

The Story Behind the Alpha-1 Angel

by Jane Martin as told by Ken Walkley

It might surprise you that a guy like me loves to do cross-stitch. I'm not really into crafts, I'm actually more of a hunter, an athletic type of guy. But having Alpha-1 has brought about many changes in my life, and led me to discover things – and accomplish things – I never dreamed I would.

Why do I do this? Well, I started doing counted cross-stitch* when I was told I had a year and a half to live. I wanted to make something for my sister, something for her to keep, so she would remember me after I was gone. Eight years later I'm still here – and I'm still doing cross-stitch.

When I completed my first project, a picture of a tiger for my sister, I showed it to some of my friends. My close friend, Shirley Dennis who is an Alpha, saw the kind of artwork I was interested in doing and suggested I cross stitch an angel for the Alpha-1 Foundation. Since I had already decided on cross-stitching something for my spiritual parents Ron and Pat DeHaan, a piece called, "Lost No More," I decided to go ahead and make an Angel for the Foundation.

I had about 100 hours to go on "Lost No More" when I came across an art project titled, "In Blue" in a magazine. I knew right away that this was going to be the one for the Alpha-1 Foundation. I estimated that it would take me about 600 hours to complete.

I started on the angel the day after Easter and worked on it for about a month and a half. I told my friend, Ed Brailey, about the project and he agreed that it was a great idea to create it for the Alpha-1 Foundation. He also suggested that I should finish it by June 5 of the next year, and show it at the Alpha-1 Association's National Conference.

By the end of May 2008, I had put in about 123 hours on "In Blue." I picked it up again in October 2008 and worked on it an average of 17 hours a week. By the time I finished, just in time for the conference, the total hours worked on the project had reached 610.

I find doing this type of artwork very therapeutic. It's so rewarding when my family and friends compliment my work. All of my friends and family have been able to see the progression of this angel.

The reason I picked this angel was because of what I saw in her, specifically, three things:

The Dove: In my faith symbolizing the Holy Spirit.

The Angel: Representing the guardian angel who is assigned to look over us.

The Flowering Trees: Our refuge from all the turmoil in our lives with Alpha-1 or any other chronic or terminal illness.

In this picture, I see the Holy Spirit giving this angel her daily instructions. No matter how tough or trialing our conditions can be, God will give us a calm and soothing spirit

or soul. God is the flowering trees, symbolizing how he is our refuge and strength in overcoming our problems, whatever they may be.

In spite of having Alpha-1, and maybe even because of it, I have been so richly blessed. So, here is my gift to you and the Alpha-1 Foundation. May God bless you, one and all.

**Counted cross-stitch is a form of embroidery in which X-shaped stitches are used to form a picture usually done on easily countable evenweave fabric. The fabric is completely blank, having no picture printed on it. The stitcher counts the threads in each direction so that the stitches are of uniform size and appearance. The type of stitch done by Ken is tiny, with 14 stitches, or X's, per inch.*

