

## Always There

*By Molly Hegman*

When I moved to Ohio I met a young man who never felt as though he did enough for others. He knew that he had been blessed with a good family. He grew up in a good neighborhood, surrounded by people who cared about him. He went to good schools and was encouraged to work at becoming a giving citizen. When he grew up and had a family of his own he decided that it was his time to help others.

He thought carefully about how he should give to others. He did the ordinary things like contributing to his church, helping his family and giving money to organizations like the Red Cross. He wasn't satisfied with just doing this so he did some research. Somehow he found out about a Catholic Bishop in Alaska who flew a small plane to minister to his church family. He was also a pilot, but as a hobby, so this intrigued him. He wrote a letter to the Bishop to ask how he could help him. This began a monthly correspondence and of course a check was sent to help. It was more than that; they became good friends through their letters. That friendship lasted until the young man died.

This young man still wanted to do something more. When his church began providing meals for St. Vincent Hotel for the homeless he volunteered to make a casserole. The church provided a pan and the recipe; the volunteer did the rest. This was a problem for him because he had never learned to cook. Undeterred by this fact he took the plunge and purchased all the necessities. He insisted that he would do this on his own so we left him to it. I could hear him searching the cupboards and refrigerator. Soon I heard chopping. I couldn't help myself I had to see what was going on in the kitchen. I found him peacefully chopping onions...unpeeled onions. I asked if he thought maybe it would be a good idea to peel the rest before chopping them. He looked thoughtful for a few minutes, shook his head and said that the peel would add crunch and fiber to the dish. The church never complained and he continued making one a month.

As his parents grew older he helped more and more...not just physically but emotionally as well. Over the years they had become close friends as well as relatives. They counted on him. He was always there for them. Unfortunately, he died when he was only fifty-six. Then it was my turn to take over for him and give back to them.