

## A SPECIAL VISIT

My heart thumped loudly as we pulled into the cemetery. I was so excited. My granddaughter said, "Turn on this road. Stop. It's right down this row."

We all got out of the car, and sure enough, it was right where she had said.

My three year old granddaughter couldn't quite understand what was going on. She couldn't understand why we were all touching the headstone and talking about "her uncle". Her mother told her that her uncle Arthur was here. She told Emily to stand by the stone so we could take her picture. And she did—still confused.

We took new pictures, with new people in them, but still the rows of perfectly aligned headstones were the same.

In the first week of August, a group of us, two daughters, a son, three granddaughters, a couple of significant others and I drove to northern Minnesota to visit my oldest son and his girl friend who had just bought a place on Big Birch Lake near Sauk Centre, MN.

As we drove through Minneapolis on our way north I asked my kids if we would be anywhere near Fort Snelling Cemetery. They said we weren't, and I let it go at that. I would love to have gone by to say Hi to Arthur, especially since I hadn't been to the cemetery since the last of my grandchildren graduated from high school a few years ago.

As we always do when my children and I get together, we had a great time. The kids fished and boated and ate and teased each other. But, when we were packing up to come home they told me that we were going back through Minneapolis a different way so that we could go to Fort Snelling. I was so happy.

Arthur has been dead thirty-four years this past May 28<sup>th</sup>. Because my oldest son stayed in Minneapolis when we moved back home to St. Louis in '74, we let Arthur's body stay there. (My son says Arthur's being there makes him feel like he has family in Minnesota with him.)

We stood around talking and taking pictures for a little while. When we left I told my children how much I appreciated coming to the cemetery. But, it was hard to explain the joy I felt at being so close to my beautiful, blond, brown-eyed six year old son again. Only my daughter Dorothy, who lost her 3year year old daughter twenty-three years ago, could really understand the joy in my heart was as we pulled back onto the road to St. Louis.

Yes, thirty-four years is a long time, but my feelings for my son have only grown warmer as the years have sped on. I can remember him and the things he did as vividly today as if they had happened just yesterday. I can remember catching him in the bathroom with scissors about to cut out the stitches in his forehead 'so the doctor didn't have to.' I can remember how he would yell at the dog to 'get away from me' because he didn't like dogs. I can remember his smile as he wobbled down the alley on his bicycle--as he road off to his death. Yes, I can remember many things, but today, 34years later, I can remember mostly happy things, and almost none of the sad ones.

So if you fear your precious child won't always be as vivid to you in the future as he or she is today, stop worrying. The love you have for your child will never go away, nor will the good memories. I promise you!