

## THE ERIN ELIZABETH OLMSTED TRIBUTE

August 6, 1979 – March 2, 1997

I remember the evening Erin was born. I didn't know you could love another human being that much. She changed our lives in so many ways I can't even list them. She paved the way for a sister and brother, and upon their births, assumed the role of "little mommy". She helped me and watched over them both. She supported them in all their achievements, sitting in the stands alongside us cheering them on to victory. I remember Erin's first smile, her first steps, her first cold/fever, her cuddles, the mess she made as she learned to use a spoon, navigating the stairs as a toddler, sitting outside on the swing for hours, how easily she picked up the ability to roller-skate, ride a bike, bowl, golf and was even able to ride a unicycle! Her passion, though, was gymnastics. I remember how hard she worked to learn each skill and wouldn't give up till it was accomplished. She was stubborn, sensitive, trustworthy, sweet and dependable. She was impatient. She loved with her whole heart. She was a good daughter & sister. She was a good friend. I hope her friends knew how much she loved them. Erin loved life.....she took it on full-speed ahead and looked forward to everything life had to offer. Erin had goals. She wanted to go to college and become a Speech Pathologist. Her reason? Later, she could adjust her hours to concentrate on her REAL goal in life.....to be a wife and mom. She loved kids and wanted to be a mom. Erin taught young girls gymnastics. To this day I hear from some of their moms. I know Erin would have been a GREAT mom.

It's been over 15 years since I've felt Erin's arms around me for a hug, seen those big eyes or bright smile. Fifteen years since our last mom-daughter chat. There are so many 'what if's', 'if only's' and 'should be's'. I can't help but reflect on all Erin's missed. She's missed everything leading up to her sister becoming a High School English Lit Teacher, a wife and a mom. She's missed all that has gone into her brother graduating from Medical School and living his dream of becoming a Doctor. Erin should have been part of all their accomplishments. She should have been beside her sister when she got married and as her children were baptized. She should have been able to celebrate her brother at his graduation. Every family milestone is bittersweet, with its tiny bit of sadness. We all think of Erin and what 'should have been'. We all think of the 'what ifs' and 'if onlys' and 'should be's'. We all had our dreams. We all try to make Erin proud. I'm sure Erin and her sister used to lie in bed at night and 'talk' about what life would be like when they grew up. If only someone else had made a better choice. If only someone else hadn't chosen to drive drunk. If only.....