

CRISTINA



Cristina had everything going for her – supportive parents – solid church background – member of the high school basketball team. Life was good!

She came to us from Oil Springs, Kentucky, two mountain counties to the north. She is now a recent graduate of Alice Lloyd College. However, her previous years were a roller coaster, an up-and-down struggle that would have thrown most of us off track.

Cristina’s father was a teacher, and the two shared a special bond. She was her father’s “baby girl.” As a child, she visited his classroom after school where she developed her dream of being a teacher – **just like her dad.**

However, life for Cristina drastically changed on the third day of her senior year in high school. While her father was on bus duty at school, Cristina was summoned to his side as he lay on the ground. He had collapsed for no apparent reason. The doctors feared a stroke or epilepsy.

He got better, only to have another bout later that fall. The doctors thought it might be his heart. He wasn’t himself during Christmas. Later, he fell in the shower. Test results indicated a brain tumor. He was given a year to live. Cristina helped care for him, becoming closer to her mother, who was showing some signs of health problems as well. But Cristina didn’t worry about her mother. **Dad was dying.**

By summer, Cristina’s father was hospitalized again. The phone rang. It was Cristina’s sister. Cristina’s thoughts were of her father. But her sister said, “Mom is gone.” “Gone where?” Cristina asked. “Cristina, Mom has died,” her sister told her.

Mom had done everything for the family. Cristina came to realize how serious things were. However, her dad improved and was actually teaching his Sunday school class again. Then, in August, his condition worsened, just as Cristina began her freshman year at Alice Lloyd College. She visited her father as often as possible, paying his bills, and even ironing his clothes. **They both sensed the end was near.** Cristina still thinks about the time her dad had said, “I will be in your classroom on the first day you teach.” He had hugged her and said, “**You’re going back to college. Promise me you won’t quit.**”

She promised!

Cristina’s dad would be proud. She has matured quickly and takes nothing for granted. Somehow, I feel her father was there with her as she taught that first class.