

John Peter Aschmann

May 21, 1983 – September 10, 2008

It is with great sadness that we must inform you of the death of our son John in September of this year. We know that some of you have been praying for our children ever since they were born, and many of you have prayed for John in years past.

He died by his own hand, in Los Angeles, California, on September 10, but we did not learn of his death until December 28. This happened because he had thrown away all of his belongings and most of his identification, so the authorities were unable to contact us. The information was accidentally (or providentially) discovered on the Internet. John was diagnosed as having bipolar syndrome several years ago, but had been unwilling to take the medication for this.

Through the years John has continually struggled with emotional problems, even as a small child. His mother Heidi Marie's long battle with cancer was hard for all of us, but especially for John, and he never effectively dealt with her loss in



1997.

At the beginning of his junior year in high school, in 1999, because his struggles reached a critical point, I made the decision, after much prayer and soul-searching, and with the help of Mission to the World, to enroll John in Chamberlain-Hunt Academy, a Christian military school in Mississippi. This proved to be an excellent decision, and John's last two years of high school were among his best years. He qualified as a National Merit semi-finalist, and received an all-expenses-paid scholarship to Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi.

He attended there for three semesters, made excellent grades, and even went on a mission trip to England. Some of you contributed so that he could go on that trip.

That was the point at which his life began to fall apart. He left school, and began drifting. Not many months after this, he disappeared for about a year, and we had no information as to his whereabouts, and all we could do was pray. Then he surfaced again in North Carolina, in a mental hospital. I flew up from Ecuador, got him settled in a good living situation, with Christian roommates, and his sister Heidi, who was close by, was checking in on him. He soon found a job, and things were looking up.

However, soon after this he told Heidi he was leaving town, and therewith began a cycle of instability in which he was largely homeless and drifting from one city to another. It was soon after this that he was diagnosed as having bipolar syndrome, which explained a lot of things. Unfortunately, he was never willing to take the medication for his condition, and



James, Nathan, John, and Anne in March, 2008



John, Heidi, and James in March, 2008

his solution to the stresses of life seemed to always be to move to another place. We tried to help him as much as we could, but we found it very difficult to know how to do so.

Along the way he met a girl, also with bipolar syndrome plus addiction issues, in a homeless shelter in New Jersey. Against all of our advice, he decided to marry her and raise a family, while remaining homeless. They had two children, while continu-

ing to move from city to city. Because of their constant movement, we were never able to meet their two children, although we made a number of attempts to do so.

In 2007 his wife fell back into her addictions and left him with the two children. He decided that he should put the children up for adoption, and we agreed with him, and offered to come out to California and help him through the process. John was very pleased with this plan. However, people with bipolar syndrome have a tendency to make sudden decisions, and the next time he called us he told us that he had already found an adoptive family, and had already given them the children.

As a result of this, quite understandably, John struggled even more with depression. We all got to see him again at my dad's memorial in March, and this seemed to encourage him. Also, his sister Heidi invited him to come and visit her in Louisiana, and John spent several months living with Heidi and her husband Jason. This was a big help in many ways, but his severe mood swings continued, and even during that time he was frequently saying that he needed to move on. He finally moved out in July and went to New Orleans. He returned for a few days to see Heidi and Jason at the end of August, and then left for California. After this, except for one phone call, we had no further word from him.

Please pray for all of us as we deal with the loss of our son and brother. We are only thankful that he is no longer suffering, and is at rest with his Lord.

In our Precious Savior's name,

Rick, Betty and children

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