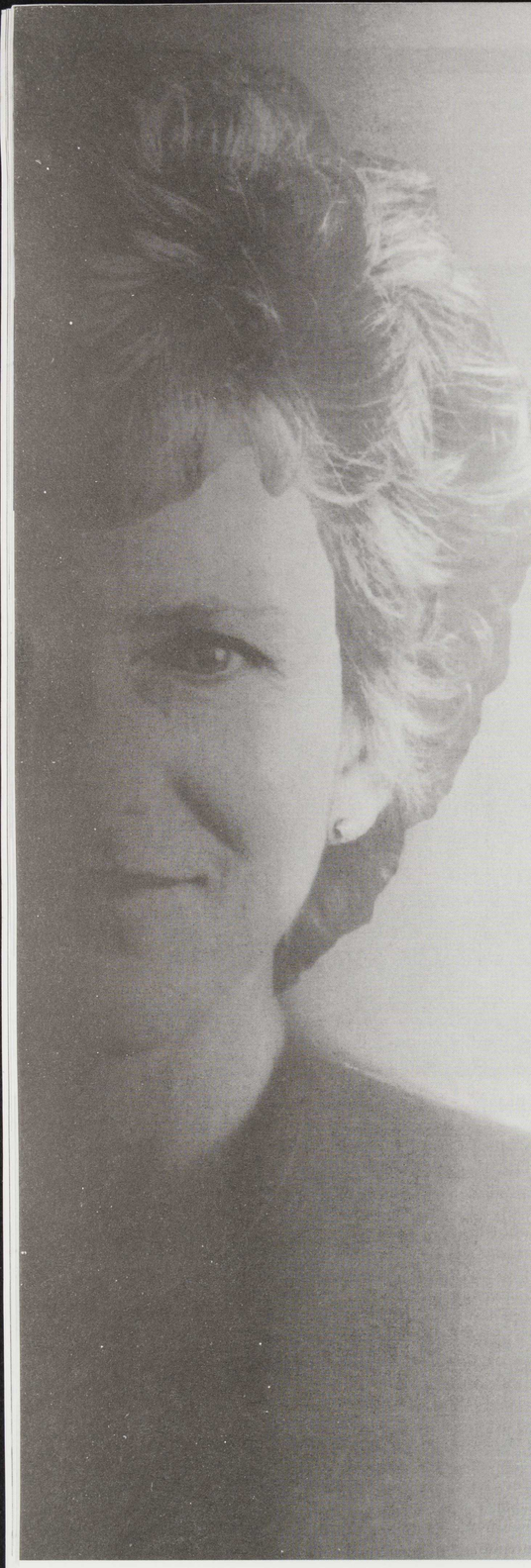

Lisa Marie

by Rachael Katlin

There was a serial killer on the loose in downtown Phoenix, Arizona. My friend went with me to the police station because I'd seen the killer and could identify him. It got dark outside as we drove.

Frightened, I told my friend to lock the car door. Even though it was cold outside I could feel the perspiration beading up on my forehead. My head was beginning to ache. My friend's face looked tight from her fear.

When we arrived at the police station, I kept looking around to see if someone was coming to help us, but no one came. Finally, a janitor came toward us. I noticed he had two paper sacks, and I became even more afraid. He wasn't the killer.

As he reached us, he took the two paper bags and handed them to . . . it was confusing at this point . . . did he give them to me? He might have given them to my friend. No, he gave them to me and I put one over my friend's head. I was suffocating my friend. I was killing her. This was my friend, what was happening?

Why was it, I couldn't breathe? I was suffocating.

I awoke in a cold sweat, unable to breathe, and I looked at the clock. It was midnight.

I've lived with that nightmare for the past sixteen years. Abortion is only an eight-letter word. How can anything that small last sixteen years?

In February, sixteen years ago, I told my husband that I wanted a divorce. He had become physically abusive, and I was starting to fear, not only for my life, but for the life of my three-year-old son. Three days later, I found an apartment, took my son and moved out. Two weeks later, I had an appointment with my gynecologist. I had been waking up feeling sick every morning.

"Doctor Jones, I haven't been feeling well lately."

"I think we had better do a urine check and see if you're pregnant," he said. The test took a few minutes, then the doctor returned to the room.

"Congratulations, your pregnant."

"It's not a very happy time for me; two weeks ago I ask my husband for a divorce."

"Well, if you want to get rid of it, we can do a D&C. That will take care of the problem. But you must let me know by next Friday."

Well, in 1977, abortion wasn't a big deal. There were no Pro-life groups and no Pro-choice groups. It sounded like it was no big deal. The next Wednesday I had an appointment with my divorce attorney.

"Mr. Williams, I've just learned that I am pregnant. I would like to know if I will be given custody of both children."

"The children could possibly be divided between you and your husband. Your son will probably be given to your husband, and you will be given custody of the baby."

This thought terrified me. My husband had also been physically abusive to my son. After spending two more days trying to decide what to do, I called my doctor and made an appointment.

Monday, my appointment was at 2:00 p.m. I had a problem with my decision, but I went. The doctor placed what looked like a large tampon into my uterus. He told me to go home and report to the outpatient clinic Tuesday.

That night was the most painful night I ever remember having in my life. My son and I were living in a one-bedroom house. After tucking my son in, I went to bed, but I didn't sleep. After trying different positions all night, nothing took away the physical pain. I cried, not only from the physical discomfort, but because I was giving up my child. I grieved for my child. Questions kept entering my mind. Was I doing the right thing or not?

The next day I went to the clinic and they did the D&C.

I was no longer pregnant. I felt extremely sad and alone. I would never know the feeling of holding my child. Almost from the beginning, I felt I would have had a girl. Intuition told me it was a girl. When I was pregnant with my son, I thought the name Lisa Marie would be an excellent

name for a girl. I would have called my child Lisa Marie.

As the days passed, I tried not to think about what I had done.

One day I was standing talking to someone and happened to notice my son, then five, standing alone. In my mind, I could see a small three-year-old girl standing beside him. Her long, blond hair came just below her shoulders. She had a very pretty pink dress.

Even now as I tell this story, tears come to my eyes. There are other times when I think of my son, now eighteen, and know my daughter would be sixteen now. Would Lisa Marie be kind, gentle, and sensitive? Or would the two of us argue and fight? What difference would Lisa Marie have made in his life?

Over the years, my burden grew heavier. I reached a point where I felt I was drowning.

It wasn't until 1992 that I learned what really went on in an abortion; how horrible abortions are.

I shared my burden with someone and they asked me why I didn't ask God to forgive me. I had always been close to God, but I never thought to ask.

I asked God to forgive me, and the weight of my burden immediately lifted. Up to that time, I had put

this guilt in the back of my mind and tried to ignore the pain, pretending nothing wrong had happened.

Now I could forgive myself.

That doesn't mean I have stopped thinking about Lisa Marie. It doesn't mean that the nightmares stopped. It doesn't mean that I have stopped wondering how Lisa Marie would have turned out; would she have gone to college studying to be a lawyer or a doctor? What would she have contributed to the world?

It only means I have peace now. Sometimes, you have to keep reminding yourself that the past is the past and you're forgiven. Some days are harder than others. It's been sixteen years and I still mourn for Lisa Marie. I still weep for her.

I know now I will never forget Lisa Marie. There are still people in my family that I am unable to share this burden with. I may never be able to. Someone once told me something that I try to remember every time I feel sad or start to cry for my baby. They said, "Your baby is waiting for you in heaven. Your baby is with Jesus."

This gives me peace; this gives me hope. ■