

In Loving Memory of Michael and Cathryn Borden

by Susan Richman

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A light of innocence has gone out in the homeschooling community within Pennsylvania. We are all burdened with grief, sadness, and horror at the terrible story unfolding in Lititz PA about the actions of 18-year-old homeschool student David Ludwig. Charged with the double murder of the parents of 14-year-old homeschooler Kara Beth Borden, David is being held now in the Lancaster County Prison. The news of the continuing investigation is probably most thoroughly documented at the Lancaster newspapers' site at www.lancasteronline.com. So that people can stay informed, the PA Homeschoolers message board will also continue to post links to articles from the news media. New information about the complexities of the situation has been coming out daily, and will continue to do so for a good while, we imagine. This sad, sad situation, of a boy with much promise succumbing to evil, has given us all pause. We are all looking inward, all seeing what possible lessons we might learn, all aching with sorrow for these two families that are in such pain and anguish.

The community is crushed, but is finding ways to uplift and give support and help to the devastated families. We especially want to let all homeschoolers in Pennsylvania and beyond know about the trust fund that has now been started to help in the support of the three younger Borden children.

**Borden Family Trust
c/o Blue Ball Bank
PO Box 448
Lititz, PA 17543**

A website for the trust fund will be available soon at www.Bordenfamilytrust.org.

One of the story lines coming out gradually is that at least some of the friends of David had been trying, if unsuccessfully, to turn him from his wrong ways. David was apparently very worried that one friend in particular might tell authority figures if he really knew what was going on. I know that most teens, homeschooled or not, feel true loyalty for their friends, and hate the thought of "ratting" on friends to parents, pastors, teachers, or others in authority positions. This sad situation is a wake-up call to all of us to reinforce with our teens that there are times when telling is what is *required*, that when evil is occurring this is no time to be silent or protective of secrets. Telling may not have averted this tragedy, of course, and sometimes no friend or adult can help. But we must try, and we must know that this is the right thing to do. We need to talk with our kids about this issue.

Another thing that is coming to light is that parents need to be able to access all websites that their teens are running, especially weblogs where students post ongoing journals of their daily happenings, with links to friends' weblogs. Many parents probably are still unaware that such sites even exist, or would be surprised (make that "shocked") at how

candid teens can be on these sites about questionable activities they are engaged in. Though allowing our teens growing amounts of privacy and independence is natural and good in most cases, this experience brings home the truth that there are ways today for teens to hide immoral activities, using technology that many of us simply don't understand. We need to become more web-savvy if we are to be able to supervise our kids' lives in today's world. We need to realize that there are warning signs for behavior that is turning towards evil intent, and to use all tools to gain information so that situations can be monitored. We need to realize that although most homeschool teens are wholesome, with probably fewer adolescent problems than many, still homeschooling is no panacea. Possibilities for going astray exist broadly in our society and can enter into our homes quite readily.

Last night at our Friday Shabbat dinner, we had the table set with an array of candles, as always-- one for each of our children, one each for Howard and me, one each for our grandchildren and for our children's spouses, and one for a friend unable to light her own Shabbat candles. I love to watch these flames quietly after the festive meal is over as we let the candles burn down completely without blowing them out, as is traditional. I noticed again how differently each of these seemingly identical candles burn. Some gutter and splutter and spill wax down over the candleholders and onto the brass tray they are sitting upon. Some burn neatly and cleanly, with no drips at all. Some flames flit about as if hit with a brisk wind, burning out hurriedly and passionately, while six inches away the next candle may be perfectly calm, burning slowly and evenly, glowing brightly for an hour more than its twin. The other week one of these Shabbat candles actually burned some of my hair as I got too close to the flame while leaning over to reach something.

These candles are like our children in many ways. We set them each on their path; we light them with great hope, as they are our greatest treasure. They seem to have near identical starts, or at least similar nurturing within the same home. But they are each unique, and call for different types of parenting responses from us. They may respond to winds we can't even sense. We cannot predict their path or their choices or their ways of handling life's many buffets and bruises. We can all at times feel like God in Isaiah 1:2, who cries out in anguish, "I reared children and brought them up-- and they have rebelled against Me!" We can feel broken-hearted as well as proud, burnt as well as grateful, torn as well as enriched. Parenting, and all of life, is a great risk-- one that is full of love and good deeds of kindness, but also fraught with danger and bad temptations. We always hope our children will make the right choices-- but sometimes they do not, and sometimes the consequences are life-wrenching.

We in Pennsylvania are all saddened right now at the loss of one candle that we had looked on with fond hope, and at the snuffing out of the lives of two loving parents. Our hearts go out to the Ludwig and Borden families in this hour of great sadness and overwhelming need. We hope that they gain strength over time from the many prayers being cried out on their behalf, now and into the future.