# Legacy of Love

As a young man, Al was a skilled artist. He had a wife and two fine sons. One night, his oldest son developed a sickness. Thinking it was only some common problem, neither Al nor his wife took the condition very seriously. But the sickness was actually acute, and the boy died suddenly that night.

Knowing the death could have been prevented if he had only realized the seriousness of the situation, Al's emotional health deteriorated under the enormous burden of his guilt. To make matters worse his wife left him a short time later, leaving him alone with his six-year-old younger son. The hurt and pain of the two situations were more than Al could handle, and he turned to alcohol to help him cope. In time Al became an alcoholic.

As the alcoholism progressed, Al began to lose everything he possessed - his home, his land, his art objects, everything. Eventually Al died alone in a San Francisco motel room.

When I heard of Al's death, my heart was empty as I reflected on his Al’s life. A man’s life was over here on earth and was there anything meaningful left behind to show for it. "What a complete failure!" I thought "What a totally wasted life!"

As time went by, I began to evaluate my earlier harsh judgment. You see, I knew Al's now adult son, Ernie. He is one of the kindest, most caring, most loving men I have ever known. I watched Ernie with his children and saw the free flow of love between them. I knew that kindness and caring had to come from somewhere.

I hadn't heard Ernie talk much about his father. It is so hard to defend an alcoholic. One day I worked up my courage to ask him. "I'm really puzzled by something," I said, "I know your father was basically the only one to raise you. What on earth did he do that you became such a special person?"

Ernie sat quietly and reflected for a few moments. Then he said, "From my earliest memories as a child until I left home at 18, Dad came into my room every night, gave me a kiss and said, 'I love you, son."'

Tears came to my eyes as I realized what a fool I had been to judge Al as a failure. He had not left any material possessions behind. But, he had been a kind loving father, and he left behind one of the finest, most giving men I have ever known.