



## **EULOGY**

### **Mikheala K'leen Beckstrand**

We are gathered here today to mourn and celebrate the passing of Mikheala K'leen Beckstrand. We mourn because we miss her disparately - her sweetness, kindness and courageous example of endurance through incredible physical tribulations throughout her life. At the same time, we celebrate her passing because of her zest for life and the knowledge that she has moved on to a more spiritual existence free from all physical pain.

Mikki was born March 12, 1996, to Scott and Carrie Beckstrand. Her birth was a great celebration for their family but at the same time, was major cause for concern due to her severe heart problems at birth. At two months of age, she underwent her first two open-heart surgeries. Surgeries three and four came during her third month. Her first birthday was celebrated in a hospital room and the next day, she underwent her fifth heart surgery. She was given a reprieve of sorts - no more major surgeries for two more years until she was three years old, her sixth surgery. Her seventh surgery at age five seemed to be more ominous than some of the previous times. Make a Wish Foundation representatives met with her and asked her what her favorite wish would be. Without hesitation, she asked that her whole family (and I want to emphasize the word family - she didn't just ask for herself but wanted her brother, sisters and parents to join in the celebration) to be able to go to Disneyland which they did and a few days later, on July 5th of this year she underwent yet another major heart surgery. Things didn't go well and she had her eighth and last major surgery on July 28th. Five short days later her taxed heart stopped beating.

Her passing from this life is what we mourn today but let us set that fact aside for a few minutes and celebrate her sweetness, kindness and incredible example of her zest for life.

Anyone who knows Mikki was familiar with her finger habit. Whenever she was nervous, unsettled, or just wanted to be comfortable, two fingers went into her mouth. If she was asleep and the fingers were removed, the two fingers of her other hand took their place. Most often the fingers were chocolate, according to Mikheala, but once in a while they were strawberry.

Mikki accepted her physical challenges matter of factly. While she didn't like injections and many of her medications, she understood the need for them. Her main concern when going to the doctor was if she was going to receive a "pokie-owie". If you told her yes, she would scowl a bit, and then say ok and usually never cried.

Upon learning from her parents that she needed another operation, last month, her simple yet faithful comment was... I'm going to get another pokie-owie and a new zipper and then I'm out of there.

Over time, it became very difficult for many who served as Mikheala's nurses to give her injections. Sometimes they would draft people Mikki didn't know, to do the deed. Mikki also was very good at taking her medicines, even if the taste was bad. The only exception was Tylenol with codeine. She didn't like that one at all.

Mikki loved to play outside by herself or with others. She loved to swim with Brittany, have long baths, and go for bike rides with her dad as long as she got to sit in the trailer. Any time a camera appeared, you would find Mikki in front of it smiling with her fingers in her mouth.

Mikki wasn't scared of much, which isn't surprising considering all her hospital stays. She had her first sleep over at age 4 and when her mom got her to the door, Mikki turned to mom and told her she could go and that she would see her the next day. When the family toured Disneyland, Mikki went on every roller coaster available (Space Mountain, Big Thunder Mountain, and Splash Mountain). I'm not sure how she pulled that off based on the height restriction. . . After the Peter Pan ride, Mikki turned to her mom and asked if that was as fast as the ride was going to go. Many times you would hear her voice on a ride saying "faster, faster".

Mikki loved people but she developed a special fondness for those who cared for her. She knew them by name and felt safe with them. Many times when her mom and dad were sleepy she would tell them to go home and sleep because she and her nurse would be fine.

Once when Dr Evans and Dr Mayman came to see her, Dr Mayman tried to get Mikki to tease Dr Evans. She said she wouldn't because she loved him and didn't want to make him sad.

She was looking forward to her trip to the park with Sherri, her nurse, and Sherri's puppies, that they planned together while she was in the hospital.

She never indicated that life was unfair. She let mom and dad know, however, that it was often inconvenient. She cared about others, as well. In the hospital, a few weeks ago, she wanted to share some of her things with another little girl, her age, who was sad. While in the hospital, it was very important for her to call her brother Nathan on his birthday. Even though she felt miserable, she wanted to let him know that she remembered him and express her love to him.

She often reminded her parents about her medications. Even the ones that tasted bad (or at least smelled bad). Her parents can count on one hand the times she tried to get out of taking "yukki" medicines.

Mikki didn't really think or behave like she had any physical limitations. She wanted to run and play with her siblings and her friends. She even told Carrie that she wanted to take karate when she was all better.

Her doctors and nurses returned the love she demonstrated to them. They showed this love in many ways such as nicknames for her: doodle bug, sweetness, and sweet pea, to name a few. Even when she went to the hospital for a visit, Mikheala would go right into their outstretched arms and give them big hugs.

Mikki would want me to pay tribute to her loving medical professionals, for you see, they have known her intimately her whole life. They gave her baths, held her when she was throwing up, read to her and played with her. Thank you Sherri, Pat, Cheryl, Ed, David, Virge, Natalie, Debby, Dr Connie, Dr Sterrit, Dr Voorah, Dr Wiencek, Dr Stamato, Dr Evans, Dr Maymen, Dr Cass, and a host of others. Mikki doesn't believe, nor do Scott and Carrie, that any girl had as many wonderful people who loved her and wanted to make her well.

Now, wasn't that a wonderful celebration. When we speak of Mikki and her radiant personality and loving character it is difficult to mourn. Knowing that although her body lies lifeless before us this day, the personality and character I have just described continues to live. This knowledge gives us even a greater cause for celebration.

Even at five years of age, Mikki had this eternal perspective. At dinner, about a month ago, she turned to her family and said "You know guys, when I go to the hospital I could die, but its no big deal because I'll be with Heavenly Father and Jesus".

The scriptures and modern day prophets agree with Mikki's testimony. The prophet Brigham Young said: quote "Here, we are continually troubled with ill's and ailments of various kinds. In the spirit world we are free from all this and enjoy life, glory, and intelligence; and we have the Father to speak to us, Jesus to speak to us, and angels to speak to us, and we shall enjoy the society of the just and the pure who are in the spirit world until the resurrection." close quote JD 14:231.

He stated on another occasion: quote "We have more friends behind the veil than on this side, and they will hail us more joyfully than you were ever welcomed by your parents and friends in this world; and you will rejoice more when you meet them than you ever rejoiced to see a friend in this life; and then we shall go on from step to step, from rejoicing to rejoicing, and from one intelligence and power to another, our happiness becoming more and more exquisite and sensible as we proceed in the words and powers of life." close quote JD 6:349.

I believe that my daughter Laura Beth was one of the friends who greeted Mikki as she passed on to the Spirit World.

Brother Brigham also said, quote "The brightness and glory of the next apartment is inexpressible. It is not encumbered so that when we advance in years we have to be stubbing along and be careful lest we fall down. We see our youth, even, frequently stubbing their toes and falling down. But yonder, how different! They

move with ease and like lightning." close quote. Mikki has a lot more physical ability right now than just karate!

The loss of a loved one, such as Mikki causes many to ask why. President Wilfred Woodruff describes an eternal principle that he discovered with the loss of one of his children, quote: "I had a son, who while in the north country, drowned. He had a warning of this. In a dream he was notified how he would die. We had testimony of that after his death. I asked the Lord why he was taken from me. The answer to me was, "You are doing a great deal for the redemption of your dead; but the law of redemption requires some of your own seed in the spirit world to attend to work connected with this." That was a new principle to me; but it satisfied me why he was taken away. I name this, because there are a great many instances like it among the Latter-day Saints." Close quote.

Furthermore, President Joseph Fielding Smith tells us that not only will Mikki go to the Celestial world but she will be exulted in its highest kingdom. Quote, "Our beloved friends who are now deprived of their little ones have great cause for joy and rejoicing, even in the midst of the deep sorrow that they feel at the loss of their little one for a time. They know she is all right; they have the assurance that their little one has passed away without sin. Such children are in the bosom of the Father. They will inherit their glory and their exaltation, and they will not be deprived of the blessings that belong to them... and, in the wisdom and mercy and economy of God our Heavenly Father, all that could have been obtained and enjoyed by them if they had been permitted to live in the flesh, will be provided for them hereafter. They will lose nothing by being taken away from us in this way." close quote.

Carrie, Joseph Smith taught the doctrine that the child that experienced death would come up in the resurrection as a child; and, pointing to the mother of a lifeless child, he said to her, quote "You will have the joy, the pleasure, and satisfaction of nurturing this child, after its resurrection, until it reaches the full stature of its spirit." close quote. Joseph Fielding Smith commenting on this statement by Joseph Smith said: quote "There is restitution, there is growth, there is development, after the resurrection from death. I love this truth. It speaks volumes of happiness, of joy and gratitude to my soul. Thank the Lord he has revealed these principles to us." close quote. (Gospel Doctrine, pp. 452-56.)

Mikki's life, although short, has in many ways been a long, righteous, arduous process. Care and nurturing by parents, relatives, medical professionals and other friends. Numerous priesthood blessings to heal Mikki's frail body. In the Doctrine and Covenants) section 42:44-46 and 48) we read:

44 And the elders of the church, two or more, shall be called, and shall pray for and lay their hands upon them in my name; and if they die they shall die unto me,

45 Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shall weep for the loss of them that die...

46 And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them;

48 And again, it shall come to pass that he that hath faith in me to be healed, and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed.

These four short verses summarize quite well why we mourn and celebrate today.

Mikki has been nurtured to the fullest extent by the best medical professionals and priesthood holders available. Although she was healed sufficiently to live five years when many thought she would never survive her infancy, she has died unto the Lord because she was appointed unto death. Her life was a mission of love exemplified by the Savior. Her life has helped make bad people good and good people better. Because of her, we are gathered today in love and weeping because of our separation from her, which, on the other hand is but a spec in the eternal timetable of God. We look forward to the resurrection when Mikki's body can be reunited with her valiant spirit and she will be able to experience a fullness of joy. Mikki has passed the test of this probationary life. Her exultation is assured. Ours are not. May we use her life and example of endurance and faith to live a bit more righteously each day. May we be motivated to give up that sin that keeps us from having His Spirit to be with us always so that we can experience great joy and happiness in this life.

Scott and Carrie, you have devoted your time and energy to seek after the one who required more nurturing and care because of her physical limitations. Going forward, your challenge will be to trust God - that He knows better than us. That Mikki is in loving and kind hands and is happier now that her pain has ended. It is time now to turn back to the 90 and 9. To nurture the rest of your children and grandchildren with the same zest you have devoted yourselves to Mikki these past five years. As you do, God will bless your efforts and ability to cope with this loss. For when we are in the service of others, we are only in the service of God and great happiness, peace and joy is our reward in this life and the next. The passage of time brings great perspective and cures many ills.

I bear testimony that God lives. Jesus is the Christ and that salvation comes only through Him and by Him. I anxiously await His return and pray that I might be worthy to be His servant and friend. May we all do likewise. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

David G. Beckstrand

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