

way down, to block traffic so we could go right straight through.

Bleeding internally, Harold went into surgery as soon as Mrs. Kuhn signed the hospital consent form. She describes the situation:

. . . in the hospital, I thought, 'How stupid! Why is she asking me all those questions?' I wanted to see what was wrong with my son I was the only one there. Otto didn't get there until about five minutes after I did, and she wanted the Blue Cross card, and she wanted me to fill out these forms But it was just the admittance girl, and that's her job . . . they could do surgery, but he was going to die without it and might die with it, but he had no chance without it.

The nurses took Mrs. Kuhn to a room upstairs, where her husband and other sons were waiting. The nurses:

. . . were very nice, they brought us coffee and asked if there was anything we needed, did they want a doctor for me . . . the Sisters came to see us too.

To Sophie's dismay, however, kin, friends, and neighbors thronged in the hospital room to inquire about Harold:

I resented having so many people with us--I couldn't talk. I felt like everybody was watching me and listening to everything I said, and what if I said something dumb? There was so many people in the room, and everybody was quiet I wanted to talk to Otto . . . my kids were sitting with me . . . and their girlfriends.

Within hours, Harold died. A doctor led Mr. and Mrs. Kuhn into the room where Harold lay. They viewed him and then went home.

The Kuhn residence was jammed with people who came to assist the family through its crisis. It is a neat, one-story, three-bedroom, aluminum frame home on a tree-lined street in Maple Grove, just across the northern boundary of Okera. The house has about 1,000 square feet of interior space. Mrs. Kuhn was overwhelmed:

They were all here . . . I have two brothers that live here, and my two brothers were here . . . my sister-in-law, my nieces, and my sister And we had best friends who had six daughters . . . they stayed with us . . . for probably two or three weeks The confusion was too much.

Sophie felt a strong need to be by herself:

. . . people say . . . when everybody is around, it's easier, don't leave them alone. But you gotta have time to be

alone I'd go into my room and shut the door, and I'd lay there I just wanted to think about myself, and I'd hear somebody open the door, and I would close my eyes and pretend I was sleeping 'Give her something, make her take a shot, call the doctor.' I didn't want anything. It was just constant It's like they thought something is wrong with me--they were afraid I would do something . . . they . . . wanted to give me medication, but because I already have buried a child, and I can remember when our daughter died--we lost her in crib death--they had me so drugged up that I didn't know what was going on, when this happened, I said, 'No, you're not giving me anything, I'm not going to have my sorrow a month from now. I want to have it now.' It bugged me, because I had no privacy, and I couldn't be alone with sorrow . . . Otto understood.

Yet the Kuhns were deeply grateful for all the help they received:

Sue [a friend] was here all day She took all the phone calls; she wrote everything down. Dan [her husband] would come right home from work at 4 o'clock and stay. I don't know how they managed . . . with six kids at home--and their kids weren't that big. They couldn't have [slept] more than four hours, or three hours during the night. I don't know how Dan got up and went to work . . . he had to be dead tired . . . our friends and neighbors were just so fantastic, especially the neighbors.

I have a brother who is an attorney--they live up in Owen Sound--he and his wife came down immediately, and he made all the funeral arrangements for us, which he had done for our first child, too. He's very good friends with the fellow who owns the Perry Funeral Home. We had already bought four lots at Little Chapel, so we . . . didn't have to go through that.

After the whirl of events culminating in Harold's funeral subsided, the Kuhns faced hospital bills and legal issues. They were generally satisfied with the treatment they received from the hospital staff and were especially touched by the letter they received from the Head Sister expressing great sorrow over Harold's untimely death. But they resented the bill they received for the blood transfusions Harold was given as the doctors tried to save his life:

We got a bill from the hospital for blood . . . it was either \$650 or \$750. We didn't know that you can't replace blood anymore . . . it doesn't matter if you have given it or not. You must pay for it All the guys at the city [Mr. Kuhn's employer] said, 'Otto, we'll go over and take care of the blood for you, don't even think about it.' . . . and they found out they

couldn't do it. It was a petty thing at the time, but it was very difficult paying that bill.

Meanwhile, the police caught the driver of the automobile that caused Harold's death. It turned out to be a man in his late fifties, a custodian with the Maple Grove public schools. He lives just six houses down a block intersecting the street where the Kuhns reside. His house is visible from theirs. He did not have a bad driving record and evidently was not under the influence of alcohol at the time of the accident. Eye witnesses claimed his car spurred to 50 mph in the 25 mph zone where the accident occurred. Mrs. Kuhn says:

We know a couple of people who had seen the accident who were willing to go to court and say how fast he was going. We know Judge Wein, who was the man who talked with him and had him in his courtroom, and all during the hearing . . . he [the judge] would call my husband, and he asked my husband to come to court. My understanding is that he got the maximum he would have gotten in circuit court . . . there weren't enough witnesses to convict him of anything, other than manslaughter, for which he received one year probation, one year without a driver's license, and I believe it was a \$1,000 fine We absolutely refused to sue. This man's home is free and clear I just did not want to go through all this in court. It was all done within . . . ten, fifteen days [after the accident].

Apparently the man who caused the accident has his own problems:

His wife is in a mental institution. He has a son who has big problems--he's been in and out of institutions. I understand he left [after the accident] . . . and didn't come back for a month or six weeks.

Perhaps the lightness of the man's sentence impelled one of the Kuhn's older sons to throw a firebomb at the man's house about a month later:

. . . all it did was crack the front window . . . the man wasn't even there. We've had problems with John before that, and John has had problems with the police in different little episodes. They sent him to circuit court; he pleaded guilty; and due to the circumstances, he was given no fine or anything; he was given probation. Arson is serious; I think it's five to fifteen [years] It's a felony.

Harold's death did not strain the Kuhns financially. Harold was a dependent child who did not yet support himself or contribute to the household budget. Otto and Sophie Kuhn consider their combined income adequate to meet the needs of their family. Otto was earning about \$20,000 a year as a technician in the Maple Grove Water Department when Harold died. Sophie had been working for three years as a clerk for the Cancer Foundation and was making between \$6,000 and \$7,000 a year. The Kuhns had no major outstanding debts, aside from

their home mortgage, and they owe only \$2,000 on the principal today. They also have a modest savings and a few investments: "We have bonds. We've never been great for savings accounts, but we take bonds out." Otto's medical insurance covered most of Harold's hospital expenses. The cost of Harold's funeral exceeded \$3,000. Sophie Kuhn relates:

My brothers, they all gave us money . . . people sent us checks to help with the funeral, and the city took up a collection, even the police department took up a collection . . . each department took separate collections to help us . . . and we had extra money left over [about \$300] after paying expenses, and we gave it all to the Church for mass for Harold . . . we had mass cards galore.

Sophie does not regard the settlement from the driver's insurance company as the product of a legal suit:

When Harold died, we got \$20,000 insurance. My brother is my attorney . . . and he felt that we should sue, and I said, 'Fred, I just don't want any part of it.' So he said, 'Well, the man is insured for \$20,000, his car . . . you will have [that] coming to you.' My brother handled all of it . . . we put the money in the bank. And of course our son John gave us lots of problems, and about \$8,000 of that went for legal fees for John. My mother says, 'Well, thank God you had the money to help,' because my son is a very lucky boy not to have spent fifteen years in prison.

Finally, "One thing we did do is . . . [buy] land up North, and we put a mobile home on it . . . this was bought with [the insurance] money."

On the other hand, the emotional impact of Harold's death upon the Kuhn family has been profound. Otto's and Sophie's continuing bereavement six years after the event permeates their marital relationship and affects their interaction with their surviving children. Contrasts in how the different family members deal with their grief reflect the structure of relationships and communication within the Kuhn household.

Otto and Sophie were married in 1963. It was his first marriage and her second. Mrs. Kuhn's family helped the couple out early in their marriage:

My parents used to go to Florida every winter . . . until my sister died. We got married in September, and they were leaving in October to go to Florida. And they said, 'Why don't you . . . stay here?' We already had the three boys [from Sophie's first marriage]. In fact, Harold was born right after they left, and they said, 'All you guys have to do is pay the utilities.' So . . . that's what we did, and we saved our money and bought this house. We only had to put \$250 down. We only paid \$7,000 for it . . . and we've been here seventeen years now When we bought this house, we had \$69 a month house payments, and my husband brought home \$50 a week . . . we

were only in here for about six months when I got pregnant with my daughter.

Thus, Otto and Sophie Kuhn had two children of their own in quick succession. But their daughter, Kathleen, died suddenly and tragically when she was just a half a year old. Otto and Sophie grieved together, but they still had Harold.

Sophie and Otto have great commitment to one another and to their children. Otto is the primary breadwinner for his family. He is a remote, but benign authority figure to the children. Sophie is responsible for shaping the children's character and tending the home, with her husband's backing and occasional aid. She always has adjusted her work schedule to the needs of family members. She is not career-oriented, although she has risen to the position of assistant supervisory clerk in her job. She says:

I never gave up my family time for the money, never
If my kids were sick, I was home . . . if the kids were out of school this week, I would not work this week. I was considered a part-time, temporary employee.

Harold disliked eating lunch in school, so Sophie juggled her breaks at work in order to go home to prepare his lunch. Otto joined them. The older boys were in junior high school and had to eat lunch inside the building.

Otto has been a true father to Sophie's sons by her first marriage. Sophie notes:

Otto has never said, 'Those are your boys.' He always bought a gift himself for the kids at Christmastime. There was always one thing that was just from dad.

Otto characteristically gave all the boys the same present--fine hunting knives one year, clock-radios another year. Sophie observes:

With all the trouble we had with John, believe me, a natural father would have walked out One thing he would not do--my son served six months in jail for this arson--was visit him in jail.

John had several run-ins with the police during his teenage years. Sophie never protected him from the consequences of his wrongdoings when officers confronted her with his misdemeanors. In her words:

John would break into a house, you know, the police would come to the door, and I would never say, 'Are you sure it was John?' I knew John . . . did it, and I faced it.

Sophie appreciates Otto's virtues. She describes his behavior towards her:

My husband, to show me he loves me, will make dinner, he'll clean the house. Otto isn't like other husbands that are

always patting them [wives] on the fanny or kissing
I weighed 200 pounds when Otto and I got married
When my back goes out, he'll say, 'Sophie, you have got to
take off a couple of pounds . . . you can't carry all that
weight around.' He takes me wherever I want to go, he's
not ashamed of me.

Since Harold's death, however, Otto has become increasingly withdrawn. Just before Sophie's interview, Otto asked her, "You sure you just don't want to shut the drapes?" and, implicitly, not revive the pain of Harold's death by speaking of it to a stranger.

In view of Otto's expression of love through helpful actions rather than empty words, his communicative distance from the children, and his reluctance to show his own emotions, it is not surprising that he simply cannot speak of Harold's death to anyone. Sophie comments:

I don't think he ever will be able to talk about it
I think the most he ever talked about the accident to any-
body was Judge Wein, and I think only then because he was
forced to But he's adjusting the only way he
knows how . . . to ignore it He almost ignores
that we even had him [Harold] He completely blocks
it out.

Nevertheless, subtle changes in Otto's behavior reveal the depths of his grief. Sophie notes:

My husband has taken to going to the bar . . . before [the
accident] . . . it was always Monday or Tuesday and then
on Friday, usually 7:00 or 7:30. First time, he'd come
home about 6:00. But now this has happened, he goes every
single night--Monday through Friday--he does not sleep
. . . if he doesn't have three or four beers Otto
won't drink in the home.

Furthermore, Otto used to see his friends every day at work and afterwards, and the Kuhns vacationed with these friends every year. Now, according to Sophie:--
"Otto doesn't like to be around them any more--it just bothers him." Perhaps the most poignant twist in Mr. Kuhn's mourning for his lost children, especially for Harold, is his refusal to move. So the Kuhns endure the agony of living within view of the house of the man who caused their son's death, and they catch glimpses of him occasionally. Yet they certainly could afford to move. Sophie explains:

I want to move, because I don't like the memories. My husband won't move, because he wants the memories. He never says anything unless he's had a few drinks And he'll say, 'No way, Sophie, you're not selling my house. My kids were born here, my kids died here, and I'm staying here.' Here is like a planted tree--this is where his family is, and he's not going to leave here.

I see the man [whose car killed Harold] every day For the whole year he walks back and forth in front of my house . . . to go to work . . . and coming home It got so I wouldn't even go out in the front. I knew he would be coming home around 5, and I wouldn't sit on the porch at 5 o'clock. I would stay in the house so I wouldn't have to see him. Even now, he has a car . . . and I see him whippin' in and out of here all the time, and it bothers me He's never approached us at all . . . and to be very honest with you, I think he's very wise not to. I've been tempted so many times when I see him go around the corner to throw a brick through his window.

Sophie's mother often urges her to move:

. . . and, of course, I have my mother on my back. My mother wants me in a brick home. She doesn't feel an aluminum home . . . I'm the only one of the children that lives in a small home of this nature.

Sophie also yearns to live in a better neighborhood:

We're getting such raunchy people moving into Maple Grove. Maple Grove--this was my grandmother's and grandfather's homestead; they owned most of it.

Resisting her mother's wishes and her own, Sophie also suppresses her admittedly irrational impulses to blame Otto for Harold's death:

I really had to fight, be very careful, because I think it would have been easy for me . . . to just walk out I sometimes think you blame each other for it . . . we had bought a home on the other side of Maple Grove, and I still say that if we would have moved, this wouldn't have happened, and we bought another home with a built-in pool that we wanted, and we backed out on that one, and I think if we . . . moved, Harold wouldn't have been on that corner So at that point in my life, the only way to keep my sanity and to be content in my marriage and to stay where I was, was to say, 'Look, Sophie, no matter where you were, when God wants you, you're going!'

Thus, Sophie is resigned to remaining in her present home: "Now I've accepted it."

Although Sophie feels her husband supported her "by just being there" during the pain-filled days surrounding Harold's funeral, she cannot share her grief with him now. Tangible and intangible reminders of Harold constantly intrude upon her consciousness:

I don't have any pictures of my kids out, but I have pictures of my two little guys in my wallet, and we have albums, full of Christmas and vacation pictures of the kids. We still

have all of Harold's things. They are up in the attic, his bedding--everything . . . and I never touched any of it--it's packed there. When our first child died, my two sisters came over . . . and . . . packed everything and took it out. I resented that, and I did Harold's things myself--my husband helped me. We did it together . . . we went and bought these storage chests. In fact, three years ago, we went up and said we've gotta clean the attic up. So we went upstairs, and we got rid of all the games and we gave it to my niece, for her little boy, so that was the first thing I've been able to discard. But as far as the other things, they just sit there--his jacket, everything.

I have everything from the funeral, for both my children. I have separate boxes upstairs . . . all the cards, every sympathy card I got, and I get into moods sometimes when I get them down, and I sit and go through them I feel sorry for myself I have my own private times alone by myself, when I think about it.

. . . the worst time is my birthday. Because it was the day after my birthday he was killed . . . and since that's happened, I never work on my birthday. They all know at work, they aren't going to see me for two or three days . . . and I stay home. I take my mother out to lunch I don't necessarily think about Harold all the time . . . it's kind of like my own memorial service I just don't want to be bothered by anybody.

. . . it was a long time before I got used to not having him in the house. I would sit here and wait for him to come home from school, or I would check his room I still have bad days.

When my daughter died, I went to the cemetery constantly. I have not gone at all since Harold died. My boys go, and they take flowers, and they go and they see, but I can't do it I think the longer you have a child, the more difficult it is.

Redecorating the room where Harold once slept helped ease the transition to life without him:

We had Luke and John in the big bedroom in the back, and then Jim and Harold had this other room, and I can remember I moved him out of there immediately and closed that room off, and wouldn't let anybody use it . . . maybe a year after he was gone . . . the boys split up . . . Luke left home, he went to Florida. Then we let Jim have one room, and John had the other room. We just redecorated it, and in fact Otto's got a TV in there he's working on. Once it was painted, and new carpeting put in, then it was all right.

Sophie at least can speak of Harold and of her bereavement with close relatives and friends:

I have friends that I can talk about it to. My mother and dad . . . don't mind me talking about it . . . and my sister . . . and they all talk freely with me. So if I don't have him [Otto] to talk to, I don't feel any great loss.

During the interview, Mrs. Kuhn frequently seemed on the verge of tears. Her eyes clouded up, and her voice quavered, but she went on with her story resolutely. She obviously still feels her son's loss deeply. She claims that her attitude toward life has changed sharply since Harold died:

I am very, very intolerant of other people I don't have a lot of feeling for them and their problems . . . I think . . . what a stinkin' little problem you've got, and you're sitting here and bawling over it and having fits . . . people will say, 'I need a new car,' or, 'I want this,' or 'I want that.' And I say, 'My God . . . you've got your kids.'

Sophie Kuhn has become an impatient, bitter humanist.

Sophie's surviving sons love and respect their parents. They also are close to one another, and they adored Harold. They too grieve for him, yet they are involved in the construction of their own futures. Sophie feels that only John, the son who threw the firebomb, suffered a difficult adjustment and temporary setback when Harold was killed:

John really went bad on me. I could not cope with it. When it just got too bad, he had a girlfriend who was going to college in Colorado, and he went there, and he did fantastically . . . he was eighteen and a half . . . he got into the plumbing trade, and he got his plumbing license in Colorado He makes fantastic money; in fact, he just moved back here last year He's got his own home.

Fortunately, John did not take up with his old chums on his return to Maple Grove. He has a new girlfriend, an executive secretary at Smith Plastics, who lives with him most of the time and whom he may marry. He evidently has settled down. He often visits his oldest brother, Luke, who also has his own home. Sophie says:

John . . . averages at least one night a week [at Luke's], not staying all night, but . . . he goes with his girlfriend and spends the evening . . . watching TV and fooling around.

Luke never got into trouble, but Sophie worries about him anyway:

The only thing with my older son is that he seems to have a need to belong to something . . . he joined a motorcycle

thing, which I disapproved of greatly, and most of the kids . . . men . . . that are in this group are from this area . . . they aren't bad kids. All of them have trades--they're electricians, plumbers, and carpenters, and some of them are in tool-and-die . . . like Luke.

Sophie's anxieties over Luke exasperate Otto who:

doesn't mind it [the motorcycle group]. He says . . . that there's never been a problem . . . they bought land up north, which they have . . . built cabins on He says, 'You yell at Luke and you never had problems with Luke, it was always John you had problems with.'

Of all the boys, Jim was Harold's most inseparable companion. The two were only a year apart. Yet Jim has adjusted well to Harold's death. Sophie describes Jim, the only boy still living at home:

A Joe College kid, he's gung ho into everything. He's going into the service [the Navy]--he wants to be a cop. He's in his last year of school now . . . plus he goes over to the Mapleton County Educational Service Center It's for kids that don't want to go to college, and they give them a trade. Jim's taken almost every course they have over there . . . he does not want to go to college. We can afford to send him He's just not a bookworm . . . I wish he would have gone to college. My two oldest boys both quit school and went back and got their diplomas through night school But I've been cheated out of graduations . . . even Jim . . . has no intentions of going through his graduation--all he wants is his diploma.

Despite her dashed dreams and motherly tribulations, Sophie is gratified that all her sons have come out all right in the end. The older boys frequently have dinner in their parents' home, and one does his laundry there regularly. Sometimes Sophie and her sons pour through the old photograph albums and reminisce about the good times when Harold was still alive. Sophie and the boys have always spoken openly with one another, so they can talk about Harold together now. Otto may overhear their conversations, but the boys never discuss Harold directly with him.