PERSONAL TESTIMONY
ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
IN MY FATHER'S, MY SISTER'S,
AND MY LIFE

by Ken Wright

My father, Harold Edwin Wright, Jr., or "Hal Wright," was a very loving, giving man, who loved the Lord Jesus Christ and served Him faithfully in the way he gave of himself to others. The Lord Jesus greatly blessed my father with 27 extra years of life. In 1976, at the age of 56, he had a triple heart bypass operation after discovering his arteries were 90% blocked. He could very well have had a massive heart attack and died at that time. If that would have happened, he would never have retired from Delco Electronics (General Motors); he would not have attended my graduation from the U.S Naval Academy on June 8, 1977; he would never have known any of his grandchildren; and he and my mother, Marie Wright, would never have celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary on February 21, 1995. However, the Lord Jesus had different plans for my father. Because of that first heart bypass operation, my father took an early retirement from Delco Electronics and proceeded to serve the Boy Scouts of America on virtually a full time basis for the next 25 years. My father survived a second heart bypass operation in 1984 at age 64 and survived a third heart bypass operation after a minor heart attack in 1993 at age 73. My father was blessed with 10 more years of life here on Earth after the third operation. The Lord Jesus Christ truly blessed my father with a fulfilling life and blessed our family with his presence.

I want to emphasize that my father was a very intelligent and gifted man. When he worked for Delco Electronics, he was an Engineering Manager of one of the primary engineering organizations at Delco and was responsible for the development of the guidance systems for the Gemini and Apollo spacecrafts along with many other important projects. He was always sharp as a tack. During the last two years of my father's life, his health faded. He developed dementia, which was very frustrating for him because he couldn't remember things and he couldn't stay focused on a subject in a conversation. It

was very sad for the rest of our family to see that happen to such an intelligent man. He was suffering from blackouts, which may have been the result of him having several very minor strokes. He had actually suffered from a minor stroke in the latter part of 2003. After a short time in the hospital, he went through rehabilitation at Honey Creek Rehabilitation Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and recovered to the point where he was able to come back home. After the Christmas holidays of 2003, he suffered another minor stroke and ended up back at Honey Creek Rehabilitation Center after another short hospital visit. He was going through more therapy and it was encouraging to my family to see that he was improving. My sister, Sandy McCann, her husband Roger McCann and her three children had visited my father at Honey Creek just before they went on a family vacation to Jamaica in early April.

While Sandy and her family were on vacation, my father developed a high fever and was taken to St. Luke's Medical Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My mother, Marie Wright, was beside herself. She didn't know what to do. She called me at my home in Southern California to let me know that my father was in the hospital. She wasn't able to give me any details of what was wrong with him other than my father's high fever. I contacted St. Luke's Medical Center and was able to leave a message for his primary care doctor at the hospital, Dr. Romani, to call me. Dr.Romani called me back and gave me the details of my father's condition, which turned out to be very serious. I found out that my father couldn't talk and was bedridden. I called my father in his room and arranged to have a nurse hold the telephone to his ear. It was Tuesday, April 13, 2004. I told my father that I had booked a flight from San Diego to Milwaukee via Chicago O'Hare Field on a "redeye" flight that night and would see him on Wednesday morning (April 14). I told him that he needs to keep fighting to get better and that he better not die on me before I get there. Although my father couldn't talk to me, I could tell that he was trying very hard because I could hear him breathing heavily into the telephone. I could tell that he was filled with joy by hearing my voice and knowing that I was coming out to visit him.

On Wednesday morning at about 11 AM, I arrived at my father's hospital room. I nearly collapsed in grief to see the condition that he was in. My father was always a person of action; he was always mentally and physically active. I knew that he had to hate the situation he was in -- being imprisoned in a body that couldn't function. I took his hand and held it as I prayed to the Lord Jesus. I prayed for Lord Jesus to restore my father to health and an acceptable quality of life or take him home -- don't leave him in this condition: completely bedridden with feeding tubes in his nose and IVs in his arms. I prayed that prayer several times each day and every day while he was still alive. It tore me apart to see him cringing in pain whenever the nurses had to move him to clean him up, change his bed-sheets, etc. My father's condition was so sad and emotionally painful for me.

My sister, Sandy McCann, and her family returned from their vacation in Jamaica that same Wednesday morning that I arrived in Milwaukee. Sandy, and her son, Scott, arrived at my father's hospital room about 12 Noon on that day. I could see from the look in their eyes that Sandy and Scott were devastated by the sight of my father's condition, which, was a far cry from the condition my father was in at the Honey Creek Rehabilitation Center just before they left for their vacation.

When Sandy and Scott left the hospital to go home that afternoon, Sandy experienced something very strange. While she was driving on the expressway, she noticed that the license plate of the car in front of her read the following:

"483-HAL"

The first thing that came to her mind was our father:

- The "4" represented the current year: 2004.
- The "83" represented our father's age of 83 years.
- "HAL" was our father's nickname.

Was this just some strange coincidence? Or was it a sign from the Lord Jesus Christ informing my sister that our father's time on Earth was near complete and He would be coming soon to take our father home? I don't believe for a moment that this was merely a coincidence. The Lord Jesus Christ has many strange and wonderful ways of communicating with his followers. My sister didn't reveal this event to me until Tuesday, the following week, the day we had our father removed from life support.

I spent about 80% of the time I was in Milwaukee in his hospital room. The nurses gave me a hide-a-bed chair in order that I could sleep in my father's hospital room next to his bed. It was very important to me that my father didn't die alone.

Through the rest of that week and weekend, the doctors had exhausted all the medical treatments that they could possibly do. My father's primary care doctor at the hospital, Dr. Romani, informed me that a cat scan revealed that my father suffered significant brain damage from a major stroke. In addition, the cat scan revealed a mass on my father's right kidney. This mass, most likely, was a malignant, cancerous, growth that, very well, could have been causing the blood clotting that resulted in my father's series of minor strokes and the major stroke. We were not able to confirm it because a biopsy would have been required. Performing a biopsy would have been very painful for my father and could have resulted in him bleeding to death. My father was on blood thinners at the time. Essentially, the only chance of his recovery to a normal quality of life was a miracle from God. Dr. Romani, who I believe was a Christian, told me that my father was completely in God's hands. I knew that my father's wishes were that he not be kept on life support if nothing else could be done to improve his health to an acceptable quality of life. I wanted to remove life support on Monday, April 19, but my sister wouldn't let me do it. She was concerned that we would be committing murder by starving him to death. My position on this issue was the fact that in the days past when such sophisticated means of life support (IVs and nose tubes) were not available, the death by starvation or dehydration of a patient who cannot eat or drink by himself/herself was part of the natural dying process. The only thing that could be done was to keep the patient as comfortable as possible. I also believed that if it was God's will that my father

live, He would heal my father to the point that my father would get up out of bed and tell me that he was hungry and thirsty and would ask me for something to eat and drink.

That Monday evening before going to bed, my sister, Sandy, prayed to the Lord Jesus for help and guidance about removing life support from our father. That night she woke up suddenly and remembered she had filed, for safekeeping, a legal document our father had drawn up with an attorney about removing life support. My father's wishes, as expressed in that document, were exactly the actions I had taken, thus far, with the exception of removing life support. On Tuesday, April 20, Sandy agreed with me to remove my father's life support in accordance with my father's wishes and it was removed at 10 AM that morning. From that point on our father was only given morphine regularly for pain killing and was kept on oxygen for ease of breathing.

On that Tuesday evening, about 6 PM, I went to my mother's house to have dinner. After that I relaxed in a recliner in my mother's den. The past seven days had been very stressful for me and I was drained. As I leaned back in the recliner, I prayed to the Lord Jesus for help. I said, "Lord Jesus, I am completed stressed out. I have chest pains, I am tired and drained, and I have fears and anxiety about the process of death. I cannot handle seeing the pain and suffering my father is going through. I imagine myself in his shoes and shudder." I said, "Lord Jesus, please let your Holy Spirit engulf me, take my fears and anxieties away, take my stress and chest pains away, remove my fatigue and rejuvenate my body so I have fullness of energy again, give me confidence that You are with my father and comforting him in this process of dying." After my prayer, I fell into a trance or a deep sleep for about an hour in the recliner. I woke up about 9 PM because I promised my father I would be coming back after dinner to be with him and expected to be back at the hospital between 9 PM and 9:30 PM. I always told my father when I was leaving the hospital, where I was going, and when I would be back. I felt so refreshed and at peace when I woke up. I felt like I had slept for 12 hours. I returned to the hospital to be with my father that evening.

On Wednesday morning, April 21, I had gone to my mother's house to shower and get some breakfast. My mother had some errands in the morning to take care of, so she

planned to go to the hospital with me in the afternoon. I returned to my father's room that morning after breakfast. I noticed that his eyes were wide open. I moved my hand back and forth across his face, but he just kept staring upward. At first, I thought he had died. However, I noticed that he was still breathing. As I positioned my head in front of his head and looked closer into his eyes, I saw the reflection of a heavenly blue light and an image of a face with the heavenly blue light coming from the eyes and mouth of the face. This light in his eyes could not have been natural light because my head was eclipsing any natural light from the room and was casting a shadow on my fathers face. I was confident the blue light was heavenly light and the image of the face was the Lord Jesus because I had experienced that same blue heavenly light and image of a face about 5 1/2 years ago when I had prayed fervently about a problem for weeks. On one particular night in 1998 when I had fallen asleep in the den of my home in Southern California, the Lord Jesus came to me. All of a sudden this heavenly blue light was illuminating the whole room and shining into my face. A voice from the image of the face within the heavenly blue light spoke to me and gave me an answer to my prayer. Then the heavenly blue light disappeared and the room became dark once again. All my family was still asleep so I knew it couldn't have been anything else. That was the first time in my life that I had ever had such a "visual encounter" with the Lord Jesus. Therefore, I knew the Lord Jesus was speaking to my father and comforting him on this Wednesday morning, April 21. It was beautiful. Then the heavenly blue light went away and my father's eyes closed. I could see that my father was resting comfortably and was at peace.

While spending time with my father, I met one of the chaplains from St. Luke's Medical Center, a beautiful hearted woman named Carlista. She was wonderful to talk to and was very helpful. I told Carlista about what I saw on Wednesday morning. Then, I asked her why the Lord Jesus didn't take my father home at that time. She told me that it was probably because my father still had some unfinished business to complete here on Earth. It could be seeing the grandchildren one more time, it could be seeing another relative, it could be anything. It would be hard for us to know for sure because my father couldn't talk to us.

On Friday evening, April 23, I went to my sister's home in Germantown, Wisconsin, to have dinner with her family. After dinner, I told them I needed to get back to the hospital to be with Dad. Sandy's husband, Roger and my father had a very close relationship -- my father was more of a father to Roger than his own father. However, Roger had an extremely hard time seeing people in hospitals and nursing homes. It was hard for him to deal with seeing my father in the condition he was in. Roger's previous visit to see my father in the hospital was very brief. However, that evening, Roger "bit the bullet." He told me that he would meet me at the hospital and spend the night with my father, also. That night both Roger and I spent the night with my father. It was like the "boy's night out" on a Friday night. Even though my father couldn't answer us, we talked with him as if he could. We knew he could hear us and was fully aware of our presence. I know that gave him peace and comfort. We watched the Sci-Fi channel until we fell asleep.

The next morning, Saturday, April 24, Roger had to go home. His daughter, Kelsey, had a soccer game to go to and Sandy had to work that day. I went to my mother's house to take a shower and have breakfast. After breakfast, I took my mother to the hospital and she and I spent the morning with my father. Then, my mother asked me if I could take her to Denny's for lunch and take her home, which I did. Before I left my father, I promised him I would be back that afternoon between 2 PM and 2:30 PM.

After lunch I took my mother home and then returned to the hospital. I arrived in my father's room about 2:10 PM. I sat with him and was reading a book about Psalm 23 titled, "Traveling Light." I would regularly read aloud to my father so he could hear my voice. At about 2:45 PM, my father started bouncing around in the bed – it appeared that he was having a seizure. I ran out into the hallway and yelled for the nurses to help my father, informing them about the apparent seizure. I ran back into the room, grabbed my father's hand, told him I was there and the nurses are coming to help. I noticed that his eyes were wide open just as they were on Wednesday morning. I could see the heavenly blue light and the image of the face of the Lord Jesus Christ in his eyes. I also noticed that his body was illuminated by a blue-white light as if there was a soft blue-white spotlight in the hospital room. There was no physical source of light in my father's hospital room, neither the ceiling lights nor the light from outside the window, capable of

providing the blue-white illumination of his body. I felt the warmth of the presence of the Lord Jesus as he reached out for the hand of my father and I felt him take my father's spirit out of his body. Then my father's head sunk forward until he was looking at me, then his eyelids went closed. At the same time, the illumination on his body faded until it was gone. I could see that my father was no longer breathing. I ran out into the hallway and noted that his heart rate was indicating 0 beats per minute. I ran back into the room, knelt down at my father's bed and prayed, "Thank you so much Lord Jesus for taking my father home and out of his pain and suffering. Thank you so much for blessing our family with my father's presence for an additional 27 years. I love you Lord Jesus. Amen." Then I raised my hand and waved at the ceiling and said, "So long, Dad!" It is hard to comprehend that experiencing death of a loved one could be so beautiful. It was probably the greatest experience in my life. I suspect the closure that my father was looking for was to be able to spend some quality time with my brother-in-law, Roger. That time was provided the Friday night before the Lord Jesus took my father home.

As you see from the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel Obituary, provided below, my father's funeral service was held on Tuesday, April 27. Monroe Hawley, the retired preacher from Southside Church on S. 20th Street and W. Grange Avenue in Milwaukee, and my parents next door neighbor for the past 45 years, spoke at my father's funeral. Dave Loosen from the Milwaukee County Council Boy Scout Office and I provided the eulogy for my father.

My father was a veteran of World War II. He served as a Naval Officer in the Western Pacific campaign. My father rated military honors at his funeral. However, to arrange for those honors, we had to find his military discharge papers to prove he was a veteran. Fortunately, we were able to find them. I know that the Lord Jesus had a hand in finding them so my father could have the honors he deserved.

The day of my father's funeral turned out to be a beautiful, sunny day. Military honors were given to my father at the crypt where his remains were to be entombed at Wisconsin Memorial Park. A U.S. Flag was draped across my father's casket. A soldier, a sailor, and a marine provided the honors, which included the following:

- Firing of guns in salute to my father.
- Playing of taps on the bugle.
- Folding the U.S. Flag.
- Presenting the folded U.S. Flag, along with the empty shells, to my mother.
- Thanking my mother for my father's service to his country.

The military ceremony was beautiful. There was one very interesting thing that happened during the ceremony. There must have been over 100 geese that gathered in the grassy area just to the west of the mausoleum where my father's crypt was located. During the folding of the U.S. Flag, the geese were honking up a storm. That evening when I was having dinner at my sister Sandy's house, I commented on the noise the geese were making during the ceremony at the crypt. "What was going on with those geese?" "Did you hear them honking?" Sandy then told me about her prayer to the Lord Jesus the evening after we pulled the life support from our father. Sandy was concerned about whether our father was saved. The reason for her concern was over a controversial issue about one having to be baptized by immersion in water to be saved. Our father was baptized in a Presbyterian church where, I believe, the practice was either sprinkling or pouring of water upon one's head rather than immersion in water. She told the Lord Jesus that her faith was weak and she needed a sign from Him that our father was saved and would be with Him in heaven when he dies. She asked if the Lord Jesus could have some geese fly over her house as a sign that my father would be spending his eternal life in heaven. At 5 AM on Tuesday, April 27, the day of my father's funeral, my sister was awakened by hundreds of geese flying over her home in Germantown, honking up a storm. Sandy had not experienced such an event at her home before that day and hasn't experienced one since. The Lord Jesus, obviously, went the second mile by providing the large group of noisy geese nearby the mausoleum during the final service at the crypt. She told me that she said to the Lord Jesus, "Thank you Lord, I get the message (loud and

clear)!" during the flag folding service. The Lord Jesus gave my sister confirmation, in a grand way, that our father was dwelling in heaven with Him. What an awesome God!

I have been a believer in my Savior, Jesus Christ for three decades. The Lord Jesus Christ has let my faith become sight. I have been truly blessed. In Jesus Christ we do not have to either fear death or the process of death. I encourage anyone who does not know Jesus Christ to get to know Him by reading His Word, which is in the Holy Bible, so that you can know what His will is for your life.