

Bobby's Story

by Taryn R. Hutchison

As I stuffed the last armload of books in my crate, I heard the distinctive sound of a Volkswagen Beetle pulling up in front of my apartment. I looked out to see my friend Bobby, with his characteristic red bandana covering his long blonde ponytail, drive up onto the sidewalk and park his trademark convertible black bug directly underneath my window. He leaped over the door instead of climbing out.

“Don't come down, Sis!” he yelled up to me. “I have a plan.”

Bobby bounded up the steps and rapped on the door before I could get to it.

“What's your plan?” I asked.

“It's simple. Just watch,” he said. He picked up my mattress as though it was a piece of paper, carried it to the window, and heaved it down onto the back seat of the open convertible.

I watched Bobby pick up each dresser drawer and throw them down, one at a time, onto the mattress, as though it was a trampoline. I had never witnessed a quicker moving job. When all of my meager belongings were on the car, Bobby tied them down with rope. He positioned me on top of the mattress, looking a bit like Granny of the Beverly Hillbillies, and we made our way across town to my new apartment.

The best part was driving past the sorority house where several of my friends lounged on the front porch, looking positively green with envy. Bobby was the most popular guy on our small campus. The quarterback of our football team, he was tall with chiseled features and brilliant blue eyes. Bobby had his own style and everyone,

whether athlete, Greek, or geek, loved him. He transcended the cliques. He was cool and I was proud to be his friend, still amazed that somehow I’d struck up a special connection with someone so sought after. I guess it didn’t hurt that we shared the same last name. Bobby often joked that we were brother and sister, which helped me guard my heart from doing cartwheels in his presence.

It had already been two years since I left my small town for college, with my youth group’s counsel to find a Christian group on campus fresh in my mind. I honestly had looked, but there didn’t seem to be anything. As a matter of fact, I didn’t know even one student who was a follower of Christ. *No matter. I can do this on my own. Just you and me, God. We’ll be fine.*

In the beginning, I really did try to read my Bible in my dorm room, but when a friend would come in, I’d hide it under my pillow. I didn’t want anyone to think I was strange. It was the mid-1970s and some poor souls bore the label Jesus freak. That would *not* happen to me. Having fun and being popular were bigger priorities than growing in my relationship with Christ. I relegated Jesus to the wings while I let my friends take center stage in my life.

Shortly after Bobby moved me to my new apartment, the first car accident happened. By the end of my junior year, eight of the football players had been in car crashes, some critical and others not so serious. Everyone had pulled through in the end, but it was unsettling, to say the least. God kept trying to get my attention, but I turned a deaf ear.

One Thursday evening in November, Bobby came by to visit. I noticed the clock read 7:30 when I opened the door.

He got straight to the point. "What's so different about you, Sis? Why are you happier than most people?"

I knew exactly what he was after. Somehow he'd seen a glimmer of Christ's light through all the boards I'd erected to try to block Him out. It felt too hypocritical to say, "I'm different because Jesus is in my life" when I tried to hide that fact. Besides, I didn't know what to say or how to say it. So I evaded his question. We chatted a bit and Bobby left about 8:30.

The next morning, my boss met me at the door to my office. "Another football player was in an accident last night. Terrible head-on collision. This one was killed."

"Who was it?" I asked. Somehow I knew the answer.

"The quarterback."

My friend Bobby was dead. A drunk driver in the wrong lane met him at the top of a hill. Bobby was killed instantly in his VW bug about 9:30. One hour after he left me.

I was so shaken I had to leave work. God had my attention now. At home, I sobbed all day. I reached for my Bible, hoping for comfort, and a booklet fell out. I read it; it felt as though I was peering into a mirror. The booklet stated that it's impossible to live the Christian life on our own efforts. That's exactly what I'd tried to do for two years now. It went on to say that we can let Christ live His life through us. I knew I needed Him. That day, the day my friend Bobby died, I asked Jesus to take over. I surrendered my life completely to Him, giving Him my desire to be popular and not be seen as strange. I didn't hold anything back.

I remember feeling free, lighter than air, set free by God’s deep love for me. I was amazed at how relentlessly He had pursued me. He must really have wanted me close to Him. I don’t remember feeling guilty or condemned, just sad that I hadn’t given Bobby the answers he needed, and I became motivated to learn how to have those kinds of conversations with other people. Over the next few months, I found a Christian group on campus and began to experience the joy of leading people to Christ and helping them grow.

One thing still troubled me, though. Bobby was seeking Christ and I wasn’t obedient, so how big was I in the equation after all? Was it true that everyone who seeks will find – or did I get in the way?

When Peter, a freshman football player, joined our fellowship group, he told me the rest of the story. Peter knew what happened in the final hour of Bobby’s life. After Bobby left my place, he drove to the football coach’s house. He asked Coach Miller the same questions he’d asked me. “What’s so different about you? Why are you happier than most people?”

Coach Miller shared the good news of Christ with Bobby. Bobby, the cool quarterback, got down on his knees, prayed and gave his life to Jesus. With tears streaming down his face, he hugged Coach Miller, jumped into his car, and within 15 minutes was welcomed home by the Lover of his soul.

Through Bobby’s death, I learned how to let Christ reign in my life. I also learned that it is true that those who seek God will find Him. Bobby did.