



Bonnie and Glenn Warren (photo by Marsha Traeger)

## Dead of Winter

**L**ike clockwork, I awoke at four in the morning on January 7, 1997 and looked through the sliding glass door in our bedroom. The yardstick Glenn had jabbed into our snow-covered deck was no longer visible—it had snowed hard through the night, and it was still snowing.

Glenn was routinely shoveling our front deck and the long flight of steps leading to it, but he'd purposely neglected the one off our bedroom. Now that the yardstick was buried, it was time to relieve the structure of its frosty tonnage. I'd expressed concern about it the day before because of all the rooftops collapsing around north Idaho. Our roof was steep and made of metal, so the snow would systematically slide off from the stress of the load. Our side deck, however, had become dilapidated, undermined by Carpenter ants, and with the weather offering no sign of reprieve, its awaiting peril seemed imminent.

I wasn't looking forward to the twenty-five mile drive to Sandpoint. My espresso café, "Jumpin' Joe's," opened at six-thirty, and I suspected the highway department hadn't plowed the roads. It had been an extremely harsh winter, and the overnight snowfall had added another foot to the existing four to five feet that already blanketed the county.

I glanced at Glenn, sleeping soundly, and I grudgingly rolled out of bed and plodded off to the shower. I probably should have gone outside and tackled the snow engulfing my Subaru, first, but the thought of venturing into the cold was far from appealing. I hoped Glenn wouldn't mind doing it for me.

I lingered under the showerhead, soaking in the warmth, thinking about the day's agenda, never dreaming that Tuesday would forever change my tomorrows.

As I'd suspected, the highway department hadn't made an appearance. The roadway was laden with a good ten to twelve inches of heavy snow. I could only drive about 35 MPH. I was late to work—no one knew but me.

Business got off to a slow start. School buses weren't running in Bonner County, much to the jubilation of the adolescents. Sympathy seekers drifted in and out through the morning, sipping coffee and complaining about the predicaments created by the weather. I listened and pretended to care when I couldn't care less. I had my own problems to deal with—one being a major move from our rental in Hope to another rental in Sandpoint, in the dead of winter.

My mother had become my silent business partner and had visited during the holidays. During her stay, she'd decided to move to Sandpoint to be more involved in our café. I was thrilled with her decision. We looked at homes for sale in the area and found a diamond in the rough that Glenn was anxious to remodel. Upon a second walk-through, Mom put fifteen-hundred-dollars down as earnest money on a contingency agreement, and then she flew back to Chicago and put her house on the market. In the meantime, the owners of the property had agreed to rent the home to us until Mom's house sold.

Our new landlords, the Charltons, had relocated to Oklahoma. Glenn and I were to meet with them at Jumpin' Joe's around five o'clock to sign the rental agreement. Not having to drive back and forth from Hope to Sandpoint, twice a day, was going to be a relief, but we weren't looking forward to moving under such severe winter conditions. Glenn was a real pack rat when it came to construction-related odds and ends. He was a remarkably skilled carpenter and artist. After going to college and receiving a degree in Anthropology, he began doing finish work on boats docked in an around Newport Beach, California, where he'd grown up. He later advanced to the level of project manager, working for large commercial companies in San Diego. The thought of moving the contents of his shop was overwhelming, and I was thankful that burden would be his.

I had a substantial wine delivery that Tuesday morning for a wine-tasting group scheduled to arrive at six o'clock. I spent the afternoon pricing inventory and stocking wine in between customers. It was around three o'clock that the Charltons called to say they had jetlag and wanted to reschedule our meeting for the following day. I immediately phoned Glenn to inform him of the change in plans, but I got the answering machine. I figured he was down in his shop, unable to hear the phone. I called back several minutes later but still got the answering machine. I left a message saying he didn't need to drive to Sandpoint, and I'd see him later.

Around half past four, my part-time employee, Grey Stapleton—a tall, handsome kid with dark hair and an inquisitive nature—arrived to do some cleanup. By that time, I was wondering about Glenn and why he hadn't phoned or shown up. I made calls to some of our friends wondering if they'd heard from him, but no one had.

Grey was in extremely good spirits and attempting to engage me in spiritual conversation. "Hey, Bonnie, what do you think happens to you when you die? I mean where do you think you go?"

I was preoccupied with Glenn's whereabouts and sighed, "I don't know, Grey. I kinda believe in reincarnation. I don't think we can learn everything there is to learn in just one lifetime. I think this is like school, you know, that maybe we keep coming back until we get it right. But that's probably my way of rationalizing my own fears about death."

Grey was eighteen and going through a metaphysical phase. I remembered experiencing that myself at his age.

“Yeah,” he said enthusiastically, “That’s what I believe, too. But do you think you come back as a person, or do you think maybe you come back as an animal or an insect or something?”

“I hope I come back as a person, but who knows?”

The wine tasting group was going to be arriving soon, so I asked Grey to pick up his pace. I then went into the bathroom and heard the phone ringing. I yelled to Grey to answer it, thinking it was Glenn. Bill Nance, my friend in charge of the wine tasting had called and was going to be late. There’d been a bad crash on highway 200. Traffic was apparently backed up for quite a ways and police weren’t letting anyone through the accident scene.

I thought out loud to Grey, “I bet *that’s* why Glenn’s late. He must be held up by that accident.” I felt somewhat relieved.

The phone rang again several minutes later. I answered. This time it was Bill’s wife, Debby. “Bonnie, could you let Bill know I’m going to be late? There’s a terrible accident just passed Kootenai. I just now got home.”

Both Bill and Debby worked at Bonner General Hospital in Sandpoint, and Debby had gone home to shower and clean up before driving back to Sandpoint for the wine tasting.

“Sure,” I said. “Bill just called here a few minutes ago. Guess he was held up on the other side of the accident.”

“Well, I didn’t see him . . . but there was a lot going on. It was a really bad accident.”

I asked, “Did you see Glenn’s VW van anywhere in that traffic?”

She responded with a sense of urgency, “What does it look like?”

“It’s two-tone blue . . . light blue on top and darker blue below.”

Debby cupped the phone and called to her daughter who’d been with her on her drive home. Her voice was somewhat muffled, but I could still hear her. She sounded alarmed. “Lindsey, what color was that van?” Debby’s tone became dark, “Oh, Bonnie, a van just like the one you described was *in* the accident!”

My heart was in my throat. “Was it badly damaged? Did you see Glenn?”

“Yes, it was.”

“Did you see Glenn?” I repeated.

“Bonnie, you’d better go to the hospital emergency room right away. I’m sure Glenn’s there.”

My knees buckled, and I dropped the phone and sank to the floor.

Grey rushed over to me.

I felt the hot surge of my emotions flood from my stomach into my chest and suck the wind right out of me. “Glenn’s been in an accident!” I gasped. “I’ve gotta get to the hospital!”

At that moment, a man and woman walked into Jumpin’ Joe’s—a local doctor and his wife who’d come for the wine tasting. I was still crumpled on the floor. Grey explained to them what had happened. The doctor volunteered to drive me to the hospital, just several blocks away.

The doctor led me through the hospital corridor to the emergency room. I was in a complete daze. There was a lot of commotion going on, and everything seemed bright, loud, and surreal. The doctor asked if Glenn Warren had been admitted. A nurse informed that Glenn was in critical condition, and they were working on him. I was in shock and could not believe what was happening.

After a short while, Debby Nance, a slender, attractive brunette with long, flowing hair, appeared in the corridor and walked over to me.

I began crying, “Tell me this isn’t happening, Debby. Tell me that’s not Glenn in there. It can’t be Glenn!”

Debby crouched down beside me. “Glenn’s been hurt very badly, Bonnie, but there are a lot of skilled people working to save him.”

I sobbed, “Is he going to die?”

She didn’t respond.

I got up and entered the curtained area where the ER people were frantically working on Glenn—he was unrecognizable to me. I knew, at first glance, the seriousness of his condition. It seemed like everything they were doing to save him was so rough. I wanted to ask them to be less aggressive, but I knew they were doing what they had to do to save his life.

A tall, large-framed male nurse wearing a hospital mask looked down at me, and then looked back at Glenn. His eyes widened and he exhaled, “Oh, my God, Bonnie!” It was Ethan, the husband of my employee, Jenny. He had no idea the badly injured man he was struggling to save was Glenn. I left the curtained area.

The next room over, I could hear a woman screaming in agony. I’d learned a woman had also been injured in the accident—the screams belonged to her.

A police officer walked up to me and asked, “Are you Mrs. Warren?”

I nodded I was.

He continued, “Mrs. Warren, did you know you’re husband’s registration has expired?”

I looked at the cop with a blank stare. I couldn’t believe he was trying to make an issue about Glenn’s registration. I thought it was insensitive. I gave him a painful look and replied, “I don’t know anything about it.” Time later revealed the officer was mistaken.

The officer informed, “There’s a woman in the entry of the ER wanting to speak to you.” He pointed to a glass door.

I floated toward it.

I had barely gotten through the door, when a very excitable, short, older woman with gray hair threw her arms around me and wailed, “Oh, you poor, poor child! I tried to make them stop, but nobody would stop! *Nobody* would stop to help us! Oh, honey, he was trying to do all he could to avoid hitting *me*! Oh, you poor child! I know what it’s like! I have a son who’s brain-damaged, too, and he’s out in the van praying for your husband’s life! I’m sorry . . . I’m sorry . . . I’m sorry!”

Her words, “brain-damaged, too,” pierced through me like an arrow. I silently questioned, “*Who is this woman telling me that Glenn is brain-damaged? How can she say that? Who is this woman?*” She was hanging on my shoulders, sobbing uncontrollably. I looked around and saw a woman seated on a chair and a man and another woman standing by the circular driveway entry of the ER.

I looked at the woman seated.

She spoke, “I was there. I saw what happened, if you want to talk to me.”

I couldn’t speak. I could feel my body and brain beginning to go into overload.

The wailing woman continued, “I’m so sorry! If there’s anything I can do to help, please call me. Here’s my phone number.” She handed me a torn piece of paper.

I glanced down at it. Scribbled in ink was: *Phone Lily and Scott Sharp 265-9070*. I don’t remember ever speaking. I just turned around and drifted back into the ER.

Debby said the attending doctor wanted to speak to me about Glenn. I needed to call Glenn’s mother in California. Debby took me into an examining room with a phone on the wall. She waited with me for the doctor to arrive.

The first call I made was to a friend who lived nearby. I was desperately in need of a close friend by my side. Luckily, Leon Lewis was home, and he came directly to the hospital. He arrived just as the

attending doctor walked in to speak to me. The doctor was bluntly frank. He said Glenn's state was life threatening, and he'd suffered severe head and brain trauma. He needed to be airlifted to Deaconess hospital in Spokane, Washington for brain surgery. He didn't know if Glenn could survive the flight. I couldn't believe my ears. I looked at Leon, who was also in disbelief. Leon wondered if I'd called Glenn's mother. I hadn't. I'd wanted to speak to the doctor first.

I don't remember exactly what I told Glenn's mother, Felice, when I did phone. She was a sweet woman who dearly loved Glenn and me. I know we were both crying as I delivered, in carefully chosen words, the harsh reality of Glenn's condition. I felt badly that she was so far away and unable to do anything but wait. I left it to her to phone Glenn's brothers, Ray and Billy, his sister, Gale, and his father, James. I then called my mother and father in Illinois, who were equally stunned and devastated by the news. I was grateful Leon was by my side, but even so, I still felt very alone.

A helicopter was due to arrive at Bonner General, but I was told I wouldn't be able to ride along with Glenn. I had no idea how I was going to get to Spokane, a ninety-minute-drive away, even longer in the snowstorm. My employee, Jenny, arrived at the hospital right around that time. She had a gentle, caring nature and realized I was in no condition to make the drive myself. She and Ethan's aunt volunteered to drive me to Deaconess. I accepted their offer willingly and gratefully. I was afraid Glenn might not survive the flight to the hospital. Then it suddenly dawned on me that I didn't know where our Australian Shepherd was—Toby had more than likely been with Glenn in the accident. Leon Lewis said he would inquire about Toby and make sure he was cared for.

Jenny drove me back to Jumpin' Joe's so I could get my purse. I had nothing else to take with me to Spokane. I waited in the van while Jenny went inside the café. Bill Nance, a wine aficionado with sandy, curly hair, came outside, climbed into the van and gave me a tender hug. I fell apart. Everyone at the wine tasting had said a collective prayer for Glenn. Bill told me not to worry about the café; he'd make sure everything was buttoned up tight.

It snowed hard the entire drive to Spokane. I was a complete basket case the whole way there. All I could think about were my parting words to Glenn early that morning. We had an argument about our finances, and I felt so guilty that we'd spent our last moments together at odds.

There was so much I loved about him. He was strikingly handsome with blue eyes and broad shoulders. He'd done some modeling in his younger years, so had his three siblings. His hair was the same as mine in texture, color and curl. If we'd had kids, their hair would have been magnificent. Unfortunately, children weren't in our cards—something that was often painful for us to accept. Glenn swam like a fish and loved to sail and play water polo. He'd been a Newport Beach lifeguard and had operated boats owned by the NB Harbor Patrol. He also spent many years on the ski patrol at Sandpoint's "Schweitzer Basin"—to watch him glide down the mountainside was a beautiful sight to behold. He loved animals and the outdoors, good books and movies, partaking in good food and wine, and hanging out and laughing with friends.

We'd had some problems, from time-to-time, in our relationship, but nothing atypical to most marriages. Our problems usually stemmed from matters relating to money. He was not a businessman, per se, and he preferred that I manage our finances. His shortcomings were few compared to his attributes. I expected to grow old with him. The possibility that he might not survive the flight to Spokane was incomprehensible and shattering to me.

**A** neurosurgeon was the first person to approach me at Deaconess. Glenn was alive but remained unconscious. The Bonner General report and CT scan indicated Glenn needed brain surgery, but the second

CT scan upon Glenn's arrival at Deaconess had determined brain surgery was not necessary. I was glad to hear it. Glenn had lost a lot of blood from head trauma, and that blood loss had deprived him of oxygen to his brain for a period of time. The doctor explained that if Glenn had experienced a significant loss of blood and oxygen to his brain for five minutes or more, he might never regain consciousness or brainwave activity.

I was stupefied. "Are you telling me that he may never be *himself* again?"

The doctor spoke softly but matter-of-factly, "Yes, he could be rendered brain-dead . . . although it's too early to tell because he's suffered such trauma. The days ahead will tell us more."

I knew he was attempting to offer me some hope, but I suspected he thought the odds were against Glenn recovering.

I asked, "Where is Glenn? Can I see him?"

A nurse led me down the hallway to a door and stopped. I pushed the door open and walked around a hanging sheet, not prepared for what I was about to see. A young Filipino nurse was stitching Glenn's scalp back onto his head. I whirled around and turned my back on what was taking place.

The Filipino nurse asked, "You a relative?"

With my back to her, I retorted, "He's my husband!"

She responded, "Oh, sorry." There was a brief pause, and she continued, "It's okay to turn around now."

She was holding Glenn's scalp onto his head with her left hand and stitching and pulling with her right. She remarked, "He has lots of hair . . . is very thick . . . makes it hard to see what I'm doing."

I was speechless and appalled by how nonchalant she was about the whole thing. It was all too much for me to take. I left the room.

Jenny walked over to me. She and her aunt needed to get back on the road to Sandpoint. I completely understood. I hugged her tightly and thanked her for helping me. Jenny said she'd open the café in the morning and that I shouldn't worry about it. The café was the least of my concerns. I watched them walk away, and then went to find a pay phone.

The first person I called was Daryl Durham, a barrel-chested former Marine and UP Railroad worker with an iron fist and teddy bear heart. He was ever loyal and always willing to help whenever I needed him. There was never a time I needed him more. He was living nearby in Twin Lakes and said he'd get to Spokane as soon as possible. I phoned several other Sandpoint friends and had them spread the word that Glenn was in critical condition.

The only person I knew in Spokane was Richard Anderson, a sassy southerner with a mop of black hair and a Cajon accent. He was working the night shift at a local casino, and I knew he'd be awake. Richard arrived at Deaconess shortly after midnight. He was uncomfortable with the seriousness of the situation and, although he meant well, his way of attempting to console me was by trying to be funny. I couldn't find my sense of humor. While I was talking to Richard, a nurse informed me that Glenn had been moved to the ICU where there was a more private and comfortable waiting area. We relocated, and Richard stayed in the ICU waiting room while I went to see Glenn.

His wrapped head was extremely swollen on his right side and the bandages were blood-soaked. A drain had been inserted into his head to relieve the pressure from fluid retention. His chest area was also taped. He was hooked up to all sorts of intravenous lines, and there were monitors making rhythmic beeping sounds and displaying various patterned responses. Nearby, a respirator was making a steady and annoying suction sound. Glenn was on life support.

I suddenly remembered what he'd told me a few weeks earlier. He had instructed, out of the blue, "If anything should ever happen to me, I don't want to be on life support." The irony of his statement slapped me in the face with the reality before me, and I felt like I'd betrayed him. But the neurosurgeon had told me it was too soon to tell, and that Glenn's body needed time and the chance to recover, if at all possible. I wasn't about to take Glenn *off* life support, regardless of what he'd told me a few weeks prior—I just couldn't. I stayed there awhile, holding his hand, telling him repeatedly how much I loved him and that I was sorry about our argument. I hoped he could hear my words.

When I returned to the waiting room, Richard was dozing. I sat down, and a nurse opened the door to ask if I'd like a blanket and a pillow.

"Yes, thank you."

Richard groggily inquired, "How's Glenn?"

I said out loud for the first time, "He's on life support."

Richard sighed, "Shit."

I still felt guilty and confessed, "Glenn told me just a couple weeks ago he didn't want to be on life support." I explained that we'd gone through bankruptcy in the spring of 1996, stemming from financial debt we'd accumulated while living in San Diego. "Glenn had to sell his one-ton pickup when we'd filed. That's when he purchased that old VW van."

Richard sat quietly while I rambled.

"I remember when Glenn bought the van and drove up the driveway. He was like a kid again. He couldn't wait for us to go camping in it because the backseat folded down into a bed."

Richard raised his eyebrows.

"Anyway, I was sitting in the front passenger seat, and I noticed how close the windshield was. It seemed dangerous to me. I told him, 'Yeah, it's pretty neat, but you get in a head-on in this thing and you're dead.'"

Richard also had an older VW van that was his pride and joy. He agreed they could be dangerous. He asked, "What year is his?"

"1970." I continued, "Because of my concern, I was having this reoccurring nightmare. Glenn and our dog, Toby, would be driving along the lake on highway 200 in the van, and then something would happen to cause them to go off the road. In my dream, Toby was thrown through the windshield, and then I'd wake up before I knew what happened to Glenn. That was right around the same time he told me he didn't want to be on life support. I never told Glenn about my dream."

"That's really weird," Richard responded in his Cajon dialect.

"If Glenn had been driving his one-ton pickup tonight, he might be okay."

Richard left the hospital around 2:00 in the morning. I curled up on a couch and cried myself to sleep.

I don't know how long I'd been out when I heard someone speak my name and felt the warmth of a hand touch my waist and gently rock me. I thought it might be Daryl, but when I opened my eyes and looked around the room, no one was there. I sat up with a start, and walked over to the waiting room door and opened it. I looked down the hallway in both directions. I could hear voices, but no one was in view. I walked back over to the couch and sat down. I could still feel the warm sensation of the hand on my side. As crazy as it seemed, I felt Glenn might have paid me a visit. Sure, I could have been dreaming, but it was as if the gentle rocking of the hand had told me, "*I'm okay*" . . . or . . . "*it's okay*."

About an hour later, Daryl arrived. I told him about the warm sensation on my side and the meaning I felt was attached to it. He told me that if I believed Glenn had been in the room with me, for that one brief moment, then that's what I should believe if it gave me comfort.

Glenn was still alive, but he was being *kept* alive. Maybe his spirit had already left his damaged vessel and was *out there*, hovering somewhere between our physical world and another realm, waiting to cross over into Heaven.

I told Daryl about Glenn not wanting to be on life support.

Daryl reasoned, "If you were in his shoes, I'm sure he would have done the same thing . . . given you the chance to survive."

I knew Daryl was right, but deep within my heart, I feared I'd soon find myself in the difficult position of having to make that ultimate decision for my husband. I desperately wanted to stop the hands of time to prevent that moment from ever arriving.

**D**uring the ten days Glenn was on life support, he'd undergone a multitude of tests. The results consistently indicated no brainwave activity, and he clearly could not breathe without the assistance of a respirator. I obtained the opinions of three doctors. One doctor offered a glimmer of hope and felt Glenn might eventually be able to breathe on his own, given more time; however, he was uncertain about his brain functions and future mental state. The other two doctors were very direct: they both felt Glenn's chance of breathing on his own was hopeless and his brain damage was irreversible. They firmly believed he was, and would forever remain, brain-dead. I knew Glenn wouldn't want that.

Craig Savage, Glenn's longtime pal, flew in from California to be with me. Craig always referred to Glenn as "The Captain." He was tall and slender with wavy hair and GQ good looks. Under different circumstances he had a sharp wit, and one eyebrow would typically lift when he laughed. Together we carried out Glenn's wishes, and together we cried. We drove back to Sandpoint in a whiteout—the snowflakes were as big as quarters. I felt Glenn's absence with every breath I took and exhaled. I couldn't fathom living without him.

There were so many things Glenn wanted to accomplish in his life. He had dreams, just like everyone. We'd shared many dreams together, but now those dreams had died. His death caused me to reflect on my own life in many different ways. I had experienced how fleeting life could be—there one minute, gone the next. I thought about my idol, John Lennon, and his lyrics, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." The timeliness of his lyrics made me wonder if John had a premonition shortly before his murder. I also wondered if Glenn might have had a premonition when he told me prior to his accident, "If something should happen to me, I don't want to be on life support." I, as well, was having the reoccurring nightmare about Glenn and Toby having an accident in his VW van, before it happened. It was strange.

I did the best I could to get through each day and maintain my business while grieving at the same time. Toby survived the accident, but he'd been thrown through the windshield (like he'd been in my nightmare) by the force of the collision. His left front leg had to be amputated. I repeatedly had to explain to people why his leg was missing—the absence was a constant reminder of the huge loss both Toby and I had suffered. It was hard to be around people, and all I really wanted was to curl up in a ball and not see anyone. But I couldn't do that; I had to be strong and run my business. I think I probably overcompensated by developing a tough outer shell—it was sometimes hard to not feel bitter about the hand I'd been dealt.



As the months passed, I lost interest in my café. I spent a lot of time thinking about life, my future, and what was important to me. I asked myself, *“If I were to die tomorrow, would I have fulfilled my goals? Would I have left this world having set an example by how I lived?”* I didn’t feel I had, and I was about to turn 40. Several years earlier, in 1990, Craig Savage had visited us in San Diego and brought us his old Macintosh computer as a gift. He sat down at our dining room table, turned on the Mac and announced, “Bon Bon needs to write.”

Glenn’s death was the turning point that made me realize what I needed to do. I needed to write about the Schneider murders and the circumstances that I experienced and witnessed surrounding that horrific event. I knew Pat Hanley and Rick Jones had pursued law degrees following Drabing’s conviction and were both practicing attorneys in Chicago—that annoyed me greatly. As difficult and daring as it might be, I was determined to reveal my perspective of what transpired in ’76, if it was the last thing I’d ever do.