

**Sunset on the Manasquan River, NJ:
An Event for the Benefit of The Myocarditis Foundation
September 29, 2012**

A few weeks ago I attempted to do something I had not done since teenager. I attempted to write a poem. I wanted to capture in few but powerful words what I have been feeling for the past 18 months. It started like this:

*"I am mortally wounded
And yet I don't die."*

When Candace asked me later if I could speak today about the experience of losing a loved one to myocarditis, those words immediately came to me: *"I am mortally wounded, and yet I don't die"*.

This is the best I can describe losing a loved one, in my case my child, my first born, suddenly, unexpectedly and cruelly at the tender age of 14 years and 11 months.

The blow is mortal. The pain is endless. How can one possibly survive the death of a child? Such loss is *not* natural, is *not* normal. It turns your world upside down into a bottomless, dark pit. It robs you of your dreams for the future. And the wound does not close. You *know* it never will.

"And yet, you don't die."

You don't die because you need to find a sense of purpose to a *senseless* tragedy. You must live and carry on, if not for you then for your lost loved one so that his memory will never fade away.

My son Andy loved life and loved everyone. He was tender, caring and generous. He never harmed anyone but embraced everyone with his warm smile. He touched many lives with his kindness, sense of humor and joyful spirit. He had so much more to give to this world where everyday greed, selfishness and lack of compassion attack the very core of goodness of the human race. He always said he wanted to help people, often mentioned he wanted to be a teacher. He was selfless.

As a bereaved parent, I go through various commonly described grief stages. When overcome with deep emotional pain I commiserate myself: *Why me?*

Other times, in a wretched attempt to rationalize my loss: *Why not?*

And right in the middle, other questions hunt me:

Why this pervasive and misunderstood illness?

Why this virus, this wicked heart infection that no one could detect?

Because there are no answers, we need research to understand this rare disease, and to spread awareness.

We need your support tonight. *I need you.*

If I can help one mother not to have to live *mortally wounded* for the rest of her life, perhaps I will someday understand that after all this is what my selfless, generous and kindhearted son wanted: *to save a life.*

Thank you.