

Letter Received at Grand Lodge Web Site

(February 26, 1999)

Hello.

I'm not sure if I'm sending this to the right place. I'm not really sure how I should start this letter, although I've written it a hundred times in my heart. I guess I should delve right in.

Two years ago this spring, my mother-in-law was visiting my husband and I from Michigan. Late one afternoon, as Kate (my mother-in-law) and I drove into Akron to do some shopping, we were involved in a horrible automobile accident. Either Kate had a stroke while driving, or the stroke was the result of the accident; nobody knows. I got out of the car basically uninjured and Kate was trapped in the car while it caught fire. For what seemed like the longest time, nobody would listen to my screams for help, but finally Eric Forney stopped and took control of things.

I am so ashamed for how I handled the whole thing. I was so mad at people for not stopping to help Kate, but at the same time, I wasn't able to do it myself. I left it to a complete stranger to save my husband's mother.

Eric got Kate out of the burning car and started first aid. Kate's left foot was badly burned and Eric himself must have been burned as his face was blackened and his hair was singed. I really don't remember much more as I completely fell apart emotionally.

Kate physically recovered somewhat after the accident. She lost the foot and never walked again. Emotionally, I am amazed at this woman. Right off after the accident, she seemed to pull from some unseen strength. You see, her husband was a Mason and while Eric attended her, Kate focused in on Eric's Masonic ring. "Masons always look after their widows," Kate would say. She found great comfort in that ring.

The other "thing" that happened as a result of the accident was that Kate reconciled with my husband's brother Phil. Phil and Kate hadn't spoken or seen each other in years. In fact, Kate had never even met Phil's wife or two boys. Talk about stubborn, mother and son had been so mad for so long that both of them had forgotten what they were even mad about. The accident really shook up Phil (as well as the rest of us) and the idea of losing his mother without being able to say I'm sorry was unbearable.

Kate constantly talked about her family and the Mason who came to her aid. That Christmas, she hung a "G" in our tree and told anybody that would listen that a Mason gave her the most special Christmas present ever: her family back. Almost a year to the day of the accident, Kate passed on. To what must have been a full year of suffering, Kate exclaimed it was the best time of her life. Her family was whole again.

The "G" on our Christmas tree has become as important as the star on top. This past Christmas, my nephew Josh asked what the "G" was. After telling him about Grandma Kate and Eric, Josh wants to be a Mason when he grows up, not knowing anything about the Masons except for what Eric did and Kate told us. I would be real proud of Josh to be a Mason. Masons are special people.

It's hard to imagine the impact one person, one special Mason can make in a person's life or even in a whole family's life, until something like this happens. My whole family owes so much to this Mason, a complete stranger who just happened to be traveling down the road. If anybody knows Eric Forney, please give him a great big hug and thank him for being there when we needed somebody more than ever before.

Dot Messinger

(Eric Forney is a member of Perry Lodge, #185, Salem, Ohio)