

## Zachary Allen Schmitz, 7 mos.

May 30, 1996 - Jan. 7, 1996 7

**WESTPHALIA** - Zachary Allen Schmitz, son of Mark and Nancy (Christiansen) Schmitz, was born May 30, 1996, in Omaha, NE, along with twin brother, Jesse. Although Mom and Dad did not get to hold me until I was two months old, then it was only five minutes for Mom and five minutes for Dad, I know I was in good hands with them from the minute I heard their voices.

Jesse and I spent all of our time at Children's Hospital and Mom and Dad have been there with us every step of the way. We were also kept well entertained. One of my favorite things to do was listen to music from my tape player with Jesse, Mom and Dad. Dad would hold me and Mom would hold Jesse and we would just rock and listen to nursery rhymes and Bible songs. He would tease me and poke me in the nose so they could watch me wrinkle up my eyes and sprint. Mom and Dad would also read to us. That was fun because we could just relax and watch the mobile spin while their voices reassured us that they were always close by.

Bath time for me was always a sponge bath. That was until last Jan. 2, 1997, when I had my first tub bath, I loved it. Mom was always talking to me. All I needed was to hear her and Dad's voice and I knew they were with us. Like my brother Jesse, I liked to see my reflection in the mirror. As twins, we were a lot alike. When one of us was mad so was the other, when one of us giggled and laughed so did the other.

Some of the most comfortable times I experienced was when Mom and Dad were holding me. Sometimes it was only for a few minutes at a time and not very often because of my medical treatment. I made good progress much of the time though. I even breathed without the ventilator for over 3 1/2 days in October of 1996. Like Jesse, I like my binky, I popped it in and out and did not like to be on my left side. I played with Mom and Dad, especially in my bouncy seat and my lullaby light screen.

In the last seven months, both my brother and I felt the love and dedication of our family, friends and the professional staff of Children's Hospital. The shifts changed several times a day, but our care continued uninterrupted. Carol took care of us during the day. Roberta at night and when neither of them were there, Julie was always there to lend a helping hand. My family, especially my parents, were amazed at the dedication of everyone.

I lived to the age of seven months and eight days which is a very short time. Understanding why I lived such a short time remains a mystery. However, do not confuse short with unimportant. In my life time, I taught my family a new kind of love and responsibility - an unquestioned love, beyond normal human experiences. God's gift of life now means something it did not before my brother and I were born. We were, and will continue to be, reminders of what all families are about, or should be about - dedication to each other in love, understanding and faith.

I know that I will live on in the hearts of some very special people: my mom and dad, Mark and Nancy Schmitz of Westphalia; my maternal grandparents, Gerald and Joy Christiansen of Shelby; my paternal grandparents, Roger and Judy Schmitz of Westphalia; my paternal great grandmother, Sally Schmitz of Harlan, and my maternal great grandmother, Esther Christiansen of Co. Bluffs; great aunts and uncles and cousins.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Jan. 10, 1997, at St. Boniface Catholic Church in Westphalia with Rev. Paul Bianchi celebrant, assisted by Rev. Stan Nielsen of the Shelby Lutheran Church and Rev. Duane Anunson of Our Saviors Lutheran Church in Co. Bluffs. Burial was in St. Boniface Cemetery, Westphalia, with Phillip Eggers, Marilyn Eggers, Matthew Schmitz and Michael Schmitz honorary casket bearers and Tony Goetz, Brad Blum, Todd Mills and Steve Schmitz casket bearers. Pauley Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.