

JEREMY STROBECK  
October 1, 1993 – January 14, 2008

I met the family in the fall of 1975, when a cute blonde girl named Jean Strobeck entered my fifth grade classroom. Then I worked really hard that summer to become smart enough to teach sixth grade. So I was able to have Jean again in sixth grade. That summer I studied even harder so I'd be smart enough to teach junior high math. So poor Jean was stuck with me for two more years!

One of the joys for me is to have former students bring their children back to WCGS. What a delight to have Zach begin kindergarten in 1994! Then five years later, Jeremy started! He was a cute, sweet boy. It was wonderful watching him become a young man. Many of the things I'm about to say are unbelievable, but Jeremy was unique!

It's been a privilege to spend a lot of time with the family this week. Tuesday night we spent some time telling Jeremy stories. In spite of the sudden events of Monday, there were times when everyone was laughing! Of course, Uncle Ken's unique laugh could be heard above everyone else's! I've tried to put together a little family snapshot.

Jeremy was normally quiet, but he was always listening. When you didn't even think he was listening, he would suddenly blurt out a one-liner. Much laughter would ensue! They talked about the great variety of Jeremy's facial expressions. His eyes were very expressive.

He was mature beyond his years. Grandpa: "Still waters run deep." He was quiet but always thinking.

He was the easiest child to do things for and to help. He was very sensitive and always thinking about others. Often he was asked how he was. His usual response: "I'm fine!" Even though he was in a wheelchair, he was still joyful! He was such an encourager and never felt sorry for himself.

Jeremy loved to build anything: LEGOS, GI Joes in the sand at the beach. He was terrific with video games. His friends say he was even better than I am! ☺ He actually took on the challenge to beat any new game he played...and he was often success very quickly.

When Jeremy was 4-5, it became apparent that he did NOT like opening presents that turned out to be clothes. He got all excited about the prospects of new toys, only to be disappointed that they were more clothes! So Grandma started wrapping all his presents in clothing boxes! He was so disappointed when he unwrapped the package to see another clothing box. He started crying until he opened the box and found toys and fun stuff! ☺

One of cousin Karl's best memories is taking Jeremy for a ride on the Waverunner at Grandpa's in WI. Pudge Bunny (as they called him) sat in front and was very scared at first. Karl took him out for a long ride. Jeremy's countenance was transformed during the ride. He loved it! He was the happiest Karl had ever seen him.

Matt McDonald cared for the boys a couple of summers when Jeremy was still walking. With a grin on his face, Zach tells the story of major rubber band wars. I won't give you all the details of each battle (some of which I understand were very violent) except to say that they are still finding rubber bands in unusual places!

In kindergarten after the parent-teacher conference, Mrs. Thrasher wrote: "Mom and Grandpa were pleased at his progress this year! Jeremy really enjoys school! They agreed to work on letter sounds at home. They will also talk to Jeremy about his 'excessive talking' in class!"

Mrs. Dominguez, first grade report card: "Sometimes he talks when he should be listening so we are working on that!"

Mrs. Landrum loved Jeremy, and mentioned that Jeremy began falling in second grade.

In third grade, Mrs. Ziembra just received a new skeleton that would help us understand the body better. All the students were thinking of a name to call this skeleton. There were many options, but when Jeremy spit out "James Bone," everyone loved it.

Fourth grade with Mrs. Burgess: "Jeremy has a tender heart and an obvious love for God. He has some good friends and enjoys creative play at recess. He is in a wheelchair this year but still tries to do all that the others do (like responsibility for classroom jobs and activities)."

In first week of October 2005, Jeremy was diagnosed with *congestive heart failure* and did not return to school that year. This was hard for Jeremy and his friends. Actually, Jean was told that he might not make it to Christmas. God graciously gave us 2 additional, significant years to spend with Jeremy. By the way, note inside your program what Jeremy wrote in fifth grade.

One of Miss Betts' favorite memories from sixth grade (when Jeremy was in school for the first three quarters) was when she had brought in a CD with the Superman theme song on it and the class was listening to it while they were working. All of the kids enjoyed the song, but Jeremy was beaming while listening to it. After class, while his friends were helping him get into the elevator, she grabbed her boom box and blasted the theme song as he went down. So there's Jeremy descending in the lift, face tuned upward, one fist raised straight

up in true Superman pose with this incredible orchestral anthem and dozens of cheering sixth graders to accompany him. Since then, whenever this incident has come to mind, she cannot suppress a chuckle.

Sheri Morrison: I just remember the joy with which so many of Jeremy's classmates served him in any way they could. We had problems at WCGS with students fighting for the privilege of taking Jeremy to the bathroom, wheeling him to other locations in the building, carrying things for him, or helping him with his school work. Their servant hearts were truly a witness of their love for Jeremy. I believe that Jeremy's disability gave our students the opportunity to NOT take their physical "wholeness" for granted.

The class has been amazing. Their love for Jeremy is obvious. On Wednesday morning, they all sat in a circle and told their Jeremy stories. It was a blessing to have family members present—Zach, cousin Karl, and Aunt Carol. We all were laughing at times and quite serious at others. I know that this time was one step in the healing process for us all.

Jeremy's classmates brought a floral basket for the visitation and service. It has school colors with yellow daffodils and blue iris, bulbs that can be planted outside and be a reminder to Jean and Zach of their love for Jeremy. There were also branches of yellow forsythia in bloom in the basket. Forsythia is the first flower in spring! The card attached says,  
"We love you! We miss you! We will never forget you!"

They say confession is good for the soul. Jean, this is just for you. You know I often took Jeremy to the computer lab. For most students, that involves walking through the gym, into the library, and up the stairs. For Jeremy in his wheelchair, we had to go outside, up the sidewalk by the garage, and into the computer lab. You know I enjoy having fun with the kids. I must confess that on the return trip down the sidewalk I would start my stopwatch and we raced down the sidewalk to see how quickly we could get inside the gym. Gabe often held the doors for us, so he had to race to get to open the gym door so we could go in immediately and check our time. We always tried to beat our previous record! It was more exciting than any ride at Great America. Don't worry, I always checked to make sure his seatbelt was fastened, although usually we didn't take time to put on his helmet and shoulder pads!

Cousin Linnea babysat Zach and Jeremy when Jeremy was 2-3. Jeremy loved to go outside and kick balls and run. He always had a smile on his face! When bedtime came, he would always say, "Pray with me." So they would kneel down and pray before he climbed into bed.

When Earlene Willis first started working with him in kindergarten, he was very confused about letters and numbers. However, by second grade, Jeremy was reading well and his favorite thing to do was read from the Children's Bible that

was in the TEACH room. He would always ask, "Can we read from the Bible today?" Earlene's greatest joy was in knowing that Jeremy was both eager to read and would be successful at reading God's Word.

When Jeremy was 4 or 5, Zach actually led him to the Lord. Zach said Jeremy's motivation at first was to make sure he didn't go to hell. However, just this past summer, Zach was reading in Romans and talked about it with Jeremy. Jeremy made a decision then to re-commit his life to the Lord.

You and I prayed for healing for Jeremy. Why did God wait until Monday to heal Jeremy? I don't know. I only know His timing is always right. I can only say He does what is best.

Though you hear nothing, He is speaking. Though you see nothing, He is acting. With God there are no accidents. Every incident is intended to bring us closer to Him.

This week at WCGS, the Word of God was a great encouragement. I am convinced that this Book is true! And it tells us how dear we are to Him and how He loves us so much that He actually watched His Son die. Jean, He knows what you feel like. He's been there.

I love you, Jean! I love you, Zach! I love you, Chuck and Janet! Look around. Your family has gathered here for you. There are lots of people here who loved Jeremy and who love you, too. We are here for you, and more importantly, God will ALWAYS be there for you...24/7.

Jeremy left this earth on Monday at 1:59 p.m. The doctors said his heart failed. I don't know what they were looking at. I saw Jeremy's heart. It was a big heart. He had a sensitive, caring heart. It was bent toward God and others. *There was nothing wrong with his heart.* His heart was wonderful.

Jeremy knew he was loved by the King, and tonight Jeremy is in the presence His King.

Reflections shared by Roger Burgess (school counselor) at  
Jeremy's Celebration Service on January 17, 2008.