

KeyOpinion

Song of Sorrow

Lia's Corner



The finality of death is shocking in any culture. In ours, death is not part of life but stands outside of it. And, with the decline in family traditions and familial support and the practice of religious observances, people are left to find ways to mourn with very little practice or experience.

The months of November and December are known by journalists, medical personnel and law enforcement as the months when most people die each year.

It is the winter months, when people light fires and turn on their heat causing their houses to burn down, people die. Holidays lead to grievances or loneliness for the elderly and young alike. There are murders, or suicides. With the multiple holidays more drivers are out on the road and have accidents and die. And, then it is just the time of year when people become old and tired, and decide it is time to go.

Death is part of life.

Many of our readers in Florida have moved south for their retirement. They have chosen this place to live out the rest of their lives, but everyone understands death is inevitable.

As we age, we read the obituaries every

day and see what friend is now gone — lost to us. Instead of attending weddings, we attend funerals. This is the natural balance of things: the grandparents die, the grandchildren do not.

This balance is changing.

We now look at the obituaries and see younger people dying. It is shocking and we wonder why. America seems to be losing a segment of its population they never lost before — at least to this extent. Our young people, who are 17 years of age through their late 20s, are dotting the obituary page from car and motorcycle accidents, violence and drug use.

Grandparents and parents alike from every class of life and every financial situation are fighting the battle against drugs every day to save their children.

Unfortunately, I am one of those.

In three years, I have lost two sons — Shiloh, who was 29 and died in 2003, and Sierra, 25, who died the Sunday before Thanksgiving Day this year.

I found them both, but it was too late.

Shiloh lost his life when his girlfriend of only four weeks shot him and then killed

himself. He was talented and successful, but living on the fast track which can often lead to disaster. The police investigators slam-dunked the case before all facts were in. They were over-budget and under-staffed that year. If I had not been grieving, I would have investigated the murder-suicide myself. There is a bigger story, which one day will come out.

But, this is a fact: where there are drugs, there is violence eventually.

Shiloh and I were working on a screenplay at the time of his death. Before he died, Shiloh made me promise that if anything ever happened to him, I would finish it and produce the movie. He said it was the most important thing he

would ever do in his life. My son was against violence in any way, shape or form. Shiloh was adamant that he would send a message to the rapists, murderers and terrorists of the world.

He was like that — a leader brought to his end all too soon.

My daughter, Indiana, and sons Sierra and Micaiah were part of that movie project called Justice. Indiana is a student at MCC, soon to go on to film school at FSU

in Tallahassee. She won two awards at the Suncoast Film Festival at Burns Court this year, one of them the audience choice award. Micaiah is a senior at Sarasota High School. He was one of the students chosen this year by the Sarasota County School District as "one of the most improved students" of the year.

However, it was my son Sierra, who had scaled the highest mountain of achievement this year.

This is his story.

After Shiloh died, my son turned to drugs as his lifesaver. Sierra dulled the pain to survive. It is true that he had taken recreational drugs for years prior to Shiloh's death, but not the hard stuff, not the stuff which would kill him.

He would have probably stayed on that road, except that his father died in April, shocking him into recovery. Within a week, he knew he had to change, particularly when that week he was stopped by law enforcement holding drugs. He would now have to go to court, be drug-tested, visit his probation officer, and do community service.

Sierra was facing the hardest challenge he would ever face — kicking drugs, and changing his lifestyle that led to his taking drugs in the first place.

Sierra said he could kick it alone. He refused counseling, but he continued to take his anti-anxiety medication. Without it, his hands would shake and his stomach

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My son, Sierra

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