



LONG DISTANCE MEMORIAL BALLOON

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR
FROM
GEORGE EPPLE

On Wednesday, January 6, I went out to the yard to walk our son's dog. As I approached the garden fence I noticed a shiny red splash of color. It turned out to be a deflated helium balloon with a note taped to it. The note read: "If you have found this balloon, it was released in memory of Cameron Xavier Graham age 7. Please email and let us know he has touched someone else's life." An email address was included.

Not sure if this was real or a hoax, I googled Cameron Xavier Graham and found obituaries in the Titusville, PA Herald(Cameron's mother's family home) and another on a funeral home website in Clermont, FL. Now more confident that it was not a hoax, I sent an email and quickly received a reply from Cameron's father, who confirmed that Cameron had died on Christmas day of complications from a bacterial infection and that the balloon had been released on December 30th at a memorial service for Cameron. The balloons (the father confirmed that I was the first to respond to a balloon) were released in Clermont. Wow! I immediately replied, shared my sympathies and told the father where and when the balloon had been recovered. I also noted that there had just been a story in the news about a boy who found a bottle with a note in it that had been launched into the sea in 1988! I also shared that as a young boy I had tossed a bottle with a note in it into New England waters during a family cruise; it was found years later on a beach in Florida (another connection with the balloon) by an elderly beach comber who wrote me a lovely note.

I have promised Cameron's father that I would send the balloon back to the family, so they could have it as a memento. I will include the photo and a copy of this note and an article should you see to it to publish the story.