

A Mother's Memories

What shall I write in memory of two sisters, AnnaLeah (born May 15, 1995) and Mary Lydia (born August 6, 1999) born to Jerry and Marianne Karth, who had their lives cut short by an accident which was out-of-the-blue, unforeseen (by us), and very unwelcome?

Countless words and circumstances bring these daughters to my mind. Their humor, joy-of-living, and insight filled our days.

They were both good with young children--each in their own way. AnnaLeah, especially, took care of many young children during her teen years. She understood them and they loved her. I know that Peter and Danelle, in particular, felt confident in leaving Marcus and Vanessa with their Aunt AnnaLeah and will miss that gift which she gave to them.

AnnaLeah and Mary liked to go on walks together, especially during this last year. I am glad that they will not be missing those times. However, a different camaraderie will be missed because AnnaLeah had been looking forward to sharing a room with her sister, Susanna, soon in our new North Carolina home.

When they were younger, the sisters spent endless hours telling stories with a vast set of paper doll cut-outs--many of them homemade. Their imaginations were vivid--especially AnnaLeah who could add a bit of humor to any situation. She liked puns and enjoyed turning a misunderstood word into a laugh.

In fact, AnnaLeah has had her own little imaginative world from a very young age. With six busy older siblings, she was likely to just crawl off and explore on her own. And when we had to frequently say, "Where's AnnaLeah?", I finally tied bells to her little shoes. As a toddler, her stuffed animals were known to go through several name changes. She continued to create elaborate story worlds and wrote her ideas down in tiny print on pieces of paper everywhere.

AnnaLeah, quite likely due to having her older sister Rebekah as a role model, was very well-read. Although, she probably would not describe herself that way because there was still so much she realized that she didn't know and looked forward to learning.

While she lived, AnnaLeah acquired a personal library of over 600 books (cataloged by her on a website). She enjoyed not only reading these books but also loaning them out to others for their enjoyment and enlightenment.

Even little glimpses tell a story about the unique character of these two young women. For example, as we started out on our fateful road trip from North Carolina headed for Texas (to celebrate the college graduations of four of their siblings as well as their sister Rebekah's wedding to John Black), we were getting ready to turn onto the entrance ramp to head south on 95 in Rocky Mount. Caleb cleared his throat, then rolled down his window and spit. Mary, who was sitting in the seat just behind him, indignantly said, "You got it all over my window!" We all cracked up and got a good, long laugh out of that one.

Shortly thereafter, Caleb turned around in his front seat and said, "Okay, AnnaLeah, what have you got for me to read?" She immediately pulled a book out of her traveling stash and handed it to him. The three of them then began discussing what the book was about, as well as books similar to it.

AnnaLeah shared a love of history with her dad and had recently gotten into discussions with him about history. She had been wading through a very lengthy book about Truman, which they had discussed. Also, he had recently emailed her about a YouTube concerning JFK. And they had gone a few months ago to Raleigh/Durham to see historical Civil War sites there. He also took the two girls to the American Girls store in the Mall of America and an enormous used book sale by the Friends of the Library in Durham.

Mary, on the other hand, shared a love of animals and photography with her sister-in-law, Naomi. In fact, she was the biggest fan of Naomi's blogs.

By the way, Mary's current frequently-used word was "socially-awkward." Although fun-loving and ready to try just about anything, from the time she was little she was a tail-between-her-legs kind of girl; looking at her crossly got an immediate reaction. So she had recently labeled situations as "socially-awkward" if they held the least bit of potential for being embarrassing. At the same time, she could easily bring a smile to others. She got a part in the community theater's production of "A Christmas Carol," along with her sister, Susanna, and she had a lovely singing voice.

Mary also loved to talk on the phone or chat on the computer with her siblings and sisters-in-law, as well as friends. I don't know what special touch she had, but it was clearly evident and she spread wholehearted joy everywhere.

Thankfully, we will be able to remember AnnaLeah by the unique stuffed animals which she created without a pattern usually from leftover material pieces, craft supplies, and button eyes.

And we'll have Mary's antics preserved in photos and video footage. Her brother, Levi, filmed many episodes of "The Pink Flamingo Show"--starring Mary and Caleb. And her brothers, Isaac and Samuel, created a short film, "Gremlins in the Basement," starring Mary along with animated characters created by Isaac.

And I will never forget the unexpected hilarity of watching Mary and Caleb perform the "Sisters, Sisters" Act--inspired by Bing Crosby and Bob Hope in "White Christmas."

Then there's the magic show which Mary orchestrated with the family of Childers boys across the alley in Midland...The little ones' eyes (Marcus, Vanessa and Braden) were so big when she cut Graham in half!

AnnaLeah and Mary both had beautiful hair and beautiful spirits. What will I do without you to take care of me in my old age, Mary?

I love every one of my unique and special children, who are gifts from the Lord, and I will miss their two sisters immensely. How can it be that their lives have been so short (and yet so full), that their time to enjoy life and God's world, and to touch the lives of others, has been so abruptly ended?

It is our comfort that AnnaLeah and Mary had the gift of faith in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. And so they will rest and laugh and sing and dance in His presence forever.

Marianne Karth, May 12, 2013