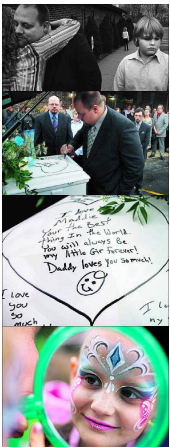


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Lifestyles

## GOOD-BYE TO A PRINCESS: Amid tears and memories, father tries to find peace

November 30, 2006

BY JEFF SEIDEL  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

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Paul Trudel knelt on the carpet and slumped against the coffin. He looked empty, like somebody ripped the spirit out of his body.



zoom

Paul Trudel's mother, Karen Scott, center, holds hands with her husband, Norman Scott, as she reaches out to a friend at the funeral. Maddie, 7, died Sunday after a yearlong battle with bone cancer. (Photos by ROMAIN BLANQUART/Detroit Free Press)

He gently touched his daughter, Maddie. She wore a blue Cinderella dress with a Cinderella necklace, matching earrings and gloves. Her face was painted almost exactly the same way it was when she went to Disney World.

She looked beautiful, absolutely beautiful.

Maddie, 7, died Sunday after a yearlong battle with bone cancer. The funeral was Wednesday in St. Clair, just a few blocks from where she lived.

"I'm just real numb," Trudel said. "We were like glue -- we stuck like glue."

Inside Young Funeral Home, against the wall, there was a collage of pictures. One was dated June 13, 2005 -- the day Maddie graduated from kindergarten. In the picture, she held a microphone. "My name is Maddie Trudel," friends remember her saying that day. "When I grow up, I want to be a motorcycle mama."

A Red Wings jersey, given to her by Kris Draper, was framed and displayed about 20 feet from her casket. Draper attended a private visitation Tuesday afternoon and met with

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several family members. He hugged Trudel and gave him the puck from the goal he scored Monday night.

Trudel arranged several stuffed animals around the casket. Puppy, her favorite Beanie Baby, rested on her left shoulder -- the same spot it could always be found when she was in hospice care.

On a table, there was a poster for people to sign.

"May you sing and dance with the angels," somebody wrote. "We will miss you."

#### Holding on, letting go

Trudel has not slept at his apartment since Maddie died. He has stayed with several friends, sleeping on couches and chairs.

On Sunday night, he was exhausted. He went to a friend's house and sat in a recliner. He was restless, unable to relax, until he pulled Puppy out of his pocket and put it on his left shoulder. He leaned his head on Puppy and found some peace.

Finally, he was able to sleep.

For several weeks, Trudel has been thinking about the future. He is getting his motorcycle seat changed from a two-seater to a single. He can't imagine riding with a two-seater and feeling Maddie's absence.

In a few weeks, he plans to go on a trip. Somewhere warm. Maybe Mexico. Someplace where he can clear his head and let go.

Maddie was cremated because he wants to keep her close. Most of her remains will be kept in a gold urn with dolphins on the side. The rest will go in a teardrop pendant he will wear around his neck.

His apartment is filled with Maddie.

Maddie's toys. Maddie's clothes. Maddie's video games. And Maddie's mail -- thousands of letters from people wishing her well.

It's impossible for him to go inside without feeling overwhelmed.

He plans to start cleaning it out today. Not the sentimental things -- it could be a long time before he changes anything in her bedroom -- but he wants to clear away some of the clutter.

The people closest to him think this is a great sign, that he has a plan.

#### 'We had to come here for him'

Children fighting cancer stay on the seventh floor at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor. Their parents spend so much time together that they have turned into a family. They cry together, pray together and pace the hallways together.

Several came to the visitation Wednesday before the funeral service. They stood in a tight circle, talking like family.

One had lost her daughter to cancer. Others had children in various stages of treatment.

Brook Lee, 7, used to be Maddie's roommate at Mott. She is in remission from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. "Maddie had a heart as big as the city," said Brook's mother, Nan Lee.

Bryan and Beverlee Stoutenburg watched a video of Maddie. Their son, Nevin, has leukemia. He relapsed recently and needs a bone marrow transplant. "Paul has been so strong for us," Bryan Stoutenburg said. "We had to come here for him."

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But it was difficult for all of them, facing this side of cancer.

Al Kasten stood in the back of the funeral home with tears in his eyes. His son, who has leukemia, was Maddie's boyfriend. Kasten hasn't told his son that Maddie died because he doesn't want to upset him, doesn't want him to think about death.

He wants him to keep fighting.

He and his wife came for Paul. But Kasten had a look of horror in his eyes.

Two of Maddie's nurses were among more than 500 people who attended the visitation and funeral.

"Paul is a hero," said Carole Bowden, Maddie's primary nurse.

Liz Martin took care of Maddie at Mott whenever Bowden had the day off. She knows her job takes her to the edge, helping patients beat cancer or comforting them until the end.

"I've always felt we are the bridge to heaven," Martin said.

About 100 members of the Wolverine HOG chapter attended the visitation Tuesday night. Most were wearing jeans and black leather vests with Harley-Davidson patches.

More than 30 returned Wednesday to lead the processional from the funeral home to Grace Bible Church for the service.

Maddie's motorcycle helmet and Harley vest were fastened to the lead bike.

Martin and Bowden, the two nurses from Mott, hitched a ride with two bikers and rode in the processional, wearing dress clothes. It was a show of respect and in keeping with Maddie's spirit -- full of life, full of attitude.

At the service, the casket was closed, adorned with Maddie's motorcycle helmet and a bouquet of blue flowers with a banner that read: Princess Maddie.

Tough but tender.

That was Maddie.

"She loved her daddy," Pastor Gary Montgomery said. But he stressed that she is now in heaven. "She is absent from the body and present with the Lord."

After the service, the casket was taken out of the church and placed in the hearse. Randy Young, the funeral director, handed Trudel a black marker.

"I love you, Maddie," he wrote on the coffin. "You are the best thing in the world. You will always be my little girl forever. Daddy loves you so much."

Contact **JEFF SEIDEL** at 313-223-4558 or [jseidel@freepress.com](mailto:jseidel@freepress.com).

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## COMMENTS



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Paul

I first read of Maddie in the Free Press when she visited the Red Wings, that story alone brought tears to my eyes. My heart broke as I learned that Maddie had lost her courageous battle. Your strength throughout has been and will be an inspiration to me. Please accept my deepest sympathy. I, as many, will never forget this wonderful little girl who I never had the privilege of meeting. God Bless.

Posted: Wed Dec 06, 2006 10:36 pm

Once again you managed to get the tear ducts in my eyes to break open like a bridge. I am overwhelmed and truly touched with this story of a great send off for a little girl who ment so much to so many. She was without a doubt a fighter and her father is a soldier for a daddies love is something wonderful.

I am totally taken by this story and today it is on my heart to write a piece dedicated to Maddie and children like her. I am heavily involved in the entertainment world and amongst the many gifts bestowed upon me is the gift of writing.

I shall send you a copy once it is complete and if you do not mind, please share it with Paul in email form so, he can see how much of an impact his daughter had on the world.

Thank you for bringing tears of joy for understanding that, their is a place called heaven waiting for people like us to go if, we can get it right down here by doing his will.

Thank you for being such an inspirational journalist / writer.

Respectfully,

Ms. Teresa Creggett  
Fyre Dispatcher  
www.swiftymcvay.net  
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Posted: Wed Dec 06, 2006 8:50 am

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Paul

I am so sorry for your loss. I live in Indiana now, but lived all my life in Michigan. I get the freepress and have read about you and Maddie and her brothers, God be with you, for your new Angel in Heaven watching over you is Maddie. It seems cancer takes everyone one we love. I lost My, best friend, fishing buddy hunting buddy (My dad) to cancer in 1991, I still grieve everyday, but I know his pain is gone and I have him as my angel protecting me. My prayers, thoughts, and heart are with you. Live to Ride, Ride to Live..Anyone can be a Father, anyone can be ride a Harley, BUT it takes a special man (as you) to be a Daddy and a Biker. Ride hard Ride long..Sincerely Yours..Beth

Posted: Fri Dec 01, 2006 9:59 pm

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I have followed the story of princess maddie since it started...  
My heart aches for your loss....  
As I sat at work and read the article in the paper,I couldn't help but cry...  
So much life,so little time....  
Stay strong,maddie will look out for you....

Be well,  
Peg

Posted: Fri Dec 01, 2006 12:41 pm

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Paul, I can not even begin to imagine your loss. Saying I am sorry does not even seem to cover the hurt and pain. Sometimes God allows us to see angels. Sharing a small piece of your journey with Maddie has touched my soul. You are in my prayers.

Posted: Fri Dec 01, 2006 12:41 pm

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