

She chose to die so she could give birth. Now her newborn is dead, too.

By **Kristine Phillips** and **J. Freedom du Lac** September 21 at 1:25 PM

The headaches began in March. The couple didn't think much of them — until Carrie DeKlyen began vomiting.

An initial scan showed a mass in her brain. More tests showed that it was a form of cancer, possibly lymphoma, but treatable. But a pathology exam revealed a more grim diagnosis. The 37-year-old mother of five from Wyoming, Mich., had glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. If lucky, she could live for five more years.

The tumor was removed during surgery in April, said her husband, Nick DeKlyen.

Then, not even a month later, the couple received two pieces of shocking news. Carrie's tumor was back — and she was eight weeks pregnant.

They had two options: They could try to prolong Carrie's life through chemotherapy, but that meant ending her pregnancy. Or they could keep the baby, but Carrie would not live long enough to see the child.

It was a wrenching but obvious choice for the DeKlyens: They would have the child, their sixth.

Life Lynn DeKlyen was born at 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 6 — 24 weeks into Carrie DeKlyen's pregnancy. She weighed 1 pound, 4 ounces. The couple chose her name together.

Carrie DeKlyen was buried six days later.

Then Life Lynn died as well, just 14 days after she was born.

The infant's death was announced Thursday [on the couple's Facebook page](#).

“It is with great sadness and a absolutely broken heart that I tell you Life Lynn passed away last night,” the post read. “Carrie is now rocking her baby girl. I have no explanation of why this happened, but I do know Jesus loves us and someday we will know why. The grief we feel is almost unbearable, please be praying for our family.”

Nick DeKlyen could not be reached to comment Thursday.

But he told the Detroit News just one day earlier that Life Lynn nearly died Sept. 12, the same day Carrie DeKlyen was buried.

“I know God can turn this around,” he told the News on Wednesday. “And I am going to keep believing that Life is going to be fine.”

Life was delivered by Caesarean section as Carrie DeKlyen was dying.

“That’s what she wanted,” Nick said earlier this month. “We love the Lord. We’re pro-life. We believe that God gave us this baby.”

In the spring, after a second surgery to remove the tumor, the couple had gone home, knowing Carrie had only months left to live.

By the end of June, the tumor was back again.

This time, it was inoperable: Doctors told the DeKlyens that all they could do was to keep taking out the fluid accumulating in Carrie’s brain to relieve the pain, her husband said.

Carrie was rushed back to the University of Michigan hospital in Ann Arbor in mid-July. She was screaming in pain and convulsing. That was the last time she was conscious, her husband said.

“They said that she had a massive stroke,” Nick DeKlyen told The Post this month. “They said the fluid built up so much, the cranium had no place to go.”

Carrie was 19 weeks pregnant by then. Nick said doctors told him they would do what they could to keep the pregnancy going.

But Carrie probably would not wake up again — and if she did, she wouldn’t recognize her family. She had suffered significant brain damage from the stroke. For the next several weeks, a feeding tube and a breathing machine would keep her alive.

Two weeks later, there was another stroke. Carrie’s brain was so swollen that doctors had to remove a portion of her skull, Nick said.

By the time Carrie was 22 weeks pregnant, the baby wasn't growing fast enough, weighing only 378 grams, or eight-tenths of pound.

To survive birth, the baby had to be at least 500 grams, a little more than a pound, Nick said.

Another two weeks went by, and some good news came: The baby weighed 625 grams.

The bad news was that the baby was not moving.

Nick said he was given two options: He could do nothing and hope that the baby began moving and continued to grow, but doing nothing meant his child could die within an hour. Or he could authorize a Caesarean section.

He chose the latter, and Life was born — an extreme preterm baby who would never know her mother.

“It was kind of bittersweet,” Nick recalled, noting that Carrie was “not awake” during or after the birth. Instead, “she [was] going to pass away,” he said.

“After that, I went to the surgeon and said my wife had enough. She’s gone through so much pain these last five months.”

Carrie lived briefly after doctors removed her from life support.

“I sat by her the whole time; I kind of held her hand and kissing her, telling her that she did good,” Nick said. “I told her, ‘I love you, and I’ll see you in heaven.’ ”

Early in the morning, just days after her daughter was born, Carrie opened her eyes, then closed them again, Nick said.

She clenched her hands tightly, then slowly stopped breathing. She died before dawn.

Carrie’s story was chronicled on a Facebook page called [Cure 4 Carrie](#).

Four days after his daughter was born and two days after his wife died, Nick said he was dividing his time between planning a funeral and visiting his newborn, who remained in intensive care.

He was living temporarily at the Ronald McDonald House in Ann Arbor, a short walk from the hospital, and driving back to Wyoming on weekends to visit his other children, ages 18, 16, 11, 4 and 2.

The 39-year-old said at the time that he was still figuring out his family’s future.

Four years ago, he said, he started a vending machine company that he later sold to his brother. And now he did not have a source of income.

“My wife’s gone. I have six kids, three are under the age of 5. I’m just going to focus on my daughter right now, getting her home,” he said. “As far as what I’m going to do after that, I can’t tell you.”

A [GoFundMe page](#) to help the family has raised more than \$150,000.

Earlier this month, Nick dismissed critics who questioned the couple’s decision to put their faith first, saying that continuing the pregnancy showed his wife’s selflessness.

“She gave up her life for the baby,” he said, adding later: “I just want people to know that my wife loved the Lord. She loved her kids. She put anybody in front of her needs. ... She put my daughter above herself.”

A service was held for Carrie DeKlyen on Sept. 12 at Resurrection Life Church, in Wyoming, Mich., “where she was remembered as a loving mother, wife, daughter and friend who cooked dinner for neighbors, sang in the church choir, watched kids in the nursery and volunteered as a counselor,” [according to the Grand Rapids Press](#).

An “In Loving Memory” card [posted on the Cure 4 Carrie Facebook page](#) that same day quoted the Gospel of John:

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

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