

Rockingham native's book deals with losing children

By Kimberly Harrington

Richmond County Daily Journal

Monday, July 19, 2005

Rockingham native Tina Bryson has penned her first book that opens a door into her personal tragedy.

“Perfect in Weakness” (Pleasant Word Publishing, \$18, November 2004) chronicles the emotional and spiritual journey of Tina and Sebastian Bryson.

Woven together with personal journal entries and vivid flashbacks, “Perfect in Weakness” gives readers a front row seat into the painful but triumphant story of parents overcoming the premature birth and death of their twin sons, who were born 17 weeks early.

In the last decade, the rate of infants born premature increased by 13 percent nationwide. The March of Dimes says one in eight babies will be born too soon, putting them at a higher risk of needing hospitalization, having long-term health problems and of dying, than babies born at the right time.

What if one day you found yourself as the mother or father of one of those precious, little ones? If tragedy reached out and smacked you right between the eyes, what would you do?

“Perfect in Weakness” is a brutally honest account of what one family felt, said and did in the moment while coping with their loss.

“It is a realistic, intimate portrayal of the feelings and reality of what grief is. The author’s honest insight presents readers the opportunity to reflect on their loss, incorporate it into their lives and move forward. ‘Perfect in Weakness’ is a must-read for parents struggling to understand the emotional and painful process they are going through. It’s the kind of book that will change your life,” said Lynda Jackson of *The Milwaukee Times*.

Even if you have never lost a child, this book has something for everyone who has gone through a traumatic situation, one account reports. The author poignantly details the emotional struggles she overcame to regain the joy of living. Whether you have lost a job, gotten a divorce, or lost a baby, traumatic situations show each person what he or she is made of. People don’t always behave the way they wish they would in these situations, but the author uses her own life to help readers see to the other side of the healing process.

In the book’s acknowledgments, Bryson gives homage to Catherine Neal of Rockingham, her fifth-grade teacher at Leak Street School. She thanks Neal “for expecting more of me than I expected of myself and for seeing potential in me that no one else had tapped.”

Bryson said Neal has kept in touch with her over the years, even attending her wedding 11 years ago.

“She inspired me to do many things in my life,” Bryson said.

Neal said Bryson was the kind of student teachers love to have. “She was a very energetic and bright student. She was eager to learn.”

Neal said it is humbling to know that she has had such an impact on Bryson’s life. One never knows if what he/she says or tries to do ever hits its mark.

Bryson credits another elementary school teacher, Sara Jackson of Hamlet, as being the first person to stir her desire to write.

And in high school, Bryson had a teacher who found her a mentor at the Daily Journal because she knew of her interest in pursuing a journalism degree.

“That was very helpful in my final decision to choose journalism as my major,” she said.

When Bryson thinks of Richmond County, inevitably her thoughts turn to wonderful teachers who nurtured her.

“That’s what I was afforded from my education in the schools of Richmond County - teachers whose caring went beyond the classroom,” she said.

Born and raised in Rockingham in the Philadelphia community, and a graduate of Richmond Senior High School, Bryson is a freelance writer and speaker. She is a journalism graduate of Howard University and holds a master’s degree in communications from Marquette University.

She and her husband, Sebastian, have four children at home.

Said one reader in an amazon.com review, “No matter what your beliefs, you will walk away from this book with a renewed spirit. Tina recounts her personal tragedy in an honest, candid voice. She makes you feel like you’re sitting across from her in her living room as she struggles with her feelings and her faith. Tina asks thought-provoking questions (at the end of each chapter) to guide you through your own grief. This is not only a must read but a must share! Pass it on!”

Contact News Editor Kimberly Harrington at 997-3111, ext. 18

e-mail kharrington@yourdailyjournal.com