

ADALINE NEELY

Faith Story, Feb. 19, 2017

Our son, Buddy, died February 22, 1992 of AIDS. He was 30 years old.

He was a beautiful, energetic, talented little blond boy, the delight of his parents, teachers and especially of his grandfather, "Big Jim."

The years preceding Buddy's death were very difficult. He went from top honor role at Landon School to living on the streets at one point. As it turned out, drugs played a huge part in this story.

When Buddy developed the first symptoms of AIDS, he was living in California. When the disease progressed to a point where he couldn't work, his brother, our second son, Jimbo, drove to LA, picked him up and put him into his car and moved him to San Diego, and made sure he was accepted by the best medical group working with AIDS at that time.

Now, fast forward to December 21, 1990. Buddy had developed a horrible infection with a racking cough, and he wasn't responding to treatment. We were set to meet after Christmas in Newport Beach for Jimbo's wedding on December 29. December 21 is Mort's and my wedding anniversary. We had elected not to go out, as we were feeling anything but festive. Not only did I not want Buddy to die, but please God, not in the middle of Jimbo's marriage.

I was sitting in our family room that evening, watching the Mormon Tabernacle Choir just feeling depressed when my father, who had died 11 years earlier, spoke to me ... as clearly as I'm speaking to you.

"Adaline, stop worrying about Buddy. I'm taking care of him."

Well, it's hard to describe my emotions. I was certain he was dying and daddy was standing there with his arms out welcoming him. I lost it, started crying and Mort thought I had really flipped my lid totally, this time.

My wonderful, solid, Rock-of-Gibraltar husband told me that all was ok. So, we did nothing. Christmas morning arrived and the first call was from Buddy, speaking clearly without a cough, he said, "Merry Christmas, Mom."

He went on to explain that he had suddenly started feeling better, and while not energetic, he thought he would be up to joining us for the wedding.

We flew out the next day. Buddy was quickly outfitted in a tuxedo and actually was an usher in the wedding. He attended the reception and even danced once or twice. On the way back to our room, he put his arm around my shoulder and said, "I'd forgotten how wonderful it was to have a family."

I told Buddy the story of Daddy speaking to me, and that I thought we'd been given a gift of time, and to let's make the most of it. We did. Mort and I flew out to San Diego as often as possible, and we gathered as a family frequently.

Fourteen months later, on February 22, 1992, we received the dreaded call from Dr. Strouble that Buddy wasn't responding this time. and that he thought we should come out as quickly as possible. We surrounded his bed in the hospital that evening, and after our good bye's, Buddy joined God and "Big Jim."

While I was born into a Christian family and can't remember a time when I didn't believe in Jesus Christ as my personal savior ... from that experience forward I've known with a special "knowing" that there is life after death and that we go from "strength to strength."

What a wonderful God we have who gave my father the power to intervene in our lives with this miracle.

Incidentally, my mother lived at home until she died after a short illness at 97. In those last years, she called me often to get my rock-solid reassurance that there is life after death, and she would be joining her friends and family, "Big Jim" and Buddy. Our daughter, Gigi changed her major at UNC to pre-med, and is now a doctor at UCSD in San Diego, specializing in HIV.

Next week is the 25th anniversary of Buddy's death.