



Travis Heying/DN

daughter, Jennifer, with school work. Both mother and daughter elementary school.

es tricky balancing act mand woman's attention

Douglas said.

Merry is divorced from her husband and receives no child support or alimony. She has no idea where he might be, and he has had no contact with her or their child.

Merry decided to go to college eight years after she graduated from high school to improve her life for her and Jennifer's well-being.

"Jennifer was 8 when I started going to school, I pretty much tried to get my classes during the day while she was in school," Douglas said.

"During the summer I had to pay for a sitter."

Douglas also said that her daughter was enrolled in a summer program.

Although Douglas admits that it is physically and mentally burdening to raise a child alone, she said she enjoyed and continued to enjoy motherhood.

"It is stressful, you have to do all the cooking and cleaning and make sure that (Jennifer's) homework is done, and then do your homework," she said.

"Before I started attending the university, I was a stay-home mom," Douglas said. "Now I'm gone all the time because of school and it's very hard not

being home with Jennifer."

But, Merry said her fiance, Marty Chamberlain, eased some of the stress of not being there for her daughter.

Merry met Chamberlain six months ago through a dating service.

"I read this ad one time and I thought that his ad was really nice — he wasn't asking for physical features, he was asking for inner beauty," Douglas said.

Douglas said the relationship between Marty and Jennifer is great.

"They play around like father and daughter," she said.

Douglas said that with her being gone most of the day, Marty is a great help with the housekeeping and with Jennifer.

Now that Merry will soon be graduating, she will no longer be a single mom and will have the opportunity to spend more quality time with her daughter and her soon-to-be husband.

Jennifer has become more understanding of why she can't yet see her mother as much while Merry's in school.

"(But) she still wants mommy to take her swimming."

A purpose Two lives begin with birth of boy

I was 17 and pregnant! As a high school sophomore I didn't have the slightest idea of what I wanted out of life, and at that point in my life I couldn't seem to find a purpose or direction. Now I was being forced to make decisions about my life as I never had before.

At first I tried to ignore the fact that I had a human being growing inside my body. I pretended that this problem would go away. Time, nevertheless, made the physical changes increasingly more apparent. Who would be able to comfort me and give me advice about my condition? I felt so scared and all alone.

At the time of this occurrence in my life, I was living in a very small town—a town in which the people seemed to know things about everyone else.

Feeling scared and alone, I went to my closest friend and explained what was happening to me. She became very withdrawn. At that point others were being informed of my situation. I began to feel more alone and kept to myself.

It became harder and harder for me to get up in the morning and face the world. My world seemed to be coming to an end. Life was becoming unbearable. What would I do? I couldn't continue pretending that my body was not changing and that there was not a tiny, precious life growing inside of me.

The staring eyes of the students, the pressure of the townspeople closing in around me was just too much to take. I had to make a decision and make it soon.

Upon first realizing that I was pregnant my first thoughts were: What would people think about me? I'm not ready to be a parent! I didn't want to interrupt my life as a teen-ager with a somewhat blossoming potential. I didn't want to face the embarrassment that would surely come. What would my parents say and what would they think of me? And what would people think about my parents?

All of these thoughts came to me over and over again. I had known many girls who had become pregnant, but it was always a hush-hush thing and most of them got abortions or were old enough to marry. Still, I couldn't have imagined that this would have happened to me. And marriage was certainly not a consideration for me.

I was now five-and-a-half months pregnant. I had accepted the fact that I was pregnant and decided to have an abortion. All that I thought about from then on was getting rid of the problem of being pregnant.

The Lord helped me to realize that I didn't really think about all the options available to me in relation to my pregnancy. All I had thought about was getting rid of my problem.

On Dec. 31, 1983, people all over the world seemed to be celebrating the festivities of the New Year. However, it wasn't a happy time for me. I was so stressed out from the pressure of not having

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