



**LOVE**

Where I Least  
Expected It



*After my father's death, I felt an outpouring of love from other people—many of whom I did not know.*

**By Hannah Rawhouser Eiselin**

**A**fter attending an all-day social worker training session on bereavement, I came home to learn that my father had suffered a massive heart attack. Even though Dad lived in Wyoming, USA, doctors had decided to send him to the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs hospital for cardiac care.

In shock, I began to cry. I felt desperate and afraid. I wanted to be with Dad, but I lived in Georgia. Thankfully, I was able to call him at the hospital and felt comforted upon hearing his voice.

He reassured me he would be fine and told me not to worry. But I did worry. While this heart attack was a surprise, my father had passed through years of health struggles, including diabetes, the loss of a limb, failing eyesight, and daily pain.

I talked to him for a few more minutes before a nurse took the phone from him and explained to me that he needed to rest. I asked to tell him just one more thing. She handed the phone back to him.

“Dad, I love you.”

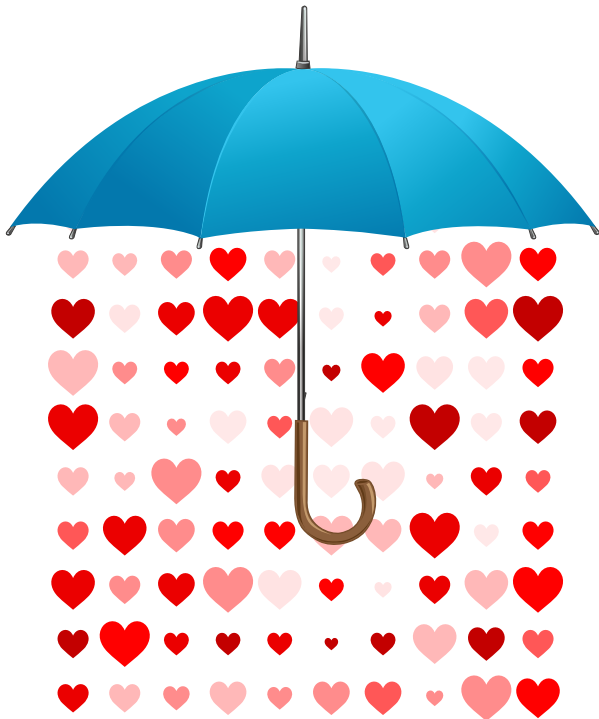
“I love you too.”

I went to bed that night with hope that he would somehow recover and I would speak with him the next day, but in the early hours of the morning, I received a phone call indicating I needed to come to Minneapolis right away.

I soon arrived at the hospital, where a doctor escorted me to my father's room and explained that his condition was poor. Dad lay incoherent with tubes everywhere and machines humming. I held his hand and talked to him, hoping he could hear me. I told him again that I loved him and tried to list all the things he had taught me. Then I sang “I Am a Child of God” to him. I had only about 10 minutes with him before his heart stopped. It was as though he had waited for me to get there before slipping away.

The machines started making loud noises. Doctors ran in and asked me to step out into the hall. Some 15 of them gathered around Dad's bed, talking about what they should do to revive him. Then there was silence. Everyone slowly walked out of the room. A nurse turned to me and said, “I'm sorry.” She wrapped her arms around me and held me. She didn't say anything; she just let me cry in her arms.

Over the years that have passed, I have thought a lot about that moment. I have come to realize that you don't have to know someone to love him or her. That nurse showed me great kindness during a time of grief and loss. Her expression of love was just the first of many I experienced in the days following my father's death.



I went into an empty room and called my brother, who lived in France. He said he and his wife and children would come as soon as they could get on a flight. Then I got a phone book and called the local bishop. I explained my situation, and he told me he would try to find someone I could stay with for the night. A few minutes later, he called me with the name and phone number of a couple who were willing to have me stay with them. Brian and Carina welcomed me into their home. I felt their love and concern. These were people I did not know, yet they extended their home and their love to me.

The next morning I called the airline to explain my need to change travel plans so I could go to my father's funeral and burial in Wyoming. The representative was kind: "I'm going to make this work so you don't have to pay for another plane ticket to get back to Wyoming." In a few minutes, she had rearranged my flight plan with little added expense. Later, I got choked up trying to explain the early return of my rental car. The young attendant promptly canceled my rental agreement and then said, "I am sorry. I will pray for you." I was touched by the actions of this complete stranger.

I continued to experience the love of the Lord through other people, most of whom I did not know. I arrived

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in Wyoming and went to my grandmother's house. My brother arrived with his wife and children two days later. It became our responsibility to prepare for the funeral. Dad's bishop called me and asked if there was anything he could do to help with arrangements beyond the funeral program—and continued to ask me every time we met with him. He helped arrange a luncheon following the funeral. When my brother and his family needed a place to stay (other family members who had come into town were already staying at my grandmother's house), the bishop found them one. He also gave me a wonderful blessing of comfort. I felt as though he loved me as his own daughter.

The day of the funeral the Relief Society sisters prepared a delicious luncheon. Many people came to pay their respects and share kind words about Dad. My single adult branch back in Atlanta sent flowers, accompanied by a box filled with notes of comfort. Many extended family members contributed funds to help pay for the funeral. A dear friend flew to Wyoming to be with me. While the day was sad, it was also replete with reminders of the love of the Lord, mostly through people I did not know.

At first, I thought this experience was a special circumstance. But I've since realized we have many opportunities to show love to people we don't know. When we serve in the temple, when the elders quorum helps a new ward member move in, when members help a refugee family, when we give generous fast offerings, we may not know the people we serve, but we can love them anyway.

The Savior taught, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). I saw the fruit of love throughout this experience. It not only helped me heal but also taught me a lesson I'll always remember: You don't have to know someone to love them. ■

*The author now lives in Arizona, USA.*