

Joy Unspeakable

By Lynette Chambers



Her laughter filled the air . . .
Sitting on the third row of the Atlanta bound 747, I heard a woman two rows ahead of me laughing a deep, rich laugh. Not the annoying kind – but, the kind that says, “I love my life!” The kind my Auntie Alene laughed.

Immediately I was transported back to childhood summer days at her home. Closing my eyes, I allowed sweet memories to wash over my soul. For a moment time was suspended, much like the plane which seemed to be hanging over space, barely moving, it felt.

Remembering a warm June evening; her voice rang out to us children as we played under the tall oak tree in the side yard. The railroad tracks were just across the dusty road and it would soon be time for the 4:10 train to come barreling along on the end of its daily run. Aunt Alene knew that each evening there was an irresistible tug for us kids to run toward the tracks. We were always just in time to see the conductor waving his hat out the window beneath the billow of black smoke as he pulled on the whistle. She worried daily that one of us would charge to our death beneath the noisy wheels; and knew too that she would never forgive herself should she let this happen.

This day she called us toward the house with the promise of warm cookies fresh from the oven. Oh the choice! To chase that train whistle, or instead run for the cookies whose aroma was drifting from the open kitchen window. All but one of us turned toward the house, knowing the train would come again tomorrow, but today there were cookies to be had! All that is except my little sister Laurie – she had a fascination for the train like no other. As the train came around the bend and the first whistle blew, I turned to look back, realizing that four year old Laurie was running toward the train, rather than away.

My heart jumped to my throat as I screamed her name. Without thinking, I threw the toy truck I held to the ground and started running. Pumping my eight year old legs as fast as they would go, I tackled my little sister from behind, just inches

from the perilous track. My long hair swept out around us as the wind from the train whipped by, missing us both by a mere breath.

As the terror wore off, I started to cry. Laurie reached her hand up to capture my tears and wanted to know if I was mad at her. Telling her no, that I wasn't mad I was just scared, I hugged her to my chest. Just then our Auntie Alene came running to us as fast as her plump legs would carry her and grabbed us both in a tremendous hug. Her smell mingled with that of the sugar cookies, making me feel safe once again. Holding us tight, she alternately cried and scolded.

Gathering us close, as a mother hen might her brood of chicks, Auntie Alene shooed us back to the kitchen and the waiting cookies. Sitting us with our cousins at the table she poured cold glasses of milk. Bowing our heads we thanked God for gracing us with another day. It was a while before her warm laughter wafted through the house again; but soon her love of life, and the One who gave it, won over. Before evening was done, she was heard laughing that deep, rich, laugh that we all so loved.

Jerking awake as the tires hit the tarmac, I realized that I had apparently dozed off after hearing the laughter from the lady two rows up. Straining to see her, wondering if she resembled my beloved Auntie Alene even a smidgen, I looked carefully at the departing passengers. Rising from her seat was a lady of more than ample girth. She was neither young nor old, but somewhere in between. Her face was kind, wreathed in smiles, even while attending the mundane task of gathering her belongings.

Something deep within told me this woman had long ago become so comfortable with the person on the inside that the outward encumbrances of this daily life were no longer a burden. I longed to know her. I wanted what she and my Auntie Alene both had. I wanted that joy unspeakable and full of glory!