In the time that I had been staying at my uncle David's, we noticed and would often joke about how in our family our children seem to come in sets of 3:

We have the oldest siblings, the middle siblings, and those fondly referred to as the babies.

Our oldest siblings are the bosses. They are our leaders, our walls of strength that show the rest of us the way with their courage. They are always the ones with all of the answers who seem to always manage to keep calm and keep the rest of us afloat.

The middle children are our feelers, the ones who sense the emotions in their environments and teach us about the true depth of our feelings. They were the ones who you could see connect with my uncle on a truly profound spiritual and emotional level.

And so with my mom, an oldest sibling leading the way, followed by Susie, a middle child who guided us on a spiritual path, I felt it was only appropriate that one of the babies get up here to speak.

I consider the babies in our family to be the observers. With the role of the boss and the feeler taken so masterfully by our older siblings, the babies are the ones who express their role in the family by recognizing the holes left unfilled by their older siblings and throwing themselves into filling those needs.

I am happy to be able to claim my uncle David as one of my own-- as a baby. He observed what was need in his own life, what was needed in the lives of his family and friends, and he threw himself into filling those needs.

He created the loving and open home his daughters had longed for, mending and strengthening relationships and communicating to them how deeply he loved each of them. He allowed himself to be vulnerable with his older sisters and let them take care of him as they had when he was a little boy. He fostered an environment which allowed his mother and birth father a share piece of reconciliation and the experience of saying goodbye to their son.

My uncle David observed how badly his girls, all of his girls, needed each other and he brought us together and taught us to open our hearts. He taught us how to be honest and communicative and how to love and receive love. In the last few months of his life, my uncle united the women in his life not only with each other but also introduced us to a community, to a family, here in Fallbrook that has truly transformed each of our lives.

My life has been enriched by the lessons my uncle taught me and by giving me the gift of making me one of his girls. I will walk away from this experience with the knowledge that I come from a group of fiercely loving and powerful women, and as well as some of the most caring and tender uncles I could ever ask for.