



Sheryl Liechty
Aug. 29, 1962 to Apr. 18, 1977

Relationship to St. Andrew: Sheryl was a member of St. Andrew and took part in the Youth Fellowship as permitted by her health.

Family: Sheryl's father is the Reverend Ronald Liechty, a former pastor of St. Andrew United Methodist Church and her Mother is Marilyn Murray. She had a brother Brian and a sister Susan.

Recognitions: The vibrant and sunny spirit of Sheryl made her a mainstay in the St. Andrew Senior High Youth Group.

Memorial: A spruce tree was planted in memory of Sheryl on the south side of Fellowship Hall of the St. Andrew United Methodist Church in West Lafayette, Indiana shortly after her death. It has grown robustly and now stands about 18 feet in height and perfect in shape. The tree is not like her frail body but much more similar to her indomitable spirit. In 2007 as a part of church relocation two spruce trees and two river birch trees were planted in front of the new Church to replace those left at the Meridian Street location.

OBITUARIES



SHERYL LIECHTY
WEST LAFAYETTE — Miss Sheryl Liechty, 14, of 2936 Wilshire Drive, and formerly of the Elkhart area, died Monday following an extended illness.

She was born Aug. 29, 1962. Surviving are her parents, the Rev. Ronald and Marilyn (Gray) Liechty, former pastor of the Dunlap United Methodist Church and Salem United Methodist Church; a brother, Brian, and a sister, Susan, both at home.

Miss Liechty attended Concord Junior High School before moving to West Lafayette a year ago.

There will be a memorial service at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in St. Andrews United Methodist Church, 333 Meridian St. There will be no viewing. Cremation will follow. Memorials may be given to the March of Dimes or the Children's Riley Hospital, in Indianapolis.

If interested in going to the service, meet at the Dunlap United Methodist Church at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, to form a car pool.

SHERYL A. LIECHTY

Sheryl Ann Liechty, 14, of 2936 Wilshire Ave., W.L., died at 8:50 a.m. Monday in Home Hospital. She had been in ill health for some time.

Born at Elkhart, she moved with her family to West Lafayette in 1976 and was a student at West Lafayette High School. She was a member of St. Andrew United Methodist Church where her father, the Rev. Ronald Liechty, is pastor. She also was a member of the Senior Youth Fellowship of the church.

Surviving with the parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Liechty, are a sister, Susan L.; and one brother, Brian W., both at home.

SHERYL LIECHTY

Sheryl Liechty, 14, 2936 Wilshire Drive, West Lafayette, daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. Ronald (Marilyn Gray) Liechty, died Monday after an extended illness.

The Liechty family moved to West Lafayette a year ago from Dunlap, where the Rev. Mr. Liechty was pastor of the Dunlap United Methodist Church for several years.

Sheryl attended Concord Elementary and Junior High schools while in this community.

Surviving with her parents are a brother and sister, Brian and Susan, both at home.

A memorial service will be held at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at St. Andrew's United Methodist Church, West Lafayette. There will be no visitation.

Car pools will be formed Thursday at 3:30 p.m. in the parking lot of Dunlap United Methodist Church to make the trip to West Lafayette.

Memorials may be made to the March of Dimes or to Riley Children's Hospital.

LIECHTY, Sheryl Ann — The family will receive friends from 2 to 7 p.m. Thursday in St. Andrew United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall. Memorial service at the church at 7:30 p.m. Thursday. Also surviving are the maternal grandmother, Mrs. Mildred Gray of Indianapolis and paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Liechty of South Bend. Friends desiring may contribute in memoriam to Riley Hospital, 1100 W. Michigan St., Indianapolis, 46202, or to the March of Dimes, 2705 Bonny Ln., Lafayette, 47904. Soller-Baker Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.

From Sheryl's Mother, Marilyn Murray

One of Sheryl's greatest fears was that she would be forgotten when she died. How thankful I am that has not happened.

I love Sheryl. The many challenges her life presented created a family lifestyle much different than we ever anticipated. Her heart defect was suspected by our pediatrician when she was six weeks old. Her connection with Riley Children's Hospital, Indianapolis, began soon after. The Cardiology Department remained a stable part of her life throughout the years. They not only kept her alive but also well enough to be able to develop a higher quality of life than she might have had otherwise. They never gave us false hope but rather encouraged us to allow her to be all she could be - and always to love her. That was easy to do. Her good verbal skills and assertiveness were not always welcome, but helpful.

So many good things can be said about the churches, schools and communities and their support. She attended class only two hours a week her freshman year at West Lafayette High, yet that is where she collapsed.

Sheryl had a remarkable zest for living. She found new experiences exciting. She especially enjoyed our tandem bike where she could "pilot" on the front while her sister, Susan, provided the "motor" on the back. She loved crafts - sometimes our house took on the appearance of a factory. She thought her brother, Brian, could be counted on for fun ideas, like hunting for coins with a metal detector - he added excitement to Sheryl's practiced her uniqueness. I hope I can do as well.

Marilyn Murray

Unpublished Poem by a close friend and former St. Andrew Member

Congratulations, Sheryl

You made it!

You're there.

You won!

The class is over and,
You aced the final.

It was so short,
but you knew so much.

The limitations of life,
The meaning of a moment.
It only took fourteen years
to graduate.

I may never even pass,
Every moment, a test.

I fail all too often,

But there's still a chance.

My teacher is patient
I'm not ready to graduate
I'm not even half way
through the course.

Maybe I'll see you at the reunion.

I should have sent this
before commencement,
But I know
You hear me now.

Cindy Sharples 3/14/78

A PASSAGE

by Donald C. Johnson

Flying my old 1946 cloth-winged, silver taildragger represented a rite of passage to manhood. The old Cessna never did fly, it defied gravity. I spent many nerve-wracking hours practicing to become a better pilot, yet I was always grateful when the aging machine delivered me safely back to earth. Piloting the old bird was a way of cheating death.

Flying the old plane was more than learning a new skill—it was a way of displaying accomplishment, achieving a new milestone, being successful in a new endeavor. It was exciting to learn about cumulonimbus, the terror of thunderstorms, and the tremendous damage that hail could do to an airplane. I enjoyed draining the oil from the old taildragger and wiping bugs off the windscreens while wearing my fur-collared, polyester flight jacket.

One day my neighbor's sickly, 13-year-old daughter intruded into my scary world of flying when she asked to go riding in the old silver Cessna. Cheryl had a small, wispy body, sparkling brown eyes, and endless enthusiasm for trying a new venture. Her lips were blue from poor blood circulation due to a congenital heart defect, and most of her young life had been spent in hospitals. My privacy had been invaded by this frail teenager, yet I felt obligated to honor her request.

On a Saturday morning, Cheryl enthusiastically accepted my overdue invitation to go flying in the silver airplane. It was a little too windy that morning for an inexperienced pilot. She eagerly strapped on her seatbelt as I explained how airplanes flew. It would be bumpy because the sky was sunny and convection currents would rise off the plowed fields and drift over gravel pits and rivers. She said it would be okay and smiled at my concern for her comfort.

This underweight child clearly had no concept of the risk of flying the decrepit

taildragger. There was something unnatural about the way the silver Cessna sputtered rather than purred over powerlines and treetops. The aging craft felt flimsy on crosswind takeoffs and landings, threatening to crash earthward like a fragile kite. I didn't have the heart to tell Cheryl that the directional compass worked accurately only when the old bird was safely on the ground.

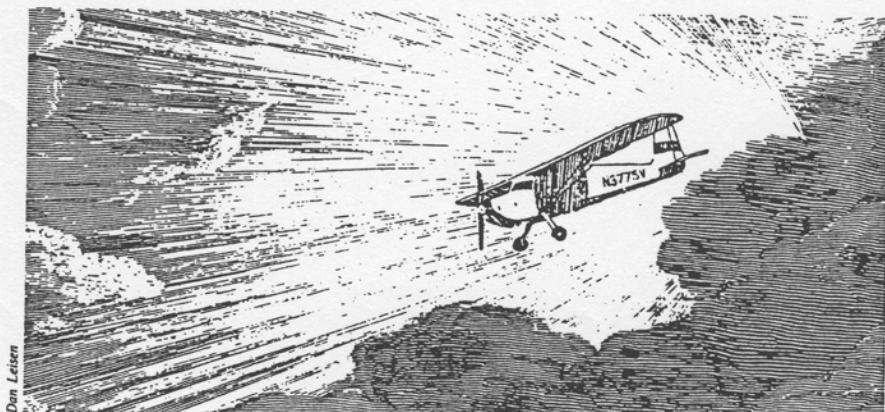
Cheryl and I took off unceremoniously, bouncing down the grass runway which was more like a cow pasture. It was a little frightening, as I had expected. My passenger wore a slight smile and a peaceful look of contentment on her face. Wanting to keep my mind off the many dangers of flying, I told her not

anyone else make negative comments about the old silver taildragger. She loved the old Cessna with all its frailties and had absolute confidence in its integrity.

She told her mother she felt free, and for the first time in her short life had done something for herself. Cheryl identified her physical frailties with the imperfections and weaknesses of the older airplane and knew in her own heart both she and the silver Cessna could overcome any obstacle. She wanted to marry someone just like me when she grew up. I suspected she loved me for my kindness in letting her fly the airplane rather than for my bravery.

Cheryl's cardiologist decided to put a shunt in her heart so she could live a reasonably normal life. Although amazed she was flying at low-oxygen altitudes, he reluctantly allowed her to continue so long as she didn't faint.

Yet Cheryl died a few weeks later; she had not felt like attending school but didn't want to miss a chance to be with her friends. Even modern technology held no solution for her severe handicap.



to worry and to keep track of our location so we wouldn't get lost. We flew low over flat fields, glided over tree-lined rivers, and circled like red-tailed hawks doing steep 360 degree turns over a small wooded area. We made diving runs over an old gravel pit and coasted onto the worn grass landing strip, making a bumpy landing.

I invited Cheryl flying the following week and for weeks thereafter during that summer. She loved to take the co-pilot's controls and fly in large circles at 3,000 feet. She even insisted on cleaning the bugs off the windscreens while I held a small ladder so she could reach the windows. Cheryl wouldn't let me or

Her father said she wanted her body cremated since she wouldn't be needing it when she went to heaven; she desired that her ashes be dropped from the silver Cessna over the river where she had soared free like a bird. We took the small square box of ashes up in the old Cessna and watched with incredible sadness as many beautiful memories dropped into the winding river below.

That was my last flight in the silver Cessna. There was no more reason to fly—nothing more to prove or accomplish. More importantly, nothing remained to share. Somehow there was no way I could ever defy gravity or cheat death again.



Spruce tree at 333 Meridian St. in June 2007



Replacement River Birch.



Replacement Spruce Tree