

W O R L D W I D E

# CHALLENGE

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## LIFE AFTER DEATH



*A Year-Long  
Chronicle of One  
Man's Grief*



# C o n t e n t s

Volume 18

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At his wife's grave site Dennis Beck helps his daughter, Keli, select a handful of flowers from her mommy's casket. Moments earlier on the way to the cemetery Keli had asked, "Did the sun hurt Mommy's eyes when she went past it on the way to heaven?"

Photograph by Greg Schneider.



## Inside Story

**L**AST WEEK I BRUSHED THE DUST OFF MY COLLEGE photo albums. After flipping a few pages I ran across a picture of three friends kneeling in front of a lopsided Christmas tree. On the left in the dorm-room photo beamed Betty Duxberry with her twinkling, brown eyes and gleeful smile.

Even though Betty had graduated in May 1977 and started her career as a Campus Crusade for Christ missionary, she was back on campus visiting many of the students she had spiritually nurtured. Betty reminded me of Barnabas. You know, a faithful mentor who would arrange her travels just to stop by and encourage others.

I didn't know Betty well, but her influence on fellow coeds etched its way into my life. One of the women she helped

toward maturity in Christ later guided me in biblical truths my freshman and sophomore years at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Looking at that '70s snapshot reminded me of my spiritual heritage and of my own journey with the ministry of Campus Crusade. Tears filled my eyes, partly because I missed the whimsical days

of college and partly because I remembered sitting with college friends at Betty's funeral last summer.

Betty died last July in Krakow, Poland, at age 34. On pages 16 to 39 you will come alongside Betty's husband, Dennis, and their children, Keli and Geoffrey, as they walk a rugged course of grief and recovery. Through this year-long chronicle you'll see how a bereaved father and missionary copes with raising young children alone in a foreign culture, a less-than-convenient culture where boxed macaroni and cheese, disposable diapers, and Kool-Aid drink mix are prized imports.

*Worldwide Challenge* applauds Dennis for his courage and honesty in allowing us to observe his everyday struggles with the realities of death, grieving and single parenting. We also applaud Dennis amid the loneliness, tension and fatigue for standing firm in his belief in the God he serves.

That not-quite-candid photo of Betty remains secure on its adhesive page. And next to my office computer rests a photo of Dennis, Keli and Geoffrey. When I look at them, I cannot help but think about Betty's smile and her Barnabas style of living that is still drawing others to Him. ■

—Beth Lueders



**The beginnings of a missionary: Betty Duxberry Beck (left) and two of the students she discipled while in college. Photograph by Beth Lueders.**

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A black and white photograph of a funeral home hearse. The hearse is a dark-colored vehicle with a large, striped awning over the back. A light-colored wooden coffin is positioned in the back of the hearse, resting on a metal frame. The coffin is adorned with a large, elaborate arrangement of white flowers, including roses and daisies, with green foliage. The background is a blurred landscape with trees and a cloudy sky. The title "LIFE AFTER" is printed in large, red, serif capital letters across the upper portion of the image.

# LIFE AFTER

by BETH LUEDERS

Photography by GREG SCHNEIDER



# DEATH

*In the year since his wife died,  
Dennis Beck has held on  
to the loving hand of his God,  
despite his struggles and his grief.*



D

ADDY, WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TOMORROW?"

"We're going to have a funeral, honey, and put Mommy's box in the ground."

Dennis Beck, snuggling next to his 5-year-old daughter, calmly discussed the plans for his wife's funeral. Before falling asleep on that muggy July night, Keli asked her dad to sing. Dennis chose "It Is Well With My Soul," a song Betty, his 34-year-old wife, had earlier requested for her memorial service.

"Daddy, what does it mean to be well in your soul?" Keli blurted out in mid-chorus.

"It means you know everything is OK in your heart," Dennis replied.

"It's like you know that everything's going to turn out for the best."

The assurance that everything will turn out for the best has upheld this 38-year-old missionary since sorrow, like sea billows, rolled into his life on July 6, 1990.

On that day, Betty and the Beck children, Keli and Geoffrey, returned home to Kraków, Poland, from a six-week trip to the United States. A few hours after walking into their apartment, Betty collapsed. The Polish autopsy report listed the young mother's cause of death as unknown.

On the morning of Betty's funeral, Dennis sat in the brown booth of a Village Inn restaurant in Omaha, Neb. Noticeably fatigued, and barely touching his eggs Benedict and biscuits, he curled his hands around a mug of black coffee.

His eyes drifted toward the window while he recalled the turmoil of the previous 10 days, as if focusing on the parking lot would steady his jumbled emotions and faltering voice. Tearfully he described his final goodbye to his wife's lifeless body:

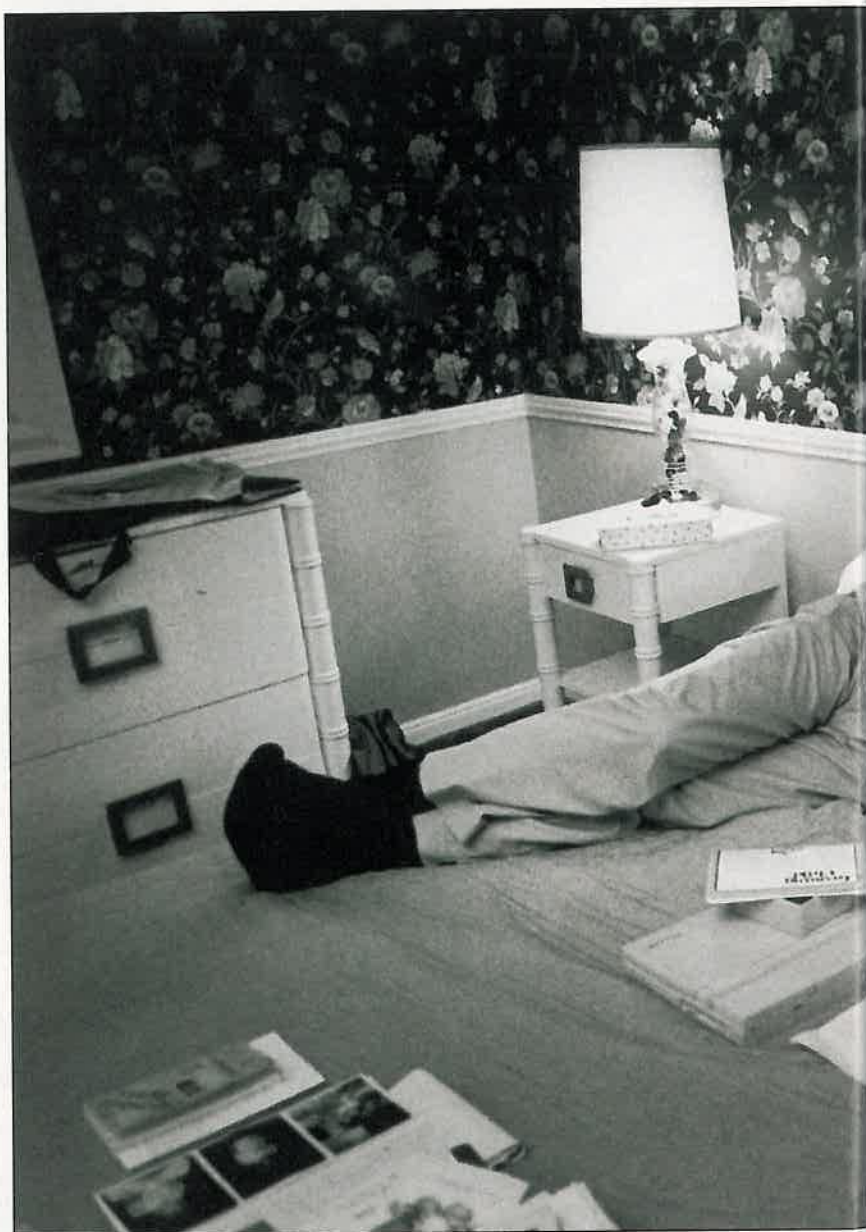
"I kissed her and said, 'I know where your spirit is, honey. I love you. I was faithful to you before marriage. I was faithful to you until death. I kept my vows. Goodbye.'"

When Dennis and Betty Beck pledged their wedding vows on June 13, 1981, and within two years left for Poland as Campus Crusade missionaries, no one expected the energetic couple to return to the same Omaha church just over nine years later for Betty's funeral. This

time only Dennis stood before the rows of family members and friends.

"Her death left me with no regrets," he said slowly. "Our commitment to resolving our differences—and we had them—allowed us to end each day and even our marriage at peace with one another.

"If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, I have no hope and neither does Betty or anyone else. . . . It is my prayer, it is Betty's prayer . . . that through her death





more people would enter Christ's kingdom, and that young and maturing believers be encouraged to grow in the knowledge of Him. . . .

"I have no idea what waits for my kids and myself, but I do have hope."

It was Dennis' tenacious hope in the sovereignty and love of his heavenly Father that sustained him through the loss of Betty and would anchor him in the tumultuous days ahead.

Those upholding Dennis through the initial days after Betty's death naturally wondered: *How will Dennis and the kids cope? Will he remarry? Will he continue as a Campus Crusade missionary in Poland?*

To answer many of these questions himself and determine future plans, Dennis met with a family counselor a month after Betty's funeral. The counselor helped Dennis think through how to provide an emotionally stable environment for himself and the children. The discussion also confirmed Dennis' decision to return with Keli and Geoffrey to Poland and continue his work with Campus Crusade.

Despite the conveniences of living in America, Dennis knew that the slower pace of Poland would allow for more time with his children, to enable the family to both grieve and grow together. "Our home is in Poland," he said, "and stability will come when we are back in familiar surroundings."

While in California, Dennis visited with family and friends, and began recording thoughts and feelings about his new lifestyle:

AUGUST 18, 1990

*I can relate with Sandra Aldridge's book, Living Through the Loss of Someone You Love: "It amazes me how quickly our society expects us who are bereaved to get our lives back into balance. . . . Rebuilding our lives takes time."*

*This is my first full day of being totally alone since Betty died. I desire to train my children as Betty and I have talked about, but I realize how much I actually relied on Betty to plan the training. I'm overwhelmed thinking about mistakes I'm going to make as a single parent. God has to become even more central in the raising of the kids.*

A few days after arriving in California, 2-year-old Geoffrey was hospitalized with a severe asthma attack. For Dennis, the thought of perhaps losing his son in addition to his wife pushed him to the point of considering suicide.

"The thought was brief, but my depression was the worst since the funeral," says Dennis. "I was overwhelmed because I felt the weight of

*(Left) Six weeks after Betty's death, an exhausted Dennis finally finds time alone to determine future plans at the Arrowhead Springs Hotel, part of Campus Crusade's California headquarters.*



responsibility for the kids was no longer up to Betty and me together."

Gaining reassurance from the doctors that the sooty air from Poland's coal-operated factories would not severely hamper Geoffrey's breathing, Dennis continued with his plans to return to the family's Kraków apartment in early September.

Back at Wysockiego Street in Kraków, Dennis and the children received hearty greetings from their Polish and American friends. Meals in the freezer and offers of child care eased the initial burden of establishing a family without Betty's daily nurturing. Yet the emotional pain

of Betty's absence did not easily fade for Dennis or the children.

Geoffrey, a serene 2-year-old with flaxen curls lazily swirling just above his brown eyes, did not know enough English or Polish words to talk about the loss of his mom. But sometimes when he would see a picture of Betty, he would point and cry, "Maw-ma, maw-ma."

Sensitive and quick-witted Keli, however, understood that her mother was not coming back. It was Keli who, a few hours after her mom's death, sensed her dad's grief and frustration and exclaimed, "Daddy, you should be happy, 'cuz Mommy is with Jesus in heaven."

During the first week after returning to Poland, jet lag and emotional fatigue strained Dennis to his emotional limits. With the nine-hour time change, Keli and Geoffrey giggled and squirmed in their beds most nights, finally falling asleep just before dawn. One night at 3 a.m., Keli and Dennis made the most of their insomnia by sitting in bed snacking on hot dogs. Another late night they enjoyed a father-daughter chat:

"Daddy, are you going to remarry?"

"I don't know, honey. It's too early to think about it."

Several thoughtful minutes later Keli added, "Daddy, I don't want you to marry a bad woman."

"Why do you say that?"

"Oh, I don't know," she replied with a typical shrug of her shoulders. "I just think that."

A few nights later Dennis and Keli discussed what it would be like if Betty were still with them. As tears welled up in Dennis' eyes, Keli gently smiled and reassured her weary father, "I know it's tough, Daddy."

#### SEPTEMBER 10, 1990

*I'm trying to instill in Keli that she's not the reason for my tears or my frustration; it's just my circumstances. At times I feel like a failure.*

*People are probably afraid to talk about Betty's death, so I've decided to just say, "It's OK to talk about it; in fact I prefer that you talk about Betty if something reminds you of her. If I cry, so what? It's all part of reality." I want to live in reality. Tonight I looked at her picture and said, "I miss you, babe, but you know I want to carry on and do the best I can do."*

*"Carrying on," for Dennis, included discontinuing his doctoral pursuits in horticulture at the Agriculture University of Kraków (a position that had originally allowed him to live [Cont. on 23]*



*(Left) While carting the kids and hefty carry-ons around Germany's Frankfurt International Airport, Dennis stops to check on their connecting flight to Poland. (Opposite right) Dennis, Keli and Geoffrey catch a nap during the 13-hour flight from America to Poland. With the time change and layovers, the Becks spend 23 hours traveling before reaching their Kraków apartment.*







*(Left) Dennis, who enjoys reading and keeping up on current world events, has added dozens of books about grief, single parenting and child rearing to his bedtime reading routine.*

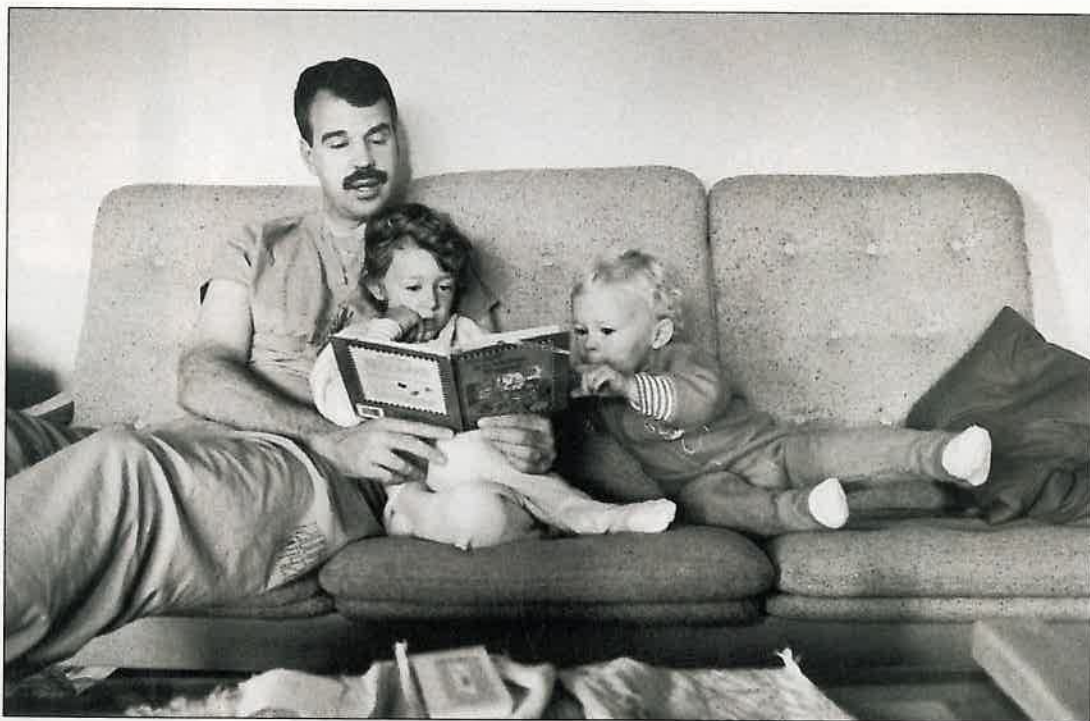




GOD,

USE HER DEATH TO BRING MORE PEOPLE  
INTO YOUR KINGDOM."

—DENNIS BECK



*(Left) Wide awake at 4:30 a.m. because of jet lag, Dennis shows Geoffrey some of the new clothes Betty had purchased in the United States for Keli and him days before her death. (Above) After leaving their team of stuffed animals huddled in a corner, awaiting tomorrow's play time, Keli and Geoffrey settle down for bedtime stories with Daddy.*





[Cont. from 18] in Poland when the country restricted access to Christian workers), and restructuring his Campus Crusade responsibilities so he could concentrate more on his family's needs. That meant shifting his role from one of supervisor for other American Campus Crusade missionaries in Kraków to a less time-consuming one of publishing coordinator, helping publish Christian materials in Polish.

By mid-September Dennis, a planner by nature, had a daily schedule mapped out. At 9 a.m. Mrs. Domańska, a gentle woman in her late 50s, arrived by taxi to watch Geoffrey and help with housework. Keli then left with the taxi driver for her half day at a private, Polish kindergarten downtown.

For the next few hours from his kitchen table and bedroom desk, Dennis would carry out his administrative responsibilities until Keli arrived home at 2 p.m. and Mrs. Domańska departed. Then, for the rest of the day, he tackled his role of solo parenting.

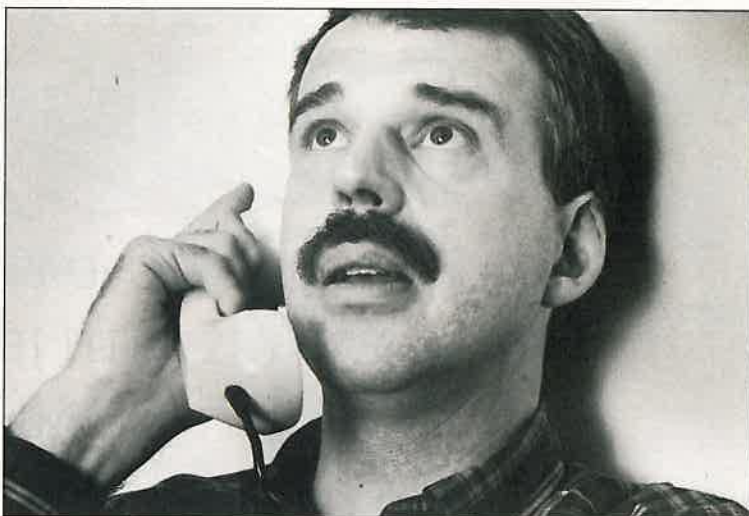
"A lot of my ministry is with my kids right now," he admits. The extra demands of raising his children alone limits Dennis from ministering as much outside the home, yet he has found new avenues for helping Poles mature in a relationship with Jesus Christ: The subject of Betty's death has prompted neighbors, teachers, parents and university colleagues to talk with Dennis about spiritual issues.

"When I've talked with nonbelievers about Betty's death, it stirs them to think about their own mortality," he says. "I witness to them that there is another way to look at life and death, that Jesus has a different reality.

"I remember praying the day after she died, God, use her death to bring more people into Your kingdom and cause more Christians to get off their duffs and grow."

SEPTEMBER 29, 1990

Now after 2 1/2 months I find myself desiring companionship with a woman. Yet I wonder if this is too soon. [Cont. on 28]



(Opposite left) The first few days after returning from Betty's funeral in America, Dennis matter-a-factly sorts through her clothes, cosmetics and jewelry, showing little emotion. After discovering a bottle of Opium, however, Betty's favorite perfume, Dennis breaks down sobbing, "It smells just like Betty." (Above) A few hours later, while talking to a concerned friend, Dennis again begins to weep as he describes smelling the perfume.

DADDY,

YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY,

'CUZ MOMMY IS WITH JESUS IN HEAVEN."

—KELI BECK



*(Left) Keli helps her father make the family's traditional Saturday breakfast: red, blue and green Mickey Mouse-shaped pancakes. (Opposite right) Geoffrey stands ready for his evening bath after a day of gingerly squeezing Leggo pieces into a geometrical mess and watching Bambi, one of his favorite videos.*











# GOD

DOES UNDERSTAND MY PAIN."

—DENNIS BECK

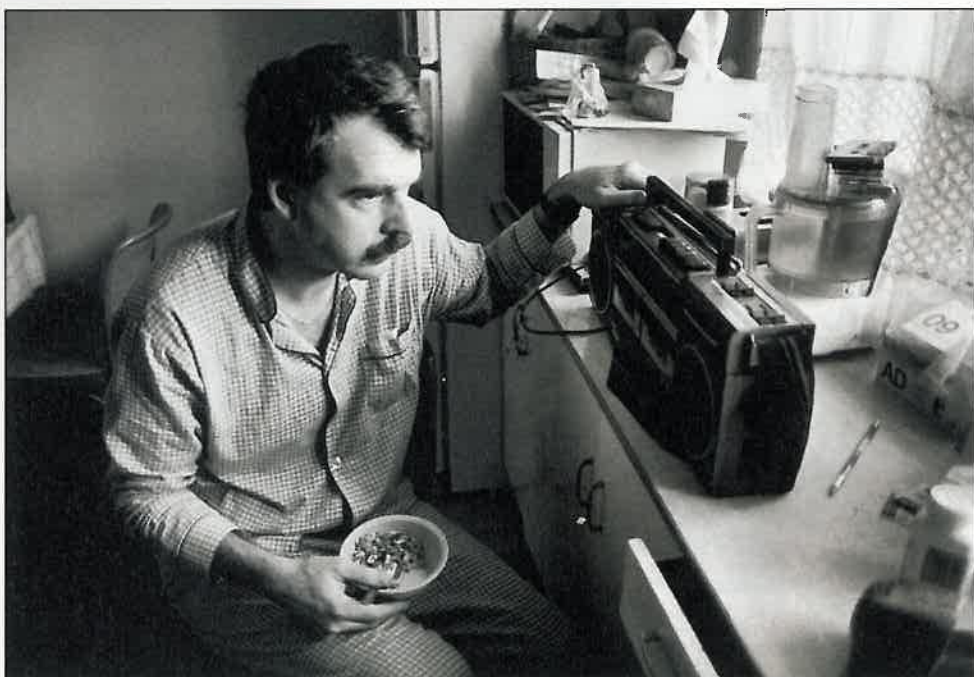


(Opposite left) Honored as America's top floriculture student in 1974, Dennis focused his doctoral studies in Poland on vegetable crops and tomatoes. After Betty's death, Dennis reduced his tenacious care of his house plants to basic water and fertilizer maintenance. (Above) Several ministry teammates and friends greet Dennis and the kids upon their return to Poland in September. Back at the Beck apartment, food, conversation and hugs help ease the pain of adjusting to life without Betty. (Right) When Betty was ready to talk to Dennis about marriage in December 1980 she said, "I know all I need to know, to know I love you." Betty had these words inscribed on Dennis' wedding band.





Some mornings seem to come too early for the Becks. (Above) With an "I-want-Daa-djee" cry, Geoffrey tugs at his father's pant leg and awaits a good-morning hug. Grabbing an effortless breakfast of coffee and cereal, (right) Dennis tunes in to the 7 a.m. broadcast of "Voice of America"—a news lifeline for Americans living abroad. (Opposite page) Keli, who at times describes herself as a "chatterbox," does not feel like talking or eating after a restless night of waking up to Geoffrey's coughs and cries.



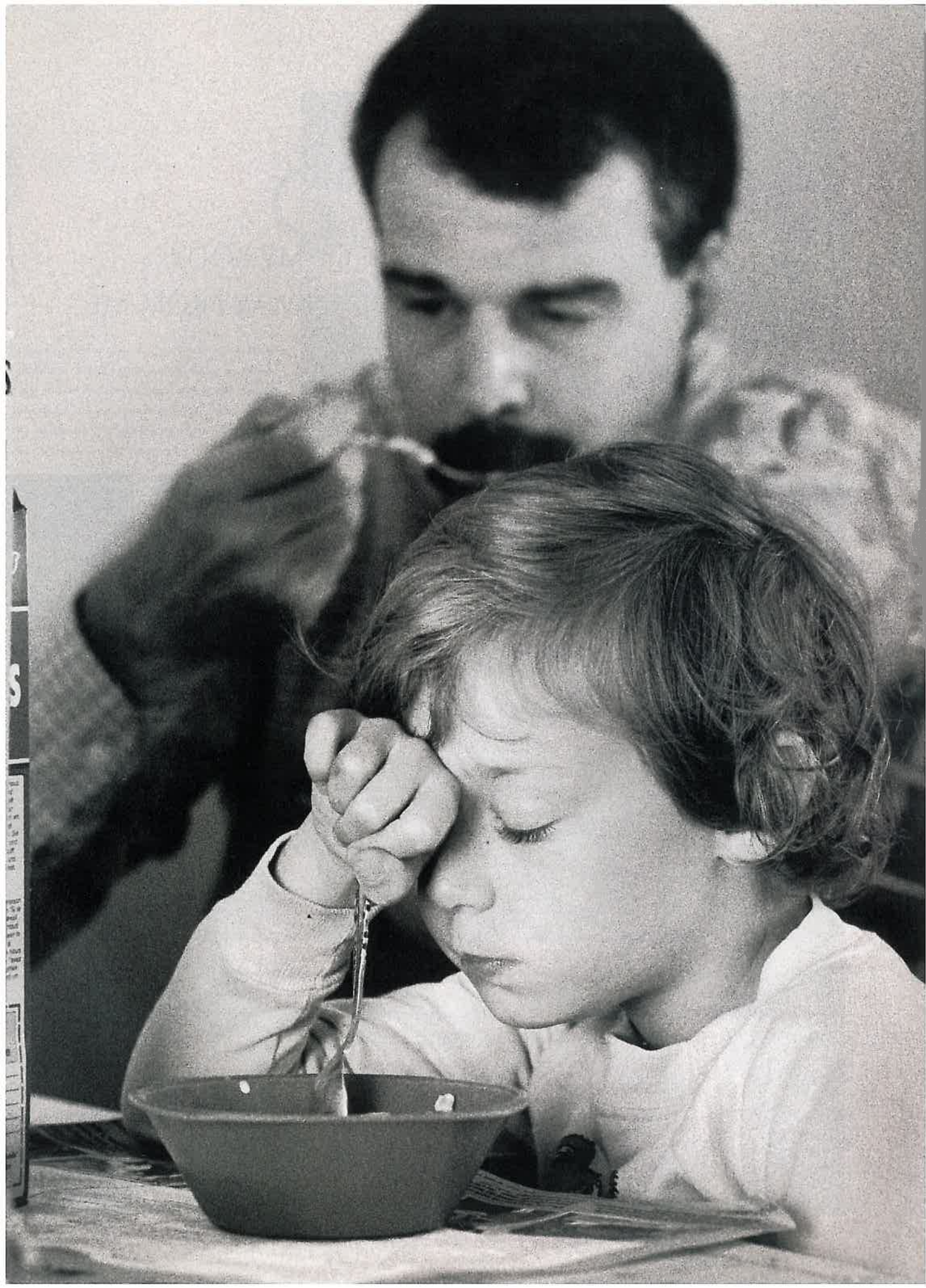
[Cont. from 23] The hardest part is a loss of your best friend, the one you always talk to. I miss the level of intimacy, particularly that I could tell Betty my most heretical thoughts and she would still love me.

With family members thousands of miles away, Polish and American Campus Crusade staff members became more than just ministry teammates, but surrogate brothers and sisters, helping fill some of the gaps that Betty's death opened.

One such "family member" is fellow American Linda Blomquist. When the Becks first moved to Poland in 1983, they and Linda became ministry teammates in Kraków. "Betty fostered the relationship between Keli and I, as if I were an aunt to Keli," Linda says.

Dennis, who lost his 39-year-old mother to cancer when he was 16, continues to encourage the bonds between Linda and his family, especially those with Keli. "I'm a man, and I'll never be a mother," Dennis says. "I'm hoping Keli and Geoffi can stay around [Cont. on 33]







HAD THE OTHER HALF OF MY BODY,  
MY SOUL AND MY SPIRIT TAKEN AWAY FROM ME."

—DENNIS BECK



(Above) Dennis dodges Keli's blasts from the water hose as they wash the family's Peugeot wagon. Often during fall afternoons, Dennis would pile Keli and a handful of her kindergarten friends in the wagon and drive to a swimming pool a half hour from Kraków. (Right) Keli and Geoffrey often try to bound up steps like their long-legged, 6-foot-5-inch father. Here Dennis takes the kids along on his visit to discuss Betty's autopsy report with Kraków's assistant district attorney.





*(Right) Parenting is a job of remarkable patience. Middle-of-the night cries, nutritionally balanced meals and frequent diaper changes—all can push a mother and father to exhaustion, but even more so when these responsibilities fall on one set of shoulders.*







[Cont. from 28] other women who knew Betty, so they can talk about their mommy. I want to encourage people to keep ministering to my daughter and son in the years ahead."

One brisk, fall afternoon Keli and Linda rode bikes to a nearby park. As they meandered around dips on the cobblestone street, Keli remembered aloud the times she had gone bike-riding with her mom.

"We can talk about your mommy any time you want," Linda reassured Keli.

"I know," Keli replied matter-of-factly. "But we can't with Daddy and Geoffi because they cry."

"It's OK to cry. Do you cry, Keli?"

"No. I don't," she answered. Yet Keli's teachers noted that sometimes they had found her in tears at school because, she said, she was thinking about her mommy.

NOVEMBER 15, 1990

*This last month was a plateau stage. The intense, wave-like emotions of the first three months were replaced by a relative calm.*

*My pain and suffering come essentially from loneliness. Loneliness from the absence of not just physical intimacy, but also emotional and spiritual intimacy. I had the other half of my body, my soul and my spirit taken away from me. I think about Christ's compassion and His own depth of suffering. He voluntarily chose to suffer and to be separated, to be lonely. So God does understand my pain.*

By mid-November, however, Dennis had sunk into another low period, tension accumulating in his shoulders and stomach. Patience waned and anger flared, especially in the evening, when he and the kids were worn out. Increasingly he found himself needing to ask forgiveness for terse responses.

"Honey, I'm sorry I got angry at you today," he said as he gave Keli her bedtime hug. "I'm just tired. I need you to be still; it helps me."

NOVEMBER 22, 1990

*There have been only four or five nights since we returned to Poland that I have slept the whole night. Somehow I get through the day, but I'm exhausted like most mothers are. I joke about having more in common with mothers now than with fathers.*

*(Opposite left) After enrolling Keli in the Community Elementary School in the heart of downtown Kraków, Dennis pushes his family back to their car on cobblestoned Jana Street. (Right) In Poland, preparing meals doesn't mean a quick stop for burgers and fries or frozen entrees. Open-air markets like this one, which provide a limited selection of meats and produce, are a far cry from the sprawling supermarkets of America.*

*A lot of people have said, "Your children need a mother." And I've quickly added, "Well, I'm not sure I need a wife. Yes, I need help and the children need a woman figure, but that's not a reason in itself to marry."*

Reminders of Betty are still present throughout the house, from her maroon toothbrush resting in its holder above the bathroom sink, to Dennis and Betty's wedding picture hanging to the left of Dennis' bed.

To ease the pain of facing the holidays without Betty, the Becks spent Thanksgiving and Christmas with friends and ministry teammates in Warsaw, a four-hour drive to [Cont. on 36]





THE

ACT OF LIVING IS DIFFERENT ALL  
THROUGH. HER ABSENCE IS LIKE THE SKY,  
SPREAD OVER EVERYTHING."

—A GRIEF OBSERVED, BY C.S. LEWIS





[Cont. from 33] the north.

Although family occasions trigger a flood of emotions, often everyday activities affect Dennis the most. "Suddenly, as I am unloading diapers from the washing machine or standing in line at the meat store," Dennis says, "the tide sweeps over me, and I feel tears winding their way down my face."

#### DECEMBER 11, 1990

*Last night I talked to a girl who has been crippled since childhood. I understood more of what she's going through, even though my pain is more temporary. In my situation, time will most likely heal.*

Another area in which it's an effort for Dennis to carry on alone is with the spiritual teaching he and Betty initiated with the children. "I know this is a priority, but we stopped reading Bible stories like we used to," Dennis says. "That's frightening to me because I know it's not going to come by osmosis."

Although he struggles to organize those devotional times with the kids, Dennis sees that his own relationship with God has flourished. "My relationship with Him is stronger than it has been in many years," says Dennis, "because I'm not as self-sufficient and I have to look to Him."

Dennis also finds that through his pain he can encourage others to look to God. "I can have a ministry by just being there and saying, 'It's OK to yell at God, it's OK to ask, "Are You forsaking me?"'"

"People need to help a grieving person focus on reality," he adds, "and neither avoid the realities of his new life nor spiritualize the pain and loss, blocking himself from the power and grace available through God."

On January 12, Keli eagerly helped her dad make their traditional Saturday breakfast—red, blue and green Mickey Mouse-shaped pancakes. At noon a friend watched the kids while Dennis took a 20-minute run. Then later, while Keli and Geoffrey splashed in the tub,

Dennis hung laundry and untangled Christmas-tree lights.

By 7:30 p.m. the kids were in bed, but an hour later Geoffrey's cry signaled his first major asthma attack since last September, his tiny chest sinking in with each raspy breath. Immediately Dennis started him on inhaler treatments. "No, no, Daa-djee," cried the squirming toddler, dodging the plastic mouth tube. Geoffrey's body tensed. Arms and legs flailing, he screamed and coughed, shoving away his father's hands.

The next morning, after a toss-and-turn night interspersed with several inhaler treatments, both father and son shuffled along in slow motion. As Dennis downed coffee, Keli whispered to a visiting friend, "Because Geoffi woke up a lot last night and cried so long, I have a headache, and I think Daddy has one too."

#### MARCH 14, 1991

*My greatest struggle is with the "phantom parent" within me. I continually need to remind myself to give myself GRACE. I see God and His provision in minute detail more clearly than ever! For that I am grateful.*

Because of increasing work responsibilities, Dennis hired an additional woman in March to help with afternoon child care. He also started plans for a late June move to Warsaw, where he will oversee Campus Crusade's national administrative office.

The stress of adjusting to a new home and job, combined with the everyday challenge of parenting alone, intensified Dennis' fatigue and impatience. Yet often during the discouraging times, Geoffrey would scramble into his dad's lap for a hug and Keli would say, "It must be really hard to be a daddy."

#### MAY 15, 1991

*I want to remarry, yet I realize that remarriage will place other adjustments and more stress on all of us. Like an electrical outlet with too many appliances connected and operating at full speed, I am overloaded*

*and heating up dangerously. When I am home, I am torn between wanting to work around the house or type another letter, OR give the kids my undivided attention. I need to work on this. I find that Betty's strengths covered my weaknesses with the kids.*

In early June while packing to move to Warsaw, Dennis ran across notes that Betty wrote during her devotional times. "She wrote down things she wanted to do to make our marriage better," Dennis says. "As I read them I wanted so much for her to be here so I could talk to her."

For two years Dennis and Betty had planned to celebrate their 10th anniversary (June 13) in Hawaii. Dennis had coped surprisingly well celebrating holidays and birthdays without Betty, but not on this anniversary day. The strain of missing his wife and settling in a new house without her shoved Dennis into an emotional gutter. Instead of attending an international book fair that he had helped plan for months, Dennis sat weeping alone amid unpacked boxes in his new Warsaw home.

A YEAR AGO, DENNIS EMBARKED ON AN uncharted journey of grief and change that at times seemed like climbing a treacherous mountain in the dark. Yet through the rugged months of adjusting to his new role as widower and single parent, Dennis has held on to God's loving hand in his life.

"God has given me the circumstances that I'm in. He gave me Betty and He took her away," Dennis says. "Because of my solid foundation in believing God's sovereignty, I've experienced His peace that surpasses all understanding since the day after her death. I have not looked back on that."

As the days and months of adjustment still unfold, Dennis believes that everything will turn out for the best as he continues to cling to the faithfulness of his God, and to the encouragement of his family, co-workers and friends. And to the laughter and love of the children Betty left behind. ■



# BEGINNING ANEW

WORLDWIDE CHALLENGE PHOTOGRAPHER GREG SCHNEIDER CALLED HIS FRIEND Dennis Beck just days after Betty's death to extend condolences and ask an important question. "I know why you are calling," Dennis said, even before the question was voiced, "and the answer is 'yes.'"

"Worldwide Challenge didn't just descend on my life," Dennis later explained. "I chose to do this story because I'd already been praying that Betty's death would draw others closer to the Lord." Part of Dennis' decision included an agreement to be vulnerable and transparent with us even when times were rough.

As we followed Dennis through the months of raising Keli and Geoffrey alone, he openly let us observe his struggles and adjustments until a new dimension of his life began to unfold—dating and remarriage. This was one subject Dennis chose not to discuss with many people including us, partly because he did not want to minimize the loss of Betty. And partly because the Polish culture traditionally holds that for at least a year a spouse in mourning should wear black and avoid interest in the opposite sex.

Yet as Dennis held to God's leading in his relationship with Linda Blomquist, fellow Campus Crusade missionary to Poland and longtime family friend, he began to see a future with her.

Just before his story went to press, Dennis agreed to talk about his relationship with Linda and their August 1, 1991, wedding. Dennis and Linda plan to work with Campus Crusade in Poland for at least another two years.

In November and December I studied what the Bible said about widowers and remarriage, and I concluded it was OK for me to remarry. I didn't know whether or not I would remarry, but I knew I didn't need a warm body just to occupy my house and bed. I did not feel totally successful about being a single parent, but I saw that I was able to function on my own. Not that I wanted to, but that I was able to.

About mid-December I verbalized to Linda that I wanted to pursue more of a dating relationship with her. I had known Linda for eight years, and the things I knew that make a marriage work were the things I found most attractive about her. I also knew he loved my kids dearly.

In February I told Linda I wanted to marry her and would wait up to two years for her to decide. On March 27 she told me she was ready to say "yes" to my proposal.

We've had varied reactions from others to our engagement. Some people asked, "How could you think of remarrying?" and others said, "Your wanting to marry again is a sign that you really loved our first wife and had a great marriage." At various times Keli has said, "Well, you two love each other. Why don't you just get married?"

This has definitely been the hardest year in my life, but it has also been a very positive year. Betty's death has put life into the true perspective. I've discovered I am ready to go and meet the Lord.

I never saw myself loving and being married to someone besides Betty. But Betty is gone, yet not so far gone that I've forgotten her. I feel Betty would have no qualms about my remarriage. Whether I remarried, however, was not the biggest issue for me. For me the issue is walking through life day by day knowing God really is the one to supply my needs. ■

—by Beth Lueders

