

Porter J. Nelson  
Born: July 4, 1967  
Where: Bountiful, Utah  
Died: December 3, 1989  
Where: North Salt Lake, Utah



Porter was due on June 19th but he didn't enter the world until July 4th. Grandma and Grandpa Nelson were visiting with us that holiday weekend at our home at 293 East 650 North in Bountiful. The morning of the 4th I woke up with labor pains but Grandma Nelson said it would still be awhile so they decided not to go home until after the delivery. It wasn't until about 7:45 pm that evening that Porter was born. In those days we didn't have ultrasounds to find out what sex we were having so it was a nice surprise. We were so delighted with our little son.

When Porter was about a year old, I took him with me to the grocery store. He was in the cart and I bent down to get something off the bottom shelf and he had a temper tantrum, stiffened up and somehow fell out of the cart and onto the hard floor on his head.

Porter was a sweet but shy little boy. He started Kindergarten at Tolman Elementary but in the middle of the year (February 1973) we sold our home and moved to a new home at 660 South 800 East in Bountiful and he changed schools finishing his Kindergarten year at Oak Hills Elementary. Porter had a tender heart and was often teased at school. One day some kids took his coat and made him cry. I was called to the school and we found his coat in a garbage can. Those times were very hard for me. I didn't like to see my children hurt. We had to talk to him several times about it being OK to fight back sometimes and other times to just ignore the kids but not to let them know they had upset him. When Porter turned 6 he got a cute yellow bicycle for his birthday. We took him to Lagoon for the 4th of July fireworks and he turned to his dad and said "Are they doing this for my birthday?"



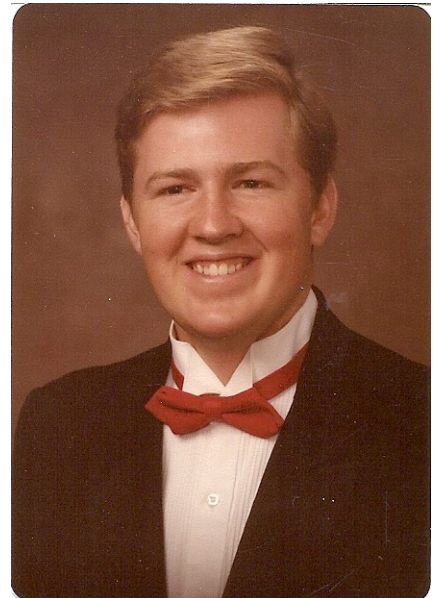
Porter attended Millcreek Junior High. His dad was such a football fan he thought his son should play football. Porter did play little league football for a few years but I don't think his heart was ever in it. I think he only did it for his dad. He never was an athlete but he liked to ride his bike. He loved computers and we got one of the first Apple Computers. He really took to the computer. Porter's friends were Ken Cushing, Mark (Buzz) DaBell, and Kip Henrie. Porter and Ken spent a lot of time together doing stuff on the computer. They were the computer geeks (not the athletes like Jeff Black and Rick Foster).



We had good scout leaders in the ward. He participated in the Cub Scout program, the 11 year old Blazer Scout Program, and the Boy Scout program earning lots of badges and awards. Porter also earned his Eagle Scout Award before he turned 14. The swimming/life saving merit badge was the hardest for him to earn. He didn't like the water in his nose and it's pretty hard to swim with one hand plugging your nose and swimming without getting water in your eyes and nose. In the pictures of scouting trips where the boys were jumping off rocks into the water, he was always the one holding his nose. I'm sure the boys gave him a bad time about that. Kids can be so cruel. His Eagle Scout project was making two volleyball poles (to hold the net) out of two tires, cement, and poles for the rehab unit at the Bountiful Hospital. He also earned 4 extra palms to go with his Eagle Scout Award.

We started a diesel shop in Woods Cross (Nelson Diesel Service) and Lyle had Porter go down and work with Myron doing odd jobs in the shop and weeding in our garden space behind the shop. I don't think he enjoyed it but it was a job that earned him some spending money. We bought a boat with Myron and Ilene Nelson and a condo in Bear Lake with John and Marco Cushing. We spent family vacations at the condo in Bear Lake boating and boating at Willard Bay and Lake Powell. Porter had a really hard time learning to water ski. He got a little heavy and had a really hard time pulling himself up on the water skis. The Rubics cube came out while he was in high school and he enjoyed solving the puzzle. He took some piano lessons with his siblings but was never too musically inclined.

During Porter's senior year at Bountiful High School he found a mole on his head that hurt when he combed his hair. We took him to Dr. Clark and he did a biopsy and it came back as a melanoma skin cancer. At that time we hadn't heard much about melanoma skin cancer. Dr. Clark made an appointment with Dr. Gregory Kjar, a plastic surgeon, who then did some more surgery on him. The cancer was almost to the skull but Porter was told to go ahead and do everything he had planned to do. During Porter's senior year the army, navy, and marines visited the school recruiting students. Porter had an army recruiter come to the house but once they found out he had cancer they wouldn't take him. I'm not sure why he was checking out the army unless he was looking for a way to pay for his college education.







Porter graduated from Bountiful High School in 1985 and did well. He never talked about girls to me and didn't do much dating in high school. He entered college at Utah State University with a scholarship and as a Sophomore because of the AP classes he had taken in high school.

After a year of college, he turned in his papers to serve an LDS mission. He was called to serve in the Tallahassee Florida Mission. He was the computer specialist in his mission. He served for one year and the cancer came back. He didn't want to come home so the doctor in Utah found a doctor in Tallahassee, Florida to do the surgery and I and Grandma



Lapray flew out to be with him and stayed in the mission home with the Mission President and his family. They loaned us their car so we could drive to the hospital. The doctor had to take most of the back of his hair and a large section of skin from his thigh to graft to his head. For several weeks Porter wore a large white bandage wrapped around his head and hospital scrubs and worked in the mission office. When his head had healed we sent him a wig. He kept serving faithfully until about 4 months before his release and the cancer came back. It was in the lymph system. He was sent home immediately (May 1988) and

put on the Interlukin II treatment at the University of Utah Hospital. He was their 6th patient to try the new procedure. He was in the hospital for 3 weeks. They would take blood, spin it and grow more white blood cells and then insert those back into his body. The doctors said the treatment shrunk the cancer some but didn't eliminate it. I remember going to the movie "Little Shop of Horrors" with Porter before he went back to school.

Porter recovered from that procedure and in the fall went back to school at USU living off campus with some other students and working two part time jobs - one in the computer lab at the college and one at a business in downtown Logan.



The first part of November 1989 he called me and said he was in pain. I told him to go to the emergency room at the Logan Hospital. He had a doctor's appointment in Salt Lake at the U of U Hospital in about a week. The doctors at the Logan Hospital checked him out and told him he had pleurisy. When he came home for his doctor's appointment about a week later they told us that his liver was extended and also the cancer was in his lungs and that he had only a few weeks to a few months to live. It was devastating. It was a skin cancer that I thought was minor and not that serious. Maybe if we would have found it earlier he would still be alive. The beautician who cut his hair said she had told him that the mole on his head had changed colors from one haircut to another (several months before) and that he should tell his parents about it but he never did until it started hurting. The Interluken II Treatment had shrunk the cancer for a while but it came back and went into his lymph system which then got into his lungs and liver. Grandma and Grandpa Nelson took Porter to Inkleys to have his picture taken.



Porter and his dad went to USU and checked him out of school and moved his things back to his dad's where he was going to live. Lyle said Porter just shuffled as he walked down the hall at USU. Porter stayed alone each day while his dad went to work but Lyle's next door neighbor, who was retired, checked on him. Porter was in so much pain he had a shunt in his arm with morphine that could be increased every few hours for pain. I stopped to see him almost every night on my way home from work. One time I brought him a treat of Mrs. Fields cookies but he couldn't eat them. They had so much fat in them that it bothered his liver. At that point he couldn't eat much. He survived on water and sprite. The doctor put him back in the University Hospital just before Thanksgiving and gave him Chemo. This type of cancer hadn't been responsive to Chemo - it was a last chance.

I was planning to fly to Arizona to spend Thanksgiving with Grandma and Grandpa Lapray because Collette, Darby and Marty were going to spend it with Lyle. I visited Porter in the hospital just before I left and told him not to go anywhere until I got back. When I got to Arizona Grandma and Grandpa said that if anything changed and he got really bad we'd just get in the car and drive home as fast as we could.

On Saturday, December 2nd, the kids got together and had a last photo taken—not knowing that he would pass away the very next day. On Monday, December 4th, I was going to pick him up and take him in the car for a ride to see the Christmas lights but early on the morning of Sunday, December 3, 1989 Collette called to tell me and the boys that Porter was very near death. He had awoke that morning hallucinating. I woke the boys and we

dressed quickly and drove as fast as we could to Lyle's but by the time we got there Porter had died. After seeing him suffer for so many days and knowing there wasn't any cure, I was praying that Heavenly Father would take him. It was so hard to see him in pain and suffering and I couldn't do anything to help him.



A viewing was held at Russon Brothers Mortuary on the evening of December 6th and his funeral on December 7, 1989, at the Bountiful 8th Ward Building with his burial at the Bountiful City Cemetery.

Porter was an obedient young man who loved his family, his Heavenly Father and the Savior. He has gone ahead to prepare a place for our family. He is an example to me. I never heard him complain or say "Why me." I am thankful to have been his mother. I am also thankful for my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel, for I know I will see him again.



Porter & Collette at  
Aunt Sue's wedding



Porter and Darby



Porter and Marty on  
Grandpa & Grandma  
Lapray's motorcycle