

# 11 REUNIONS – 2008

**Friday, Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 PM**

We were delighted to be able to surprise someone within our own choir with a very special reunion. As she was learning the songs and participating in all the rehearsals, Anna had no idea that her very own sister, Sara, would be our surprise guest for our very first reunion of 2008. We flew Sara in from San Francisco, California. Sara wrote this to us:

*“Unfortunately when I was born my mother passed away, and 4 of us we all spread out with different relatives. I was the only one with my grandma and I remember when I was about 6 years old I heard I had 2 siblings which they lived with an uncle in another city. Once my grandma said we are going to visit them, I still remember I was very excited to see my sister and my brother. I cried when I left that city and since then I begged my grandma to take me to see them and beg them to bring them with us. Finally they came to live with us remember when my sister turned 15 years old she was like my idol like my mom my role model.*



*I wanted to be just like her I studied the same Carrier she did - I always looked up to her she was and she is perfect to my eyes. When she got married I even got upset with my brother in law even though I knew he was an amazing gentleman and that I knew was the perfect man for her.*

*But just the idea that she would not be with me anymore upset me, when she was planning her wedding she lost weight so did I. When she got pregnant I was with her all the time. I remember I was still in high school and every penny I got I used to buy stuff for the baby. And I remember I didn't like to skip school but when my niece Sara was born I skipped a few times just to be with her. Many beautiful memories that I could go on and on. But I know God gave me the perfect sister as my role model, my support, the one who gave me all the love my mother couldn't give me. I miss my sister and her family to be around me and to have those beautiful moments together.*

*My sister is my Idol and always will be”*

This reunion was filmed by CTV and aired on the late news for most of the weekend.

## Saturday, Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> – 2:00 PM

An email from a concerned friend was what started us planning this very special reunion. Randy Weyman had no idea that his entire family was being flown here from Stellarton, Nova Scotia to give him the surprise of a lifetime. This is what his family wrote to us saying:

*“Growing up in a small Nova Scotia town, he chose to leave home at a young age.*



*Getting involved with not so good people, he became heavily involved with drugs and alcohol. Although he came home a few times during these years, he lost himself along the way, so we never really saw our brother, just the person he had become. Now that he is recovering and back to the brother we knew so very long ago, having this opportunity to see him and tell him how proud we are of him and all he has accomplished. We lost both our parents and last year our sister,*

*who was one of his biggest supporters, so this makes this reunion all that much more special because she told him all the time how proud she was of his sobriety and of the wonderful man he is.”*

His brother Jamie, sisters Cindy Lue and Kimberley, nephew Allan, and brother-in-law Allen, were all here to walk out on stage to surprise Randy. After the reunion was over, Randy said this: “I’ve done a lot of drugs, but this is the biggest “high” I’ve ever had!”

## Saturday, Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 PM

As this story began to unfold, we knew it was going to be special. CTV had inquired of us to see if they could follow the entire story from start to finish.

Of course we were happy to have this happen, so from the very first phone call everything was filmed and aired on Dec. 15th, 2008.



It was the story of two sisters who hadn't been together for a very long time – one in Germany, the other here in Ontario. Cindy wrote this to us when asked exactly how long it had been for this family to be together:

*"I think it's been about 15 or 16 years. I will look in my old passprt to check the exact date and get back to you. She (my sister) has not been to Canada in about 20 years though and I have been married 7 years now and Julie has never met Paul or*

*my 2 children, Sarah (7) and Jack (4). We are all planning to come to this event in Ottawa, of course. Mom did actually get a chance to go to Germany (about) 2 years ago and saw Julie then. If this all turns out, it will be the VERY FIRST time my whole family, Julie and my Mom will have been together, which means to me (and I know to my mom as well) more that words can say. I know I will need a CASE of Kleenex, as I am getting teary eyed and emotional just thinking about seeing my mom's face when she sees Julie and I together behind that curtain ad then gets to enjoy watching as Julie meets Mom's Grandchildren for the very first time. Mom, Julie and I have not been in the same room together, let alone country, in I think about 20 years. What an amazing gift"*

We were thrilled to be able to bring this family together on our stage!

**Sunday, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> , 7:00 PM**

Our partnership with CHEO has produced some incredible reunions. Misha, a young cancer patient, had a dream to see his aunt from Madrid, Spain. He had a dream to go and see her in Spain for his 'wish' trip but things did not work out.

At the age of 18, Misha had secured a sports scholarship to a top high school in the United States. In the spring of 2007, with High School completion just around the corner, he was looking forward to a career in professional sports when he collapsed and was rushed to CHEO.

He managed to graduate from high school and became the valedictorian of his class.

These reunions are often extremely moving under the circumstances and as it began to unfold, we were delighted to make it all happen.



When Misha's aunt, Jacqueline arrived in Ottawa, we knew she was very nervous...but as we started to connect and talk, it was evident that she loved her nephew very much and was so thrilled to come here and surprise him.

Just this past fall, Misha lost his battle with cancer at such a young age. We hope that the reunion was something that he treasured and valued and we are so thankful that we were given the opportunity at Bethel to be part of his life in this way.

## Tuesday, Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 PM

On a very, very stormy night, we were able to surprise a special little girl. Chase, another CHEO patient, was in for a reunion with her aunt Adrienne, from Regina, Saskatchewan. Adrienne wrote this to us:

*“This is very exciting, and I can't think of anything better than seeing Chase just after her 10th birthday. You know, I don't think we expected to have her at 10 years old, so it is especially important for our family.”*

Chase's mom, Sarah, also wrote to us. Here are her words:

*“Chase and Adrienne's bond began before Chase was really old enough to bond with anyone but Mom and Dad. Rewind back to Chase being 5 months old. We lived in Belleville, Ontario and Adrienne lived in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan when Chase's brain tumour was first discovered. After a CT scan was performed to determine the cause of Chase's health issues we were immediately rushed to Sick Kids hospital in Toronto. Our world changed in such a flash we really couldn't comprehend what would happen next. Three hours after this discovery we were in Toronto in emergency and a friend of Adrienne's walks into the room. She had come to comfort us and let us know that Adrienne was on a plane to Toronto. She had taken a cab from work to the Saskatoon airport with nothing but her purse.*



*Soon after the diagnoses we continued with our existing plans to move to Saskatoon so that I could be near my. When Chase was 4, Adrienne suggested that our family move in with her. She said to us “I have this big house and I could help you out with the kids.” We ended up living with her for close to three years! She helped us through the hardest period with Chase's health we have seen thus far and words will never be able to express how much this meant to us.”*

*A year a half ago we moved from Saskatoon to Ottawa because of a wonderful career opportunity my husband had. The hardest part was saying goodbye to my incredible family. Not wanting to say good bye quite yet, I asked Adrienne if she would help me by flying to Ottawa with the kids and I, as my husband was already working and living here. Of course she said YES!*

*I love Ottawa, however, I miss my children having the opportunity to grow up with their Aunty and their new cousin. The love and selflessness that Adrienne showed us throughout the years is something that fills my heart each and every time I think of her. Her bond with Chase is undeniably unique and we will all cherish this, near or far, for a life time. We are so very blessed to have the most amazing people in our lives seeing us through this journey. Sometimes our path is dark but friends and family always light the way!”*

This reunion was very special as we not only flew Adrienne here, but also her newly adopted daughter, Xinyue – which was a surprise to the entire family.

## Wednesday, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 PM

This reunion turned out to be entirely special – one that we will never forget. Amy was a dear young lady who we flew in from Victoria, B.C., to surprise her mom Pat. While the plans were being made to give this mom the gift of a lifetime, we were privileged to meet Amy and give her some very special love. As I was sitting at my desk late one night in the midst of rehearsals and programming lights, a phone call came in. As I picked it up, I was told of how a girl was so incredibly homesick for her mom. She had an incredible amount of health issues and just needed to be with her mom in a bad way.

This letter came to me from Amy while planning the reunion:

*“Hi Kathy,*

*Thank you for this wonderful gift you have given us, I have been homesick for so long now, It been 5 years now since we moved from Ottawa away from everything familiar, our friends, family and friends of the family that have meant so much to me.*

*With my health problems and the holiday’s being so close it is worse since I have no friends or family nearby and not knowing many people I really get lonely. I’m so excited to see snow around the holidays since we mostly just get rain. It’s been 2 years since I’ve seen my mom. And am really looking forward to seeing her talking on the phone is not the same.*



*I miss my mom coming over for*

*Christmas Dinner and over the holidays and this opportunity is so wonderful I can hardly contain myself on how happy this trip has made me I never thought I would the chance to get back to Ottawa for a visit. I can’t wait till I get home! I don’t know how I will ever be able to thank you enough for this wonderful gift.”*

There was not a dry eye in the audience when Amy walked out on the stage to surprise her mom. As we watched them embrace throughout the entire night, we were so happy that God gave us this opportunity to bless them together.

**Friday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM**

The bond of family is strong even though years can separate us. In the case of this reunion, it was the bond of cousins growing up together – working on the farm, playing, and creating incredible memories – that made it very special. John was flown in from Indianapolis to surprise a host of cousins and a wonderful aunt, Barb. John wrote his special story to us:

*“Every summer we, as a family would travel to Canada, usually in August, we would visit for a week or two. When I was 9 years old in 1960, I spent my first extended summer vacation with my older brother Darrell on the farm of Uncle Ray and Aunt Jean. I don’t remember how long exactly but I think it was about 2 months or so. Of course it wasn’t really a vacation because we were expected to earn our room and board and help with the chores on the farm, but it was a change of pace for me and we did have plenty of fun with our cousins and all the relatives and visiting different sites in Ottawa and the surrounding area. I remember visiting the parliament buildings in Ottawa and see the changing of the guard, going to Upper Canada Village, of course went to the World’s Fair in Montreal. I remember going to the Maxville Highland Games each summer in August - that was a real treat to learn about our family and the Scottish heritage.*



*All of  
the us  
kids as  
I call  
us,  
Darrell,  
Mary  
Beth,  
Dawn,  
Debbie  
and  
myself  
spent*

*summers up in Canada and helped with the harvest at the end of the summer and moving the chickens from outside to the inside of the barn.*

*The picnics at the farm each summer would be when many of our relatives would attend. Just sitting here thinking of the past visits bring back so many good memories. It’s been a long time since I’ve been to visit, we sold the farm in 1977 and I remember going back with my father I think in 1979 for a week staying at Bobby’s home. I haven’t been back since, and have thought many times before as has my brother to come again and visit our relatives.*

*When I received your email I almost deleted it, before I noticed Bobby’s name as I quickly glanced at it. I feel very honored to have the chance to be there at the reunion with Bobby and family. They are a great bunch of fun loving people.”*

When John walked out on stage after being apart for **30 years**, a host of cousins and relatives joined him on the platform. It was amazing to watch this entire family reunite for the first time in many, many years.

## Saturday, Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> – 2:00 PM

This reunion was planned in just 4 days, as it was our last one to confirm. Eileen was contacted in St. John's, NFLD, and what a treat it was to talk to this special lady. The normal jitters were magnified as Eileen had never traveled too far without her husband and was quite nervous to fly alone, especially with a stop-over in Toronto. However, she consented to come as this was too good to be true – plans were made quickly and she packed her bags to come and surprise her daughter, Cynthia. Of course we know that most grandmothers would do just about anything to see their grandchildren, so of course the choice to not accept this offer was not an option, in her words this was “crazy good”. She also expressed that there would be lots of tears...in which we replied, that's o.k. – we pay big bucks for those tears.

The bond between a mom and a daughter is very special. This daughter, who works very hard to provide for her family, got the surprise of a lifetime when Eileen walked out on stage. While raising two children, she spends her days making extra money cleaning homes. It is not enough to just clean the home though – it needs to be completely immaculate before she leaves.



After leaving Newfoundland 9 years ago, she misses her family and especially her mom – so we brought MOM here!

Theresa was our special host for this guest and she made Eileen feel like she was a queen. This reunion was heartwarming and wonderful for those in attendance that afternoon.

## Saturday, Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> – 7:00 PM

When we were first given this story, it was our desire to fly in a brother from England to surprise his brother here in Ottawa. However, when that plan did not work, we were asked to consider having the mom come to surprise her son. Mary, at the age of 80, decided that she would take the trip from Bristol, England, to surprise her son, Julian and her special granddaughter, Caitlin. Caitlin joined our Singing Christmas Tree choir this year and was an inspiration to us all. Mary wrote this to us:

*"I am in the library and have printed off the e-mail and electronic ticket you have sent me. How wonderful, I cannot believe it, I was feeling sad and wishing I could be with my family in Ottawa for Christmas, I lived in Vancouver for 40 years and came home to retire, but miss Canada. I will be able to see my grand daughter Caitlin appearing in the concert, The Gift of Christmas, and it is a big surprise, as she does not know I am coming, and my Son Julian also, a big surprise for them and I have to keep it a secret, I  
am  
so*



*excited, I cannot thank you enough, for giving me this wonderful opportunity, you wonderful people, this is a miracle you have created for me, a Godsend, and I am so grateful to you, and I thank God . I am looking forward to seeing you all and God bless you. My son here, Simon, Julian's twin brother, is so happy for me, he has four children, the youngest is 2 yrs old, so he is happy I can take this opportunity, and he thanks you as I do, with all my heart."*

As Caitlin saw her grandmother walk on the stage, she was completely overwhelmed with happiness. We will never forget this special reunion.

## Sunday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 PM

When you find a special, caring friend, you want to do all you can for that friend. As I was talking with Tammy one day, she mentioned to me that she had someone who might benefit from a special reunion. Margaret, her dear friend, talked often about how much she missed her sister, Dorothy, who lives in Omaha, Nebraska. As we continued to talk about this, we knew it would become a special day for them both. In talking with Dorothy's husband, who was in on the secret and who accompanied Dorothy to Ottawa, this is what he wrote:



*“Although ten years apart in age, Dorothy and Margaret have always been close. In fact, Margaret has described her sister Dorothy as the best sister in the*

*whole wide world...a confidant, a protector, a partner in crime, a teacher, a mother, and a guardian angel.....she remembers Dorothy always taking time to make her feel special and loved and included in things. Dorothy speaks of her “baby sister” Margaret as a dear friend and a great mother.....thoughtful, loving, artistic, caring, and wise beyond her years.*

*Their memories of the fun things they did together when they were young are many.... like watching the soaps, playing school with Margaret as the teacher and Dorothy as the student, gabbing on the phone, having uncontrollable laughing fits, decorating Margaret's room with Peanuts characters, doing lots of crafts, singing together in the church choir, and Dorothy giving Margaret driving lessons and showing her the Christmas presents before Christmas and teaching her how to act surprised when she opened them.*

*Dorothy and Margaret each have two children, a boy and a girl, and have not seen much of each other since the mid-1980s. Most of their time together since then has been in brief visits, and often when each of them was on the way to somewhere else. They have not seen each other in almost two years, and Dorothy cannot remember the last time they were together at Christmas time. Yet when they see each other, it is as if they have never been apart.”*

Since the two sisters had not seen much of each other in over 20 years, and they couldn't remember the last time they spent Christmas together, they were reunited on our stage!

## Sunday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM

This story came to us from a church member who was looking to surprise her husband. This dear family has lived with many challenges so we were grateful for the chance to make a dream come true for them. Bill, when he attended the last production of 2008, had no idea that he would be the one surprised with his mom from Nanton, Alberta, along with his Aunt Sue. Bill's wife, Jennie, submitted his story to us:

*"We have never been able to travel out to visit Bill's family - the twins were born very prematurely in 1999 and struggled with many related health issues over the next few years. Both of the boys have cerebral palsy and Andrew is in a wheelchair - this makes travelling a lot more difficult because of the additional equipment required, etc. It has also limited our ability financially to travel as a family to Alberta.*

*We had hoped to send one or two of the kids to Alberta with Bill in 2007 to visit their grandparents but Andrew required surgery which left him in a body cast for 10 weeks and once again limited our ability to travel and the trip was once again called off. Matthew had been quite looking forward to going out West to meet his grandparents and has often asked when he would get to meet his grandparents and get to know them. It is for this reason that I submitted our family to Kathy.*



*The family have not been together in over 5 years. Bill has had occasion to visit his parents occasionally over the years since he settled in Ottawa in 1997 but has not been able to take his entire family to visit as he has desired. His wish is for his children to get to know their grandmother. His 3 young sons have met their grandma once before however his daughter was not yet born."*

So, on our stage, for the closing reunion, this grandmother got to meet her grand daughter for the first time.