

NEWS FEATURES

Marine's daughter remembers 'a hero'

By Jennifer Powell

■ The Breeze

James Madison U.

Like many students away from home, Chrissy Higgins has a picture of her father on her desk.

But pictures of this James Madison U. sophomore's father were shown to the world.

The picture on Chrissy's desk is one of a smiling Marine, Lt. Col. William R. Higgins. Chrissy's father was kidnapped in Lebanon Feb. 17, 1988 while on duty as part of a U.N. peacekeeping force, and apparently murdered about a year-and-a-half later.

The picture on her desk was published in Newsweek on Feb. 29, 1988.

This is the picture by which Chrissy wants to remember her father.

"I want people to remember him like he was: carefree, in a Marine shirt and shorts," she said.

"I was so angry," Chrissy said, upon learning of her father's murder. "I was hurt. Any emotion you can think of, I was feeling."

Before the group that was holding William Higgins hostage released the videotape of her dead father, they threatened several times to kill him. Chrissy first heard that her father actually might have been killed from a counselor at the

day camp where she worked. A friend heard the news on the radio, the counselor said in a phone call to Chrissy.

She had been watching the Cable News Network, but no news had been released. Soon after, an announcement was made that a videotape of William Higgins would be broadcast.

She called her stepmother, also a Marine, at the Pentagon, but still could not learn anything definite.

At 1:30 p.m. on CBS, the videotape was broadcast to the nation. It showed a man, clothed in a U.S. Marine uniform, hanging by a noose.

No one knew if the Marine on the tape had been dead before he was hanged or not, and Chrissy says she has not been told anything since the death of her father was first announced.

The date of his death still has not been determined.

Chrissy's parents divorced when she was 5 years old, and she moved in with her father at age 11. She enjoyed the "normal" relationship she had with her father, from their activities to his fatherly advice.

"I looked up to him," she said. "I admired him for his job, but he was just a normal dad. We had our ups and we had our downs," she said.

"Our big thing was to go to horror movies, to go to dinner, to stay up late and



LAWRENCE JACKSON, THE BREEZE, JAMES MADISON U.

Chrissy Higgins and a portrait of her father, who was killed in Lebanon in 1988.

watch TV. Just normal things," she said.

When her father first went to Lebanon, Chrissy's first reaction was frustration. It was the beginning of her senior year in high school.

"I wanted him there to see me graduate," she said. "I wanted him there for my birthday and Christmas. Just little things.

"Then I was completely shocked when he was taken, because I had just assumed that since he worked with the United Nations, he would be protected and nothing like that would ever happen."

Since February 1989, a year after her father's kidnapping, Chrissy has worn a Missing in Action bracelet with her father's name on her right wrist, she

said.

"I don't always know what to say when someone says, 'Oh, what's that?'"

Chrissy recently wrote a letter to the editor of People because her father was not mentioned in a "People of the '80s" review the magazine recently published.

"It was hard on me because I felt, 'Why doesn't that constitute an American tragedy, why isn't that something that people should think about or remember?'" she said.

But the good memories also remain. "I think he was a hero in his own sense," Chrissy said. "To me, he was a hero from the time I was 3 years old. It didn't take an incident like this for me to think he was a hero."

Church

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university.

Hohman said he thought nothing of his dissociation with his natural family and friends until almost a year later, on July 4, 1989, when he broke free from the C-U group.

His newly found independence came when his family educated themselves about the local and national group and became concerned for his well-being. They intervened with exit counselors — social workers who make a career of working with families and helping members of groups they describe as exclusive, mind-controlling or both.

At the end of the summer, Hohman returned to campus for his sophomore year and now characterizes the C-U

Church of Christ as a group of religious addicts.

"In the C-U Church of Christ, every single person in the church will live the life of a religious addict, or else he or she will be 'in sin' and 'struggling' in the eyes of the church."

"They really do persuade people to give up their dreams"

— Todd Hohman,
Former Boston Church of
Christ Member

Hohman also contends, along with other former members of the C-U Church, that the church employs mind-control and manipulation tactics in its teachings.

Ken Long, the church's lead evangelist of the C-U church, says neither are hap-

pening in his church. If church methods were unethical, he added, church membership would be dropping rather than increasing.

"We sold our church on Lincoln (Avenue) because we outgrew it" with a combined campus and community membership of more than 200, he said. "We believe in positive pressure, not negative."

Fellow member and Champaign resident Kathleen McCartney, 27, also refuted claims that the church is manipulative. After dropping out of school in St. Louis, she "came here willingly, to work for the church and to share my faith," McCartney said.

Phil Kunz, senior in engineering, was a member of the C-U Church of Christ from March 1986 until July 1988.

"If you would ask any of the members, they'll refute using mind control because they don't perceive it as mind control," Kunz said. "They just don't see it."

"If you really believe you're on a mission from God and if you go to their five or more meetings every week, and if you really believe you're saving souls, then everything else pales by comparison."

McCartney acknowledges that church members influenced her decision to drop out of school.

"In college, I wanted to go into painting, but it required so much studio time that I had to make a choice between that and the church," she said.

Hohman said he had signed up and paid for a trip with the Illini Ski Club just before he joined the C-U Church. After he was converted, however, he was told unequivocally not to go.

"I was convinced by many that if I went on the trip, I would somehow fall into some deep sin and fall away from the church. That was \$600 down the drain,"

he said.

Hohman said at one time he was seriously considering studying in Germany for a year. According to Hohman, the campus minister for the C-U Church forbade him to go, saying, "We have no (Boston) Church there."

"They really do persuade people to give up their dreams," he said.

But Long said he does not recall the same details of the situation that Hohman does. "It was his free choice to make."

Despite Long's rebuttals of these students' claims, university administrators say they have heard stories about the C-U Church of Christ similar to those of Hohman and Kunz.

Frank Nasca, an associate dean of students who often deals with religious organizations, said, "This is apparently a very controlling organization, and we are greatly concerned about its effects on our students."

Steve Shoemaker, director of the Presbyterian campus ministry, the McKinley Foundation, says that while working with the Dean of Students' Office, he was receiving "at least one complaint every two weeks about the C-U group — as recently as this summer."

Many observers of the church stress that college students, being fairly open to new ideas, are targeted heavily for recruitment.

After a newcomer has come to meetings and has started to take part in the one-on-one Bible studies, he or she is taken through a short but rigorous series of studies that lead up to the newcomer's eventual baptism in the C-U Church, former members say.

Kunz said the "cross study" is "the one that makes you feel horrible. They take

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