

REMEMBERING DR. CHRIS HATCHER (1946–1999)

By Marc Klaas

Two weeks after Polly's kidnapping and overwhelmed by chaotic events beyond my control, I had just concluded a briefing on the status of Polly's case and as usual there were no new developments. I was leaving the Petaluma Police Department, feeling as I could hardly maintain my sanity, when an elegant man in an Armani suit introduced himself as Dr. Chris Hatcher, clinical professor of psychology from UCSF. Thus began

an ongoing therapeutic journey of healing and personal growth.

As an acknowledged expert in hostage negotiation ... predatory child kidnapping, threat assessment, and violent behavior, Chris Hatcher's influence has been extensive and profound.

Dr. Hatcher gave me several phone numbers and placed himself at my disposal. As weeks dragged into months, I often called Dr. Hatcher for advice and consultations. He was always available, returning my pages within a few moments. No question was too small, no query insignificant. He helped me to focus on the task at

hand and in his quiet, professional manner helped prepare me for a fate I was unwilling to accept. Although I barely knew him, Chris Hatcher became indispensable in my quest for resolution. He treated my wife, Violet, and I with dignity and respect, displaying an empathy that seemed impossible for an outsider.

Polly Becomes America's Child

As the intensity escalated in the search for Polly, certain law enforcement representatives blurred lines of responsibility by engaging in social work. Chris interceded and ensured that frustrations created by a lack of progress never betrayed our common goal of finding Polly. His judgment was always sound, his intentions clear. Trips to the Petaluma Police Department were much easier to bear whenever Chris' Corvette was parked in their lot.

Unlike fairy tales, things do not always end happily ever after, even



Dr. Chris Hatcher

when you do get what you want. As we approached resolution, Chris introduced me to a kidnap recovery program that he had developed. At best, Polly would be traumatized beyond imagination, were she still alive, and the entire family would need intensive therapy.

But, alas, the news we received was the worst. Chris suggested that we designate Polly as America's Child, a symbolic gesture that allowed people to emotionally invest in the important issue of child kidnapping. In the weeks following Polly's death, Chris became my big brother, guiding and maneuvering Violet and I through our grief. Chris was our lifeline in a sea of fury and rage.

Understanding the Mind of the Victim

I had not spoken to Chris for over a year when I learned that he died suddenly on Saturday, February 20, at his home in Ramona, California at 52 years of age. At his memorial service at San Francisco's Fort Mason Conference Center, I learned that Chris extended his healing powers and brilliantly creative mind into many arenas. As an acknowledged expert in hostage negotiation, workplace violence, cults, predatory child kidnapping, threat assessment, and violent behavior, Chris Hatcher's influence has been extensive and profound. His overall contribution to the understanding of the mind and fragility of victims cannot be overestimated and will never be fully appreciated.

Chris Hatcher accomplished what we all aspire to. He left the world a better place than he found it. ■

© 1999 by the KlaasKids Foundation. The *Klaas Action Review* is published quarterly for Foundation members. Dedicated to the memory of Polly Klaas, the Foundation's purpose is to inform parents, children, and communities about how to prevent crimes against children through personal action and support of legislation. Editorial: Freeman Communications, Berkeley, CA. Design Concept: Blackburn Design, Petaluma, CA. Printing: Marin Stat, San Rafael, CA.