

Through Laurel's Eyes
by Deborah Dombrowski

Laurel Lee once described herself as “Laurel in the sky with diamonds, ... the girl with Kaleidoscope eyes.” Little did she know then just how truly accurate that description was.

A Kaleidoscope is an instrument, which takes plain, simple colored pieces of glass and turns them into an endless variety of beautiful colorful forms. What starts out as objects with sharp edges and no beauty of their own, becomes an intricately woven masterpiece. This is how Laurel viewed the elements of her life.

Whether battling a life threatening disease, raising three children alone or traveling around the world, Laurel turned the drudgeries and disappointments of life into an array of captivating rainbows. Of life she says, “A lesson came to me as a parable when I was first ill. I saw that our battle was not in the circumstances but in our attitude towards them. It is as if we stand at an elevator panel within ourselves. We have the choice of pushing the down button of self pity, bitterness and resentment, three separate thoughts, that can bind themselves together. Or we can push the up button and just draw closer to God because of the extremity of the problem.”

When it came to those Laurel loved, she colored each one beautiful. Whether you had met her twenty years ago or just happened to have met her a week ago, you knew this woman loved you and saw you as a masterpiece. She drew you in with those eyes of love, and you knew you would be her friend forever. Of us she says, “My friends are well-lit houses where I can go and rest along my way.”

And of her beloved Michael Thaler she often said, “He’s the first man who ever truly loved me.” Once, shortly after they were first married, Laurel describes a scene they shared in a hospital, while waiting to hear a biopsy report. She declares: “Mike kisses me again goodbye. Our passion must be surprising to the miscellaneous staff. How can they know? We are just two days short of eight married months. As they roll me around the corner, I want to call back to him that the sun is just coming up. There are streaks of first light behind the hillside trees.”

Few words can truly illustrate Laurel’s deep, unending love for her children, Matthew, Anna and Mary. They were her inspiration and the essence of her life. On a New Year’s Day many years ago, she writes: “I take the children roller-skating along the sidewalk. I pull them and hold them up all at the same time. How we feel can be just like a wind of weather; I am happy. I am full of life, in me, around me, on each arm ... I want the privilege of guiding the arrows of my children and giving them the exhortations that can shoot them into the high place.”

And finally, we cannot forget the deepest love of Laurel’s life—Jesus Christ. When Laurel looked at Him, she did not see simple, drab bits and pieces of an unknown God – she saw the extraordinary masterpiece of a Saviour, a Friend and a King. So eloquently she explains: “There’s an alpha and omega in swirling colors like the eyes of God, who sees from beginning to end. There is nowhere else to go. I want a life that reaches further than my perception. I have to surrender to the fact that God can be trusted, and He has a plan for me.”

This was the very heartbeat of our friend, Laurel Lee. And the longing of her soul was that every friend she ever had and every child she bore would see Him too. As Laurel looked upon her God, she could not bear the thought that those whom she loved would not see Him too and share with her, glorious eternal life.

Laurel lived with the threat of cancer for most of her adult life. But every tree and mountain, every friend and child, every song and heartbeat, she saw through the eyes of love. Truly, she was the girl with Kaleidoscope eyes. And of the day when she would finally be free to go home and stand face to face with that One who first loved her, she cried out, “Music comes. Chorus and voices, in tones and scales, in patterns and textures, repeating a joyous sound: **‘He who liveth and believeth in me shall not die but have everlasting life.’**—Jesus”