him say a mean word to or about anyone; I am not just saying this because he has died. I would say it even if he were standing right next to me, because it is the truth. Stan had an unwavering faith that I have not seen in anyone else I know. I have learned so much from him, and I only wish I had seen it and learned it before this year. I have learned, as I said before, that everything happens for a reason. I don't know yet the reason that Stanford died, but I do know that a lot of good is coming out of it already. My faith has certainly been strengthened, for one. Because of losing Stan, I have begun more often to tell people I love that I love them. I never want people to doubt my appreciation for them, so I have decided that I will always tell them. Stanford may not have gotten to serve his mission the way he wanted to, but I believe that his mission has been fulfilled. He taught everyone the importance of life and the importance of loving everyone. He was, and still is, an example to which many people look for strength.

I have always been an optimistic person, but in the last couple of months, I have seemed to lose some of that optimism and the spirit with which I have lived my life. I am sure many of you have noticed it, too, and some of you have even commented on it to me. I feel sometimes like I have lost so much, with having lost several best friends over the past three months, but when I think about it, I realize how much I have gained. I have gained a lot of life experience and maturity to be able to handle these things. I have gained a greater appreciation for life, and for the shortness of it. Most importantly, I have learned not to depend on people, but to depend on the Lord. I always thought that I was depending on God, but now I realize that while I was depending partially on Him, I was also waiting and relying on friends and family. I have learned that I need to trust in His plan, and trust that everything happens for a reason. Again, it has taken time, but I think I am beginning to see good coming from even some of the worst situations.

Even now, three months after the first of the many pains I have faced lately, I struggle to wake up each morning and go about life in a cheerful manner. When I think of Stan, which is very often, I am sad that I don't get to see him anymore. But at the same time, I think of all the good he accomplished and all the lives he has touched, and I try to live like that. It is hard, and I get frustrated when people complain about the small stuff, but I try. I don't see life as I used to, but I cannot let that have a negative impact on my life. All the other stuff, what with losing friends and all, has actually enabled me to help some of my friends who are now going through the same things. I know how they feel, so I am better able to relate to them and help them in any way I can.

Everything does happen for a reason, as I said before, even though the reason is not often obvious. It is through looking for this reason that I have been able to get through the

rough times. I have thought many times lately "I don't know how I am going to make it through this." And I have, through faith, prayer, and the hope that there is something better in the future.

I feel like I have grown up a lot in the past few months. I do not like all the pain that has come with it, and I often still suffer the pain of the things that have happened. When this happens, I have to remind myself that I have good memories, which will never leave me. I have my faith, and I know that God will help me get through anything that I face. One day, a few weeks ago, I was talking to one of my friends about all this, and he gently reminded me that God does not give us anything that we cannot handle. I try to keep this in mind, but I will admit that some days I still do not want to even get out of bed and face all the realities of the world. These are the hardest days... and unfortunately, there seem to be a lot of them. But through my faith, and through the support of my friends-these past few months have shown me who my real friends are, which was a wake-up call-I feel like I am able to go on with life. Like the song I played at the beginning of this, it is all "lessons learned." Everything is a learning experience, and looking at it like that has made things a little more bearable. I know this is not the end of the pain I am going to have to face in life; it is only the beginning. But it is all. "lessons learned"-now I know better how to deal with this kind of hurt, and while I never want to face it again, and wish no one else had to face it, it is inevitable. But God can help me, and everyone, get through it.

I encourage you all to love life and live yours to the fullest, never wasting a minute. Look for the good in life; it is there, and not very hard to find. Trust in the Lord, and He will lead you. Let go of painful memories, and move on, though it may be hard. Forgive quickly, live life without regrets. In the words of John Larsen, Stan's father: "Cherish every day that you have. Tell your loved ones how much you love them and do it every day. Relationships are the most important things you have. Time is short. Let's not waste it."

I love you all, and I thank you all for supporting me through this rough time, even if you didn't realize that you have been a support.

ASCENSION

And if I go
While you're still here...
Know that I live on
Vibrating to a different measure
Behind a veil you cannot see through.
You will not see me,
so you must have faith.
I wait for the time when we can
soar together again
both aware of each other.
Until then, live life to its fullest!
When you need me, just whisper
my name in your heart...
I will be there.

Colleen Cora Hitchcock

The Hand of the Lord

**By
John R Larsen
23 Jan 2008**

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The Hand of the Lord

It was very late at night. I read the email one last time before sending it to the 370 members of the email list. “Stanford passed away at 8:38 PM on Tuesday, January 23, 2007 at the Community Hospice House in Merrimack, NH. Thus ends his courageous battle with cancer. He was strong right up until the end and hopeful that the chemotherapy was working. Sadly the tumors weren't responding to the therapy and Stanford's liver gave out...” Now, instead of helping Stanford prepare for a mission, we would be choosing a casket and planning a funeral.

After clicking the send button I sat there and pondered the last seven months. The day after high school graduation Stanford was taken to the emergency room suffering severe abdominal pain. A CT scan came back negative for appendicitis. Using a laparoscope a tumor was discovered blocking Stanford's small intestine. Through a large incision in his abdomen the tumor and ten inches of his small intestine were removed. A preliminary test on the tumor done in the operating room confirmed any parent's worst nightmare, cancer.

Cancer? How could this be? We had always obeyed the Word of Wisdom. As a family of seven we had all been blessed with excellent health. We could count on two hands the number of ear infections and emergency room visits made in 25 years of raising five children. In the blink of an eye our family was thrust from normal daily life into the world of emergency surgery, life impacting medical decisions, never ending doctor appointments, hospital stays, living wills, and chemotherapy.

Why was Stanford taken at only 18 years of age? His testimony of the Savior and the restored gospel was unshakeable. His fondest desire was to serve a full-time mission. As one of a handful of Mormon youth in his large high school he was a shining example of gospel living. He was kind and thoughtful. He was involved in music, drama, scouting, and seminary. He was full of energy, had a zest for life, and a sense of humor that drew everyone to him. During this trial he received several priesthood blessings from righteous brethren saying he would be healed, and he had the required faith to be healed. Why were his days shortened?

The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith, “Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less...” (D&C 122:9) and “For there is a time appointed for every man, according as his works shall be.” (D&C 121:25) This comforting doctrine has helped me understand in a very personal way that God knows the end from the beginning. Our days in this mortal probation are known to him and won't be any less than required to accomplish our work in this life.

It has been over a year since Stanford died. I grieve for him everyday, but over the months the Lord has quietly answered many of my questions. Looking back over this trial and the months before it all started, I now see the hand of the Lord directing things, pushing here and arranging there. He knew what was coming. He knew that Stanford was going to get sick and that we as a family and ward would need to take care of him. God was calling Stanford home, but He made things work out the best they possibly could and still meet His needs.

Seven months before Stanford was diagnosed I felt a strong prompting that we needed to get a family picture taken. It had been almost seven years since the last one. Because we followed that prompting we have a family portrait that is very precious to us.

Four months before we learned of Stanford's illness, I was one of 80 people let go in a company layoff. I hadn't been laid off in 18 years. I was worried and scared. Why now? Why me? I didn't know then what Heavenly Father knew. I needed to be in a different place. This was His way of putting me where I needed to be. He knew that Stanford was going to be very sick soon.

Two months later I started a new job as the 25th employee of a small company in Massachusetts. What a blessing! I still had some weeks of severance pay from my old job. I even got a pay raise from the move. My new boss was an engineer I had worked with ten years ago. When he found out I was laid off, he talked me into applying for a job with his company. He convinced the CEO that they really needed to hire me and they created a position for me. Heavenly Father was looking out for us.

I signed up for health insurance and new medical cards arrived as expected. I thought everything was fine. Heavenly Father knew differently. We still had health insurance under COBRA from my previous employer. With new medical insurance I realized we could save several hundred dollars by canceling COBRA. However, for some reason I never did, and left the COBRA insurance in place, knowing it would expire the end of June.

Now that Heavenly Father had everything arranged it was time. Five weeks into my new job Stanford's battle with cancer began. In a way, the timing of the emergency surgery was a blessing. School was still in session for everyone but the seniors who had just graduated. When people at school heard about Stanford's surgery, many friends and teachers came to see him at the hospital during his week of recovery. I really feel that Heavenly Father timed it so Stanford, who was very social, could have maximum support from, and time with, the many people who cared about him.

Our first appointment with the oncologist a few days later is when we found out there were big problems with our new medical insurance. It turned out it was only valid in Massachusetts, but we live in New Hampshire. Thanks to what I now recognize was a prompting, we still had COBRA insurance, which paid the huge medical expenses incurred thus far. My employer was able to work things out so that we were covered when COBRA ended.

Chemotherapy is controlled poisoning of the body. The goal is to kill the cancer, but in order to do that they knock down the patient over and over. Before starting chemotherapy the type of cancer must be known. In Stanford's case four world-class pathology labs were never able to determine the type of cancer. Finally the oncologists just started trying chemotherapies most likely to work. At the time, it didn't seem like a blessing not to have a specific diagnosis, but in a way it was. We feel Heavenly Father planned all along to call Stanford home. However, by not having a firm diagnosis, Stanford was able to have hope right up to the end.

The first five months of his treatment Stanford almost didn't seem ill, other than losing his hair due to the chemotherapy. He attended youth conference and other activities during the summer. He attended early morning seminary with his brother, although he had already graduated. In September he was ordained an Elder. In October, he was well enough to go on an eleven-mile bike ride with me in Mine Falls Park. In

November he started a part-time job with my company as a documentation clerk, which worked in around his chemotherapy. It was his first job and he was so proud of his paychecks.

The crisis. The evening of November 20th we had family home evening as usual. Just before bedtime we gathered to have scripture study. We usually read a chapter taking turns reading a verse each. Stanford lay on the bed and listened, but didn't feel like reading. We all went to bed thinking this was just another night like so many before. About 4:00 AM Stanford woke me up. He was in extreme pain and medication was unable to make it stop. His doctor told us to go to the emergency room. This is the day that everything suddenly got a whole lot worse. Looking back on it now, it also was the day of a miracle.

A CT scan in the emergency room showed uncontrollable internal bleeding. The doctors told me that Stanford would die within a few hours; that there was nothing they could do. I then had to do one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life. I had to tell my dear, sweet, hopeful, faith-filled son that he was going to die. Words can't describe the feelings I had at that time. I told him what the doctors had said, and Stanford said, "Dad, that can't be right. Help me pray." I helped him turn over to kneel on the emergency room bed. In faith he prayed vocally and poured his heart out to God. I don't remember much of what he said, but I do remember him telling Heavenly Father that this wasn't right, that he still had things to do. I believe that is when the miracle occurred. In response to Stanford's great faith the bleeding stopped, and Heavenly Father spared his life another nine weeks.

This crisis made it clear how great a blessing my new employer was. Stanford was now homebound and needed 24 hour care. The CFO said, "John, don't worry about work. Family comes first. Don't worry about your paycheck. You will still get paid. Take all the time you need." This never would have happened with my previous employer. Heavenly Father had put me where I needed to be. I was able to be Stanford's primary care provider for the last two months of his life. Because I was there Stanford was able to be at home, except for weekly medical treatments, until the last few hours of his life.

Now that Stanford was very ill, our ward and the community at large became very involved. His care was very demanding. Ward members volunteered time to help out. Meals were provided. Volunteers did projects around the home. Stanford's Sunday School class insisted that their "I Love Isaiah" party be held in our home so Stanford could attend. The high school principal visited, as did other teachers. The high school gaming club came weekly to play cards with him. The record breaking mild weather in December and January made it possible for school performing groups to set up in our back yard to give Christmas concerts just for Stanford. Out of state extended family members came and stayed many days to spend time with Stanford and help out. Dozens of Stanford's friends visited. During this time, Stanford's optimism and faith lifted others and made it a pleasure to take care of him. Our ward family was knit together with love, service, prayer, fasting, and concern.

Through this experience with Stanford I have learned to better recognize the "still small voice". This is what bears witness to our souls of the truth. This is how the Lord talks to us, not in the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire, or the noises of the world. It is

in the quiet moments when we can “be still and know that He is God”. (1 Kings 19:11-12)

The day of Stanford’s passing was a time to “be still and know that He is God”. Through the modern miracle of instant communication I was able to get the word out by email to people around the world that Stanford had been taken to the Hospice House and was going to die soon. All immediate family members, many of our ward family, and others who loved Stanford gathered there. I remember looking around at those who came and feeling such great love for each of them.

At this time of emotional turmoil Heavenly Father blessed me yet again through Stanford’s compassionate oncologist who spent the whole evening with us. Recognizing the end was near he felt prompted to ask me if we performed something like last rites in our Church. Because he prompted me I was able to give Stanford a final father’s blessing. The spirit was strong and many in attendance felt angels in the room.

As the moment of Stanford’s passing drew near we gathered around his bed and began singing primary songs. Stanford took his last breath to the closing words of “I Am a Child of God”. He was sent off with a mother’s lullaby, a father’s blessing, and a room full of love. Heavenly Father welcomed Stanford home.

Over 1200 people attended Stanford’s funeral. His life was celebrated. His high school choir sang beautifully. The plan of salvation was taught. Seeds were planted. His favorite hymn “Called to Serve” was sung. Stanford’s mission had begun.



Stanford with his family on 24 Sept 2006, the day he was ordained an Elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood.