

CHAPTER 9 – A TIME TO EMBRACE

This chapter covers two things that have been an important part of my life. They were things that were hidden so to speak, in that they were not talked about. They were things I pushed to the back of my mind to forget and to ignore. As I grew in years and experience, I also grew in understanding that our loving heavenly Father allows no darkness, no places of secrets in our hearts. All is open to Him and He is able to bring all things into the light, bringing healing, peacefulness, freedom and even joy into our hearts where once there was hurt and denial.

FINDING MY FATHER

At some time during the early 1980's I had become interested in family genealogy. Roy's paternal grandfather had done much research on the Smith and Crook lines. A distant relative of my mother had also done a lot on the Bucknam and Holden branches of mother's family. I was fortunate to get copies of much of the information they had gathered.

As I worked on the genealogy of our family I followed three lines; my mother's line, Roy's line and my stepfather's lines. As time went on, I decided to try to follow my birth father's line of Taylor, but had no intention of trying to make contact with anyone on that side. So much research can be done without personal contact. Eventually curiosity got the better of me! There were so many things I did not know.

Finally, I contacted the Veterans' Administration. Because my father had been a veteran, and because he was on the way to the Veterans' Hospital in Los Angeles on that one day many years before, when my mother had seen him at the bus stop, which was mentioned in chapter 4. I felt I could probably find out something about him from the VA. I wrote them a letter stating his name, and what little I knew of his vital statistics.

After about a month I received a letter back from the VA saying that they knew where my father was! If I would write him a letter and send it to them, they would forward it to him. That is the method used to preserve the privacy of a person who may not want to renew contact, yet which allows the person seeking contact to try to establish it.



So it was that in September 1989, I wrote a short letter telling my father about my family, and a brief account of our activities over the years. I also enclosed a photo of the six of us.

On a Tuesday evening, about a month later, a phone call came from my father Vincent. He said he had received my letter that morning and spent all day stunned, wondering if he should call me.

He said that he was sitting looking at an 8x10 photo of me taken when I was three years old. In which my hair was curly and I had on a pink satin blouse and a turquoise knitted skirt with little straps. I told him that I remembered exactly which picture he was looking at because I have a copy. All those many years he had kept the photo on top of his television where he could see it constantly!

Hesitantly he asked me if the problems I'd had with my legs had been his fault. Had I inherited it from him, even though he did not have it himself? With some degree of confidence based on what I had learned about it, I was able to tell him that it had not been his fault.

We talked about the day he saw mother at the bus stop and about his trip to the Veterans' Hospital during which he did not die after all. He mentioned that he had bussed tables in the dining room of the Statler-Hilton Hotel and I told him Aunt Harriet worked at the insurance company in that same building and had seen him a couple times as she took lunch there. He told me about another job he held in 1961-62 as a waiter at the California Men's Club, now known as the California Club. This was significant because the Club was right across the street from the Church of the Open Door and the Biola dormitory where I lived during that same year, my only year in college at Biola! We may have passed each other on the street and not known one another! What a shock for us both to learn!

My heart aches to think, that we were so close and yet so far apart! Oh the lost years!

Our first apartment

Ruth born here

Where Harriet, then me and finally Mom worked for an insurance co in Stattler-Hilton Hotel

Where Vincent lived 8th & Hope St

Vincent worked in California Men's Club across the street from the Church of the Open Door & Biola dorms 6th & Hope St

Downtown Los Angeles

Sources: Map & Men's Club photo from Google.com



Vincent was very honest with me on the phone. He told me of his drinking problem, saying that it was the cause of the divorce from my mother as well as the cause of the divorce from his second wife Rosita, with whom he was still in close contact. Vincent and Rosita had been married only five years when she had put him out. She told him she would give him another five years to the day to become a sober man or else she would divorce him. When that date arrived, she did just what she had said. Because he had not been able to stay sober, she divorced him.

However, they had remained friends and Vincent was included with her extended Mexican family in all holiday and birthday celebrations just as if he were still part of their family. In fact, two days from the time we were talking, it was to be their would-have-been 35th

anniversary if they had stayed married. They had plans to go out to dinner to celebrate, as they had been doing every year for 35 years!

Vincent and Rosita lived a couple miles apart, riding the bus to visit one another or to meet someplace. They had not ever had children, so I was the only child he had! There were no half-brothers or sisters for me to discover.

He told me about his brother James who had been in the Navy and his sister Marilyn, who had been part of a women's riveting crew during World War II, and what he knew of his family history. He enjoyed going to the horse races at the track in Santa Anita.

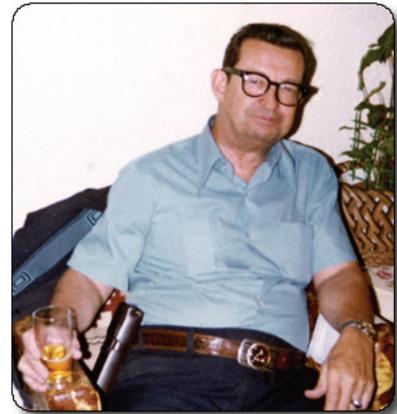
He frequented a certain local tavern where he knew everyone. He had become friends with all the tenants in the apartment building where he was the manager and collected the rents. He was having trouble with his health; his feet were often very swollen so that he could hardly walk. Other tenants would bring his mail to him and share their pizza with him sometimes when they ordered it.

I told him that I did not remember what he looked like. I had only a couple brief memories of him but no image of his face in my mind. On Wednesday, the next day, he phoned me again saying that he had spent the whole day going through his photo albums pulling out pictures for me. He had put a small package of them into the mail so I would probably receive it on Saturday. Our conversation was brief; I don't think either of us really knew yet what more to talk about.

The rest of that week I was torn with uncertainty. What had I done? Opened a can of worms? What would he really be like and what impact would this now have on us, on my mother and dad? Would there be trouble ahead? Would he want money?

Saturday the package of photos arrived in the mail. There were quite a few of them and in most he had a drink in his hand! So nothing was hidden from me. I saw not only what he looked like, but got an idea of the kind of man he was.

There were pictures of him at the races, dancing with the ladies, at Elks Club meetings and having a good time socially. All of which I knew from the few things mother had said and he himself had told me, but now I could see it for myself.



Vincent Ora Taylor

I was not sure how I felt. I waited, unsure what to do next. Should I call again? What would I say? Did I want further contact with this man who might become a drunken problem to us all?

The days began to pass and I did not hear from him again, nor did I call. I began to work on a longer letter telling about our family, collecting photos to send with it. I imagined that he probably had mixed feelings just as I did. He was probably waiting on me to make the next move. Monday through Friday passed without word from him. By now I was starting to feel that I had to call him, but I did not do it. Saturday and Sunday came and went; eight days had now passed since his photos had arrived in the mail.

Monday night I was out late. When I got home, Roy told me that a phone call had come while I was out. Vincent's ex-wife Rosita calling to say that he had died! What!? I couldn't believe it! I was stunned! I felt hurt, cheated. After 40 years, I had only just found him, and now had lost him already!

The next morning I phoned Rosita. She told me that the Thursday night anniversary dinner date they planned, had been canceled because Vincent's feet were so swollen he could not walk. He had told her on the phone that he had talked with me and sent pictures to me. She tried to call him again on Saturday, the day I had received the photos he sent, but his phone had been busy. She thought he must be talking with me. However his phone remained busy each time she tried to call throughout the weekend. By Sunday evening she had been quite worried. She slept very little that night.

Rosita had gotten up very early Monday morning, got on the earliest bus and went to Vincent's apartment. He failed to answer the door. She ran down the street to the local tavern and roused Hank, the owner out of his bed. He went with her to Vincent's apartment, but still no answer to the pounding on the door. So they called 9-1-1. The door had to be broken down. Vincent lay dead on the floor with the phone pulled down from the table and off the hook. He had died of a heart attack, probably sometime Saturday, the very day that I was looking at his photos for the first time!

After Vincent had been found, Rosita did not know how to contact me. She did not know my last name, phone number or address. For the next week she returned every day to Vincent's apartment building to get the mail. The police had sealed his apartment while his death was investigated, so she had no access to his papers or address book. Because they were divorced, there was nothing she could do about his remains or his belongings. The body was at the morgue and his apartment was locked up.

A week after he had been found, my second letter and pictures arrived in Vincent's mailbox and Rosita received it. Having our name and address she could now get our phone number from information. So it was that she finally reached us on the phone on that Monday night while I was out and Roy answered her call.

Rosita wanted desperately for me to come to California to take care of Vincent's belongings and arrange a funeral! What? I couldn't do such a thing! This was a man I didn't even know, who had rejected me! How could she ask such a thing? The fact was, being divorced from Vincent, she had no legal authority to touch anything of his or to make any arrangements no matter how close they had remained for so many years.

Since I was the only child, I was the only one with any legal authority! If I had not been located, the State of California would have taken over to settle all his affairs after a set length of time, 40 days I think. Vincent would have been buried in an unmarked pauper's grave at state expense. I told Rosita that I could not go out there to do anything and that the state would just have to take care of it all. She was not happy with that answer!

Another week passed. Then she called me again saying that his apartment had been broken into. His belongings were being vandalized, thrown into the garbage. I HAD to come and put a stop to it! She was beside herself in anguish! Roy and I discussed all this and finally decided that I had better go out there after all.

Up to this point I had not told my mother anything about trying to contact Vincent or that I had located him. As was usual for me, I was trying to avoid any unpleasantness that might occur for me with my family. Very gently Roy said to me, "Don't you think it's time you told your mother?" Of course, he was right. I phoned her, told her to sit down, then told her that I had found Vincent. Yes, I had found him and he had died already!

She could hardly grasp it, she was so shocked. The whole story came out then. Shelley, my sister-in-law, later told me that it had put mother in such an agitated state the family feared she would have another heart attack. That did not happen but what did happen was that she wanted to go with me to Los Angeles! Daddy agreed to let her go, but after considering it as an actual possibility, she decided not to go. (Sometimes just knowing we can do something, enables us to choose not to do it.)

Roy could not get away from the office to go on the trip with me, but Ruth was able to go along. We drove her little car, arriving in Southern California on Thanksgiving Day. We went first to the home of Ron and Dolly McDaniels, my old friends from high school and college days.

After the holiday, we drove into Los Angeles to Rosita's apartment. It was the first time I had met her. She was short like Ruth and I. She was friendly and put us both in her bed while she slept on the couch. She had not ever had a car, and seemed to enjoy riding with us in Ruth's. We visited Vincent's tiny apartment, which had not been broken into after all, but which the building owner had emptied, after the police seal was removed, because he wanted to get it ready for other tenants.

The owner of the building was a Korean man, in a largely Korean occupied section of downtown Los Angeles. He spoke broken English about how filthy and cockroach infested the apartment was! He had put Vincent's furniture in a storage room and trashed all the books, papers, photo albums and kitchen items.

Thus was lost any paperwork that should have been mine, photos of my childhood that he might have had, his military papers, etc. The bank papers had been kept, which was a good thing. I had to go to the Los Angeles county coroner, which does not have a viewing room, to get a copy of the death certificate in order to go to the bank to close his account. There was a grand total of just over \$300.

I gave all Vincent's furnishings to Rosita and others who lived in his apartment building and who, according to Vincent's words on the phone, had been his friends. I kept his two toolboxes, a jar of coins, an old paper ladies fan from Japan and his army cap with the stick pins in it. I did not arrange a memorial service, much to Rosita's disappointment. She said there were many friends who would want to come. Maybe there were, but I could not afford to do it on the \$300, which barely covered our travel expenses.

Instead of Vincent being buried in a pauper's grave, Hank the tavern owner, who had known Vincent for many years, told me to contact the Veterans Administration, which would take over the body and bury it properly.



Ruth, Gale, Rosita

I imagine that later he and his patrons at the tavern raised a glass together in Vincent's memory, I would have enjoyed being with them for that occasion and wish I had thought of it at that time.



**My father Vincent,
I wish I had known you better!**

So it was that the VA buried Vincent, as they do all veterans who have no one to make arrangements (if they know about the death), in a marked grave at the National Cemetery in Riverside, CA. There was no graveside service, but I know where to find his grave, should I ever want to see it.

Hank told me other things about my father, speaking of him in a kind way. He was very helpful to me in getting through the things I had to do there.

I imagine that later he and his patrons at the tavern raised a glass together in Vincent's memory, I would have enjoyed being with them for that occasion and wish I had thought of it at that time.

Looking back now, I know that Vincent and I each gave the other something before he died. I gave him a peace of mind that my medical problems had not been his fault. Perhaps that had been a fear haunting his life all those years. I gave him knowledge about myself and about his grandchildren, whom he never met. I am sure he was grateful to know about them. In sending me photos, he had given me back his face.



Hank & Ruth

I now had a complete picture of him in my mind, a young soldier dressed in his khakis with a big smile and his Army cap on at a rakish angle. (Pictures of Vincent, his siblings and Rosita included in this book are all ones I received from Vincent and later from his brother James.)

MEMORIES

Ruth and I took our leave of Rosita, spending another day in the greater Los Angeles metro area. See the map on page 2 of this chapter.

We revisited the apartment building where Roy and I had lived when Ruth was born. The building was in the process of being torn down, probably to be replaced by a new office building. Just down the hill from there, we went to 6th and Hope Streets where radio station KBBJ had been and where Roy and I had lived in the dormitories at the old Biola campus. The dorms and the Church of the Open Door were gone and where they had been there were just huge holes in the ground!

The Church of the Open Door, which had seated 4,000 people, like Biola College had relocated to the suburbs. Gone now, the beautiful sound of the carillon bells that rang out over the city each day at the noon hour. The bells have been moved and established as a memorial on the new campus of Biola University in La Mirada, California.

Gone as well from the tops of the dormitory buildings were the two huge JESUS SAVES signs that had been visible all over the area and to everyone traveling the freeways. Everything familiar to me that had stood there before was gone.

It was the end of an era! It was the end of a large urban church and a Bible college campus located in the heart of a huge metro area. It was the end of what had been a magnificent downtown testimony to the grace of God, a magnet for saint and sinner alike in the center of Los Angeles for so many years. And as well, it was for me the end of a tangible place that had given reality to the illusion in our personal memories.

Ruth and I spent a day locating some of the houses where my family had lived in La Crescenta. We visited Herbert Hoover High School in Glendale where I went and the junior high school I had attended, which is now La Crescenta High School.

We returned home to Denver with much to talk about, to think about and much for me to digest in thoughts and feelings about a parent, now gone, whom I barely had a chance to know.

I was glad finally that I had gone out to California.

I had found out that Vincent might have been too much of a drinker, but he was not the bad man that I had thought he probably was.

I was glad to have met Rosita, whom I remained in contact with for a few years. She would have been a stepmother to me if Vincent had contacted me while I was growing up. It would have been so easy to visit them and I would have known Rosita's extended family.

The trip was the end to a number of things for me. It was the closing of a door on what might have been with my father, on my past as a student and on the young couple that Roy and I had been as we started out in one small part of the greater Los Angeles metro area.

A TIME TO GATHER

As I wrote previously, the Little People of America was a group I had heard of before. This group was not open to just any person of less than average height, it had to be short stature caused by some form of dwarfism, a concept that I thought of as awful, even creepy. It was not yet the era for support groups!

The death of our oldest son Stephen was a turning point in the life of each person in our family. Our family had gone to counseling for a while but when the rest of the family stopped going I continued to go. The therapist eventually got around to talking about other things in life besides just Stephen. One of which, was how did I feel about being such a short person?

In response to this question, I began to ponder and ask myself, probably for the very first time, what did I really feel about my short stature? As I thought it over, I began to realize that I really wanted the subject ignored. I wanted to see myself the same as everyone else. In fact, I had to admit to myself that years before I had broken off writing letters to Janie (who had been in Shriner's Hospital with me when we were children) because she had mentioned the Little People of America organization in a letter. I had not wanted her to talk to me about that group; I had been determined to have nothing to do with such an organization.

As soon as I admitted these hidden feelings to myself, I began to wonder what LPA was all about. As well, I began to be honest with myself about the creepy feeling it gave me to think about a group of short people! Eventually, I was able to tell myself that it was time to face my dread of dwarfs! I looked in the white pages of the phone book, called the number listed there for the Little People of America organization and attended the next meeting. It was January 1991.

The meeting was held at the home of a member of the group. Ruth went along with me; I really needed her moral support. The group was small in number that day, about eight people total. Several were average statured family members of little persons.

It was a pleasant surprise to me to discover that the little people there were just ordinary people! DUH! At the same time it was a kind of shock to both Ruth and I. For the first time we were speaking to standing adults with our eyes on a downward angle! Previously we had only spoken to standing adults on an upward angle and only to children on a downward angle. That may seem foolish to the reader, but for both Ruth and I it was a major event!

I believe that this same shock happens to other little people who attend an LPA meeting for the first time. In addition, the little person sees a mirror reflection of their own self in the other little people. It can be hard to realize just how other people "see" you when you are used to telling yourself that you look like everyone else. It has to do with one's self image; all persons have a mental picture of what they think they look like to others. Each little person, who has not associated with other little people before, has to readjust their own concept of how they look to the general public. Perception of self, as well as of others, is changed. It is usually a traumatic experience for a little person.

The Little People of America, Inc. now became a major force in my life and in the lives of our whole family. I attended almost every monthly chapter meeting. The people I met have become some of my closest friends, it became a time to gather new friends and to gain a new perspective of myself as a short statured person.

Living in Colorado, I became a member of the Front Range Chapter of LPA and District 10, comprised of the Four Corners States of Arizona, Utah, New Mexico and Colorado. In August 1991 our district held a Regional meeting in Cheyenne, WY. At that time Wyoming was not a member of our district, but being close it was easy to include them in our activities. It was a small regional meeting with folks attending from other near by states. Even Janie came from Oregon!

Janie and I had not seen each other in 40 years! I was so excited to meet her when she flew into Denver! As I waited at the gate I began to wonder how in the world I was going to recognize her after all the years. When I saw her, the question was immediately answered; no one else except her came even close to my height! We had so much catching up to do!



Gale & Janie

In July of 1992 I attended my first national conference in San Francisco, CA. The annual national conferences last a full week. During that time there are many activities for all age groups. For repeat attendees one of the biggest attractions of the week is being able to see old friends, meet new friends, and spend hours just socializing at any time and any place, such as the hotel lobby or a hallway!

The hotel lobby is full of conference attendees the entire week. We sit around on the chairs, couches, stairs, and on the floor. For many sitting on the floor is much easier than climbing up into a chair! Once I heard a gift shop employee complaining in disgust, “Why do they have to hang around the lobby all the time?”. Because it is the best place to spot who is attending the conference! Everyone will eventually pass through the lobby going in or out of the hotel. It is a great way to find friends from past conferences, many of whom one gets to see only at conferences.

There are a variety of workshops throughout the Conference week, which are designed to be informative to all the various people who attend. Workshops are geared toward parents of small children, teens, adult little people, siblings of little people, accessibility at school and in public places, accessibility at home, how to inform classmates about a dwarf child at school, employment, financial assistance for schooling, psycho-social issues, medical issues in general, and so on. In addition there are smaller group meetings for specific types of dwarfism.

I have discovered that dwarfs are just like other people. I am not afraid of dwarfs now. There is even a kind of “dwarf pride” out there in the world! When a group of us walk to a local restaurant for dinner, people slow down in their cars to look. People walking past us in the opposite direction, turn around to stand and stare after us. We just go on our way, but we are not immune to the staring, finger pointing and smart remarks sometimes made in our direction.

All of these are things we talk about in workshops and group discussions. How do we feel about it? How do we respond to it? Do we hide away at home? Do we wear a chip on our shoulder for life? What do we say to the person who points?

What do we say when a child asks if we are a grown up or a child? What do we do when we turn around in a store to find a child standing very close behind us measuring him or herself against us? Actually children are the easiest to talk with. They are naturally curious, which generates their questions. They are not usually trying to be obnoxious. It’s a great opportunity to educate them, and their parents, about physical differences, if the parents don’t hustle them away too quickly.

On the other hand, educating the public by always having to explain one’s self, is a role that wears thin now and then! When that happens, a little person can sometimes seem cranky or even rude.

The LPA has a Medical Advisory Board made up of doctors around the country who specialize in various problems that affect little people. These specialists attend the conference each year donating their time and skill in advising families about kinds of medical treatments that are needed. Sometimes they bring members of their staff along with them.

For the first three days of each conference, a medical clinic is set up in the hotel so that families can schedule appointments free of charge with these wonderful doctors. Patients who want to see a doctor are to come to conference with their medical records, x-rays and test results in hand. These clinics are especially important to families with small children, many of whom do not yet have a firm diagnosis about which form of dwarfism their child has.

That may sound strange, until one realizes that so far over 200 types have been identified. The most common form is called Achondroplasia and is the form most people think of when they get a mental picture of a dwarf. Approximately 80% of all little people have this type of dwarfism.

As a dwarf child grows he or she often needs a series of surgeries to correct skeletal deformities. It is important in each individual case that surgeries are done at the most opportune times in the stages of growth. After seeing the doctors at the conference, the family will return to their local doctors at home armed with a better understanding about what steps must be taken for their little person's medical care. The Medical Advisory Board specialists are willing to discuss individual cases with local doctors by phone to help with proper treatments.

Quite a few people come to the conferences from other countries, many for the sports competitions. The Dwarf Athletic Association of America is in attendance at each conference. This organization pits the dwarf athletes against one another. It is the one time when they can compete with others who are on their own level in regard to size. The competitions are organized just like the Olympics with many of the same events including: track, swimming, weight lifting, javelin, discus, volleyball, table tennis, and so on.

Depending on which athletic events a person will be participating in, participants must have x-rays on hand and a signed permission form from their local doctor saying they can take part in the sports. This information is screened by doctors on site because some types of dwarfism have an instability in the vertebrae of the neck that if injured can cause paralysis.

Every night there is dancing until midnight. This is a very big item to everyone whether they are a dwarf or not. The children love to participate often getting on the dance floor as soon as they can walk. The dances are especially big with the young people, who look forward to having the dance floor to themselves after the children go to bed! The last night of the conference there is a banquet followed by the dance. The afternoon of that day is spent getting ready for the banquet. Ladies of all ages are excited when corsages are delivered to their hotel rooms.

Many people have said to me that they do not think of me as a dwarf. I understand that. Yet I do look different, you have to admit that. I am about 3 – 6 inches taller than most dwarfs, but I have some skeletal deformities that are similar to those of other dwarfs. Plus the medical condition I have is listed as one that causes dwarfism.

How do I feel now about being short? It's a blast, most of the time! The worst time is when I am in a group of average statured persons and the conversation is 6 inches above my head. Sometimes, I just gradually work my way out of the conversation and leave the huddle. It's not anyone's fault, people talk on their height level. Everyone does it, even little people!

In 1995 the National Conference was held in Denver at the downtown Marriott Hotel. Linda, Jan and I were the conference co-chairs and spent much of our time during the preceding three years putting that conference together.

But, since Jan and I were both working, Linda ended up doing most of the paperwork, making contacts and scheduling events. She was the one who really made it all come together.

Everyone in the Colorado chapter of LPA was involved in the work of making the conference happen once it began.



**Jan, Linda and Gale
1995 Conference Co-Chairs**

Those three years were a difficult time for the three of us, with some heated arguments. The Denver conference, with 1100 attendees, was the first conference to have over 1000 people in attendance. The more recent conferences have been over 2000 in attendance, with the organization having to book two or more major hotels at a time.

Linda had a form of dwarfism known as Cartilage-Hair Hypoplasia (CHH), was just under four feet tall and married to a gentleman over six feet tall. Linda died from cancer.

Jan had Spondyloepiphyseal Dysplasia (SED), was also just under four feet tall and was single. Her courage to remain independent with her significant disabilities was a wonder to watch.

Jan worked all her adult life, being first employed in the small town where she was raised. Her job was to put the cinnamon into cinnamon flavored toothpicks! She had to soak the toothpicks in cinnamon water and then dry them before putting them in little cellophane packages. Perhaps you remember when those were available in restaurants.

Eventually Jan moved to Denver and was employed until her retirement at the Jefferson County Health Department at the triage desk.

Jan was my dearest friend in LPA. I would call her up making a date to meet for lunch so I could get my “Jan fix”, and she would get her “Gale fix”. Jan was from Nebraska, a great football fan! You dare not call her up when the Cornhuskers or Broncos or Buffs were playing. She would politely tell you she could not talk and then hang up on you!

Jan walked with crutches and had pulmonary complications periodically. The last years of her life she could not overcome this problem so always had to pull along a small canister of oxygen in a small wheeled cart.

I got pretty good at helping her lift this as well as other things in and out of her car. She had a battery-operated scooter, as many little people do, and a small electric lift to get it into her hatchback car. Everything she did took longer than the amount of time it took me. From her I gained a new perspective and appreciation for my own ability to perform daily tasks.

Jan had numerous orthopedic surgeries in her life and was in need of having both hips replaced again for the third time. But her doctor had told her that she should not ever have surgery again because of her pulmonary complications. So, she quietly and cheerfully endured the pain in her hips year after year.



Roy helps Jan up the boardwalk at Easter Seals Handicamp during an LPA Chapter meeting

She would on occasion tell me that she was struggling because of pain, but God always gave her ability to go on. I never saw her depressed or discouraged. She always would say there were others worse off than she was. Jan, the lion-hearted!

In 2002 Jan developed gall bladder problems. Again, she stoically endured as the discomfort got worse, until finally she could endure it no longer. She went to the emergency room and was admitted into the hospital for surgery. The gall bladder was so bad it was found to be gangrenous!

Jan went through the surgery just fine but developed pain on the second day. In order to determine the cause, a CT scan was done but during the scan Jan went into respiratory failure. Emergency measures failed to revive her.

Several times over the years, Jan and I had talked about heaven; saying that we hoped the mansions Jesus is preparing for us will be right across the street from each other. We had mentioned that again the night before her surgery. Her mansion must have been ready sooner than mine.

Another dear friend in our local chapter is Suzy. She was born with a very rare form of dwarfism, with only one arm and one leg. I do not know the name of the condition.

Suzy and her dwarf husband had two children, one a dwarf and one not. Suzy is very energetic and has been active in LPA for many years.

Suzy too is an amazing person in the way she leads a normal and very active life in spite of her challenges.



**Suzy, Gale, Linda and Jan
Hanging out in the hotel lobby**



**Jan, Trisha,
Roger & his sister Linda, Gale**

Being a part of LPA with the wonderful privilege of knowing so many fine people has had such a strong effect on my life. I often think of one or the other of these friends as I face a task that is a bit hard to perform. Little people have such determination in the face of adverse circumstances. Their courage and cheerfulness are magnificent.

It would be remiss of me not to say that some little people are not so courageous. Some do wear a chip on their shoulder all of their lives. Some never do persevere to achieve goals.

LPA is playing a role in the lives of many little people and their families to help with facing and overcoming challenges and reaching goals.

The Internet has been the main means for LPA to do this as more and more people are finding LPA via the internet, and more recently on television.

This also explains the rapid growth in attendance at more recent annual conferences.



**Getting clothes that fit
is a challenge!**