

## If Only They Had Waited

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The following story appears in the January issue of "The Reader's Digest". With consent of that publication, it is being reprinted here for the benefit of Scout readers. Digest reprints are offered free to Scout readers at the Scout Office. If you prefer you may order one by mail enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope for its return. The Scout's mailing address is P. O. Box 190, Murphy, N. C.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** I had to wait six months before I could write this article, even anonymously. The hurt was so deep that only time could partially heal the wounds. Then with time came the insistent belief that perhaps, by telling our story, we might help others avoid the senseless tragedy that has twisted the lives of two families. For no matter how we try to avoid admitting it to ourselves, tragedy is what has occurred--and we parents must share the blame.

It was a lovely moonlit Saturday evening in May. My husband, Nathan, and I were reading in our modest home in a typical Midwestern town. Our 18-year-old son, Paul, had left a couple of hours earlier to escort his steady girl - friend, Nancy Crawford, to their high school senior prom. WHEN THE DOOR opened at 10:00 and Paul walked in alone, both Nathan and I looked up in surprise. Even before Paul spoke, I knew that something dreadful had happened. His large hands clenched at his sides, he said slowly, "Nancy is going to have a baby. We're getting married. We just told her family."

For a moment, as if I hadn't heard, I gazed at Paul's strong handsome face. Then what he had said began to penetrate my consciousness. Stunned, I looked over at Nathan. He had raised his hands to cover his face. I turned back to our son, the dependable Paul we had been so proud of, the senior voted Most Likely to Succeed, the basketball star. How delighted we had been when Paul settled down to going steady with Nancy--a beauty with brains and character, president of her class. We had attributed Paul's improved grades to Nancy's influence. Now he said huskily, "Mother, Dad--I'm sorry to hurt you. I'm so terribly sorry."

I heard my words tumbling out: "So this is how you proved you loved Nancy! Just how can you support a wife? And we trusted you! Oh, Paul, how could you do such a thing?" Nathan, a high-school history teacher, has often acted as counselor for students in trouble. But this time the student was, with bitter irony, his own son. Paul responded forthrightly to his father's questioning. A few days before he had taken Nancy to our family doctor. Earlier that evening, they had phoned for the results of the pregnancy test. Nancy was two months pregnant. The doctor had made them promise to inform their parents during the weekend.

Suddenly, I was thankful that our 12-year-old son, Tony, was away on a Boy Scout camping trip. "What did the Crawfords say?" Nathan was asking. Paul ran his fingers through his crew cut. "Mrs. Crawford didn't say much. She just cried."

Then he went on quickly, "Nancy's dad was awfully mad. But he said I didn't have to marry Nancy, and I--"

"Yes," I interrupted. "Nancy can go to a home and have the baby and give it up to an adoption agency."

Paul shook his head. "Oh, no!" he said, almost in a whisper. "I wouldn't let Nancy do that. At first, we were going to run away, but we knew that wouldn't solve anything." His face was so serious, so pitifully immature; the words so sincere: "We want to get married and make it right."

Abruptly, Nathan stopped

ment with kitchenette?" He dialed a number and talked briefly. Crestfallen, he turned from the telephone. "The rent is \$125--more than half my month's paycheck."

Paul sat down heavily at the kitchen table. He rested his chin on his hand. "Mom, we are sure to find something nice soon--don't you think?" I watched Paul go slowly down the hall to his room and shut the door. I knew then that my son realized, for the first time, that life had closed in on him, that the door of the future had shut--hard.

THE WEDDING DAY arrived--a day I had once dreamed of; now I dreaded it. Twenty-one people crowded into the Crawford's narrow, spotless living room. Besides the immediate families, the only guests were schoolmates of Paul's and Nancy's. The room seemed hot and close as a girl sang in a thin soprano, "I Love You Truly."

My heart quickened when Paul, so straight and handsome, stepped up to stand in front of the minister. How proud I would have been--otherwise. The out-of-tune piano faltered bravely through "Here Comes the Bride." And there was Nancy, coming slowly down the short hall on her father's arm. Her lovely face was somehow sad. Then she and her stoic father were beside Paul.

The minister began, "Dearly Beloved, we are gathered together--" I focused my mind on emptiness. Not even one tear would escape. Nathan nudged me. I rose for the final prayer. At last the ordeal was over. When Paul had helped Nancy cut the wedding cake, we all had punch. Soon afterward the wedding party assembled on the front lawn. Finally, the new husband and wife emerged from the doorway amid a shower of rice. They hurried toward Paul's jalopy. He opened its door with a flourish. "Come on, wife, we have a long way to go."

We all waved vigorously as they drove off on a five-day honeymoon. And that would be the end of Paul's hard-earned college fund.

The others went into the house. Nathan and I stood at the curb until the car had disappeared around the corner. "The Lord help them--and us, too," Nathan said fervently. He put his arm around me. We walked forlornly back to the house. I knew that we were both thinking the same thought. If they had only waited!

Forever seared on my heart today are the words I have not been able to say to Paul. I say them now, not out of bitterness or anger, and not because they will help our Paul; but rather, because some boy, some girl, sometime may remember them before it's too late.

Paul, no rationalizations, no tricky sophistry, no "modern" moral twists can change the fact that your life and the lives of those who love you most will never be the same, will never be as contented or happy or hopeful as they once were, because for one selfish moment you ignored your responsibility to Nancy, to your family, to your society--and to yourself.

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**Deed Transfers**

C. L. Alverson, Tr., et als for First Methodist Church to Emily Davidson, Maybelle Easley, Jean White, Katherine Stewart, Louise Bayless (Trustees for Archibald D. Murphy Chapter of Daughters of American Revolution) property in Murphy Township.

M. G. Crawford to M. G. and Jane C. Crawford, property in Cherokee County.

Posey J. and Catherine Crisp to Dock and Edith Gibson, property in Andrews.

J. N., Frances, A. J., Madie, Madelyn, Marie, T. D., and R. D. Cole et als to Lorraine Brooks, property in Hothouse Township.

L. M. and Kate Davis to Fred M. and Joyce Davis, property in Valleytown Township.

W. M. Davis, Et Als, Trustee, to Trustees for Daughters of American Revolution, property in Murphy Township.

Edward Dickey, Tr., et als, to Trustees for Daughters of American Revolution, property in Murphy Township.

Columbus S. and Belzie Evans to James and Mary Jo Evans, property in Cherokee County.

David and Orna Elrod to Gale and Betty Jo Elrod, property in Shoal Creek Township.

Alvin and Evelyn Gladson to Delbert and Marcia Kreps, property in Cherokee County.

Jerry Hatchett, Trustee, et al, to Trustees for Daughters of American Revolution, property in Murphy Township.

Lloyd and Mae Kephart Loving et als to Davie Kephart, property in Cherokee County.

Where's that ad--nifty one room furnished apart-

## Clay County 4-H Corner

By 4-H Agents

Are you interested in electricity and electrical gadgets? If you are, the 4-H electric project offers a real opportunity for you to learn more about electricity. In addition you have the opportunity to win various expense-paid trips, awards, and to participate in many 4-H activities. We are now planning to organize a county 4-H electric group. Any 4-H club member carrying the 4-H electric project is eligible to be a member of this group.

Kenneth Woodard has agreed to serve as advisor for the group.

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Another project which should be of interest to many 4-H'ers is the individual crops project. Crops in this project include corn, tobacco, forage crops, and commercial vegetables, (peppers and tomatoes). All expense-paid trips to National 4-H club congress are sponsored for the state winners in corn, tobacco, and commercial vegetables.

Now is the time to start making plans for the crops projects for 1965.

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The 4-H Demonstration Program is one of the most important parts of the overall 4-H program. In giving a demonstration, club members show and tell how to do something, pertaining to their 4-H project work. Begin planning now to give a demonstration this year. The district contest will be held June 22 at Asheville. You can get a lot of ideas on demonstrations from your project manuals and record books, magazines, and newspapers. Talk with your leaders about a 4-H demonstration.

If we can be of any help, let us know.

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Clay County 4-H Council

### License To Wed

Buel Clinton Ward, 18, and Patticia Jean Jordan, 18, both of Memphis, Tenn.

Bobby E. Hogan, 21, and Barbara Sue Davis, 18, both of Andrews, N. C.

David Vance Welch, 22, Waynesville, N. C., and Joyce Lee Sneed, 21, Murphy, N. C.

Mr. and Mrs. George Keasler Murphy spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Suit.

Rev. J. C. Swanson is to preach at Liberty Baptist Church Sunday morning. The service will be followed by a baptizing weather permitting.

delegates met on January 30 in the Agricultural Assembly Room at 10:00 a.m.

The delegates elected Council officers for 1965. They are:

Larry Groves, president; Sara Mease, vice-president; Steve Armstrong, secretary-treasurer; Becky Ledford, reporter; and Greg Howell, song leader.

Other club members attending were Joy Smart, Chris Ressel, Betty Faye Coffey, and Nancy England. The council will meet regularly on the last Saturday of each month at 10:00 a.m.



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And for help in planning exactly-right lighting for your home, see us. This help is yours, free, for the asking.



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