

Sandra Wilson

From: Hoyt Family [mehoyt@mtaonline.net]
Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2009 7:30 PM
To: Sandra Wilson
Subject: RE: Hello

Sandra,

HB 2, to create a 'Birth Certificate resulting in a Still Birth' would make me and a lot of people feel complete. My daughter was still born at 36 weeks and we had a large funeral for her. The idea that the state will only accept the fact that she died is so heart breaking. How can a person die with out being born? Having that piece of paper in my hand would bring closure to the entire grieving process. This would validate that my little girl was once here and apart of our lives.

Thanks so much for bringing this bill forward.

*Michelle Hoyt
 Project Linus - Alaska Chapter
 Providing Security thru Blankets*

-----Original Message-----

From: Sandra Wilson [mailto:Sandra_Wilson@legis.state.ak.us]
Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2009 4:44 PM
To: Carletta Gemmell; Chauna Sheppard; Colleen; Dayna Murphy; Dina Banez; Gretchen Mangrobang; Kaylene Johnson; Lynnette Haas; Michelle Hoyt; Rhonda Crawford; Sandy Thomas; WesCin Yuill
Subject: Hello

Hello everyone. Today was the first day of session and I am preparing the packet that will accompany our request for hearing. I need updated letters of support. You can either write new ones or use the same ones as last year but I need them to reflect the new bill number for this bill which is HB 2. The sooner you can get these to me the sooner I will get a request in. Again I thank everyone for being willing to take the time and send me these letters.

Sincerely,

Sandra Wilson
 Staff to Rep. Carl Gatto
 907-465-3163
 Sandra_wilson@legis.state.ak.us

January 20, 2009

To the Alaska Legislature

In Support of HB 2

This is the Story of Daniel Gavin Sheppard,

My name is Chauna and in 2002, I became pregnant for the first time in my life at the age of 32. We were overjoyed and considered this a miracle baby after being diagnosed with Fertility problems.

I walked on air with happiness, eating healthier, drinking extra water and taking every breath with my precious baby in mind. That summer we purchased a larger car, a crib and swing, stocked up on diapers of various sizes, and dozens of outfits. We went to child birth classes and even did relaxation exercises at home to prepare for labor. I never missed a doctor appointment and even switched doctors so I could get higher quality care. We got ultrasound videos and pictures. I really enjoyed feeling his regular kicking, rolling and occasional hic ups.

Daniel was due on November 26th, 2002. It was that morning that after a bit of poking and juice drinking that I couldn't seem to wake my son. My doctor sent me to the maternity ward where using a Doppler speaker they couldn't hear a heartbeat. At that point we had an ultrasound where we could not see any heart movement in those tiny, clearly visible, ribs on the tv screen. It was the most painful reality of my life to know my baby had died.

I was induced at apx 2:30pm that day. We went through 17 hours of labor that including an epidural, pain and nausea medication, IV's and 2 hours of pushing. Daniel Gavin was born weighing 7lb 14oz and 19 inches long at 7:30am on November 27, 2002. His warm, soft, beautiful body was placed on my chest where my husband and I cuddled and kissed and loved him even more than the day before. The nurse bathed him. We dressed him and friends and family came to hold him as well. I distinctly remember one dear friend rocking him just like he was any other baby. The hospital took foot prints and cut a lock of hair for us to keep. They also gave us two camera's to take pictures of our beautiful boy. We were so lucky to be able to keep him with us for 12 hours. We sang to him and prayed before we had to let him go and begin the long painful journey of grief.

The next day the hospital gave us a generic card with his name and birthday on it written in marker and told us that we won't get a birth certificate because he never took a breath. This was a harsh blow after all we had been through. After all, I had given birth to Daniel and he was certainly born.

We drove home from the hospital on Thanksgiving Day with an empty car seat, empty arms and broken hearts.

As sad as this was, we still love Daniel so much, he will always be a part of our family. We do things on his birthday and other times of the year to show him our love. Though we never saw his eyes or heard him cry, my son Daniel is such a gift and we are so thankful for him. There never has been a day when I thought I wasted 9 months carrying him or a time when I wish he never existed. Never, ever... I wish the State of Alaska would not treat him as such.

In 1892 American Author Mark Twin said, "Favored above Kings and Emperors is the stillborn child." I wish stillbirth and the experience of having to deliver a dead baby was respected in this manner today.

This tragedy strikes everywhere. According to the Center for Positive Outcomes in Pregnancy in Washington DC, there are more than 39,000 stillbirths in the U.S. every year.

Historically, we share this horrific experience with John Quincy Adams, Rutherford Hayes, Ernest and Pauline Hemingway, and John and Jackie Kennedy, whose stillborn daughter is buried with her parents and siblings.

Ask any woman why she would endure the pain and agony of giving birth and she will tell you because of the 'reward' at the end...it is 'all worth it' we frequently hear. But what about the silent births- the women who get no reward for all their hard work...

I am writing this today asking you for your support...Please pass HB 2.

Sincerely,

Chauna Sheppard
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(907) 333-7650
chauna18@hotmail.com

All of our Family & Friends -

Our son, Declan Murphy Stich, was stillborn Thursday, December 6th at 3:22pm. He was a beautiful 4 pounds 15 ounces and 18.5 inches, just the right size for a baby of 37 weeks.

It was discovered at Dayna's Wednesday morning checkup that Declan's heart had stopped beating. He must have passed away between midnight and nine o'clock, because we both felt his movements the night before. We decided to induce her labor on Wednesday night. Dayna's labor was short and Declan's delivery was without complication. Dayna is healthy and beginning the process of recovery.

We were able to keep Declan with us for several hours after his birth. He was so perfect - absolutely perfect with no sign of distress or problem. We will cherish those precious few moments with our special little boy forever. We took photographs of our own, but we also had a photographer from Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep (a volunteer organization) take images for us so we may share this experience with everyone. We've attached several select pictures from our camera, and we understand if anyone is uncomfortable or uneasy viewing these. The camera does not do Declan justice, he looked very much like a normal sleeping baby.

We are, of course, completely distraught. However, our memories of the time we did have with Declan are raising our spirits. The hospital staff did some wonderful molds of his feet and cut a lock of his hair, so we do have some very physical momentos of him.

Many people have asked about his name. Declan is a VERY Irish name meaning "Full of goodness". The most famous bearer of the name Declan was St. Declan, an early Irish saint who preached in Ireland prior to the arrival of St. Patrick.

I wish I had an explanation as to why Declan has died so unexpectedly, but hopefully a limited autopsy and the results of a large battery of tests will shed some light. However, most fetal deaths like this simply have no explanation. Dayna's pregnancy was completely normal and without complication, and there were no indications that anything like this could happen. We do hope to determine if there may be problems with future pregnancies or if there is a genetic disorder that could have caused a problem.

While we will grieve for Declan and the life we've lost with him, we both feel that life must now move on. We understand that many of you will have questions or want to talk about what has happened, please don't hesitate to speak with us. It has probably been just as hard, or even harder, experience for all of you that don't have the details or latest news. We appreciate your grief for our loss and hope that this email and future conversations with us can assuage the anguish that you may feel.

We would like to thank everyone that has called, emailed, sent flowers, provided a meal, or even just given us space during these past few days. We would particularly like to show our appreciation for the professional services provided by the nursing staff at Providence Hospital (Marcie & Tricia), Dr. Allison Gibbs & Midwife Tonya Kirk from

Anchorage Women's Clinic, photography by Janna Maile (<http://www.photoartsak.com>) from The Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep Foundation, Evergreen Mortuary (<http://www.evergreenfuneral.com>), and Dayna's brother Matt for fabricating Declan's urn.

We ask that anyone who feels a need to make a contribution on behalf of our experience please consider a donation to The Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep Foundation. The web page for donations is: <http://www.nowilaymedowntosleep.org/pageDisplay.php?page=42>

While we've tried to include everyone that we touch in our daily lives as a recipient of this email, we don't have addresses for many friends or acquaintances. Please forward this to anyone that you feel needs to receive it, and we apologize if anyone receives this message more than once.

All our love - Steve & Dayna

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Steve Stich
Dayna Murphy
8040 Fairwood Cir
Anchorage, AK 99518
907-770-9132

Mayme Ohnemus

P.O. Box 754
Cooper Landing, Alaska 99572
Phone & Fax: (907) 595-1214

February 22, 2009

Representative Carl Gatto
E. Railroad Ave.
Wasilla, Alaska 99654

Phone: 376-3704

Fax: 376-6180

RE: HB 2: Stillbirth Certificate

Dear Representative Gatto:

Thank you for sponsoring HB 159 Stillbirth Certificate last year and for sponsoring HB 2 this year. I sent you some information October 16, 2008 regarding the loss of our granddaughter, Evynn Nicole Ohnemus. My daughter-in-law shared her desire to obtain a Stillbirth Certificate for our granddaughter Evynn Nicole Ohnemus born March 5, 2006. She received a note about HB 2 and asked me to contact you since I am planning to be in Juneau February 26th.

I'm so proud Amber asked me to speak on behalf of our family. She wants me to relay the pain and anguish we have suffered during the time of losing our sweet baby; tell you how the flame went out of our lives upon her death and about the huge void we have had in our lives from that loss three years ago.

Our nineteen month old grandson has rekindled the flame in our lives and continues to give us a lot of joy. We're expecting another grandbaby in July and life feels good again. Evynn's spirit is with us always and we miss her. It's important, especially to her mother and father that Evynn Nicole Ohnemus is treated with the greatest respect. She lived and she died. A Stillbirth Certificate is a small thing to ask for a family that suffered the greatest of losses, their baby.

Thank you reintroducing the bill for parents to be able to obtain a Stillbirth Certificate. This is very important to the healing process for the families of stillborn babies. Thank you for this opportunity to share our story. I urge Representatives and Senators to give 100% support for HB 2.

Sincerely,



Mayme

Enclosed: I am enclosing a letter from my daughter-in-law and the information I sent before including letter, picture page and a copy of This N That, written for the Sexy Seniors soon after the loss of our granddaughter - my husband and I couldn't bear to talk about our loss for several weeks but our friends and families deserved to know why we were grieving. They also shared in our loss.

February 21, 2009

Sandra Willson, staff
Carl Gatto
Juneau, Alaska

RE: HB 2 Certificate of Still Birth

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for sponsoring HB 2 again this year.

My name is Amber Mullican-Ohnemus. Three years ago my husband and I lost our daughter to stillbirth at 43 wks. There was no apparent cause of death. I was very disappointed the bill failed last year. It is an amazingly hard issue to deal with for me and my whole family. When we found out Evynn would not get a birth certificate it made things even harder to deal with since it seemed she was not considered alive at all. She was a wanted and planned for child. She was alive for 10 months until that gut wrenching day in March 2005. She deserves the dignity of having a birth certificate just as much as children who die of any cause minutes or even days after their births. It would mean a lot to me and my family to have a certificate of still birth to place in her baby book. The death certificate we got was so cold and hurtful it felt like she never existed in life only death.

Please, think of all of the lives you can help change for the better by providing this meaningful certificate. You may not be able to bring back our children but you can at least let us have peace with knowing they mattered and were acknowledged.

Thank you for your support on this issue,

Sincerely,



Amber W. Mullican-Ohnemus, B.S.N., R.N., CNOR.

P.O. Box 1442
Soldotna, AK 99669
907-260-4922

Newsweek

A Vast and Sudden Sadness

Each year thousands of families experience stillbirth. As science seeks causes, parents use photography to honor their babies and cope with their grief.

Claudia Kalb
NEWSWEEK

From the magazine issue dated Feb 9, 2009

Marirosa Anderson was still sweating from a workout when her cell phone rang at 8:20 p.m. on Nov. 11, a particularly cold night in northern Virginia. Anderson had planned to spend the evening with her husband and two small children. Then she saw the caller-ID number. She took a deep breath, readied herself and answered the phone. Karen Harvey, a labor-and-delivery nurse at Inova Fairfax Hospital, gave her the rundown. A baby was about to be delivered by C-section and the parents wanted photographs. Could she come right over?

Anderson threw on jeans and a sweatshirt, grabbed her camera bag and ran out the door. At the hospital, Harvey led her to a quiet room where Laurie Jackson and her husband, Michael, were waiting. Laurie's pregnancy had been easy and enjoyable, filled with the happy buzz of baby showers and the lovely air of expectation. But during a routine check that Tuesday afternoon—just three days before her due date—the Jacksons were given the incomprehensible news that their baby no longer had a heartbeat. The night before, Laurie had felt the baby kicking. Now she and Michael were confronting the impossible: saying hello and goodbye to their firstborn child at the very same time.

Anderson introduced herself, then took out her camera, turning her attention to a perfect little girl who lay still in a bassinet, peaceful in a white cotton blanket with pink and blue stripes. "She's precious," Anderson said. Then she started to shoot. The baby's face. Click. Her tiny hands. Click. Her little pink feet. Click. Now it was time for the three of them. Laurie cradled her baby girl in the crook of her elbow, Michael leaned in next to her. Together they studied their daughter's face—her mouth resembled Laurie's family, the rest was pure Michael—they whispered to each other, they came together as a family. Their baby girl weighed six pounds, seven ounces and she was 19 inches long. They named her Brenna Rose.

Pregnancy is supposed to be the most wonderful time, brimming with anticipation, kicking with newness and life. But as novelist Elizabeth McCracken writes in "An Exact Replica of a Figment of My Imagination," a recent memoir about the death of her first baby, "this is the happiest story in the world with the saddest ending." Stillbirth happens more often than we imagine—10 times more often than sudden infant death syndrome, or SIDS, a condition most every parent knows about and dreads. Every year some 26,000 babies die during or after the 20th week in their mothers' womb (a loss before that is considered a miscarriage) or die during birth. In at least half of all cases, doctors have no idea what went wrong. The impact is impossible to measure. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends—all must figure out how to absorb the vast and sudden sadness, to grieve and, in many instances, to reconcile with a God who has shaken their faith to its core.

Decades ago, stillborn babies were whisked away from their parents to morgues; doctors and nurses pretended nothing happened, mothers were medicated with Valium, parents suffered their sorrow alone. It was in the late 1970s and early 1980s that the medical and psychological thinking about stillbirth began to evolve when researchers started studying the impact of a baby's death and parents began telling their stories. From silence and detachment came acknowledgment and

remembrance. Today nurses encourage parents to hold the babies. Molds of hands and feet are created. Locks of hair are collected. And photographs are taken. Not just the clinical snapshots that nurses have been capturing for years, but striking and sensitive portraits that have burgeoned since the formation of a group called Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep in 2005.

Volunteer photographers who belong to the group, including Anderson, take pictures of stillborn babies—and babies expected to die soon after birth—for their parents at no cost. The idea was born from the life of Maddux Haggard, who was 6 days old and on life support in Colorado when his parents, Cheryl and Mike, decided they wanted pictures of their baby and contacted Sandy Puc', a local photographer well known for her beautiful baby portraits. After that photo session four years ago, Cheryl Haggard and Puc' founded Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep, which has since grown to 7,000 photographers, most of them professionals, across the globe.

Photographing the dead may seem strange, even morbid, especially in our American culture so uncomfortable with death. Those feelings are only intensified when the dead are the newly born or just hours or days old. "We associate giving birth with life, with the future, with the defiance of death," says Irving Leon, a psychologist at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor who specializes in reproductive loss. "To have that smashed, violated so powerfully, it's something people don't want to look at, both literally and metaphorically."

Postmortem photography, though, has a long and treasured past. In the 19th century, when people died at home, families spent much of their savings on expensive silver daguerreotypes depicting their loved ones after they had passed away. Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep is a modern-day incarnation of this "memento mori" photographic genre (Latin for "remember your death"). Memories facilitate grieving, says Leon, which is critical to long-term healing. Holding a baby, talking to her and photographing her—all create memories that help parents cope with a devastating loss.

Parents who are hesitant about holding their babies often change their minds toward the end of a shoot, realizing that they'll have no other chance to embrace their child. And the sessions bestow a quiet time for mothers and fathers to treasure and honor their babies without any interruption from nurses or doctors. In years past, parents didn't expect all of their children to live. Today babies are dreamed about and dwelt on, and the deep attachment that develops between parents—especially mothers—and their unborn children starts earlier than ever before. At eight weeks, a baby's heartbeat can be seen on ultrasound; parents now find out gender and assign names months before their babies are born. All this has intensified the grief reactions many women feel after they suffer not just a stillbirth, but a miscarriage too, says Leon.

Studies show that mothers benefit from bonding with their stillborn babies. Joanne Cacciatore, a researcher at Arizona State University, studied 3,000 women and found that those who had the chance to see and hold their babies had fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety. This benefit may be temporarily reversed during a subsequent pregnancy. And nobody should be pressured to hold their babies. But more than 80 percent of women who did not regretted the lost opportunity. Cacciatore, whose fourth baby, Cheyenne, died in 1994, calls this a period of "ritualization," a time for parents to honor their child and to feel some semblance of control during an emotionally chaotic time. Holding a stillborn baby allows women to connect and then separate themselves from their babies after months united in the same body. And it gives parents the chance to create positive memories, rather than live with the unknown: What did she feel like? Whose nose did she have? Was she peaceful?

Doctors, nurses and social workers who encounter stillbirth have come to know this, and their thinking about how to care for patients has evolved enormously. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's seminal 1969 book, "On Death and Dying," exposed the impact of loss and the long and intricate process of grieving. Parents of stillborn babies started talking about what it felt like to lose their children; physicians and psychologists began challenging the hush-hush approach. Michele Schwarzmann, director of maternal child health at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, can't forget the first stillbirth she witnessed in the 1970s. "Michele, you can't cry, you have to be strong," she remembers her supervisor telling her. A decade later, Schwarzmann says she was finally allowed to express her sadness: "I sobbed for every baby I never got to cry over."

Stillbirth is in many ways a medical mystery. Despite its gravity, it has been largely overlooked. Even today, researchers don't know the true incidence of stillbirth nor do they fully understand why it happens. In some cases, doctors can identify a cause—a prenatal infection that travels from mother to baby, a genetic anomaly, a placental abruption, an umbilical-cord accident. But in at

least half of all cases—more than 10,000 a year—they can't pinpoint the problem. "Over the last 50 years, we've put a lot of research and clinical energy into preventing sick babies from dying after birth and a lot of energy into premature babies," says Dr. Robert Silver, an Ob-Gyn at the University of Utah School of Medicine. "We haven't put the same energy into stillbirth."

All that became clear at a workshop held by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in 2001. "We realized that we needed to do a study that was larger than anything undertaken in this country," says Dr. Catherine Spong, chief of NICHD's Pregnancy & Perinatology Branch. With NICHD funding, Silver and other researchers began collecting data on more than 500 stillbirths at five sites around the country. Now they're analyzing the information. The hope is that the new information will help researchers sort out how to reduce a woman's risk for stillbirth, identify problems in advance so that couples can prepare for a loss and, ultimately, save lives.

No matter how good the science gets, however, some number of babies will continue to die and parents will continue to grapple with the shock. Not long after joining *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep* in 2007, photographer Jennifer Clark got a call from a hospital near Salt Lake City. The parents, Melina and Tom Anderson (unrelated to Marirosa Anderson), had three other children—a son, Jack, then 6, and two daughters, Amy, 4, and Mae, 2—and they were excited about welcoming their fourth, another girl, named Ella. At 39 weeks, however, the baby's heartbeat started dropping precipitously and Melina had to have an emergency C-section under general anesthesia. Melina remembers waking up and hearing her doctor say, "I'm so sorry, she didn't make it." The umbilical cord, wrapped tightly four times around the baby's neck and once around her arm, had cut off her blood supply. Melina "made the kind of sound you never want to hear," says Tom. "Not really a scream, but almost. A moan." And then she started to cry.

Clark was nervous. "I remember standing outside the door before I went in and I prayed," she says. "I wanted to make photos they would cherish." She also remembers a sense of peacefulness as she worked. It was a sacred time, and she was buoyed by the gratitude shown by Tom and Melina. But she was also profoundly saddened. At times, she had to put her camera down to wipe the tears from her eyes as she captured the images. Amy touching Ella's fingers. Mae, in her pink-and-yellow kitty-cat pajamas, a pacifier in her mouth, peering at the baby's face. Jack, who had accompanied his mother to every doctor's appointment. Tom and Melina looking at their daughter's face.

The next day Tom carried his daughter to a hospital exit next to the ER, far from the place where new mothers are wheeled out with newborns in their arms and smiles on their faces. A mortuary attendant strapped Ella onto a gurney and drove off in a big white van. In the weeks after Ella's burial, Melina suffered both physical and emotional pain. Her breasts had to be bandaged to stop the milk from coming in—a poignant reminder of what should have been. Pregnant women brought tears to her eyes; new babies made her think about the milestones she was missing with Ella. But tangled up in the sadness was the conviction that Ella needed to be remembered. Clark's images allowed Melina to savor a face that was fading from her memory. And the Andersons' tributes to their daughter now assure her a constant place in the family. On the first anniversary of Ella's birth, the Anderson family held hands at her grave and sang "Happy Birthday." Then they went out for dinner and shared a birthday cake.

When Clark first heard about *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep*, she felt a powerful urge to participate, but she never imagined that she'd find herself on the other side of the lens. Last year Clark was overjoyed to discover she was pregnant. Her first three babies were healthy. This time, Clark's fetus was diagnosed with trisomy 18, a genetic disorder so catastrophic that less than 10 percent of babies make it to their first birthday. The Clarks, devout Mormons, never considered terminating the pregnancy. Above all else, they prayed that their little boy would be born alive and that he would live for some time—hours, days, weeks, maybe even long enough to go home.

Connor Clark was born on Dec. 22 at 5:54 p.m. For just over an hour, his parents, his siblings—Ellison, 10, Sydney, 7, and Hayden, 2—his grandparents and some of his many aunts and uncles held him, talked to him, rejoiced in him. Two photographers from *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep* shot the sobbing and the smiles, the kisses, the hugs, the gentle cradling and the embrace between Jennifer and her husband, Spencer, when they realized they were losing their son. At 7:20 p.m., Connor took his last breath. At his funeral service two days after Christmas, the Clarks showed a powerful video compilation of black-and-white photographs set to music for their family and friends. A life deeply mourned, a life lovingly celebrated.

To learn more about *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep*, [visit their website](#). For additional information on stillbirth and to find support resources for families, visit the [M.I.S.S. Foundation](#) and First Candle. [LINKwww.firstcandle.org](http://www.firstcandle.org) And for more on research conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Development, you can [visit their site](#).

With Andy Murr

URL: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/182572>

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