

By Ed Bruderer

In July 1997 a serious automobile accident completely crushed my pelvis and midsection and left me blind. I spent five long months on my back in the hospital, able to move only my head and my right arm. Only through priesthood blessings, fasting, and prayers was my life spared.

The hospital discharged me in December, though I was bedridden for months. On Christmas Eve, the doorbell rang. It was 15-year-old Spencer and his mom. Spencer and I had been acquainted since he was a Cub Scout. As I helped out with the den, I soon realized that Spencer, who had Down syndrome, often needed one-on-one attention. We had a lot of fun and became good buddies.

My wife led Spencer and his mom into the room where I was lying. He came to my bedside, bent down, and embraced me. He began to tear up but kept himself in check. I wasn't as strong as Spencer—I couldn't hold back my tears. He kissed me on the cheek.

On each subsequent Christmas Eve the doorbell would ring, and it was always Spencer there to give me my Christmas hug. Spencer's hugs were pure, sincere, and honest.

There was nothing superficial about them. As Spencer hugged me, I felt his Christlike love and imagined what it would be like to get a hug from the Savior.

One Christmas Eve, Spencer's mom told us that Spencer had been to Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City—Spencer needed a new heart and lung. The doctors were concerned that his body would reject the organs or that he wouldn't make it through the surgery. They predicted that without the surgeries, he would live anywhere from

three to eight more years. The family decided to decline the surgery. About three years later, in the arms of his stepdad, 19-year-old Spencer quietly slipped from mortality.

A few months after Spencer passed away, Christmas Eve came and our doorbell rang. It was Spencer's parents and sweet little sisters, there to give me Christmas hugs. Each Christmas since, they have come.

One day it will be my time to go through the veil. I hope that when that time comes, Spencer will be one of those waiting for me with arms outstretched, ready to give me a hug full of Christlike love. ■

The author lives in Idaho, USA.

A CHRISTMAS HUG

