

PRESS RELEASE

A Nostalgic Reminder of What Life Was Like in the Good Old Days

(Plymouth, Minn.) – Wynn Johnson works hard for a living. As a contractor for his local phone company, he lays cable and fixes problems with the lines on the hottest of days in the summer, and the coldest days in winter. But when he's not working, like a lot of older Americans he thinks back to the good old days.

Johnson grew up during the 1960s in Weeksbury, a small coal-mining town in southeast Kentucky that has seen its share of hardship. "Weeksbury was a harsh place to grow up. There were the rich and there were the very poor. There was no in between," said Johnson, whose family fell into the latter category.

Despite the difficulties he had growing up, he has only nice things to say about his hometown in his memoir titled, *An Angel is Born: A Family's Story* (Amber Skye Publishing, 2013, \$15.95). "I think the people there are true blue. They work hard, they are honest people. They go to church and hope their children have more than they have," said Johnson.

An Angel is Born: A Family's Story begins with a detailed description of the town in Appalachia where coal is still the pervading industry, despite a downturn in the 1950s and 60s that nearly bankrupted the town. "There is such a large variety of wildflowers and blooming trees in the spring, and if you've never seen that part of the country in the fall, then there's just no way to describe the beauty or the colors," he writes.

Johnson also describes a lot of the businesses that once lined Route 466, the only way in or out of Weeksbury, and the activities people used to take part in during the "Good Old Days," like listening to John Kennedy's speeches on the radio. He shares the townsfolks' excitement when Weeksbury got its first movie theater, and how the kids used to pass the time by playing in the woods and gathering fruit off the apple, pear, plum and nut trees.

He also writes about what life was like during those times and the people and experiences that affected him the most, including friends, neighbors and family members who died in car accidents and of disease, and the incredible ordeal his sister, Lily, and her husband, Bill, endured.

Their daughter, Angel Rose Skiles, was born in 1972 with Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome (RSTS), a form of retardation. She also developed Progeria, or rapid aging, and that wasn't the only medical ailment the youngster faced. She also suffered from seizures.

*An Angel
is Born*
Wynn Johnson



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“Despite all she was up against, Angel was the sweetest person you would ever meet. She was kind and caring and brought a smile to the face of everyone she met,” said Johnson. Angel died of natural causes on Oct. 1, 2011.

Shortly after Angel’s death, Johnson and his sister had a conversation about what they should do to keep the memory of Lily’s precious daughter alive. “It was Lily’s idea to write something about Angel’s life. She thought it would be just a short article I would submit to the paper,” said Johnson.

Angel’s story ended up being a 50,000-word manuscript. “Lily and Bill are extraordinary people. They had an extraordinary daughter and what they went through to keep her alive, when those in the medical community had predicted that she wouldn’t live seven years, is amazing. Theirs is a story that needed to be told.”

Now that *An Angel is Born: A Family’s Story* is in bookstores, Johnson is hoping readers who want to be inspired will pick it up in droves. “I think it tells a good story,” said Johnson.

An Angel is Born: A Family’s Story is available for purchase online at www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com and www.Itascabooks.com. Copies can also be ordered at any bookstore in North America.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A lot of young men are proud to follow in their father’s footsteps, but Wynn Johnson of Plymouth, Minn., knew better than to become a coal miner, one of the most dangerous professions there is. Before he was born, Johnson’s father had been injured so badly in a coal mining accident he was disabled. His paternal grandfather had also been crippled in a coal mining accident and his grandfather on his mother’s side had been killed.

So, on Sept. 9, 1971, with a high school diploma under his belt, Johnson left his hometown of Weeksbury, Ky., and headed out into the world to seek his fortune. He moved to Springfield, Ohio, and worked for a short time at Vining Broom, a manufacturing company that made brooms and mops. In the mid 1970s he joined the Marines and traveled the world.

After his tour of duty ended, he returned to Vining Broom and became a plant manager. He remained in that position for a few years then left to start up his own contracting company in 1980. Today, Johnson remains an independent contractor, working in the communications industry. He works frequently for Frontier Communications, installing and testing electronics and cable.

Johnson attended Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. He and his family now call Minnesota’s Twin Cities area home.

To arrange an interview with Wynn Johnson and/or request a review copy of *An Angel is Born: A Family’s Story*, contact Rachel M. Anderson, Publicist, at 952-240-2513 or rachel@rmapublicity.com.

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TESTIMONIALS

"*An Angel is Born: A Family's Story* is a personal and candid memoir set in the small coal-mining town of Weeksbury in the Appalachia mountains of Kentucky. When Johnson writes of what life was like for him and the families in this community, his narrative reads like a candid conversation with a family elder who has lived through interesting times. *An Angel is Born* offers detailed and descriptive insights into a town's evolving economic conditions and families afflicted by tragedies. Ultimately inspiring, *An Angel is Born* is an engaging read and highly recommended, especially for anyone struggling to deal with their own problematic life issues."
- **James A. Cox, Editor-in-chief, Midwest Book Review**

"I enjoyed the notalgia and informative look at what life was like a few decades ago in Eastern Kentucky and Central Ohio. I also enjoyed the scriptures and quotes which helped me to reconnect with the wisdom of the bible."
- **Jessie, Amazon.com review**

"This book told such an amazing story. It was heartbreaking and heartwarming all at the same time, not to mention very inspirational. Wynn Johnson's story telling is very awe-inspiring, as is the lives of the people who serve as the main characters within the book. "
- **Nicole Rice, Amazon.com review**

"I loved the trip back in time! It read like my father's childhood stories that he told when I was a kid."
- **Katharine Arnold, Amazon.com review**

"From the moment I picked it up I couldn't put it down. A wonderful story of faith and family and a parents love for their child."
- **Katherine Newton, Amazon.com review**

"It is a gift for all who read. This book had me after Chapter One. I loved the relativity of the true story and the bible verses and quotes at the end of each chapter."
- **Christine Dupont, Lakeville, Minn.**

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SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Ask Wynn Johnson, author

1. What is your strongest, most profound memory of your hometown, Weeksbury, Ky.?
2. What made your niece, Angel, so special?
3. How have readers reacted to the story?
4. Describe the research process you went through to develop the material for this book.

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Who Has Had the Most Profound Affect on Your Life?

(Plymouth, Minn.) - When you were in high school, you may have had a teacher who assigned you to write an essay about the person who has had the most profound affect on your life. Perhaps you wrote about an actor or sports star, or maybe about your Mom, Dad or best friend.

Wynn Johnson of Plymouth, Minn., doesn't remember who he would have written about when he was younger, but today it's his niece, Angel Rose Skiles, and her parents, Lily and Bill.

"Lily and Bill are extraordinary people," he said. "They had an extraordinary daughter and what they went through to keep her alive, when those in the medical community had predicted that she wouldn't live seven years, is amazing. Theirs is a story that needed to be told."

Angel Rose Skiles was born on May 2, 1972, and there were complications surrounding her birth. Her umbilical cord had been severely wrapped around her when she was born. Not only that, her mother had suffered toxemia. After being born, Angel was immediately rushed to an incubator. Her parents weren't able to hold her for four days.

Lily and Bill eventually brought their delicate baby girl home, but her early years were plagued by problems. Angel Rose was eventually diagnosed with Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome (RSTS), a form of retardation. She also developed Progeria, or rapid aging, and that wasn't the only medical ailment the youngster faced. She also suffered from frequent seizures.

"There were so many times when Angel was young that Lily and Bill were told their daughter wouldn't live through the night. She became that sick, and it's amazing how they transformed their home, their vehicles, their entire lives to cater to keeping her alive," said Johnson. "If the weather was bad, they wouldn't go anywhere because they couldn't take her out. They couldn't go on vacation because she wasn't feeling good. Everything was dependent on Angel. I think that kind of devotion deserves some attention."

Johnson explains that Bill and Lily Skiles did everything in their power to make sure their daughter was happy and comfortable. They never once gave thought to placing her in a home for the disabled. They kept her home for all 39 years of her life, rarely leaving her side.

Sheila Grisim, Director of Fraser Home & Community Supports, says special needs families deserve significant recognition and support for the care they provide on a daily basis. Fraser is Minnesota's largest and most experienced provider of autism services, and also serves children and adults with more than 60 types of mental and physical disabilities.

"As Angel's family demonstrated, this commitment often goes far beyond that of caring for a child who is developing typically or certainly that of caring for an adult child without a disability. As families make the important decision to care for their loved ones at home, it is critical that communities embrace the entire family



with support. Each day often brings a new challenge to overcome as they devote their lives to ensuring the most healthy and meaningful life for their family member,” said Grisim.

“What I like about the beginning of the book is that the author kind of sets the stage for how the whole family handled this beautiful child and there is history about Appalachia. There are very interesting stories about the people and the community and all of it leading up to what Lily was and how she became the strong, wonderful mother of this child with inabilities rather than disabilities,” said Judith Palmateer of Amber Skye Publishing.

“I really think this book reaches out to any parent who has lost a child. Whether to illness or an accident, it can happen anytime. I think the message of this book is love your children, keep them near as Lily did,” said Johnson.

An Angel is Born: A Family’s Story is available for purchase online at www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com and www.ItascaBooks.com. Copies can also be ordered at any bookstore in North America.

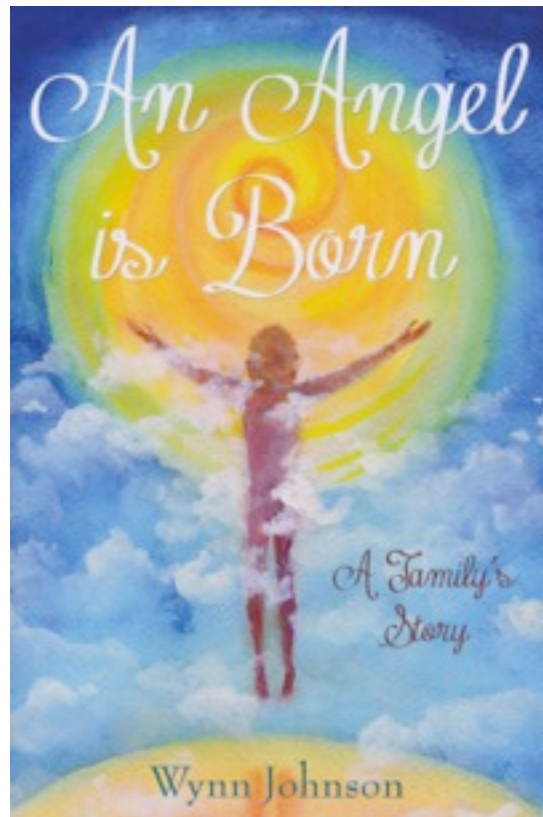
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