



Michelle Crippen

April 18, 1962 - August 23, 2020

A Story of Michelle's Life, by Christina Crippen Brown

This is a summary of the story of my mother Michelle Buzby Crippen – beloved daughter, wife, mother, and friend. I cannot do justice to the wonder of Michelle's life, and wish I could have been a part of it from the very beginning, but as her daughter, I was privileged to have witnessed some of the most beautiful seasons of her life, and I will do my best to describe them to you.

Michelle's life began in Abington, Pennsylvania when she was born to the late Myron Buzby, and Kathleen Lockhart Buzby, in 1962. The youngest of four children (brother Robin Buzby, and sisters Melanye Buzby Winterbottom and the late Karen Buzby Whittle), Michelle spent her young years climbing trees and scraping up her knees as she raced over the fields of bucolic Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

When Michelle turned fifteen in the summer of 1977, her family moved to Roseville, Pennsylvania where she met the love of her life, Alan R. Crippen II. That August (43 years ago this week!), Alan and Michelle went on their inaugural date to the famous debut of the classic film Star Wars, and when they entwined hands for the first time that day, they never let go.

Even during their earliest days as a couple, Michelle and Alan dreamed of ministry together – of educating and raising God's people up in His ever-loving grace. So to prepare for their vocations, they decided to attend Philadelphia College of Bible (now Cairn University). And in my opinion, throughout their

relationship, they fulfilled these dreams in exponential ways.

Alan and Michelle were betrothed at age 18 before attending college. They were married at First Baptist Church, in Wycombe, Pennsylvania at the end of their freshman year in 1981. Michelle wasted no time pursuing her passion for ministry to children and youth, and upon sophomore year began full-time work as a house parent at Melmark, a residential facility for special needs children. I was always amazed by the stories of her sacrifice and dedication to Melmark residents.

After college graduation, Alan became an Army Officer and with her teaching degree in hand Michelle began teaching. Stationed in Heilbronn, Germany during Alan's Army service, Michelle taught in the Department of Defense Dependent Schools. "Mrs. Crippen" quickly became a favorite of students and parents. In turn, Michelle adored her students and poured her energies into shaping their minds and guiding their hearts heavenward. She even named me after one adorable little blonde-haired student named Christy.

After active military duty, Michelle and Alan moved back to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and there Michelle taught in the Central Bucks School District at Butler Elementary School before giving birth to her first daughter, Christina (me!). After which, for my sake and that of what she hoped would be my future siblings, she gave up her professional teaching career to stay at home with the little ones God entrusted to her care. And sure enough, 22 months later my brother, Zachary, was born, and upon moving to Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1992, Michelle had two more children, Brittany (1992) and Schuyler (1994).

Once settled in Colorado, that amazing woman began the admirable and arduous journey of homeschooling four small children. As if that wasn't enough of a tall order, she also became a distributor for Usborne Books. She was exhilarated by the venture and my siblings and I got to benefit from the richness of the literature and her enthusiasm for sharing it with us. (We have many fond memories in particular of the mysteries and seek-and-find puzzle books.)

But Michelle's role as a teacher and mentor wasn't limited to her children. She enthusiastically supported Alan's work with college students at Institute for Family Studies at Focus on the Family. My siblings and I grew up in a home with open doors. We lived and learned Michelle's art and ministry of hospitality. She made our home a place of welcome and joy for students, friends, and neighbors.

When God called our family to the Washington, D.C. area in 1996, Michelle began private in-home tutoring for children, and even took on teaching two more full-time homeschool students in addition to her own children. She good-humoredly decided (with my siblings' and my enthusiastic affirmation, of course!) to call our house "Backyard University."

Michelle, alongside a friend, also undertook the task of creating curricula for summer camps for neighborhood kids, and we will forever remember the famous "worm camp" in the muggy summer of 1997. (It may or may not have involved real earth worms, and maybe some cookie crumbles...)

Always supportive of Alan's work of the Witherspoon Fellowship at the Family Research Council, Michelle naturally became a mentor and friend to the students who sought her counsel and were inspired by her furious passion for life. As kids, one of our favorite events were the epic Witherspoon alumni Christmas parties (where it felt like a hundred people were in our house sipping spiced cider and gluhwein and mountains of guests' coats were piled on our beds.) But then of course there were those new student orientation welcome dinners where we could always count on General Tsao's Chicken! In 2003, our family was blessed with another baby, little Felicity. And Felicity was special. She was diagnosed with autism, but only after our fierce mother kept insisting to the medical experts that something was wrong. An intense early intervention and occupational therapy followed. All of us kids were a part of a treatment plan that contributed to what Michelle always believed was a miracle: Felicity's healing from autism. Yes, our supermom was at it again. In these tough years, our equally tough Mom continued to homeschool her

children and became the “cool mom” in town when she started hosting and teaching youth group for us teenagers and our friends. Meanwhile she energetically continued to shepherd the students of the Witherspoon Fellowship. (It is perhaps worth noting that several times she self-identified as the Energizer Bunny!)

A shared vision for a new ministry, the John Jay Institute, led Michelle and Alan back to Colorado Springs in 2006 and gave our family five more years establishing a rich community in the Rocky Mountains. It was during this time that Michelle became fondly known as the “first lady” of the John Jay Institute, and her reputation for hospitality, mentorship, and matronly wisdom continued in epic proportions as class after class of aspiring public servants went through the program and encountered Michelle’s contagious smile and passion for being a servant to the living God.

When the John Jay Institute relocated to Philadelphia in 2011, Michelle, Alan, and the youngest three children moved back east where she continued in her role as “first lady” and began teaching at Classical Conversations International Homeschool Co-op.

But in the summer of 2017, we were all stunned by Michelle’s diagnosis of non-Hodgkin’s B-Cell Lymphoma. She spent the next three years fighting courageously against the cancer and insisted, throughout the journey, that God was good. I still remember my cynicism when, after watching her suffer some of the worst side effects chemotherapy could throw at a person, she’d give me that refrain, “God is Good” - and I knew she believed it. And I remember the fierce joy she had in claiming God’s goodness over her life as she asked me to believe it with her. And I wasn’t the only one she asked: she was dedicated to recording her battle with cancer through the Caring Bridge website to encourage others in adopting that mindset as they prayed for her. If she only knew how many people she inspired with that endeavor... well, she’d be astounded.

On August 23rd, 2020, Michelle passed through the shadowlands and into the kingdom of her Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus. Through him, she is victor over

death, and in Him, she rejoices.

I'm in awe of her stalwartness even in the most difficult of times, and I aim to emulate her courage and her faith. My mother believed that in both life and death, she obtained victory; she knew that dying in Christ was a victory over death, so she rejoiced in whatever outcome her battle with cancer would bring.

She left behind a community who grieves together the loss of this wondrous woman, and I can't begin to describe the pain I feel over the loss of her presence here. I wasn't ready to lose my incredible mother. But in the words of Michelle's favorite psalm, "He who dwells in the Shelter of the Most High will rest in the Shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91 NIV) Michelle always believed that. So now, we reluctantly but faithfully commit her beautiful spirit into the hands of the Most High and beg her rest well in his care. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:14 NIV) So rest well, beloved Michelle, and dwell in the favor of your King. We will see you again in the City of God. "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let him who hears say, 'Come.' And let him who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price." (Revelation 22:17 ESV)

Michelle Crippen (née Buzby) of Burlington, NJ died peacefully on Sunday Aug. 23rd, 2020 at the age of 58. She is survived by her husband, the Rev. Alan R. Crippen II; children, Christina Brown, Zachary Crippen, Brittany Basile, Schuyler Crippen and Felicity Crippen; 8 grandchildren; her mother, Kathleen Buzby; brother, Robin Buzby; and her sister, Melanye Buzby Winterbottom. Her funeral service will be held at 2pm on Friday, Aug 28th at St. John's Anglican Church, 1150 Bristol Rd, Southampton, PA 18966. Service music will begin at 1:30pm. The family will receive guests at the conclusion of

the service. Guests are kindly requested to socially distance and wear masks. Michelle's service will be live streamed via St. John's Anglican Church Digital Media on YouTube (toknowchrist.org/live-stream-worship). Michelle will be interred at Washington Crossing National Cemetery at 10:30am on September 3rd. All are welcome to attend. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in her memory to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Cemetery Details

Washington Crossing National Cemetery

830 Highland Road
Newtown, PA 18940