

Memories of

Nicholas Franklin Pierce

(June 20, 1982 - December 24, 2001)
(Father's Day - Christmas Eve)

We miss ya' Boss!

A million times we've thought of you,
A million times we've cried.
If love alone could have saved you,
You never would have died.

In life we loved you dearly,
In death we love you still.
In our hearts you hold a place
No one could ever fill.

It broke our hearts to lose you,
But you did not go alone,
For part of us went with you
The day God took you home.







Nick Pierce, English Assignment-Book
About Himself, 18 May 2000

Dedication: I am dedicating this book to the millions and millions of members of the Nick Pierce fan club. They have supported me throughout my life and are always there to inflate my ego when I am feeling down. Also, I would like to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Chip Pierce on the creation of such a wonderful person and give them thanks for their years of wisdom. Without such masterful guidance, I would not be the man I am today, and the world would have been deprived of one of its greatest assets, me. Lastly, I would like to thank God for endowing me with such wonderful characteristics, loving parents, caring friends, and most importantly, such stunning mental ability.



Essay by Nick about himself:

My name, Nicholas Franklin Pierce, is sort of a family name. My grandfather's name is Louis Franklin Pierce, Sr. and my dad's name is Louis Franklin Pierce, Jr., so Dad didn't want me to be a third and decided to change one of the names. My mom wanted to name me Cavanaugh, but Dad said no to that idea.

I love sports. I play football, wrestling, and do field events. My favorite hobby is deep sea fishing, but I love cars too. I've also inherited the Pierce family love for stereo equipment.

A color that is synonymous with my personality is black because I'm pretty secretive, and either you like me or you don't. I only tell people what I'm doing if I know them really well, and people usually have an opinion about me. They are either my friend or don't like me.

Nice, well-mannered, shy, and athletic are the four adjectives that best describe me. I'm a very nice person, and it takes a lot to make me mad. Also, my parents put a lot of emphasis on manners, so I have to practice good manners at all times. Though some people don't think so, I'm very shy. I don't open up to people unless they have earned my trust. Lastly, I'm very athletic. I'll play any sport I can, given the chance.

Most people remember me as a nice guy. They all know I have a long fuse and that it takes a lot to set me off. I'm proud of that aspect and plan to keep that as my most memorable aspect for as long as I live because everyone likes a nice guy.



Written by Nick Pierce, Fall, 2000:

Life is a funny thing
Whether for a beggar or a king.
Freedom in a masonry jar
Can only be seen from afar.
Happiness is a four way stop.
Don't run it and get pulled over by a cop.
Life is a sea of choices
Yet actions are dictated by voices.
In my head, screaming
And never seeming
To agree on anything.
Shut up! Be quiet! Oh wait,
Those are the multiple faces of fate!
Screw what they say
I'm gonna do it my way!
People suck!
But I don't give a f@#\$!
Try and hold me down
You'll be in so deep, you'll drown.
Run away little man, run away
Hide from the world everyday.
This is what the world will say
But have strength and keep them at bay
Get busy livin' or get busy dyin'!
Nobody can stop you when you're flyin'!
It's your life, live it!
But it won't come to you as you sit
On your butt and wait.
It's not all up to the hands of fate.
If you choose your own path
You won't end up like Plath.
But if you do
At least the blame rests with you.



Nick Pierce, English Assignment-Book About Himself, 18 May 2000

Favorite Memory: The sky flashed a brilliant yellow and the thunder rolled in the distance. Forbidding clouds threatened the quarry. The crystal water and the angry sky were such contrasts that a mood of tranquility hung in the air. The smell of ozone pervaded my nostrils and filled my lungs. I love that smell. Although rain would mean a delayed dive, I did not care. For some reason, rain is one of the most relaxing natural events. It calms the world around and slows things to a tedious crawl. Still miles away, we decided to make our dive. The relaxation experienced on a scuba dive in the frigid waters sixty feet deep is like that feeling right before sleep overcomes the mind. It is a natural high in which sounds and feelings are amplified and a supernatural state of heightened awareness is reached. "I will sleep well tonight," I thought as I trekked up the long hill to unload my gear.



Families by Birth: My dad has believed in me and my abilities right from the beginning of my life. He coaxed and nurtured my talents immediately upon noticing them. Dad has always been there to take care of me when I mess up and don't know what to do, but he is also there to let me clean up my own mess if he feels it is necessary for my moral growth. He has always treated me with respect, just as he would any other adult. Many people will never know how treating children as adults makes them feel like adults and strive to act as any other mature person. Having done this throughout my life, my dad has always been there to help me grow up and mature. This I thank him for the most. While all other parents were scolding their children, he was teaching me responsibility. People are always impressed with my manners and it is a great feeling to be complemented and given respect due any adult. Yep, my dad has always been there to make me a man.



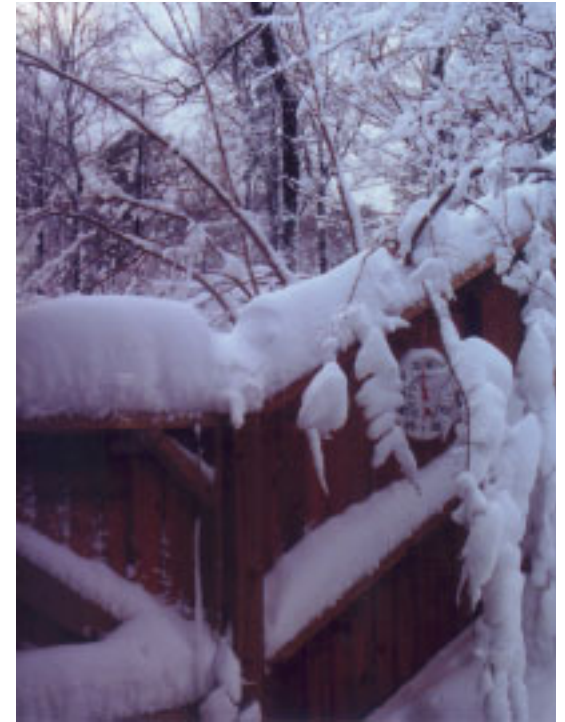
Families by Choice: As I descended past fifteen feet, my arms felt as though they were about to freeze off. "Good Lord I'm cold," I thought, "now I know what the people in the Titanic felt like." I signaled to the surface to Spencer, my diving buddy, and began to ascend. As our heads bobbed out of the water, we both noted the cold in unison. Although it was over a hundred yards back to the house, we decided it would be worth the trip to get our wetsuit jackets to combat the chill. We were right. Our new wetsuits performed beautifully in the frigid depths of Echo Lake. However, our dive was quite unproductive, as the visibility was literally nothing. Spencer and I swam shoulder to shoulder, neither one of us being able to see the other. To tell the truth, the visibility was both an amplifier and cause of the cold. A feeling of loneliness overcame me immediately followed by a strong feeling of fear as a scene from *Jaws* entered my mind. Nevermind though, that was merely a result of a panic stricken mind overtaken by hypothermia.



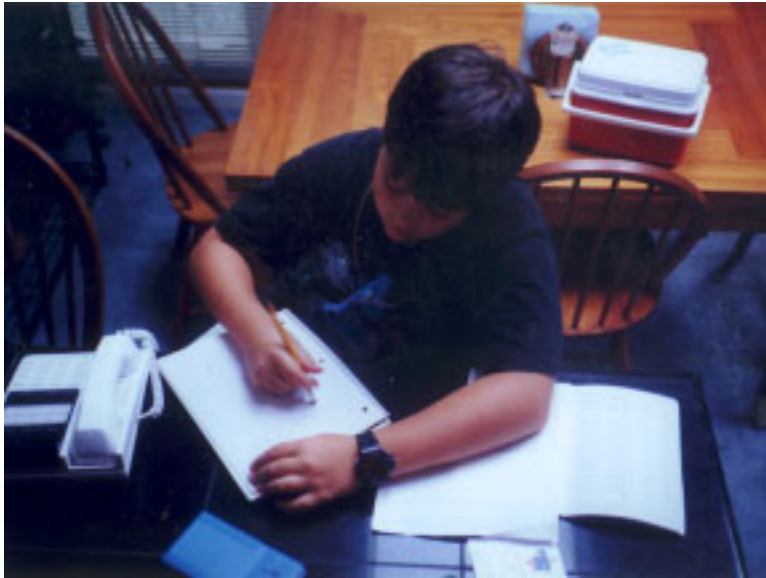
Choices: The two school bullies were at it again. As usual, the two monsters made their rounds, singling out those who were not "cool" or in the main group. They zeroed in on a boy who wore a hearing aid and was a bit of a nerd. Viciously taunting him, the two jerks brought him to tears with verbal abuse and then moved to a more physical natured attack. Throwing him to the ground, the boys restrained him and pinned down his arms and legs. To my dismay and the tremendous discomfort of their prey, one of the boys raised the amplification level on the stricken child's hearing aid and proceeded to shout cut-downs into his ear. At that point, I decided that this torture could persist no longer. I would have to intervene. I pleaded with the two boys to cease their fun. My efforts were met with much agitation and they turned on me. I have never been one to instigate a fight and have always tried to avoid them at all costs. All costs, that is, until one of the two circled around me and kneeled down behind my back without my taking notice and the other pushed me over him. I will never start a fight, but once I have been violated, I will react with uncontrolled fury. Jumping to my feet, I lashed out at the boy on his hands and knees and kicked him square in the face. I braced as the other boy tried to tackle me, countered, and threw him in a headlock. It was at this time that a teacher broke us up. It was not my fight, but I had been sucked into it by my compassion for others.



Regrets: My childhood was dictated by a constant need to fit in. If everybody else had a certain backpack, I wanted it. If everybody else was wearing a certain type of clothes, then those were the ones I wanted to wear. This urge for conformity was quite unfortunate. For years, my true personality was suppressed and I was just another face in the crowd. My biggest regret about this is that I felt my true self was not good enough and was afraid that if I showed my true colors, I would be ostracized. The biggest problem with this is that I was unable to develop my characteristics until I broke free from the restraint of conformity in tenth grade and started acting for myself and did things of my own accord. I have mixed feelings about this suppression of character as I am unsure of how I would have been without coming to the realization that you must live life for yourself and not let others dictate your actions.



Major Places: Winter viewed from my bedroom on one morning in April many years ago was a white one. As I walked through the den, I noticed around two feet of snow built up on the table by the pool and then the rest of the back yard. The power was out and I was overcome with excitement; overcome with excitement, that is, until I saw the look on my mom's face. When I asked her what was wrong, she said that she was scared because she did not know how long we would be snowed in. My mood was dampened to say the least. However, my spirits lifted when I went out to play in my wonderful winterland. It has been referred to as the great winter storm, and it was. The ground was covered with the pillowy, white snow for days and I built the largest snowman I ever had/have built. Overall, it was an enjoyable experience and has provided me with a load of wonderful memories.



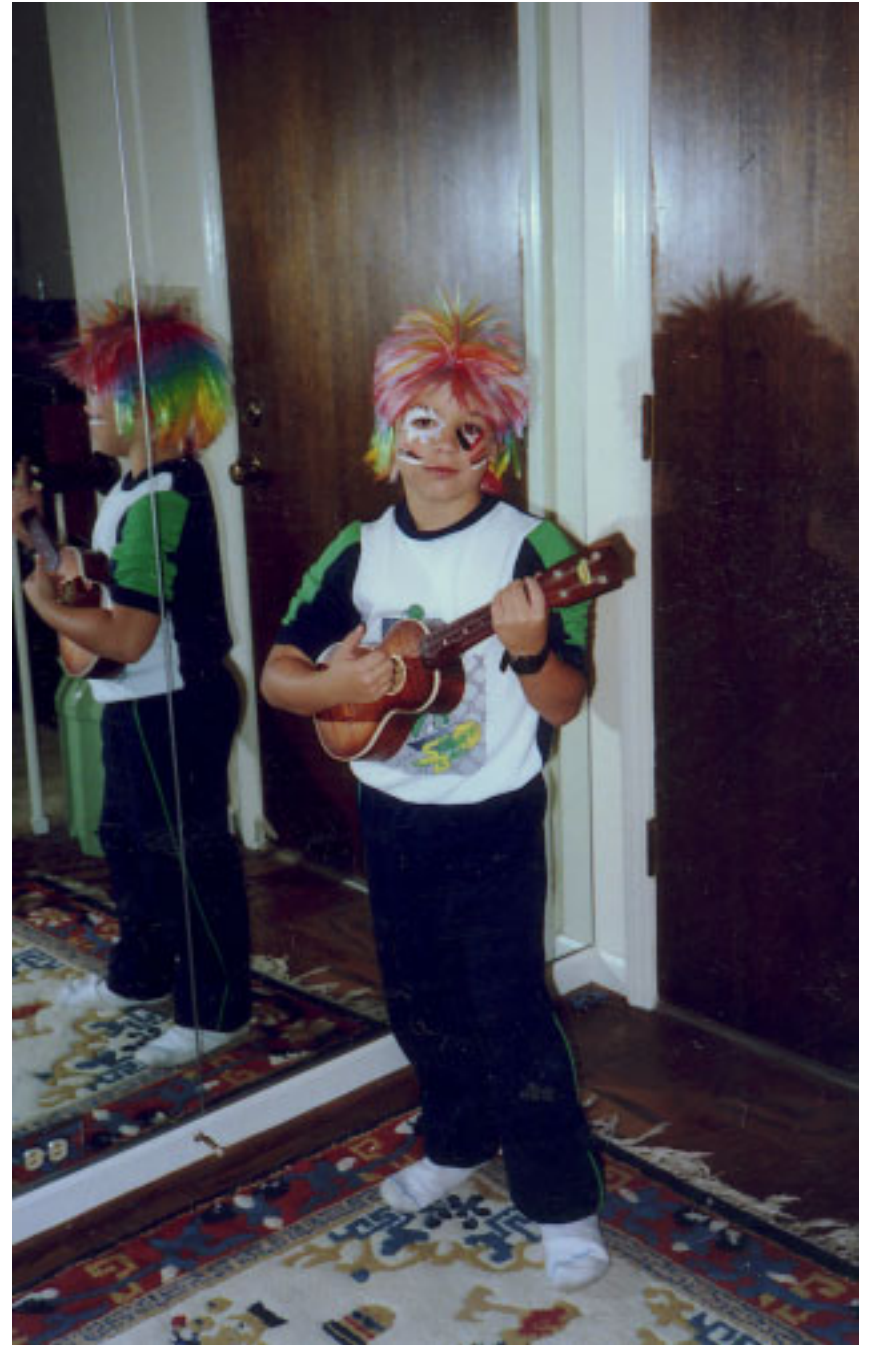
Major Players: Mrs. Lawrence was the best teacher I have ever had. She was nice to all of her students and a great teacher. What I remember most of all are my experiences with her on the Math team. Mrs. Lawrence was the coach and we all developed a strong attachment to her because of the time we spent with her. She was my seventh period teacher and it was a positive way to end the day. Additionally, Mrs. Lawrence always just seemed like one of the boys because she was always so friendly. Mrs. Lawrence also had a small list of quirks or picky points. You could make a good grade as long as you knew what was going on in class and there were not any classwork or homework points. This was very beneficial for me as I am very good at math and understood the concepts involved so I did not ever have to do any of the recommended homework assignments.





A Look Ahead: Now that high school is over and done with, it is time to move on to bigger and better things. I am headed to the University of Florida to get my degree in Civil Engineering. As it is one of the best engineering schools in the country, I feel that I will be able to do well in the job market and be a successful businessman. There will be no more going to school every morning at eight, no more parents to deal with, and most importantly, I will, for the most part, be free to do what I please when I please. The major I have chosen is a four and a half year program. In addition to the mandatory semester between junior and senior year, I intend to take an extra semester of summer school in order to graduate in four years. This will give me a jump on the business world and allow me to head in the direction of my life goal. Eventually, once I am an established engineer, I will go back to school to major in Business Administration. I will then use my knowledge of engineering and my business degree to break into the Real Estate market, particularly real estate development. With my construction company running smoothly developing my real estate acquisitions, I will be able to sit back and watch the money roll in. Once I have made my millions, I will move to South Florida, namely the Florida Keys, and live a life of pleasure in my villa.







28 December 2001, written by Leigh Ann Pierce

Nicholas Franklin Pierce (20 June 1982 - 24 December 2001)

My little brother Nicholas Franklin Pierce, or "Nick" as everyone called him, was the kind of person who always had a smile on his face. When he walked into the room everyone knew he was there and within minutes, everyone else would be smiling too. He loved life and lived every moment at ninety miles an hour. He did everything he wanted to do when he wanted to do it. He lived for the moment and never held back. He wasn't scared of anything, and he almost never complained. He ignored the bad in himself, other people, and life in general. He never admitted it when he was in pain, and even finished out a football game with a sprained ankle when he was in high school. He was always imitating some character, and he was an excellent mimic. He was very smart, a National Merit Scholar, and he also had his priorities straight. He knew that the most important things in this world were to enjoy life and to value people. He spent every dime of his money in the attempt to do one hundred different things and have fun doing them. Whenever he got a whim to try something new, he just went out and did it. His friend Trey said that Nick was the most spontaneous person he knew. I can remember times when my parents told Nick he should save his money for when he got to college and really needed it. He would just laugh or roll his eyes and say that he needed it now. With Nick it was all or nothing. He thought he could do everything, and he was usually right. He was so confident. He was excellent at everything he did. He was a great snow skier. I always worried that he might take on more than he could handle, but he just told me that worrying was a waste of time. He was able to drive and dock our boats from the time he was eight years old. He was definitely a know-it-all; when Dad and he went fishing, Nick would always try to tell Dad what to do. He thought he knew everything, and he would never give up in an argument. Like Trey said, "We knew someone would have to quit sometime, and it sure as hell wasn't going to be Nick." Nick told me one time that if he realized he was wrong halfway through the argument, it didn't matter; he had already committed to his side, and he was relentless. If it came up again later and you tried to prove him wrong, he would just say, "That's what I said," even though we all knew it wasn't. He was so stubborn, but that's how he usually got his way.



Nick had been sick for a couple of months. He went to the doctor twice in November in Tuscaloosa, where he was a sophomore at the University of Alabama. The first time he went, they told him he had the flu, and the second time, they diagnosed sinusitis. He gave my mom, dad, and me a cold at Thanksgiving that lasted about three days. We all got well, but he never did. When he came home for the Christmas holidays, we both went to work for my dad. It was Monday, December 17th when he said he was feeling terrible, and he called the doctor to make an appointment. When they told him that there were no available appointments until Thursday, December 27th, he got pretty angry and asked them if he was just supposed to be sick until then. They then told him that they would squeeze him in on Wednesday, but he missed that appointment because the front-end loader he was operating broke down, and he had to stay with it until someone came to fix it. When he left work Wednesday afternoon, he almost passed out in the car, and when he got home, my mom took his temperature, which was 103.6 degrees. He said that the fever and badly swollen glands were his only symptoms – his throat wasn't sore and he didn't have a headache. Mom was panicking, for obvious reason, and she called our family doctor at 5 p.m. His office said he left at 4:30, so Mom called him at home and left a message, saying Nick was really sick and asking him to call her. When he didn't call back, she called his office again and they said there was an on-call doctor who would call her. After speaking to both Nick and my mom, he said to take two ibuprofen and call our regular doctor in the morning if he wasn't better. The next morning, Mom called the family doctor's office again, and they repeated that they didn't have anything available until the 27th. She had to beg them to see him, so they said they would squeeze him in that day, Thursday, December 20. When Nick went to the doctor that day, he diagnosed him with strep-throat, and gave him a prescription for Trimox. The bill reflected only an office visit and injection; there was no throat culture or blood test performed, according to the bill. On Saturday, December 22nd, he was still feeling terrible. The fever had not come down, his glands were more swollen, his stomach was hurting, and he was throwing up. Mom talked to the on-call doctor again and he said we could either bring him to the Emergency Room (ER) or he could change his prescription. Mom asked if he thought we needed to take him to the ER, and he said, "I can't make that decision for you" in a bored tone of voice.



He told my mom that he could not prescribe anything for the nausea over the phone, but he could call in a prescription for Zithromax, a different antibiotic. Sunday morning Nick's fever was down to 99 degrees, and he said he was feeling better. He told my parents that he was going to Tuscaloosa to pay his phone bill and pick up my Christmas present. My parents went to a friend's Open House and were really worried when they got home about 8 p.m. and Nick wasn't back. They called him and he said he was in a lot of pain and his stomach hurt. He told them he was going to lie down for a while. He called back at 11 p.m. and said he was throwing up a lot and hurt really bad. They wanted to go pick him up, but he insisted that he could drive. It took him one hour and twenty minutes to get here, and once he arrived, Mom and Dad noticed that he wasn't coming inside. He was outside throwing up, and they had to help him upstairs to his room. He was in excruciating pain and told my mom that it hurt to be touched. Mom called the on-call doctor again at 1 a.m. and told him that Nick was throwing up, and that his stomach was hurting badly on the left side. Nick said that inside, it felt like a needle was sticking into him. The doctor said he couldn't do anything on the telephone for his stomachache. Dad took him to the ER, arriving about 1:20 a.m. The people at the ER didn't appear to take him seriously. My dad said they were just really cavalier about the situation. They didn't examine him or question him. They didn't press on his stomach, like they usually do. We thought he could have appendicitis, but they didn't even check for that. They simply assumed that he was dehydrated from the strep, started an I.V. and left him in order to tend to another patient. He told my dad he was having trouble breathing and said, "What have I done to myself?" Dad went to get the nurse, then called Mom to tell her to come to the ER. At 3 a.m., they came into the room where they had asked my parents to wait, and my dad had gone to the bathroom. They asked Mom to sit down and told her, before Dad got back, that Nick stopped breathing at 2:30 a.m., and they tried to revive him for thirty minutes. Everyone was shocked. They thought he had strep, and no one took him seriously. The people at the ER did not know what to do; they did not know how to do their jobs and take care of my brother. The blood work didn't even get back until after he was gone. His white cell count was 60,000 per unit, instead of 4,000 to 5,000, which is normal. At that point we still didn't understand. It wasn't until after the autopsy that we discovered that he had a ruptured spleen, which was caused by the undiagnosed Mononucleosis that he had had for 8 to 10 weeks.



If only we had known that Nick had Mono. If any of those doctors had taken his blood and tested it, we would still have him here. If that doctor last Wednesday had said to take him to the ER, they would have run a blood test and put him in the hospital to rest. If only someone had done his job and taken Nick's health seriously, he would still be alive. If there is one thing I can tell everyone, it would be to look out for yourself. Make sure the doctors run a blood test when you're sick, and don't take Mono lightly. No one really knows how dangerous it can be, how sensitive the spleen is, and how easily it can rupture. It is a sad thing that we cannot trust the doctors to look out for us. If a doctor is not serious about saving lives, then he or she should get out of medicine. I am very angry about what happened to my little brother, and I don't want this to happen to anyone else. If you are sick, read medical books, try to learn as much as you can about what you may have and be truthful about your symptoms. Stoicism gets you nowhere.

Christian, one of my brother's friends read the following poem at Nick's funeral:

A million times we've thought of you
A million times we've cried.
If love alone could have saved you,
You never would have died.
In life we loved you dearly,
In death we love you still.
In our hearts you hold a place
No one could ever fill.
It broke our hearts to lose you
But you didn't go alone,
For part of us went with you
The day God took you home.

I love you, Nick, and I will miss you forever.



Dream about Nick

January 9, 2002, 7:15 a.m.

By Leigh Ann Pierce

I just had the most amazing dream. Nick came to see me. There were other people around. It all happened at the Birmingham house out in the driveway. I asked him a lot of questions about where he was and what he did every day. I asked him if he would come see me a lot and he said he couldn't, that I would have to "walk close to me" (him). I asked him if he could send signs and he asked me what I meant. I asked him if he sent the ray of sunlight (on Mom, Dad, and me at the funeral) and he said yes. I asked him if he could send me lots of signs and he said he couldn't. We hugged several times. I told him that I felt like half of me had died, and he said he knew. We all cried several times. Oh God, I miss him. He said he'd come see me sometimes, but he couldn't come often. I can't remember what he said he was doing every day. He was so wise and comforting and it seemed so real. When he hugged me goodbye, I woke up immediately, and I was very confused to not be in the driveway and I was crying. I asked him 100 questions and he gave me perfect answers to all of them, but now I can't even remember what the questions are, much less the answers. Maybe they'll come to me when I really need them. I told him I needed him and he said he'd be here. Oh God, I miss him. He was so cute and so real. There was other stuff going on in the dream too. We had walked next door because there were all kinds of backhoes and equipment working in the yard, and Brandon's Toyota was parked at the corner. They had smashed the hood in, and while we were talking to them, a tow truck came and hooked up to Brandon's truck. It was kind of strange because my mom was saying that the truck belonged to Nick and she said to smash it all up. Then Brandon said, "No, leave it like it is." We all thought all along that it was Nick's truck, but it kept flashing through my head that it was Brandon's. We also saw a flying truck, similar to the flying cars in *Back to the Future*. It landed in our driveway and it was Mike Neely. There were some children there that I didn't recognize, in addition to David, Mom, Dad, Brandon, and me. I'm not sure if Alice was there or not. Nick was wearing that fleece shirt that's black and brown and smiling from ear to ear, even when the rest of us were serious or crying. He would just hug us, and say he would be there. I'm so selfish, but I just want him back. I can't believe it took something this drastic to right all that is wrong within our family and with our friends. I know this death has done some good, but it just hurts sooooo bad, and all the good in the world will never make up for the anguish, hurt, and loss that I feel.

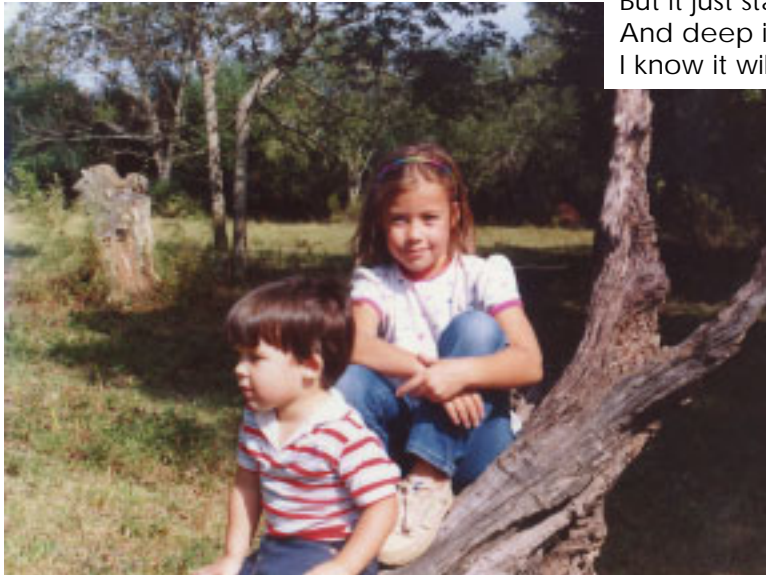
The whole dream lasted about one hour.



15 February 2002, by Leigh Ann Pierce



Everything seems so strange
I keep waiting for it all to change
Eight weeks gone by
And he's still not alive.
I can't take it anymore
I just stare at the door,
But it just stays shut,
And deep in my gut,
I know it will never open.



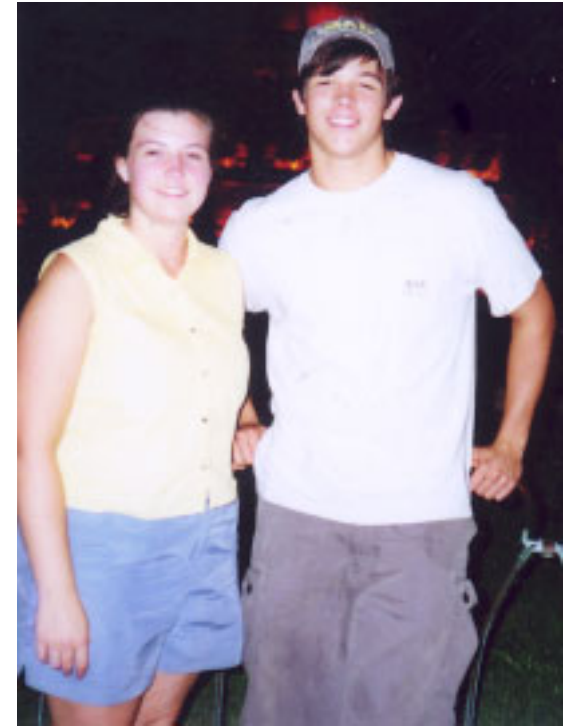


15 February 2002, by Leigh Ann Pierce

Alone I sit,
Unable to admit
That you are not here.
The doctors screwed up,
Said you were in the clear.
If only they had caught it,
I would not know these tears.
It's anger I feel,
No wait! It's fear,
That I'll never see you
Or your curled ears.
Nobody listened,
They were so cavalier.
To your cries of pain,
They turned a deaf ear.
I hate them now
And my emotions are severe.



The times we had,
I hold so dear.
I remember how we talked
About driving and beer.
I remember how I worried
That trouble was near.
But you would assure me
That you knew where to steer.
Close to the edge
And the cliffs were sheer,
But you smiled at the challenge
And we would all cheer
As you faced the world
And watched it sear,
Set it on fire,
Then laughed as your peers
Ran from the flames.



Their paths would veer
Away from the danger
At them you would jeer.
You are the one
Who had all the gear.
You knew when you spoke
That everyone would hear.
How ironic it is that
They stole so many years
From the kid who knew
How to make people hear
Because they were busy
And turned a deaf ear.



Nick,

15 February 2002

You lived every moment as if there would not be another. You were my best friend. I knew that no matter what I did that you would always be there to listen and offer advice. You always respected and admired me no matter what, just as I respected and admired you. We had so many good times together. I find it hard to focus on specific memories because there are so many. For that I am so glad. I only wish we had talked more often the last few years. Thank God for the summer, Thanksgiving, and the week before Christmas. Nick, you were the best brother I ever could have dreamed of having, and then some. People always say how wonderful someone was after they are dead, but I can honestly say that you were more wonderful than you could ever know. I feel so lucky to have had such a good life and a good family. I miss you a lot, and it always hurts. I don't know how I am going to live without you. There are so many things I wanted to do. There are so many things we didn't get to experience. I have to focus on what we did have and not what could have been, but it is so hard. I don't know how I am supposed to focus on the future when all I want to do is dwell in the past, when you were here with me. I don't know how I am supposed to look forward to anything which you will not be a part of (physically, at least-because you'll always be a part of everything I do). I guess what I'm trying to say is that life sucks without you, and I don't know who I am anymore. I've always been "Nick's sister," and who am I now that that part of me is so destroyed? "Nick's sister" died when you did in so many ways. I'll always be your sister, and I'll always have a brother, even though you're not here physically, but it's just not the same.

Part of what seems so strange to me is the fact that most things seem normal, but I always have this sick feeling in the back of my mind that knows the truth. Every once in a while I find myself feeling almost normal, and then, all of the sudden, I get this overwhelming feeling of nausea when I think about you being gone. I never knew emotional pain could be so physically painful. I sometimes just want to throw up, and other times I just want to destroy something. I keep thinking, if only I had had more time, but the truth is that no length of time shorter than my lifetime would have been enough. I think about that debate we had when we were in Chicago this summer about road design. I was trying to convince you that the journey, not the destination was what was important, but you kept telling me that you were only interested in getting where you were going, and fast, by the shortest route possible, in a straight line. Your whole life was about getting places fast. We called you "Mr. Destructo" because you would destroy any obstacle that slowed you down, and I guess that included your own body. I guess your body was holding you back, keeping you from experiencing paradise in heaven. It's amazing to look back and realize that nothing is a coincidence. You were destructive, ambitious, always in search of a good time, no matter what the cost. You were clever and funny, and you lived your whole life fast and in a hurry. It's almost like you knew you wouldn't be here long. You raced from one thing to the next, enjoying the speed as much as the destination. You and your truck got sick at the same time. I wish your truck had died instead of you.



You were a really neat person, sweet, charming, cute, clever. You were an all-around wonderful human being, and you genuinely cared about people. You were so much fun to be around, always cutting up or imitating someone, always able to make everyone laugh no matter how mad they were at you. You did have a long fuse, but whoa to the person who lit that fuse and then stuck around to see it burn down. You had that Norwegian fire in you. You were always passionate about whatever you did. It was either all or nothing.

I never in a million years thought you would not be here to see me get married and have children. I need you here. People say that the pain fades with time, but I'm not sure I want it to. The more time that passes, the longer it has been since I've seen you, and I wish I had seen you last week, yesterday. I don't like empty wishes. It's hard to smile. It's hard to laugh. All I want to do is crumble and cry, but I'm tired of crying, and you would kick my butt. I found a birthday card you gave me, and you wrote, "Live your life like a roll of toilet paper-long and useful!" You can still make me laugh even when I just want to cry. I find myself waiting for the phone to ring, and for you to be there asking me to help you get out of trouble. I need you to argue with me, and to know that regardless of whether you're right or wrong that you won't give up until I concede. I need to grow old with you and your wife. I wanted to be grandparents together. I wanted you to be here with me when Mom and Dad die. You were the person most like me in this entire world, and you're gone. All I have left is a few pictures and video tapes, some of which you, being the little turkey that you were, taped over. I just want to hug you, see that beautiful smile, and marvel at how quickly you became a man. I want to worry about you all the time, like I used to. I want to hear you imitate Forrest Gump so I can yell at you to stop saying "Maa Maaaa." I want to see Mom pick at you and hear you say "mama" in that warning tone. I want to lecture you and hear you tell me that I worry too much. I don't want to be an only child!!!

I love you Nick. There are not words to describe what you mean to me. I will never get over losing you, and I will think of you every day.

Your sister,
Leigh Ann











Nick and I used to experiment with fire when we were little. We would get those old cookie tins and put all kinds of stuff in there just to see what would burn. We would build forts wherever we could. Our favorite places at the house were in front of the house, in the boxwoods; in the brush that was in front of the tall part of the brick wall; in the magnolia tree; in those evergreen trees that were at the edge of the yard; and in the creek. We also loved to build forts in those evergreen trees in the back yard. We would take our concoction of pinestraw, leaves, toothpaste, whatever we could find to burn that day, mix it all together in the cookie tin and go hide in one of our forts to set it ablaze. One day we snuck one of Mom's Pearl Light beers out of the outside refrigerator and went down in the boxwoods to try it. We opened it up and each took a sip, only to find out that it was the most horrible tasting, bitter thing we had ever tasted. We both waited a long time before ever trying another beer.



We used to make up all kinds of games to play. One time, when we lived at the house on Forest Run Road, we were playing this game we called "Ugh Man." The rules of the game required one person to jump on top of the other person until that person said "Ugh!" Then it would be the other person's turn to jump. We were playing the game in my room on the bed, and it was Nick's turn to jump. He jumped and bounced off of me towards the bedside table, and he hit his head on the corner of the table. I noticed that he was bleeding on my carpet and proceeded to run into the den to tell Mom and Dad. Mom and Dad drove him to the emergency room in the Blazer, and I sat with Grandma in the waiting room while the doctor stitched him up. About ten years later, I walked into the kitchen to find Dad studying the top of Nick's head. They had just returned from one of their father/son ski trips, and apparently Nick had a little mishap on the slopes one day. He fell and his ski popped up and hit him on the top of the head, leaving a not-so-shallow wound. Nick insisted on skiing down to the bottom, where he and Dad decided that it would be a good idea to hide the cut from Mom. They bought a bunch of butterfly bandages and successfully hid it from her for almost a week and a half.



Nick and I also liked to build forts inside the house. We would gather all the sheets, towels, and blankets we could get our hands on. I know this used to drive Mom crazy. We would then proceed to drape the linens over all kinds of things. We would make the most elaborate tents. There would be room after room. sometimes we would make mazes, sometimes just what we perceived to be palaces. We would try to leave these forts up for days, but between Mom and the cats, they would never last very long. Of course, these small obstacles never prevented us from re-building. There were several times when we covered the entire playroom with a maze of sheets. We had great fun in those tents. We both begged Mom endlessly for tall, four-posted beds so we could build higher, grander tents.



Nick came in my room one night and told me that he had heard at school that there was no Easter Bunny or Santa Claus. He must have been about eight. He asked me if what he had heard was true. I told him that whoever told him that must have been so bad that the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus never went to visit them. I remember being so mad that anyone would tell my little brother that he was wrong to believe in something and try to steal his innocence so soon.



I used to love to tell stories. Nick and I both did. We used to tell these far-fetched, unbelievable stories to all the other kids at the C.D.C. (Child Development Center), or day care as we hated it being called. Our story-telling abilities must have been pretty impressive because we were always able to convince the other kids. One day we had a snowmobile that could morph into a hovercraft or an airplane. We actually had everyone believing us. I think our fantastic stories were a combination of James Bond movies and Grandma stories. I know one thing for sure; we were not scared to use our imaginations. I used to tell Nick that I had a secret den. I would tell him that only I knew where the entrance was and that I would go there sometimes at night. I told him that I had everything I wanted there, from T.V. to video games, from icecream to chocolate, from stuffed animals to transformers, from magic carpets to talking birds, all kinds of remote control toys, etc. His eyes would just get bigger and bigger the more I told him. Deep down he really didn't believe me, but I think he wanted to so badly that I caught him in my room several times searching for the secret entrance to my secret den.



Nick and I used to have a blast at the condo in Orange Beach. We spent so much time down at the dock fishing for pinfish or minnows or crabs. Sometimes we would be surprised to find little baby sanddollars or starfish nestled down in the sand. Our favorite prey beneath the dock was the blue crab. He used to be fast. You had to be really sneaky with the net, stalk him and know which way he was going to flee when you quickly slung the net into the water on top of him. They loved to hide in the barnacles and oyster shells on the pylons. We would try to chase them away from safety into the open water or sand so we could capture them. We worked pretty good as a team. We would collect as many crabs and minnows as we could, put them into a bucket for our parents to see, and then dump them out at the end of the day, only to try to catch them again the next day.





Another one of our haunts at the beach was Orange Beach Marina. We used to walk back and forth and up and down those docks until we couldn't walk anymore. We would gaze at the boats and tell each other stories about when those boats would be ours. We had this little inflatable rubber boat with a hard bottom, called a Zodiac, and it had a 9.9 HP out-board motor. We went everywhere in that little boat. Nick liked to go fast, crashing over the waves in the attempt to get me soaking wet. We would cruise up and down any canal we could find, explore any island that looked deserted, follow porpoises and pelicans. We would search endlessly for the alligators we sometimes saw in the marina and the canal behind the marina. We would fish off the back of the boat and catch huge catfish. There were so many times when our bait and the lure attached to the bait would get bitten entirely off of the line. Nick always said it was the alligator or some monster catfish down in the black depths of the marina. One day Nick was washing the boat and slipped on the soapy side of the boat, falling into that nasty, oily, black marina water. Sam Dewey said that he'd never seen Nick move that fast. He barely hit the water before he was climbing out onto the swim platform. He headed directly to the shower, and said that it wasn't until he soaped his whole body down that he realized that he had kicked one of the barnacle-covered pylons with his leg in his mad dash out of the water. He swore to me later that day that he had seen one of the two alligators submerge across the way, and he just knew he was gator bait. I seriously doubted his story, although we had seen both alligators earlier that day hanging out under the finger piers directly across the water from the boat, so who knows?







I remember watching the video "Swing Blade" with Nick and Spencer Ringland one night. I thought it was a depressing movie and wanted to turn it off, but they wanted to watch it to the end. When it was over, they both started imitating the main character (Carl?), hitching their pants up really high and pretending they were ordering a "coke and large fry." They had me laughing so hard I was almost crying, and they sounded so much like him that it was uncanny.

After that Nick must have watched "Forrest Gump" because he started talking like Forrest all the time. I would be telling him to do his homework (kind of mad because he was procrastinating) and he would tuck his chin down into his neck and say in his Forrest voice, "But MaMaaa..." I would be laughing against my will when I was trying to be stern, and there was no way I could keep from laughing no matter how hard I tried. He was one of the best mimics I've ever known. I will always miss him...



ECLIPSE

For Nicholas

By Ann Syltie Pierce, 3/11/2002

I carried you under my heart, little boy
And cherished each moment with wonder and joy.
Dad laughed at your antics; you were obviously crowded;
You delighted us nightly by being so rowdy.

Then you arrived, early one morn,
A wonderful boy and finally born.
I loved every moment of being your mother,
And was glad for Leigh Ann that she had a brother.

For nineteen years we loved and cared
And then we lost you – what a nightmare!
It's hard to believe, still, that it's true
But with each day that passes there's still no you.

We all knew that people were all that mattered,
So why did our world have to be shattered?
No lesson was learned, no good was done.
Just random eclipse of our brilliant son.





Goodbye to Nicholas

Ann S. Pierce – March 9, 2002

This has been very hard for me to begin, because I know writing it will make me sad. I guess facing up to it is the best way to get through it, though.

I have such a vivid memory of Nicholas standing in his crib, with his funny black duck-down hair sticking up in all directions, with that huge happy grin beaming out at everyone, like he's saying, "Hurray! It's another wonderful day; wake up everybody, it's already 6:00 a.m.! He was not a fussy baby; however if he was awake, he wanted company! Being his mom was kind of like being hitched to a shooting star, zooming through life at a hundred miles per hour. I wish his light hadn't gone out so quickly.

I remember when he was little he pronounced his l, r, and y sounds as w, so when he called Leigh Ann, he called her Wee Ann, or Wee-Wee (Leigh-Leigh). I sat down with him when I thought he was ready and said, Nicholas, look at where my tongue is when I say "lllll." He carefully put his tongue in the right place and said, "llll...www!" We kept it up, though, and in a few minutes he did it, and got his r's and y's the same way.

I remember when he was playing baseball in about third or fourth grade, and came up to bat with the bases loaded, and two outs. The opposing coach was yelling at his pitcher, something like "easy out" and then Nicholas hit the ball over the fence – grand slam! We were so elated, and he was so proud. Mostly, I was relieved, because I died a thousand deaths every time he came up to bat. He always had a huge amount of upper body strength; his chest and shoulders were so big. My brother David picked him up in the pool once when he was about five, and said, "Wow, Nicholas has a really BIG chest!"

He found it extremely difficult to comply with bedtime because he always suspected that he might miss something, so after we said his prayers, I would do The Sleeping Prince to help him relax. He would lie down on his bed and close his eyes, and I would say "Oh, look at my Sleeping Prince...his handsome black eyebrows," as I gently brushed my fingers over his eyebrows, and continuing to pet him, "his strong masculine nose, his lovable ears, his beautiful smiling mouth, his wonderful chin, his muscular shoulders..." until he dropped off to sleep. Since Leigh Ann was The Sleeping Princess and both children loved this nightly ritual, sometimes it would take a long time to get them to sleep, but I loved it too, because I loved being close to them.

When Nicholas was in elementary school, I got a call one morning about 8:30 a.m. from the principal. "Nicholas has had to sit on the Black Bench for fighting this morning," she said, quickly adding after my exclamation of shock, "but it wasn't his fault, although you can't say I told you that." One of the school bullies (Nicholas's age) was picking on a smaller boy and Nicholas told him to stop. When the bully turned on Nicholas and kicked him in the shin (very unwise on his part), Nicholas the Powerful put him on the cafeteria floor and, as he told me, gave him the elbow a few times. I told Nicholas I was proud of him for protecting someone who was being unjustly persecuted; I was always warmed by his sense of justice.

Nicholas turned into such a wonderful young man. He was kind, smart, honest, and skilled at everything he wanted (here's the key – wanted) to learn. He had his Coast Guard



License at age twelve, could dock our 41-foot Viking, water skied, snow skied, fished, hunted, scuba dived, and wrestled. He played football and had really good friends from six years of being on the same team. Above all, he was a kind, nice, wonderful human being.

When Nicholas became a National Merit Scholar, we started getting scholarship offers from schools we had not even applied to, and I told him that it had always been fun to be his mom, but now it was REALLY fun. He was so smart that it was almost unbelievable. I was so happy for him, and I had such high hopes for him when we moved him into his apartment in Tuscaloosa. The first year he came home almost every weekend because he was dating Leslie and she was still in high school. I worried about his driving back Sunday nights because he lived alone and no one was expecting him; he had made his decision to attend the University of Alabama so late that his friends already had roommates. He was very patient with me, though, and tolerantly called me every time when he arrived safely after leaving Birmingham.

The Saturday night before he died, I had tried everything to help him feel better. I had made Jell-O, stocked up on chicken noodle soup, got Pepto-Bismol tablets for the nausea, and set my alarm to get up and give him Advil. I went upstairs and he said all his muscles hurt, so I gave him a back rub. He gave a sigh of relief and said it felt so good, and it seemed to help him feel better, so I rubbed his back as long as I could, until my hands started to cramp. The next day he said he felt better and his temperature was down to 99 degrees. He went to Tuscaloosa to make a CD for Leigh Ann for Christmas, and started to feel bad again – stomachache and nausea. He managed to make it home, but died at 3 a.m. on Christmas Eve at the Emergency Room. I still can't believe he's gone. I can't believe that of the doctors he saw in November and December, none did a blood test or throat culture. Oh well, as Nicholas used to say.

Nicholas, I am going to let you go. I want you to be at peace, and I hope you are. All I ever wanted was for you to be happy, and I tried to bring you up so that you would be able to spread your wings and fly when the time came. I just didn't know that they would be angel wings. I regret that I will not be able to see you grow up, get married, and have children, because I think you would have been a wonderful husband and father. I regret that Leigh Ann will not have you for a best friend after your dad and I are gone. I regret that I have a gaping hole inside me that was the place where you were; I hope it will hurt less with time. I miss your laugh, your gentleness with me when I repeat myself, and your great big smile. I'm glad we did so much as a family and have so many happy memories. Goodbye, my Sleeping Prince. I'll always love you and miss you, and I hope to see you in the next life.



Written by Dad:

Nick was so capable and able to do things so advanced for his age. The way he could accomplish tasks which normally were challenging to even much older people was truly amazing.

Since boating and fishing played such a significant role in our family life, many of my most vivid reflections are about things that Nick did while we were on the boat or fishing. I fondly remember having Nicholas strapped into his car seat on his Granddaddy's Formula King Mackerel fishing in the Gulf off Dauphin Island. As I recall, Nick was about a year old and we were at Mimi and Granddaddy's house at the Island. We had the Notos with us including Sammy and Nichole, so we loaded them up with Leigh Ann and put Nicholas in his car seat and went out past Sand Island. Even though Nick was still in his car seat, he was ready to begin his fishing career, and sure enough, we caught several Kings including one he helped reel in.

In the summer of 1983 we moved into our condo at Ole River in Orange Beach. At the time our boat was a 25 Blackfin which was a center console and had two seats behind the console. I remember one beautiful day when Leigh Ann had gone to Mobile with her Grandma that Nicholas and I jumped in the Blackfin and went trolling along the beach. It wasn't long before Nick had fallen asleep in the helm seat and slept through me catching several fish. When he finally woke up, he was determined he was going to reel in any other fish that struck and he certainly did. Even at that very young age he wanted to be in control of the situation so he grabbed that throttle and sped us up while I was turned around working on a line. Of course he startled me, but he said he thought we were going too slow so he just took matters into his own hands.



When Nicholas was 5, we got the first Directress, a 35 Bertram. That Christmas, we took the whole family to Ft. Lauderdale after Christmas and spent New Years exploring the waterways of South Florida. I guess that period of time was the happiest I have ever been, and I have this vivid memory of Nicholas and Leigh Ann standing on the bow of the boat directing us where to go. At that age, Nick was pretty thin and the perfect size to crawl into the flybridge to help me fix things. He was completely capable of using tools and doing mechanical and electrical projects that some adults wouldn't even tackle.

Probably one of the funniest things that happened on the Bertram was in June of 1988, right before Nicholas turned 6. We decided to take the boat and cruise down to Fort McRee next to Pensacola Pass late one Saturday afternoon. Leigh Ann and Nick got off the boat and went exploring and swimming and before you know it the sun was going down. Since we had a good supply of snacks and microwave meals on board, we decided to just anchor and spend the night in the cove. Well about 7:00 the next morning I woke up and noticed the wind had changed and was blowing us closer to the shore. I got Nicholas up, not wanting to disturb Syltie or Leigh Ann, and we started the boat engines so we could re-set the anchor. I told Nick that when I signaled, he should shift the engines to reposition the boat so that I could haul the anchor up and drop it in a new location. After several minutes of maneuvering, I heard Nick's Mom say "Who is driving the boat?" When she got up to the bridge Nick said in a completely controlled manner "I am" and in fact he was doing an excellent job. It is hard to believe how well he could do things for a little boy.







Written by Grandma, April 1994

He had been with me, and we did a lot of things, so when he went home I was riding down the highway, and thinking about him, and sort of worked this out in my head. I typed it when I got home, but came across it when I was cleaning my files the other day. Oddly enough, what described him when he was 11 or 12 years old held up when he was 19.



Nicholas, my grandson, is dear to me
He's kind, loving, and so carefree.
He makes the world a great place for me,
because his love is plain to see.
In the summer, when he visits,
We have great fun.
We bowl and play tennis, one on one.
He's a perfect gentleman, a fine young man;
I know there's none like him in our fair land.
He's clever, he's sweet, he's gentle, he's kind-
A sweeter boy you'll never find.
Even though the poetry I write is bad,
My heart is filled with glee.
Because I know that I love him,
And I know that he loves me.
Love you Nick!



Dear God,

We've been friends as long as I can remember. I've tried to live my life the way you directed. I love you, trust you, know you love your children, and know you can do all things. Now that you've taken Nicholas to be with you, I try to understand. Maybe there was something in his future so terrible that you had to keep him from whatever it was. Maybe he had completed his job on earth, and you took him home to a perfect world. You gave us so much, when you let him be with us for 19 years, but oh the pain of having him snatched from us. Advent has always such a happy time—looking for the great things to come in a new year, reliving the birth of Christ, looking forward to Christmas. Yet, our family comes into this year with heartbreak so painful we can hardly bear it. I know you will give us the strength to live through this, but why not take me, an old woman, instead of such a bright star just reaching manhood? I know you love me, because I've been so blessed with family, success, friends, faith, and happiness. You even threw in some pain, which strengthened me to face some of the sadness in my life. I can understand my son's death, because he made the choice, but Nicholas's death will kill me. I loved him too much, I guess, but you made grandmothers like that. He was a good Christian young man, believed in you, and you blessed him with good parents and sister, and a happy life.

All I can ask for now is relief from the pain all of us feel. I know that I will never be truly happy again, because my heart has taken more pain than any organ should be expected to live through. I do pray for the rest of my family—for Eric and Janet, who have pain, unrest, and unhappiness. Please give them a chance and a lot of help to use the opportunities that are there for them. Help Leigh Ann keep the faith she has in you. She is young, but wise beyond her years. She will trust you, and she will be comforted, knowing we are your children, and although we are hurting right now, we trust you to show us the way. Please give the parents of these grandchildren knowledge and strength to help them grow, mature, and find their way.

Thank you for the many friends our family has; their love and care do help ease some of the pain. But, oh God, do you really feel the pain we have? Please stay with us and help us. We aren't strong enough to handle this alone.

Grandma
Jan. 1, 2002











Written by Leslie Elliott:

Well, this is my story of Nick. When we first met, it was just the usual "hey I'm so and so...nice to meet you". As the days went by, we started talking on the computer. One day, the conversation topic ended up being about Neil Boudreaux and how funny it would be if Nick and I started acting like we were dating and see how pissed Neil would get (Neil had a pretty big crush on me at the time). Ended up, Neil got very, very mad with Nick and I. We both explained that we were just kidding and meant it as a joke. Ended up two nights later, we really went on a date. And I'll always remember that first date too. El Plablano on a Friday night. I thought the food was awful. The date went fine though and from then on out we were a couple. It got to a point where we couldn't go two hours without seeing each other. We loved each other so much. I would get roses on my windshield after school with love letters and stuffed animals in my drivers seat when I got in my car to go to school that day. He was the most romantic, caring and loving guy I had ever met. He wasn't like those guys that think they're all buff and have to control the relationship and never show any affection. He was proud of me and didn't care what his friends thought about it. We would go crazy if the other went out of town for the weekend. You wonder why Nick had a huge phone bill? =) Even if I was out of town for a tennis tournament for a weekend, guess who would surprise me and be at my match at 8:00 in the morning in Montgomery? You got it, Nick Pierce. My coach, Mrs. Rob, called Nick my good luck charm. As long as Nick was there, I ALWAYS won. But it's funny, Nick never knew that much about tennis, but he learned so much and actually could tell me what I was doing wrong. He was just smart like that. We had the perfect relationship for a while there. But college comes around and the usual problems with that came around too. The distance, the fraternity, the gas money and school work of course all got in the way. But we both made every attempt we could to see each other. Back and forth from Tuscaloosa, both of us switching weekends to come and spend time with the other. We still had that love though. Anyway, a lot of people there in the end of our "togetherness" saw the fights and the little arguments. I'm sure it seemed like we were an old married couple, but it was just because we couldn't stand to see the other person with anybody else or thinking that the other didn't care anymore. But we still had so much love. I will apologize right now to all those people that had to sit there and listen to us, but everybody fights.



Now I look back, and see all of those stupid fights, and think about how much I'd like one more chance with him...to apologize. I was selfish and ignorant. So many things could have been different there in the end, so many things that I could have made right by just stepping up and admitting that I was wrong every once in a while. I am so sorry for the things I did to hurt him though, I just think I loved him too much and never wanted to let him go. Every night when I pray, I talk to God, and then I talk to Nick...like he's right there next to God. And I do apologize, every time. I tell him how much I miss him and how much I love him and always will and to protect me from bad things and to help me be smart like he was. The Pierces raised a little chunky kid into the most amazing man I have ever known. He allowed me to learn so much. I swear I got smarter just by listening to him talk. He taught me how to care about somebody more than myself, he taught me how to love, he taught me how to be myself. Nick will always have a huge part of my heart. Nobody ever forgets their first love. Not only was he my first love, he was my best friend, a teacher, and an inspiration. There will never be anyone that will take his place. Nobody ever could. Gah but what I would give right now, just to see those dark brown, puppy dog eyes one more time, to be able to touch that "girlie" hair of his, just to be able hold his hand. I would even settle for one more argument. I miss him so much. Everything about him. I cry myself to sleep just about every night thinking about all the great times we had. I'll always remember those times. But I know that Nick is in paradise right now and he's perfect and not in pain anymore. I just have to remember that. God's taking such good care of him, because I ask him to every night. But we'll see Nick again. And what a happy day that will be. But until that day, I'll think about him every night, tell him how much I miss him and how much I love him. Well...it's actually about that time. Time to sleep. I hope this maybe let some other people other than me see a different side of how Nick was.

I love you Nick...always have...always will.







There are so many stories that we can all tell about what we did with Nick. Many of us share stories of the beach, going fishing, hunting, football, and just joking around. One story I would like to tell is about the "fire stage" that Nick and I went through when we were around eleven or twelve years old. There was a period of time when Nick and I would try to blow up everything we came across. One day we actually did just that. As I remember we were playing in the creek along side of his house and one of us, probably Nick, decided to make a flame thrower. The torch that we made was a stick wrapped in old t-shirts that Nick said he wouldn't mind getting rid of. We got rid of them alright by lighting them in flames and then proceeding to use a can of WD-40 just to enhance the flame. Now I know all of you guys have done this before, but I also bet that none of you set that creek on fire like Nick and I did that warm afternoon. When Nick saw the creek go up in a blaze he shot over that rock wall like he was riding a rocket between his legs, if you know what I mean. There I was standing there in slow motion looking at this blaze we had created and knowing that water was not supposed to catch on fire like this was going. By the time I put the fire out and ran like hell myself, Nick had been in the house for about ten minutes or so waiting for me. I think he even had time to eat a sandwich and cool off in front of the t.v. before I even entered into his den. He was always quick on his feet when he needed to be, just like he was that afternoon of the blazing creek.

I was searching for a more inspirational note to write for everyone that helps explain how Nick was and how he never gave up at anything. I was thinking of something that he and I shared over the years about not quitting even when times are hard. I know that things will never be the same, but inspiration still lives through us all and we must never forget that. I did come across a poem that Nick and I had probably seen during highschool when we spent much of our time discussing football just like many of us did back then. The poem is called "Don't Quit", and I urge all of you to understand this because we must not ever give up no matter how hard the strife becomes.

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh,
When care is pressing you down a bit,
Rest, if you must - but don't quit.

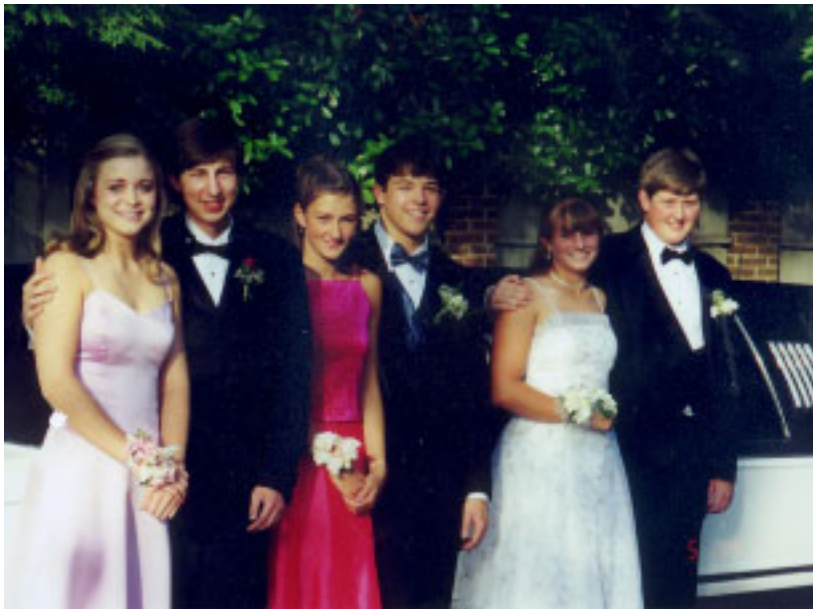
Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a failure turns about,
When she might have won had she stuck it out,
Don't give up, though the pace seems slow-
You might succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than
It seems to a faint and faltering man,
Often the struggler has given up
When he might have captured the victors cup,
And he learned to late, when the night slipped down,
How close he was to the golden crown.

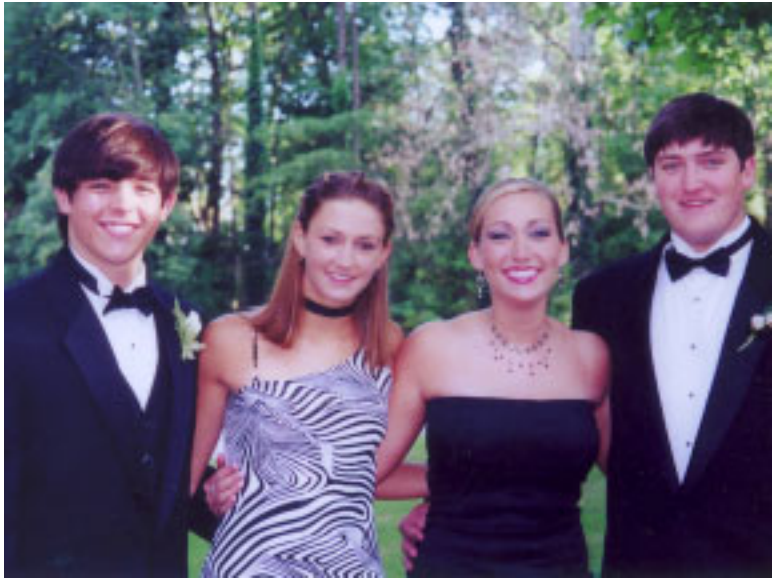
Success is a failure turned inside out-
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt-
And you never can tell how close you are,
It may be near when it seems afar;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit-
It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit!

Nick lived these words each and every day, just as we must continue to do the same. Don't ever give up the memories that we all share with Nick and between all of us as well. I look forward to seeing each and everyone of you soon. Take care everyone and God Bless!





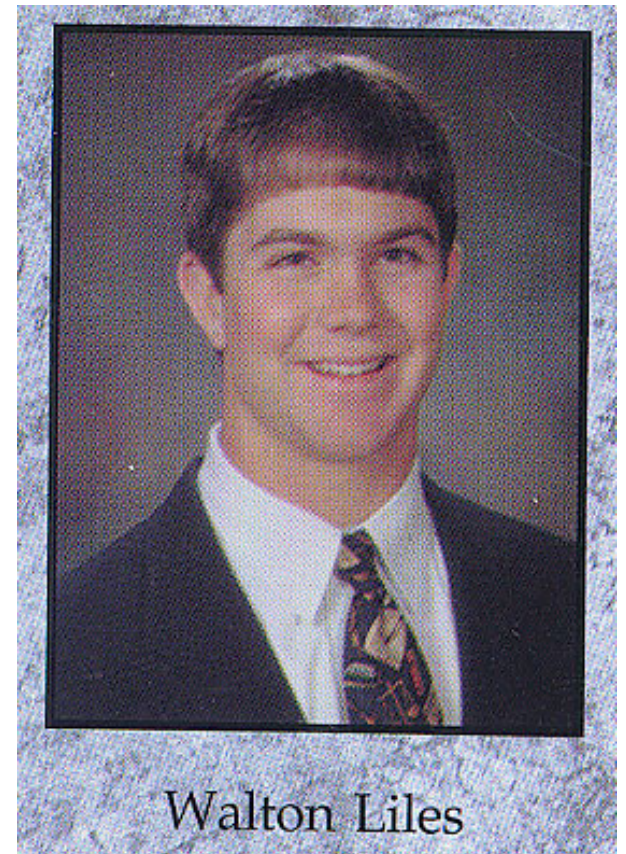
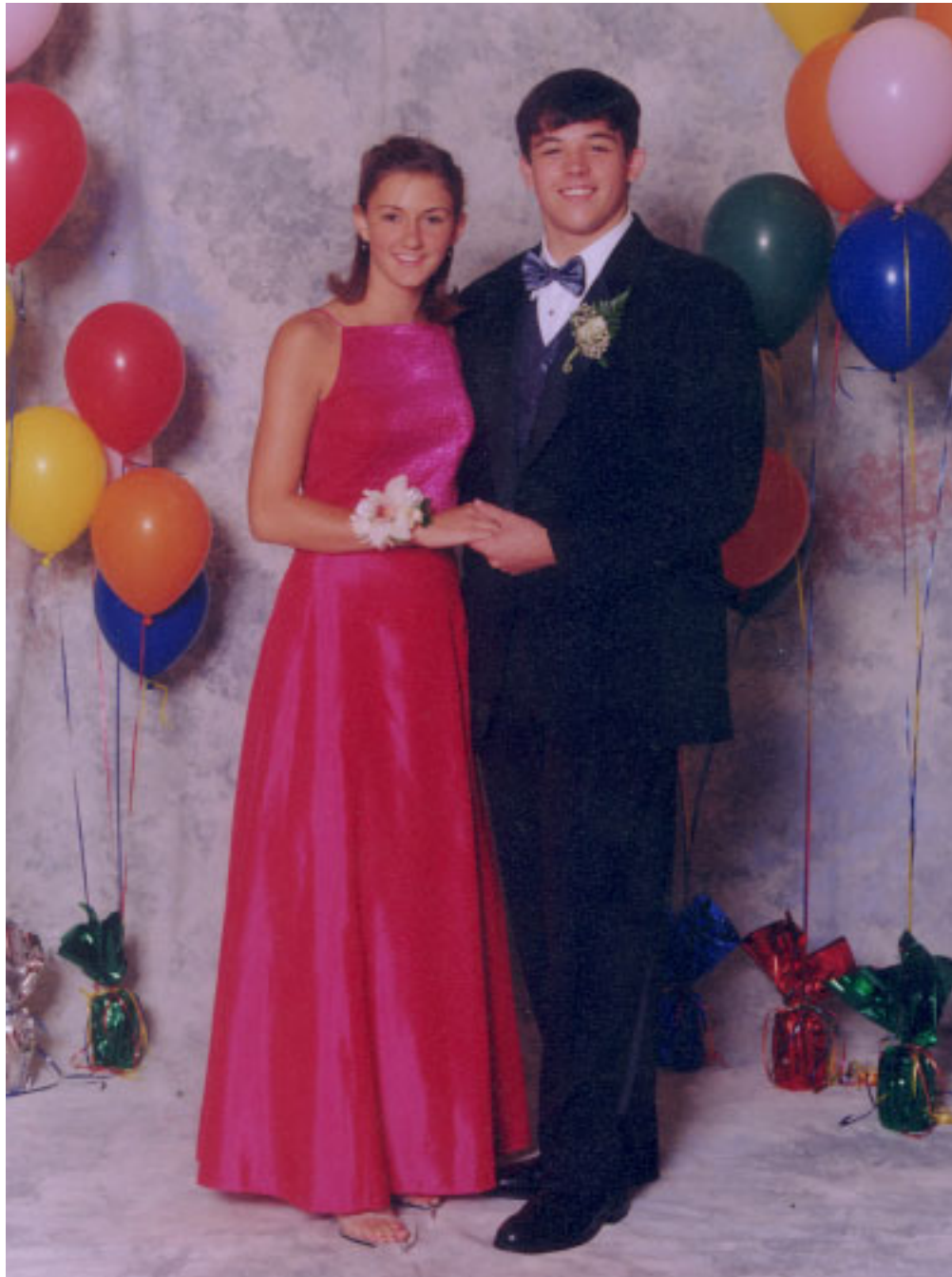
Nick by His Friends



One of his favorite sayings was "We'll Holla"
-from Charles DeBardeleben







Mr. and Mrs. Pierce,

I just wanted to tell you that my thoughts and prayers are with you. Your son meant so much to me and I truly thank God for having the honor and pleasure to know him. He will always live on through each of his friends who loved him so dearly. My thoughts and prayers are with you both now and forevermore.

Love in Christ,
Walton



Chip and Ann,

John and I were so very saddened to hear about the death of Nick. Having not seen him in a while, we both remember an extremely nice little boy who was very nice to our daughter through elementary school. We have very fond memories of him as he came to visit Lindsey when they were "boyfriend and girlfriend." We remember times of taking them places together when they were both so full of innocence. What we remember most is that Nick was exceptionally well mannered and behaved in a time when both of our girls struggled with the emotional attacks that kids seemed to take at each other. Nick was an exception.

We fully attribute this to his parents and the example that you set for him. We always enjoyed the interaction with the two of you. You were always just good people. The world needs more. Nick was a good boy and we will always remember him as such. We have discussed his passing with both Lindsey and Ashley, and Lindsey was visibly stricken by the thought. She really doesn't know what to do or say when she thinks about the loss of one of her peers, especially one who was so kind to her. We can only imagine the grief and anger that you are experiencing at his loss. We wanted to take the time to let you know that we are aware of his passing and a day does not go by that we do not think about the two of you, and Leigh Ann, during this trying time.

Terri Channell is a good friend of ours and we have been very close to her since Jeff's death over a year ago. We have cried many tears with and for her, been angry, lost and sad and I know nothing to make it better. You are in our thoughts regularly and our hearts go out to you. We are here and available any time if you need a diversion. Please do not hesitate to call if you need anything.

Sincerely,
John and Betty Nix.



Dear Mr. and Mrs. Pierce,

I can not tell you how sorry I am. Nick was so dear to me as a child. He befriended me while others were cruel, and there is nothing more precious than a kind heart. I have nothing but good memories of your son and the time we spent together. He was one of the few true friends I have ever had. Childhood for me would have been miserable without Nick's care and kindness. I can't tell you how sad it makes me to know that my first dear friend is gone. I remember he sent me Valentines and Christmas cards at school that were always so sweet. We used to play at your house and you had a pool, and he just managed to make everything fun. On school trips we sat together when no one else would sit with me. He was such a joy in my life as a child, when it was needed most. It would have been so hard to get through elementary school without his friendship. Kids are so mean to each other, even now, but Nick was never mean. He was the only person I remember that wasn't mean. I wish I had kept in touch with him after I moved away. Nick meant so much to me, and he always will. He was genuinely a good boy, and good boys are so rare. I will always treasure my memories of him.

I wish your family the best; you are all in my heart.

Sincerely,
Lindsey Nix



January 4, 2002

Dear Pastor Kazanjian,

On behalf of my family, I am sending a small donation in memory of Lee Syltie's grandson Nick. He was a joy to all who knew him. He was the apple of Lee's eye.

Nicholas was a great boatman. From the time he was very young he would tell my husband that he was going to drive the boat on our next fishing trip. I would say, "Nick, you're too young!" I was wrong. He was a navigator at heart and was at home on the water. He could drive the boat as well as anyone — and loved to follow the seagulls to the best fishing spot. I doubt if we will ever see a flock of birds diving for shrimp without thinking of Nicholas.

He was also a pleasure to have around the house. He had a very special relationship with my dog Meg. When Nick was about 10 years old, we got Meg. Nick would swim for hours with Meg right beside him. She never left his side when he visited our home. It was a mutual love affair. She will miss Nick.

More than anything or anyone, Nicholas loved Lee. She was his motivator, his inspiration, and his refuge. She loved him even more. I hope this small token will show Lee that we loved him, too.

Sincerely,
Pam Adams

Liz Morgan
Dr. and Mrs. Joe K. Griffin and family
Mr. and Mrs. John D. Adams



Dear Chip,

I was greatly saddened to learn of Nick's death and know that this is an insurmountable loss to you and your family. Something of the future disappears with the loss of our young ones and all of you continue in my prayers.

As I sat in the beautiful service at Canterbury, memories of Mountain Brook baseball flooded my mind, especially that really good year that Nick and my Thomas had together, and I will always be grateful for those memories. I know that you took great pride in him and his accomplishments, then and now, and it was comforting and reassuring to hear his friends speak of him in such a loving way. To see the large and supportive contingent was evidence of their love for him and you. Their presence was overwhelmingly gratifying.

Please know that I cherish your friendship and that many of your friends stand quietly in the wings in silent support of you and your loved ones. Call me any time I can help.

Kindest good wishes to you and your family,

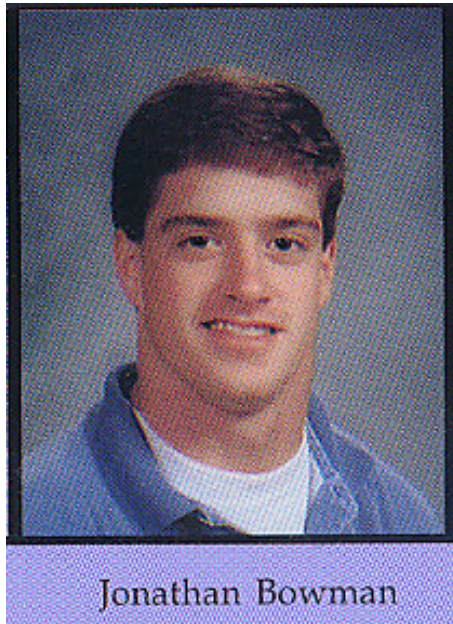
Sincerely,
Tom Rains



Dear Chip and Ann,

I want to express to you how deeply sorry our family was to hear of the tragic loss of your son Nick. We all remember him as such a great kid. He knew Susan and I only slightly, but he was always friendly and smiling and always spoke to us when he saw us and she remembers him well from having him in class when she was substituting at the High School.

Jonathan was really devastated by this. This is the first friend he has ever lost and it was hard for him to come to grips with, especially since he spent time with Nick as recently as Thanksgiving. He remembers him as one of the older boys that was always nice to him and the other younger kids, especially when they were playing on the football team. He said he was always joking and laughing, but he would always take time to help you. He said that Nick went to their senior prom with his group and they really enjoyed him. The kids apparently video taped some of the goings on during prom night and they were watching it over the holidays. He said that Nick was in the tape a lot and it really was nice to have this memory of him, but it also made them realize what a loss this was.



Jonathan also liked the fact that Nick was such an outdoors man and said that he had looked forward to fishing with him sometime. He also mentioned what a great diver he was. I know that when they were playing football, we all thought that the offensive line of Nick's class was superb and how easy it was for the running backs to run behind that bunch. Jonathan said that those seven guys (Powers, Nick, Weintraub, Moore, Lyles, O'Rear and Hartsfield) had been together so long and were such great friends that they all thought alike and it made them all the more strong as a unit. I recently watched a tape of the 1999 Homewood game when they really had to play against a strong defense, and that line was amazing. I know that my son owes his touchdown in that game to # 65 and his blocking. Nick was a fine football player and I know how proud you still are of that. I also know from my son and my wife and what I read in the paper that he was also a great student. He was a super young man all the way.

We thought his funeral was a very fine celebration of Nick's life. I thought Trey Goldstein and the other boy from Nick's fraternity did outstanding jobs on the eulogies under very tough circumstances. It was an incredible thing to see all those football players come in together to honor their friend. Jonathan was honored to be allowed to be part of that.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family during this difficult time for you. Our family and the entire community share your loss. We will remember him well.

Sincerely,
Bill, Susan and Jonathan Bowman







Nick by MBHS

Dear Chip and Ann,

The Athletic Department would like to extend our heartfelt sorrow for your loss. Nick meant so much to so many people as can be seen by those who have sent in donations to The MBHS Memorial Fund established in Nick's name. We hope your family may take some comfort by this show of support.

Sincerely,
Terry Cooper
Athletic Director

In Honor of Nick Pierce the following persons have donated:

Jeffrey and Gail Bayer
Susan H. Boyd
Brasfield & Gorrie
Joseph L. Bynum
Mrs. Barbara K. Capper
Terry and Sheila Cooper
Judith M. Deegan
Murray, Sue, and Thomas Dixon
The Dixon Foundation
Howard and Victoria Dyer-Smith
Linda Lawson Fagan
Judge and Mrs. Robert G. Faircloth
J. Sharp and Louise Gillespy
M. James Gorrie
M. M. Gorrie
Dianne W. Harmon
M.O. and Joan B. Krawcheck
Charles and Carol Hunn
Kiwanis Club of Birmingham
Ms. Annie M. Lee
Nimrod W. E. Long

Jim and Joyce Lott
Milton, Gail, and Mack Magnus
Charles and Lucy Mason
Michael and Kathy Mourn
Michael and Kelli Neely
Nimrod, Long and Associates, Inc.
Mr. and Mrs. John M. Nobinger
George and Susan Nolen
George and Kathleen Petznick
Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 498
Matt and Pat Reeder
The Ritchie Organization
Rives Construction Company, Inc.
Rachel Russell
Mr. Walter Schoel
Robert and Joan Shores
Patricia W. Shoulders
George and Beth Simpson
Mr. and Mrs. Maclin F. Smith III
Star Electrical Contractors
William and Nancy Stetler

Russel and Virginia Syltie
The Thompson Foundation
Alan and Cindi Weeks
The Williams Family (Crawford, Lynn, Barkley,
Marna Jane, and Charlie)
The Willis Family (James, Sherrye, and Jonathan)
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Anderson, IV
Robert & Susan Carswell
Sam R. Dewey, Jr.
William & Judy Fitzpatrick
Charles & Martha Grizzle, Jr.
Bill & Gina Murray & David Whatley
Ben & Barbara Nevins
Mark & Maureen Petrofsky
The Segal Company, Clark J. Yaggy, Sr. Vice-
President
Allan, Susan & Scott Soloman
Mark & Nancy Syltie
Bill Larson

The following people have donated to the Mountain Brook Sports Corporation in memory of Nick Pierce:

Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Estes
Mr. Jeffery Beal, President-American Pipe & Supply Company, Inc.
Lenore J. Unger
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas R. Lawson, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Bass, Jr.
Mr. James M. Brown, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas H. Brigham, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Lacey
DeBardeleben Foundation, Inc.
Mr. & Mrs. Stan Bradley
Mr. Andy Campbell, Campbell, Waller & Loper, LLC







Your outstanding son will be forever remembered as a stellar young man at MBHS. My prayers are with you.

Note from David Stiles, principal of Mountain Brook High School.

January 3, 2002

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Pierce,

With a heavy heart, I write this note. I am so grieved over Nick's death. I taught Nick with he was in seventh grade advanced English, and I looked forward daily to his mischievous fun. What a delightful sense of humor he had, and those eyes! My, how they did shine when he talked!

I loved Nick as well as your sweet Leigh Ann. Both of your children are mine too. That's the way I have always felt about my students. You see, a lot of sharing goes on in a classroom. When I read and was reminded about Nick's honors — National Merit Finalist and Presidential Scholar — I was as proud as you are. Nick was a handsome, bright young man and a credit to you both.

Please know that you are in my prayers daily. I am so sorry for your great loss.

Sincerely,
Kathy Laurence



Dear Friends,

I was deeply saddened to hear of Nick's death. I can still see him sitting in my 4th period Calculus class, asking a question occasionally, but always able to pull out the grade he needed. He had a wonderful smile and personality, and as I always said, great hair. He lived a beautiful life in front of us and we will always cherish the short time together.

Wanda Burns, AP Calculus Teacher at MBHS

I was truly saddened to see that Nick Pierce had passed away last Christmas. He was in my class last spring in Matlab Programming. He was a very good student, with a great attitude and a lot of energy and enthusiasm. He often helped his fellow students when they were struggling. He will be missed by many.

Bob Leland
Associate Professor
Electrical and Computer Engineering
University of Alabama







The Emergence of a World Leader

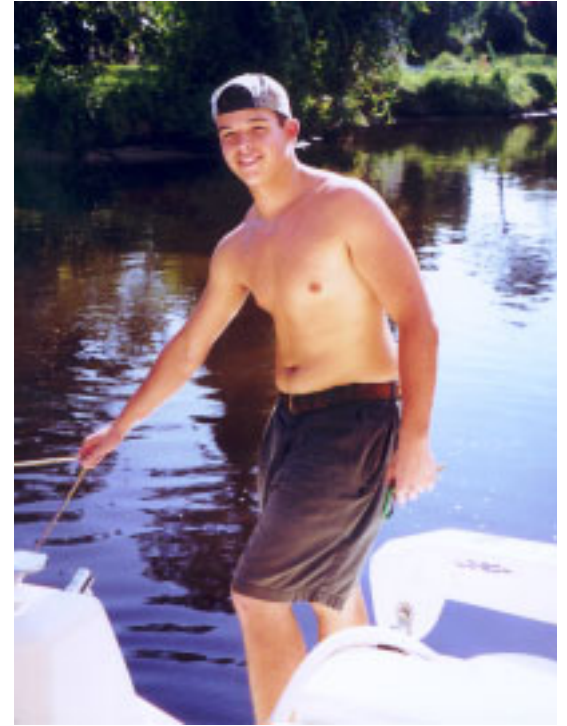
Written by Nick Pierce

31 September 1999

There has been a sudden shift, an earth shattering change in my day to day routine. Until now, life has been nothing but peaches and ice cream, and it has proved quite enjoyable. I have already experienced several life altering experiences that should have hardened me against any new surprises, but this development is more than I can handle. My life up to this doubtful event has been fraught with adversity, but none too great to overcome.

My first significant calamity came when I realized I was not as perfect as the future ruler of the world should be. There I was, the most important being alive, and there was something wrong with me. Two of my arms seemed poorly placed and nobody would tell me why. It seemed evident to me that this revolting development would surely interrupt my plans of world domination. This, I was now realizing, was way off the mark.

Next came the enigma of food service. It seemed I could never get something to eat when I was hungry or something to drink when I was thirsty. What's the world coming to when the future ruler of the world is unable to get what he wants when he wants it? Well, I eventually learned that the more agitated I acted, the sooner my needs were met. This life lesson proved very useful in day to day activities until these two things called responsibility and maturity were dumped into my lap. These two terms and concepts have become known to many children as the great equalizers, as adults cite them whenever they try to prevent us children from having fun.



My last hurdle to be overcome was acutely unexpected. I was just settling down to another peaceful afternoon when my shelter suddenly was pelted with a barrage of unsettling noises. It was such a high pitched shriek that my head felt like it was about to explode. Then, just as suddenly as the supernatural hullabaloo began, silence returned and, though shaken, a cursory exam revealed I was okay. This was the first of several of these ear-splitting assaults, and I soon realize they came at regular intervals. Again, I could not understand how anybody could treat the future ruler of the world with such disrespect.

This brings me to my current predicament. My living space has suddenly diminished in size and it seems I'm being evicted. For the first time in my life, I hear demonic voices encouraging my expulsion from the comfort of my home. Without warning, a brilliant light is shining in the distance and I am quite chilled, both mentally and physically. As I regain my senses, I now see several huge, alien beings surrounding me, probing with long fingers and sharp objects. Then, to my dismay, they proceeded to cut one of my misplaced arms off and wrap me in a restrictive device. Again, such disrespect for such an important person. My alien tormenters placed me in one of their sweaty cohort's arms and it looked at me with adoration. I have been born, and I can already tell that I'm going to like this world a lot less than the one from which I was just evicted. (However, suddenly, but quite gently, one of the monstrosities known as "Dad" hoists me into its arms, smiles at me, gently kisses my forehead, and says "Hi Nick." I felt a little more comfortable, even happy, and thought, "this life might not be that bad after all"-I was right.)

METRO • NATION

NICHOLAS PIERCE

Mononucleosis leads to Mountain Brook teen's death

By JAMIE KIZZIRE

BIRMINGHAM POST-HERALD

Nick Pierce was never one to complain when he was in pain.

Even when playing football for Mountain Brook High School, Pierce tried to keep playing on a sprained his ankle.

"He never complained, he just kept going," Chip Pierce said of his 19-year-old son.

Monday, the younger Pierce apparently died of a ruptured spleen caused by a long bout with mononucleosis, commonly known as mono. The Pierce family now is warning people about the danger of the disease and taking ailments lightly.

"Nobody really thought it was that serious at first," said sister Leigh Ann.

Her brother, a 2000 graduate of



Pierce

Mountain Brook High School, had probably been sick with the disease for about eight to 10 weeks, she said.

Mono is an infectious viral

disease that affects the respiratory system, liver and lymphatic systems. It's common among teens. Fever, sore throat, swollen lymph glands and an enlarged spleen or liver are symptoms.

Rest and a healthy diet are needed for treatment, but in some rare cases a ruptured spleen can result.

Yet he just thought he was feeling under the weather. After a few trips to the doctor, he was diagnosed with strep throat, which he thought he would eventually overcome with antibiotics, family said.

Things worsened Sunday when he returned to Tuscaloosa where he was attending the University of Alabama, to pick up some Christmas presents for his family. He became very ill but still managed to drive back to his family's home in Mountain Brook.

He was taken to Brookwood Hospital, and died in the early morning hours Monday.

"A ruptured spleen is one of the real risks of mono, and we've been telling people to have their teens checked out," his father said.

When the family had visitation for the former football player Wednesday night, there was a great outpouring of support from friends, his father said.

The Homewood Police had to direct traffic at Ridouts Valley Chapel. The 1999 Mountain Brook football team will be honorary pall bearers at the funeral service to-

day.

"He had a lot of friends," his father said.

Jamie Kizzire can be reached at 325-3122 or jkizzire@postherald.com



The Birmingham News

HEALTH

Monday
February 25, 2002

Restaurant ratings 3D
Entertainment 5D
Comics 6D
Classified 8D

Mononucleosis

Illness is common and bothersome, but it can also be deadly if not monitored.

By KATHY SEALE
News staff writer

Most of the time, a diagnosis of infectious mononucleosis is more of a tedious nuisance than a serious danger.

The worst outcome of the viral illness — commonly called mono, or the kissing disease — usually is a combination of swollen lymph nodes, fever, sore throat, muscle aches, loss of appetite and exhaustion.

Occasionally, however, it can lead to life-threatening illness, even death. "I don't think anybody knew it was so dangerous," said Ann Pierce of Mountain Brook, whose 18-year-old son, Nick, died Christmas Eve, apparently from complications of the disease.

The teen had been ill for weeks, but no one knew until his death that he had mono, his mother said. Doctors in Tuscaloosa, where he attended the University of Alabama, diagnosed infectious at first. Later, a Birmingham doctor diagnosed strep throat and an emergency room doctor suspected strep-induced dehydration, she said.

"He had classic mono symptoms, swollen glands and high fever," said Mrs. Pierce, adding that her son was also tired, but he attributed that to final exams.

An autopsy confirmed mononucleosis and a ruptured spleen, Mrs. Pierce said. Unobstructed breathing, possibly caused by throat swelling, another symptom of mono, also could have contributed to his death.

Deaths attributed to mono are rare, said Dr. Mark

Mononucleosis: The "kissing disease"

Mononucleosis, also called glandular fever, is caused by the Epstein-Barr virus, a virus of the herpes family.

Facts about the disease

Infection

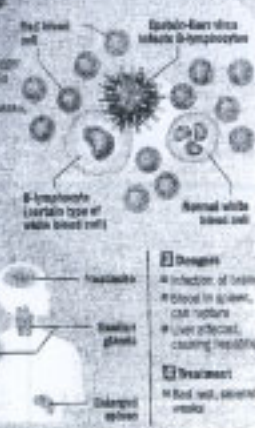
After only three days of infection, B-lymphocytes, which originate in the bone marrow, begin to produce antibodies that cause the characteristic symptoms of mono: fever, sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, muscle aches, loss of appetite and exhaustion.

EBV spreads through contact with saliva of infected persons. Virus remains latent after primary infection.

Diagnosis

Mononucleosis is often diagnosed by a blood test. Other symptoms include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Swollen glands (usually neck, armpits)
- Enlarged spleen
- Enlarged adenoids



Epstein-Barr virus will infect more than 90% of worldwide population during their lifetime, mostly without causing symptoms.

Source: Family Medical Guide, The Salk Institute, University of California, San Diego; "Mononucleosis: The Kissing Disease" (unpublished) website by David Schuchman.

MONO: Complications can arise

— From Page 1D

Stafford, an internist at University Hospital.

"It's very uncommon," he said. "I don't want to alarm people."

Mono occasionally leads to serious conditions such as meningitis, heart muscle inflammation or encephalitis, he said. Mono occasionally, enlarged spleen — present in about half of mono victims — are the most serious concern, he said. An enlarged spleen could rupture, although that happens in less than 3.5 percent of cases.

Stafford explains an infected, enlarged spleen is susceptible to this way. A healthy spleen is the consistency of an orange peel, while an enlarged spleen is the consistency of a ripe peach.

"If you take a regular peach and hit it, nothing will happen," he said. "If you hit a ripe one, it's going to split."

Normally the spleen, situated in the upper left side of the abdomen, is protected by the rib cage. If the spleen enlarges, it protrudes below the rib cage and loses that protection. Typically, doctors recommend that mono patients avoid activities

that could traumatize the spleen.

"You should avoid sports probably for at least six weeks," Stafford said.

In other words, doctors do not recommend enrolling American speed skater Chris Witty. She was diagnosed with mono in mid-January but went on last week to capture Olympic gold in world-record time.

After a diagnosis of mononucleosis, potentially serious symptoms, such as abdominal pain, difficulty with swallowing or breathing, increasing headache or confused thinking, merit immediate attention, said Dr. Michael Heymann, an infectious disease specialist at Brookwood Hospital.

Mrs. Pierce admits patients to encourage tests — who might tend toward stoicism because they don't want to complain or because they don't want to miss out on activities — to be completely honest about symptoms.

"We teach them to be a man and don't complain," she said. "If you have those symptoms, that's not complaining. It could mean life or death."

There is no cure for mono, but adequate rest is important, doctors say. "We used to recommend bed rest, but most don't recommend that now," Stafford said, because complete bed rest could cause further weakness.

Antibiotics are ineffective, although doctors sometimes prescribe steroids for an obstructed airway.

The Epstein-Barr virus, which infects up to 90 percent of people worldwide at some point in their lives, is responsible for mononucleosis.

"Approximately 70 percent of the population is infected by age 30," Heymann said. Some people, usually young children and older adults, have no symptoms or only mild symptoms from mononucleosis, which tends to

hit hardest during late adolescence and young adulthood.

Because the symptoms of mono are similar to other illnesses, such as strep throat, it usually needs to be confirmed through blood tests.

"You can't make the diagnosis on how the person looks," Stafford said.

And once you've had mono, the virus remains latent in the body but rarely causes relapse, Heymann said.

"By and large, you are immune," he said.

— See Mono, Page 4D

FEBRUARY
21
Thursday

The Crimson White

Volume 98, Issue 38

Memorial service honors life of University student



200 Wesley student Nick held speaks at a memorial for Nicholas Pierce Wednesday.

By GUYERNE CLARK
Staff Writer

Described as spontaneous and outgoing, Nicholas Pierce found his niche during the brief time he spent at the University. Pierce's life made such an impact on others that at a memorial service held Wednesday at the Wesley Foundation, there was standing room only.

Pierce died suddenly on Christmas Eve after his spleen ruptured after a long bout of mononucleosis, which neither he nor his family knew he had. He was a sophomore in the College of Engineering and just 19 years old.

Reverend Ken Smith, who conducted the service, reminded those in atten-

dence that life is a gift and to "give thanks for the life of Nicholas Pierce."

SGA president Jonathan MacLaren spoke on behalf of the student body.

"In this time of grief, it's important to the student body to remember Nick," he said. "It is our responsibility to share with one another the experiences we have had with Nick and communicate with others."

Subi Todd, also president of student affairs, shared a similar message and some comments often had made about Pierce.

"He was filled with spontaneity," she said. "He never poisoned himself and

See MEMORIAL, page 7

MEMORIAL

(Continued from page 1)

with in fact an individual who personified values."

She also described him as someone who "knew what was important in his life."

"We must learn to emulate those things which made him special," she said. "And from this we must learn that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers."

Susan Dowdy, whose daughter was one of Pierce's friends, said what struck her most about Pierce was his smile.

"He was really fun, fun-loving and loved everyone," she said. "He had a great attitude about life and was a pleasure to be around. He was one of the nicest boys I ever knew."

Pierce was an active teenager with hobbies including hunting, snow skiing and deep-sea fishing. He was also a serious student, exemplified by his distinction as a National Merit Scholar and University Presidential Scholar.

Not sure to completion, the 2000 Mountain Brook High School graduate once tried to play football with a sprained ankle.

"He wasn't scared of anything, and he almost never complained," his sister Leigh Ann Pierce said in a piece she wrote about her brother.

When Pierce first became sick, he complained of few symptoms and never mentioned to doctors or parents that he was fatigued. One doctor diagnosed him with the flu and another diagnosed him with sinusitis. None of the doctors he visited took blood to test for mono.

"If he would have told me he had been feeling fatigued, I would have immediately thought of mono," his mother Ann Pierce said.

"I think that there's enough stress in school to give students the reason to think 'I'll get better,'" his father Chip Pierce said. "I think that's what he thought."

The Pierces hope students will learn from their son's death and learn to take care of themselves and listen to their bodies.

"When you don't feel well, describe all of what your symptoms are," his father said. "It's very important to tell people what is bothering you."

"This could have easily been prevented just by getting him to the hospital even a day before we did," his mother said.

Though his death was a shock, Pierce's family is able to take comfort in their fond memories of him.

"We had a great time as a family," his father said. "And it's been a joy to think we were able to do so much. He always

had time to do something with mom and dad, and that's important."

"He always exceeded our expectations."

Friends of Pierce are encouraged to share their memories and experiences on a Web site dedicated to him. Those wishing to contribute should e-mail their stories to wislightmemorial@wfu.edu.

Wednesday, February 20, 2002

The Crimson White

In remembrance of the life of
a beloved student of this University
Nicholas Franklin Pierce,
a memorial service will be held at the
Wesley Foundation
509 9th Street
on Wednesday, February 20, 2002,
at 4:00 p.m.
Darryl Chimes will ring in honor
of Nicholas at 3:30 p.m.







Nick by Nick

Nick wrote, "No poetry book would be complete without a Poe poem. Also, this is my favorite poem in the world."

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore-
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door-
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door-
Only this and nothing more."

Ah distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor
Eagerly I wished the morrow-vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow-sorrow for the lost Lenore-
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore
Nameless *here* forevermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me-filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door-
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door-
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"-here I opened wide the door
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before,
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore!"
This I whispered and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"-
Merelythis, and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore-
'Tis the wind and nothing more."





Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
Bit, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door-
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door-
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no
craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly shore-
Tell me what they lordly name is on the night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marveled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning-little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blest with seeing bird above his chamber door-
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his should in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered-not a feather then he fluttered-
Till I scarcely more than muttered, "other friends have flown before."
Then the bird said, "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore-
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never-nevermore.'"

But the raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore-
what this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Mean in croaking, "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o'er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamplight gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!



Nick by Nick

Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe, from thy memories of Lenore!
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil—prophet still, if bird or devil!
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
On this home by horror haunted—tell me—tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil—prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign in parting, bird or friend," I shrieked, upstarting—
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!





Winter Solstice

Dawn turned on her purple pillow
And late, late came the winter day,
Snow was curved to the boughs of the willow,
The sunless world was white and grey.

At noon we heard a blue-jay scolding,
At five the last thin light was lost
From the snow banked windows faintly holding
The feathery filigree of frost.



Nick wrote, "I put this poem in my book because it tells about a morning on the water, and I love the water."

The Harbor Dawn
by Hart Crane

Insistently through sleep-a tide of voices-
They meet you listening midway in your Dream
The long, tired sounds, fog-insulated noises:
Gongs in white surplices, beshrouded wails,
Far strum of fog horns...signals dispersed in veils.

And then a truck will lumber past the wharves
As winch engines begin throbbing on some deck;
Or a drunken stevedore's howl and thud below
Comes echoing alley-upward through dim snow.

And if they take your sleep away sometimes
They give it back again. Soft sleeves of sound
Attend the darkling harbor, the pillowed bay;
Somewhere out there in blankness steam
Spills into steam, and wanders, washed away
-Flurried by keen fifings, eddied
Among distant chiming buoys-adrift. The sky.
Cool feathery fold, suspends, distills
This wavering slumber...Slowly-
Immemorially the window, the half-covered chair,
Ask nothing but this sheath of pallid air.

Nick wrote, "it tells about a person who is torn between love and hate. It tells that one time, the writer's lover or boy or girlfriend, or whatever the case, will come to see the writer and he/she will be gone."

Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word
Anonymous

Oh, oh you will be sorry for that word!
Give back my book and take my kiss instead.
Was it my enemy or my friend I heard,
"What a big book for such a little head!"
Come, I will show you now my newest hat,
And you may watch me purse my mouth and prink!
Oh, I shall love you still, and all of that.
I never again shall tell you what I think.
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly;
You will not catch me reading any more:
I shall be called a wife to pattern by;
And some day when you knock and push the door,
Some sane day, not too bright and not too stormy,
I shall be gone, and you may whistle for me.



Nick wrote, "I put this poem in my book because it shows that even a minor can write a good poem. Also, I love my cats and like to read and hear good things about them."

Killer
by Leigh Ann Pierce
5 October 1993

He sits
watching everything
the birds
the passing cars
the scampering chipmunks
and squirrels
he is very observant
and notices everything
he spots it
just right
he slinks towards his prey
he waits
he watches
he springs and
he pounces and
he wonders
why he missed.







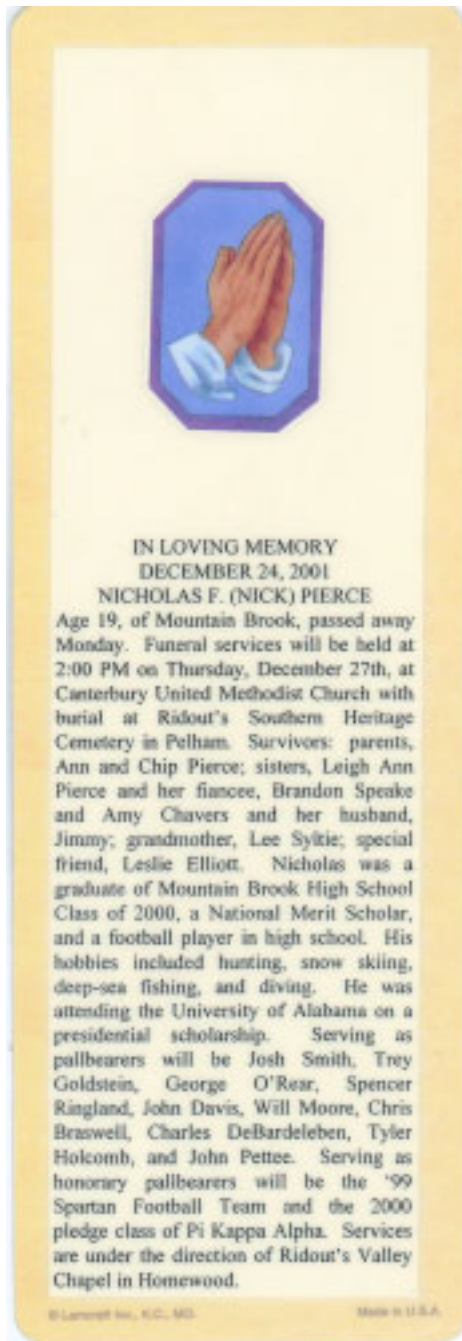
Nick wrote, "I put this poem in my poetry book because it is about my grandfather, who deserves recognition for his work. He is very nice and ought to be read about."

The Prince of Rhymes
(Or, Frank's Tape Cassette)
Ann S. Pierce

Frank Pierce writing poems,
Who would've thought so?
(Us, maybe)
And now we want mo'
Of these thoughts and memories
That only you know.

Please accept this little gadget
To help you keep on making magic.
It seems there's nothing you can't do,
(And we really like your voice too).





Nick wrote, "I put this poem in my book because it tells about a person who is fed up with the world and needs to get away from it all. He is on the brink of suicide and holding on by a thread."

Good-Bye
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home:
Thou art not my friend, and I am not thine.
Long through thy weary crowds I roam;
A river-ark on the ocean brine,
Long I've been tossed like the driven foam;
But now, proud world, I'm going home.

Good-bye to flattery's fawning face;
To grandeur with his wise grimace;
To upstart wealth's averted eye;
To supple office, low and high;
To crowded halls, to court and street;
To frozen hearts and hasting feet;
To those who go and those who come;
Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home.



I am going to my own hearth-stone,
Bosomed in yon green hills alone,-
A secret nook in a pleasant land,
Whose grove the frolic fairies planned;
Where arches green, the livelong day,
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
And vulgar feet have never trod
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

O, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
Where the evening star so holy shines,
I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
At the sophist schools and the learned clan;
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet?