

## **To all of my piper and drummer friends and family.**

I have seen and spoken to so many of you in person this past week but I know there is no way I could ever get to tell you all in person exactly what I want to say so I hope this reaches as many of you as possible.

There is no loss like the loss of a child - whether an unborn child, an infant, toddler, teenager, or adult child. My oldest daughter was beginning a new life in Colorado at the ripe old age of 32 when her life ended so suddenly and tragically. I thought June 14th was the last day of my life as well. But over the past week I was so strengthened and held up - of course by my other 3 amazingly strong kids and my 5 wonderful siblings. But little did I realize that I had another family - a huge family that I never realized cared so much about me. I was in and out of a daze all week but in the midst of it all I asked my very good friend Joe McGonigal if he could please do me a huge favor and try to ask as many pipers and drummers possible to be there on Saturday to have a one-block procession to the church in downtown Albany for my daughter's funeral. I barely remember the conversation but I remember these 3 words from Joe. "You got it." I didn't see all of the emails that flew around all week and therefore I can't thank other people who may have also been instrumental in making this happen but I am thanking you now. During the week I got a phone call from Joe Brady Sr. offering his condolences and he shared with me that he and Eileen had also lost their son Vincent in a similar way when he was just about my daughter's age. I never knew this. When Joe Jr. called me later to tell me how sorry he was about my loss, I asked him if he could possibly be there to be the Drum Major for the procession. He first said he had an important commitment that day but after a bit of a pause said, "Someone needs to keep those (plural expletive deleted) in line! Let me see what I can do." I got my answer.

This was the worst week of my life but I woke up Saturday morning to a gorgeous, sunny day. Score one - thanks, St. Joseph. On the short trip from the funeral home to the church I kept hoping that my wish would come true and that lots of people would be there.

When the car was about to make the left turn from State St. onto Lodge St. where the church was, I said to the limo driver, "Do you know what's going to happen now?" and he just turned around and nodded and smiled. As we turned the corner I heard Joe Brady give the "Right Quick March" command and saw the most amazing sight. A big group of pipers and drummers started to march us down the street. I lost my composure and my son said, "Mom, you're supposed to be happy!" For the first time in a week my tears were not of sadness but of absolute joy at seeing what was happening. "I am happy" was my reply.

This corner is in front of the Crowne Plaza hotel downtown and people were coming out of the hotel wondering what was going on. The Albany police had blocked off the streets around the church earlier that morning and the bands had been assembled for about an hour, just waiting for the word to go. As the procession went down the street I saw people standing on the side of the street crying, not part of the funeral but just knowing that something very special was going on. Someone told me a cop came up to them and said "Who was this girl??" If only he had asked me that question.

I had no idea how many pipers and drummers were there but I did hear from Maureen Connor that there were 29 pipers. I know that not everyone came to the reception afterwards so I wanted to just say thank you to all of you who participated in this beautiful, respectful and honorable tribute to my daughter and to myself and my family.

So many people said to me that day, "Wow...you sure have a lot of friends." I now know that I have more friends than I ever knew I did and I am so grateful and PROUD to be part of this community/fraternity.

My daughter's friend Celeste took the attached picture of the bands on Saturday which I will treasure forever. If you see yourself in this picture, thank you. If you were watching this, thank you. If you were there on Friday or Saturday, thank you. If you could not be here for whatever reason but sent a card or an email or phoned me, thank you too. If you said a prayer for Beth, thank you. I just can't say thank you enough. I'm also sending a picture of my beautiful Beth. She loved music, laughing, friends, family - but massed bands and the beer tent were 2 of her favorite things and I know she got all of that this past weekend. I will miss her forever.

Love and thanks to all of you. I'll see you around the games.

Carole