A Memoir devoted to Lydia Rebeccah

Her father
Her 30th Birthday

## Birth and more

When you were conceived it was a little like you were first born. There was joy in the house that’s for sure.

There at the very beginning of your life there was one thing that stands out for me. Of all of my children you are the only one that I didn’t have the opportunity of being present at the moment you emerged. They put the knife to your mother’s belly, having given her a nerve block, and she twitched and pulled back. Immediately they knew they had to do a cesarean and they removed me from the delivery room, although I objected at the time. Someone explained to me that medical team couldn’t have the possibility of a father fainting or some other reaction when they had to give their full attention to the mother and her child. I totally accepted that, although I knew that my own personality wouldn’t have succumbed. In fact, when faced with all manner of crises, my tendency is to face it with a calm demeanor that seeks to deal with whatever is at hand.

Even before we got home I acted as a kind of La Leche League coach. I wanted you to be nursed because I had seen the benefits of that for the three older children. Your mother hadn’t done very much with nursing.

I remember reading stories to you from an early age, before you were able even to comprehend them. I remember rocking you until you fell asleep in my arms. That gave me a satisfaction and joy that it is really impossible to describe.

## Michigan City

As you grew into a toddler, I remember the delight we both felt as we went out to the front yard, knelt down and crawled around looking at all the living creatures.

Partly because we have photographs depicting you and your sister lying contentedly in the mountains of autumn leaves, I can remember you playing in the yard, swinging on the swings, running to play games with the next-door neighbors. I remember when you wanted to have a party and invited your friends from kindergarten. There were one or two who were people of color, but you didn’t see color do you only saw friends. That’s a characteristic of you that I have treasured and never lost sight.

Again I have one or two photographs when I have company due to a father daughter dance. I was so excited for you and thought you were the loveliest child in the room. There was probably a part of me that was sad because I missed those opportunities with your older sister Miriam. But this time around I missed the chance to dance with you. You were embarrassed to be with me, or maybe you were afraid that you didn’t know how to dance. I don’t know what it was but I do think I was the proudest father in the room.

One of the last things I did before we moved to Hawaii was to film you performing the year end concert at the school. I think that video may be lost somewhere. Probably no one would treasure it as much as I would. Again, such a proud father I was at that moment.

One of the things that was clear in your personality in those days was your love of the water. It wasn’t just playing in the sand or enjoying the company of friends on the beach at Lake Michigan. You loved the water. I remember the day that you romped in the surf in May. The water was so cold I couldn’t imagine going in it. But you were fearless. When I was holding your hand and we were running through the little waves you suddenly screamed in pain. I had inadvertently pulled your arm out of it socket. Your mother took you to her hospital where someone with a quick gesture made it right and the pain was gone.

## Toward Hawai’i

I’ve written about how poignant it was as we drove away from Michigan City, from the things and people that you knew, from your security, toward this new land of Hawaii that you didn’t know, and how you played *The Potters Hand* over and over again as a way of comforting yourself. What a striking thing it is that you knew how to give yourself the message that gave you the strength to go on.

“**The Potter’s Hand**”

Beautiful Lord, wonderful Savior
I know for sure all of my days are held in Your hand
And crafted into Your perfect plan

You gently called me into Your presence
Guiding me by Your Holy Spirit
Teach me dear Lord, to live all of my life
Through Your eyes

And I’m captured by Your Holy calling
Set me apart, I know
You’re drawing me to Yourself
Lead me Lord, I pray

Take me and mold me, use me, fill me
I give my life to the Potter’s hand
Call me, You guide me, lead me, walk beside me
I give my life to the Potter’s hand
–*Darlene Zschech*

As we drove through Colorado on our way to California where we were to board the plane, you knew that you had to learn to swim. There was a total focus. Julian helped you at a motel we stayed at. Our first month at the condo in Waikiki you spent every waking moment you could either in the waves of the ocean or the chilly waters of the pool. At the end of that month you knew how to swim.

There in Colorado Springs we took the train to the top of Pikes Peak. You discovered, as it were, that frozen water was just as delightful as the liquid kind. You played so freely in the patches of snow in the middle of the summer there at 14,000 feet.

You seem to find a way to be at home in Honolulu and our townhouse in Hawaii Kai. I remember especially your third grade teacher whose specialty was teaching writing. It seemed as if you understood the task of telling stories and perceived the strength that they carried.

## Priory

As you got older you wanted to try new things. As soon as you could you wanted to play soccer, and through AYSO I had to follow you into the sport, learning how to coach and to referee as well as to make the spam musubis that accompanied our game day presence.

I remember driving you to school after we figured out a way to get you into the priory. It was a special time for me, because every day going off to my own work I had the company of my daughter. It was on one of those drives that you said to me that the problem with being a pastor’s kid is that you know the first names of all the homeless people you pass.

We went to the drivers license building and waited and waited in a long line in order to get you a learners permit. I remember picking up the Kia and the first thing that you drove was the Kia around Ke’ehi Lagoon Beach Park.

## St. Mary’s

You were my acolyte assistant when we baptized Isaiah. As before I have a photograph that lets me treasure that experience. The Horimotos waited until after his formal adoption before bringing him to the baptismal font. It was Easter. The way we did it then, the vigil was in the chapel, the baptism outside in the pool, and the Eucharist in the main sanctuary. As we got into the water, the rain began in a deluge. That was one baptism that really “took”. And you were with me.

Later you were to lead one of the Happenings. You didn’t want me to be around and I didn’t understand that. I had already agreed to be the spiritual Director for the weekend. Were you angry at me? Intimidated by me? I would later learn that you harbored a lot of bitterness towards me. Perhaps you blamed me for not being able to go to your grandmother’s funeral. Before we flew out to South Bend your mother and I had agreed that we could pull you out of school for a final visit or for the funeral but not for both.

Any of the ways that I have hurt you along the way were never with the intention of hurt. For having hurt you I’m sorry and I apologize to you.

## College and beyond

When it came time to choosing a college, I thought I was going to be involved. I went to a couple of the presentations at The Priory, but by the time it happened I guess the communication was just completely broken down. This story loses focus and winds down with the disappointment of broken dialogue.

I was glad that the school that was chosen, St. Mary’s, was associated with my alma mater, Notre Dame. I was so proud to be able to see Lydia giving a presentation at a conference in Memphis. Glad as well that she had invited me to attend.

The desire for connection. Bits and pieces that remain. A night sitting beside a fire, sharing stories and reflections. Sitting at a table where Lydia prepared the meal. These are to be treasured.

There is much more to the story. But these thoughts and memories are gathered together on the occasion of Lydia’s 30th birthday. They are sent with love.