



SOFT Founder, Kris Holladay

SOFTLY SPOKEN

Kris Holladay

“GIFTS OF THE HEART”

Gifts of the heart bring me sweetly and kindly to a gentle place in my soul. It was Wednesday, June 3, 1998 and it marked the 10th anniversary of Kari's death. As a reminder of this special day, I put on a necklace that belonged to Kari and enjoyed a few moments of memories. But, the day was busy and so I moved onto the list of things yet to be completed. Savannah (5 years old) had an appointment with her neurosurgeon, Dr. David Moss. This is one appointment we do not miss, no matter the date. Our son, Nick, 15 years, was helping by going with me to the appointment. We loaded up the wheelchair, the walker, and off we went.

To our disappointment, the waiting was small and crowded! We left our “stuff” in the hallway then moved into the crowded room trying to be considerate to the other patients already waiting. We crammed ourselves into a corner and sat down. A young mother holding her son was talking to Savannah and being so cute with her. Nick, the ever-thoughtful brother took Savannah into a playroom while I visited with the young mother. As we began to talk, she introduced me to her two daughters ages 3 years and 2 months. The young mother was holding her 18-month-old son born with a neurological disorder of unknown cause and an uncertain prognosis. As I listened to this dedicated mother and heard her words of courage and determination to do all she possibly can do for her son, I felt her to be a “kindred soul.” She told me of their experiences with specialists never blaming, only looking for answers.

After sharing her story, she asked about our family. I told her we had 3 darling daughters and 3 handsome sons. As I

stroked the necklace I was wearing, I explained about Kari and Trisomy 18 and this date was her 10-year anniversary of her death. I explained how we adopted Savannah four years prior. As I shared this with her, this young mother began to cry and she asked in her most hushed voice, “Is it okay to not want my son to suffer? Is it okay not to wish for him a long life? Is it okay for me to not know what I want for him? How long can I do this to him and my family and me?”

As I watched her share her deepest fears with me, a stranger, I realized I was sitting there looking at MYSELF just 19 years before. I, too, had had three small children in three years; our middle child was severely impaired with her future uncertain! Taken back by my realization, I began to gently cry as I held this mother's hand. Because she did not understand the source of my tears, she began to pull away. I continued to hold her hands and in a soft voice I shared with her my fears, my prayers, and my hopes of those many years ago. We hugged an understanding embrace.

Just then, Savannah's name was called and Nick, Savannah, and I were ushered into an examining room. After the doctor's exam, we prepared to leave, or so I thought. As we walked out the door, I heard Dr. Moss enter the next room and overheard my name. I peeked in to see the same young mother and her son. I smiled to Dr. Moss and went over to her and thanked her for her

gift of the heart. She was puzzled until I told her that she had blessed me with a gift of seeing myself 19 years before. She and her son were my gift today, especially this day of all days. I told her the gifts of the heart are held in a special place in my soul. As I turned to leave, I told Dr. Moss that “she was me” years before. The young mother then asked Dr. Moss as she pointed to me, “Will that be me in 19 years from now?” Dr. Moss's response, “If you are lucky!” As I drove home, I stroked the heart necklace and again thanked Kari for touching my life and giving me another *GIFT OF THE HEART!*

GIFTS OF THE HEART come to us wrapped in the most unexpected packages! It seems these gifts come to us when least expected and most appreciated.

Hugs...

Kris

“You smiled and talked to me of nothing and I felt that for this I had been waiting long.” - Rabindranath Tagore



Kris Holladay, with her beautiful daughter, Kari Deann Holladay.