

Randy's Cousin Nancy writes about her memories of Randy

My first recollection of Randy was when Cara and Abby (Randy's mom and dad) lived in the Bay area. He was still a baby and he was in a play pen on the floor. Cara was so excited because he had just held his own bottle for the first time.

My next memory is of Randy in the Garden Grove house. He was enamored of the "Batman" series on TV and he had a Batmobile. He was very protective of his toys, as if someone would take or ruin them. He would go around saying, "Dah-dah-dah-dah-dah... Batman!" (the theme from the show). Abby would always water the backyard just before company came, which made Cara really mad. I remember Susie (Randy's older sister) was biting people around that time.

Next, I remember Randy chafing around his lips. I don't know if this was after he started Ritalin and was licking his lips a lot. The family had moved to Seal Beach.

I came to live with Cara and Abby in the mid-1970s. Randy was already demonstrating his temper and difficulties with impulse control. I remember, once, he was angry and put his fist through a cabinet door in the kitchen. He was hanging around with a group of boys I didn't like much—I think they later broke into the house and stole everybody's belongings.

He clearly didn't get along with his dad, which was not uncommon for teenage boys. He became distant and didn't hang around with his family much. This was even more true when he bought his motorcycle. (I think there was a time when Cara discovered a grow-lite and/or a hole in the roof over Randy's closet where he was trying to grow pot.)

Randy was sent to military school—I still remember his school picture. He was in uniform and looked more confident of himself.

He always had a stuffy nose. He loved the family cat. He would tease the housekeeper, but she had a way of keeping him in his place. I never saw him lose his temper with her.

Randy had a motorcycle accident when he was still a teen; I think he liked driving fast. He was in the hospital and I believe he lost his spleen. He had a plate and screws in his leg for a long time.

I moved out of the home and rarely saw Randy after that. I think I visited his Laguna Beach store and bought a birthday gift for a friend, some makeup. It was primarily a clothing/gift store.

It wasn't until my Aunt Cara's funeral that I really got to see him as a man. Randy had some heart problems and was feeling chest pains at the cemetery. His brother rushed him to the emergency room (I thought Randy had a panic attack).

At the hospital, we visited. He seemed vulnerable. He made a comment as I left, that I walked like my dad. I turned in a gesture of joking and told him he shouldn't be checking out his cousin's butt. He laughed. I left and didn't see Randy again until he was in the hospital after the assault.

I went to visit him a couple of times; he was in a room with half of his skull missing. It was very disturbing. I couldn't shake the feeling that he was "hiding," sort of like he was scared. I talked to him, coaxing him to come back, to be brave, but I was not hopeful. However, once they replaced the portion of skull they removed, he did come back (I guess I wouldn't want to be conscious if I knew that half of my brain was only protected by a tiny bit of material!)

After that, we talked on the phone. His speech was slurred, as if on too much pain medication. His emotions were all over the place, happy then sobbing in a matter of a few seconds. I heard that he had problems handling his frustrations. I expected this, due to his brain injury.

He talked about his past in a way that was and wasn't surprising. He talked about drugs, alcohol, and women. I have to say that I was surprised that womanizing was a part of his life, as he didn't seem too adept around women when he was younger... The drug and alcohol problems are something that run in the Spence side (Randy's mom's) of the family and didn't surprise me as much.

I was glad to hear about it when he finally became clean and sober.

When I think of Randy now, I see a man whose thoughts are easily and clearly expressed. What a difference! He says that he believes that God was instrumental in bringing him back from death so he can be an example to others. With that kind of help, I feel sure that he will continue to improve.

Welcome back, Randy!

Love, Cousin Nancy