

**A Personal Testimonial**

**Effect Of Cancer On Family Member Recalled**

**'Her Witnessing For Christ Has Touched Many'**



**Dr. Alvis B. Adams**

appearing before cancer groups, church groups, and "wherever anybody needed her. Her witnessing for Christ has just touched so many people."

Tink's philosophy, J. B. said, is that "she had to be knocked down before she could look up and see where the Lord was. The Lord is her strength," he added, saying that "her competitive spirit and pride never let her get down. She just felt like the Lord would take care of her."

That "competitive spirit and pride" has seen her through surgery nine times, not to mention the many times that she has had to be hospitalized for the purpose of draining off fluid from her diseased and weary body.

But though the battle has been long and, medically speaking, a losing one, J. B. feels as though his and his wife's prayers have been answered.

"Some years ago, her prayer and mine was to see Deb (Debbie) through her marriage, and for the children and me to have a little bit more time with her (Tink), as well as for us all to be brought closer to the Lord. We've seen grandchildren, Jill about ready to graduate, Kevin become a lawyer, and Jane grow up so fast. We've had six more good years since cancer struck, real precious years.

"We both agree, and the children all agree, that although things look kind of bleak now, we think back over the way things have been and the way things could have been, and we're just real thankful. These 29 years have been so, so good."

By now his voice was beginning to crack a bit.

"There's got to be weeping and tears and sadness, but down deep, we're real thankful. And we know she's headed for a better place."

J. B. CITED what he says he and Tink believe are two real reasons why man and woman are put on this earth, and he summed them up this way:

"We're put on this earth not just to occupy space, but to leave the world and the community in which we live a little bit better, and her great spirit and great faith touching all those that she has touched have accomplished that facet. And the nursing home (Southside Manor) that she was so instrumental in building has hopefully benefited the community and made a lot of people there happy, too."

"The other reason is to try to spread the word of the Lord, and I think she's done that."

J. B. also said that he doesn't "see how people who really love one another can get through an experience like this without the Lord. Tink says, 'Don't ever stop serving the Lord, no matter what.'"

Are J. B., or any of the children, bitter because one they love so dearly, who has lived such a good and meaningful life, is about to leave them?

Jill, who is 21 and a student at Virginia Tech, says that no one in the family "is jumping up and down, but we can accept it. I don't think she is bitter at all. I think she's ready."

J. B. says that Tink "is human enough not to want to die," and Debbie, the oldest child and the mother of two small children added, "She just doesn't want to leave us."

Kevin, the lawyer in the family, is by no means bitter at the prospect of a magazine, "I'm enjoying all this TLC (tender loving care) I'm getting."

Tink was reminded of how the people of her church (Monumental United Methodist) literally flocked to the altar during the closing hymn at Sunday's worship service, whereas only a handful or so usually do so at the time set aside to pray for loved ones. Her name was never mentioned or even implied just before that touching demonstration of love for her, and yet there probably was not a soul at Monumental who did not realize who all those prayers were for.

And I remarked to her that my wife had said to me just before the singing

**BUT NO MATTER** what lies ahead for Tink, the Adams family realizes the effect that her illness and the events of the past six years have had on their family ties, and on the community.

As J. B. puts it, "We've always been a close family, but this just brings out so much love, even throughout the community. But even if she didn't help anybody else, she's certainly helped me," he added. "And me," Debbie quickly said, with an almost identical response from Jill.

J. B. said that the entire family "goes to bed happy every night. We're all just so thankful for the last 11 years, for the last six years, for these last few days. I think we've all grown a lot. I don't know what I would have done six years ago, or 11 years ago. It's going to be hard now, but I think I can accept it now and do okay."

J. B. and I then moved into the room where Tink was, a room immediately conspicuous because of its lighted picture of Jesus that faced the bed and the religious music of Richard and Patti Roberts that was coming from a nearby stereo.

Tink, as usual, was smiling, something that she kept up during the nearly 90 minutes that I was in her presence, despite her repeated gasps for breath and the presence of oxygen tubes to aid her breathing.

Was she ready to die? Did she fear death?

"I have fears about what could

of the hymn ended, "Wouldn't it be nice to know that so many people loved you."

"I feel like all the people in my church are my family," Tink said, "just like my family I have here." Her voice cracked a bit as she continued, "I love them all, and I'm sure they know this. And you get back a hundred times more than you give. I've missed church so much."

She said her children used to tease her about always being the last person to leave church other than the preacher. But church time was always a favorite time for her.

"I always looked around the church on Sunday morning and thought to myself, how can I get around to all those people and find out the things that I want to know about how they are once church is over. But I really do love the folks in my church, and I'd be awfully disappointed if they didn't love me back."

**SHE FEELS, TOO**, that her church has "really come alive recently. You can feel the Holy Spirit moving there. There's a warmth there, and there's love for each other that we haven't had before. I really love to go to church. I like to start at 9 o'clock. I love the early morning communion."

Another favorite of hers over the years has been her husband, as Tink is as quick to express her love and admiration for J. B. as he is to express similar feelings for her and the life that they have shared.

"They've been so good," she said of their 29 years together.

"And they get better as the years go by," he quickly added.

And Tink, like J. B., knows and appreciates the value of living a life with Christ.

"Your life almost has to be Christ-centered for you to be happy," she said. "I'm just sorry that I didn't find this out sooner. But I really didn't come to appreciate the Holy Spirit until that time I was in the hospital, and I was just so overwhelmed by His presence."

Although she has always gone to church, tried to do what was right, and tried to teach her children about God, she was not really "born again" to God through Jesus Christ until that stay in the hospital six years ago. "After writing all of the thank-you notes to everyone for all of the nice things they had done for me. I still had this feeling of love for everybody, which I never had before. I used to think it was gratitude, but all of a sudden I realized it was the Holy Spirit moving through me, and the gift he had given me was love. And so this was the beginning of really knowing Christ for me."

"It was a gradual thing. It took six months before I realized it had to be the Holy Spirit. Since then, I see people doing things wrong—things that I normally would have been judgmental about—but I can't find it in my heart not to love them. And when you love them, you hurt with them."

Asked whether she ever felt as though she might be losing ground in her spiritual growth, she said that the "only time I ever felt that way would be if I would go for a while and not have a chance to witness (for Christ). I've never turned down an invitation to witness, except I had to cancel the last time I was in the hospital. God always spaced them out so that I could handle them and the burden was never too heavy."

**TINK WAS ALSO** quick to elaborate on all the good that others have done for her.

"My tears have been tears of joy because I've just been touched that someone would care enough to want to do something for me. People write and thank me for the things I have done for them, but most of the time I can't remember (those) things. And when they turn around and do for me, I'm just so touched by it. That's when the tears flow."

Probably one of the highlights of Tink's and J. B.'s life together came this past winter, when they took their trip to the Holy Land. "I was sick

The following is reprinted from the Emporia "Independent-Messenger." Written by I-M Editor Keith Mitchell, the article appeared in the July 7 edition and Dr. Adams died July 11. Dr. Adams organized chapters of the American Cancer Society's Reach to Recovery Program in Brunswick County and South Hill, Va.

before, during, and after that trip," Tink said, "but I wouldn't take a million dollars for it."

J. B. remarked somewhat jokingly that he can recall only two times during their life together that Tink has wanted to stay at home or to be at home. "One was when we got back from Israel, and she felt so bad, she just wanted to go home. And now she doesn't want to leave."

Referring to his wife by the name that has apparently been given her by her two grandchildren, J. B. commented that "Me-ma and I have not given up the old battle yet. We've been going on for years now, but we're resigned to whatever the Lord wants us to do, and it's going to be a happy day."

"Six years ago," Tink said, "I prayed that God would let me live until J. B. got strong enough in his faith to accept it (my death), and he's done that. We went to Tampa a few years ago to get consultation—I wanted medical advice from a Christian—and we went down there and went to a healing service. And J. B. played a dirty trick on me—he got the healing instead of me. We came back home, and since that time, he's wanted to go to praise and prayer services, we've enjoyed the Bible together, and so many other things have been so beautiful."

But J. B. is quick to admit that he is nowhere near being the outgoing Christian that his wife is.

"I don't think I'll ever be a vociferous Christian; it's just not in me. I'll just have to be an inner belief Christian. I'm not outspoken and outgoing right now, that's for sure."

**AT THAT POINT** in our conversation, I couldn't help but to comment about how we all were sitting around talking about someone in our presence who was about to die, and I didn't feel the least bit uncomfortable about our discussions.

"We don't feel uncomfortable about it either, Keith," Tink responded.

"We're happy."

"Deep down we're happy," J. B. added, "but openly and humanly, we're sad. We have said, though, that we'll never be very far apart."

"No, my spirit will always be here with him and the children," she said.

Did Tink feel that the end of her physical life was near at hand?

"Well, I don't think it's imminent."

Did she think she might have another five years or so?

"Oh, no, I don't think I've got five weeks."

She continued, "I don't want to go on. You get tired of the treatments that make you sick, and the trips to Richmond (for treatments), and the constant indecision about whether your fluid is getting better or whether it is getting worse. It gets to be a real burden after a while, and you think it would really be a relief to be where there would be no pain."

J. B. recalled a doctor friend having told him recently, "You know, I thought I was a tough old hombre, until I have been treating her, and this is getting the best of me."

Tink remarked about how a lady who used to work for her around the house on a part-time basis had stopped by earlier in the day, just to speak. "These things really mean a lot," she said.

And Jill, who had just come into the room, repeated something she said she has told her mother many times before. "I don't feel like I'm losing my mamma as much as I feel like I'm losing my best friend." To which her mother responded, "I appreciate that honey, but you're not losing me, either. I'll still be here."

Tink went on, "I don't think you ever get to the place that you're ready to die

as far as your family is concerned. I'd like to see Jane older, she's come a long way in these last few years. And I'd like to see Jill settled, and Kevin..."

J. B. interrupted, saying, "We have finally seen now, in recent days and weeks, that we really don't have anything to worry about. I've told her all along that all of these good seeds that she's been sowing over the years and months—they're going to grow up to be good girls and boys, and we really don't have that much to worry about, I don't think."

"We've seen Debbie come to the Lord," Tink added.

J. B. SAID HE just tries to trust and not to question so much. He recalled something that a former Monumental minister, Abe Moyer, said on a recent visit to their home. "I don't think you can intellectualize the Bible too much," he recalled Moyer having said.

And, Tink added, "You've just got to accept it and what it says. It's lasted 2,000 years, and you just have to take it at face value. Like that bumper sticker that says, 'God said it, I believe it, and that's the end of it.'"

On a humorous note, J. B. said Tink was "a little bit unhappy that she can't take her pink Mustang (automobile) with her." He went on to mention that a mausoleum was currently under construction at the Emporia Cemetery that would accommodate both their physical bodies upon their deaths. "J. B. had leaned in this direction. He took pictures of them and showed them to me, and I liked the idea, too" Tink added.

The one they selected, by the way, is one solid unit, and not two separate ones, as they had seen in pictures. "We've been together for 29 years," she said, an indication that they have no intention of separating their physical bodies for eternity.

"We've been thinking about this for some time," J. B. said, "but we decided now was the time to go ahead and do it. Certainly, Tink is worse now than she has been, and she's decided that she didn't want to continue going back and forth to Richmond to get the treatments that were making her so sick. She is still taking her medicine, though."

Tink commented that she was constantly getting worse, that the treatments were only making her sicker, and that there wasn't much point in going on with them.

"It's now in the good Lord's hands," J. B. added.

**TINK SAID THAT** since she is gradually getting worse, she has asked her doctor "that as the end comes, not to do any heroics just to keep me breathing. In fact, I've told him that if I go into the hospital, that I don't want any fluids or anything, just to let me go, because I don't see any use in prolonging life that's not useful when there's no hope."

"God has been awfully good to me, Keith. He's given me, well, everything. Material things, which really don't amount to a whole lot. But from the very beginning, he gave me good parents, and then my whole life has been sort of a Cinderella life."

Was there any one thing that she didn't accomplish in life, or one thing that she never quite got around to doing that she would have liked to have done?

"I wish I had taken time to write some music. I wish I had time to put some of my thoughts to music. Music has always meant so much to me."

When the end comes, it will in all likelihood be a sad occasion for those of us who knew her, and who realized how Christ-like she really was. But it won't be all sadness, not if she has her way.

First, there will be a private burial ceremony for the family. "I'd like for my family to feel free to be themselves."

But then will come a memorial service in her church, complete with joyous music, like the kind that Richard and Patti Roberts sing. "The memorial service is going to be so gay that I'm afraid we'll be criticized for it," she said. Another reason for the memorial service is that she doesn't want her body to be carried into the church "so that every Sunday my family would see this."

**LOOKING AHEAD** to those days that inevitably will come, J. B., speaking for the entire family, and probably for the community as well, said, "We may weep and cry, but it won't be sadness. It will just be old human emotion."

And Debbie added, "It'll be sadness for us, not for her. We'll just be feeling sorry for ourselves."

Any final thoughts from Tink?

"My prayer," she said, "is that all of my children and their families will find the Lord so I can wait for all of them."

I had a final thought or two myself, but my own emotions and tears are now such that there is no way I could adequately express them here.

I do, though, recall something that someone said about Tink during my visit in her home, and it probably best sums up my own feelings about this wonderful and remarkable lady.

"There may not be another one along the way like her for a long, long time," they said.



**The J. B. Adams Family**

From left, Kevin, Jill, Jane, Debbie, and Debbie's husband, Keith, all seated in front of their parents, Dr. and Mrs. J. B. Adams. Not pictured are Debbie's two children, Jennifer and Adam.