

# **PEN PAPER PRAYER**

A TRUE STORY OF DEATH AND LIFE

**BY**

**JAMES P. HOLMES**

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"This is a long way from life support"

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## Coming This Fall

### **THE MAILBOX MYSTERIES IN MY FATHERS FOOT STEPS**

**BY JAMES P. HOLMES**

I bared my soul in writing PEN, PAPER, PRAYER, both the good and the bad. Re-living the whole experience was exhausting and difficult. As I say in my videos, "If I hadn't lived it, I wouldn't believe it." ([jamespholmes.com](http://jamespholmes.com))

I enjoy writing, telling a story. So, when PEN, PAPER, PRAYER was done I started writing for fun, as a release.

Out of this self-administered therapy, The Mailbox Mysteries, evolved. A series of books featuring Jack Harrington, whom, like myself, has suffered a traumatic brain injury. The book is fiction, but Jack's struggle is real.

The first volume, In My Fathers Foot Steps, Jack is unofficially recruited by the local Chief of police in Wellfleet, MA to look into his own father's death. The investigation has been "swept under the rug" by the State Police, further fanning the flames of suspicion that Jack's father, Walter Harrington, had been murdered, as most of the locals believed.

Walter was a good mail-man and an even better husband, father, and friend. His death was tragic enough, but murder in the sleepy sea-side town of Wellfleet?

Unfortunately, Walter would not be the last resident to die a suspicious death, leaving the town's residents on edge, and surrounded by a cloud of mystery.

Please visit [jamespholmes.com](http://jamespholmes.com) for updated information about The Mailbox Mysteries release date.

Thanks,  
Jim

## PEN PAPER PRAYER READER REVIEWS

Christopher R. Whiting  
Independence, MO

Pen, Paper, Prayer, James Holmes story of dying and coming back to life, is a book overflowing with redemption and hope. I've read several books about NDE's (near death experiences) and none have explored, with such depth and honesty, what it must be like to lose your mortality, experience immeasurable bliss, and come back into your body. The author's struggles, following his taste of the unmitigated joy of the afterlife, resonated with me as I've often wondered how hard it would be to come back to this existence after experiencing heaven/nirvana. His ultimate redemption and renewed sense of purpose, after years of struggle, provide hope for all of us. For anyone who is wrestling with the meaning of their own mortality, or who is wondering what has happened to loved ones who have passed on, this is a must read. The book is well-written and hard to put down. I finished it in one sitting and highly recommend it.

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Denise M. McShane  
Stoughton, MA

**Jim Holmes is a storyteller.** He has crafted a tale that does what all good stories should do – elicit emotion in the reader. *Pen, Paper, Prayer* is compelling, informative, funny, heart-wrench-

ing, and, most importantly, true! In this book, Jim bravely shares his innermost feelings regarding his struggles with his traumatic brain injury, long recovery, and desire to reclaim his life. He also lets us in on what happened to him when he died as a result of the car crash. He takes us on an amazing journey of survival and the incredible power of prayer. I am now far more aware of how a traumatic brain injury impacts not only the victim but also those who love that person as well. I am grateful to have read this book, for it has left me more spiritual. I am in awe of Jim's strength, honesty, courage, and the determination of the human spirit.

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Kimberly A. Walsh  
Kansas City, MO

### **5 stars! A Powerful and Compelling read!**

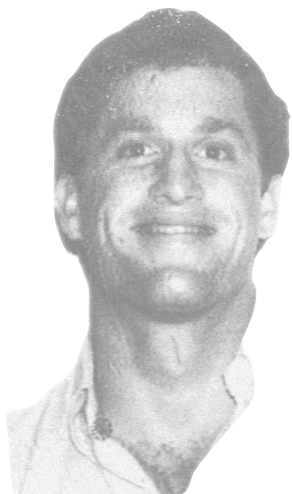
I could not recommend a book more highly than I can this one. *Pen, Paper, Prayer*, is a true story that gives you **hope** for life after death. Jim's ability to communicate his experience during his time in heaven and his return to his body is simply amazing! As he shares his experience—you can *feel and see* his glimpse into eternity. It affirms the power of prayer and that miracles do happen. His miracle death and life experience also reveals how much we are loved by a presence unseen.

Jim's recount of his recovery and the love of his family makes this book especially hard to put down.

Jim's recovery is a true miracle, I recommend this book to everyone and *especially*, those who have or love someone with a brain injury.

## CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR .....	8	CHAPTER 7.	
AUTHOR’S NOTE .....	10	Grand Mal Seizures .....	166
CHAPTER 1.		CHAPTER 8.	
My Accident .....	14	Who or What Was I? .....	198
CHAPTER 2.		CHAPTER 9.	
My Life Before the Accident.....	32	Rock Bottom.....	238
CHAPTER 3.		CHAPTER 10.	
A Glimpse of Heaven .....	56	Tree Guy .....	286
CHAPTER 4.		CHAPTER 11.	
In the Hospital .....	72	A Power That Defies Description.....	302
CHAPTER 5.		APPENDIX A:	
Alive Again.....	100	Cape Cod Hospital Clinical Resume.....	308
CHAPTER 6.		APPENDIX B:	
The Beginning of Recovery .....	130	Cape Cod Hospital Operative Record.....	312

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Driver's license photo 1979

*“Courage is like love, it must have hope to nourish it.”*

Napoleon Bonaparte

*I* was born on February 10th, 1957 in Wareham, Ma. My parents, Phil and Jean Holmes, were living in Falmouth, Massachusetts, at the time. This is the town where I would be raised and attend public school. Graduating from Falmouth High school in 1975, I was pretty much done with formal education. Not really having a direction in life, I would attend and leave several colleges

before settling down into a good job as an estimator and superintendent for a local construction company. After several years of excelling at and loving my job, I was in a terrible car accident. My life went completely off the rails, and I would never be the same. My death, new life, and unexpectedly strong relationship with God is what I have written about in *Pen, Paper, Prayer*.

I am a flawed person living a remarkable life. Remarkable in that, despite my shortcomings, and skeptical take on religion, I was given a second chance at life.

My tremendous injuries from a car accident killed me. Death was beautiful beyond words, and I was content to be dead.

Not only did I come back to life, but I would eventually flourish despite having lost part of my brain.

Recovering from my traumatic brain injury was a long and difficult process, one that I was forced to do on my own, never receiving one second of formal rehabilitation.

During this time, I struggled with; being alive again, relationships, drinking, self-worth, and an on-again, off-again relationship with God.

I just wasn't worthy of God's attention, or so I thought .

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book is a work of narrative nonfiction. The characters are real, and the events depicted actually happened. Passages in which I narrate a person's thoughts and feelings are based on interviews with the subjects and witnesses. The characters are real, some of their names have been changed for privacy reasons. When I was twenty-three, I died of massive brain trauma and other injuries suffered in a car accident. Obviously, I have lived to tell about it. I recall dying, being dead, and coming back to life. That is when my thirty-six-year struggle began, as my brain healed, and I tried to adjust to being alive again.

For my 58th birthday, this past February (2015), my daughter, Molly, gave me the book *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*, written by Eben Alexander, who also had a near-death experience. I eagerly read the bestseller, seeking validation of my own death experience. About halfway through, I stopped reading. Though I connected with the beginning of his story (his description of dying), his experience of being dead was nothing like mine. Not that mine is "right," but what I

experienced is almost beyond description, and it took me years to comprehend. I have since finished *Proof of Heaven*, just to make sure that I didn't sell his book short; my opinion has not changed.

I particularly wanted to read about his recovery—not so much physically, but how he handled the mental aspect of dying and then coming back to life. When I came back to this world, I was different. My spirit, which was released in death, had to go back to its less-prominent role in my being. My brain, which was damaged, had to integrate this new form of awareness into daily life. My awakened spirit, which is meant for existence in death, was now very prominent in me. This heightened spirit was now active in day-to-day life and very vulnerable to this physical world, where it was never meant to exist. The mixing of dominant forces to run my body, brain, and spirit, and the associated realities did not go so well. My recovery has been difficult and complex on so many levels that it has taken me thirty-six years to process and begin to understand what happened to me. I read Dr. Alexander's book because I needed to know that someone else had come back from being dead, had struggled to be normal again, and was at a loss for words to

describe what they had witnessed, that their experience with God defied all words and logic.

The big question that haunted me continuously was *Why me?* Not *Why did I die?* but *Why was I allowed to live—to come back to life?* Many people have died from less damage to their bodies than what happened to me, or they survived and are severely handicapped. I know that I shouldn't question my tremendous good fortune. But still, *Why? Why save me—of all people? I can understand God saving Eben Alexander's life, as he is a highly educated neurosurgeon saving patients and improving lives. Dr. Alexander, as I read, was happily married, raising a good family, and well respected in the medical field. I envision him as a "Norman Rockwell-ish" figure, a pillar of his community. But me? I have only a high school education, a job in construction, and I liked to drink beer and chase women. I was hardly worthy of God's attention—or so I thought. But I was saved despite my "nobody" status in life. There is no question that I survived against all odds. But I would more than merely survive—I would eventually flourish, despite my permanent injuries. The fact that God saw fit to save me—me, of all people—should encourage*

everyone, no matter who they are or what they've done, to live without fear of dying. I can tell you that dying is a beautiful experience and that death is nothing to be afraid of—neither your own nor the death of somebody you know.

So, I thank Eben Alexander for writing his story, because it has inspired me to write mine.

James P. Holmes

## CHAPTER ONE

### *My Accident*

*From "Song of Myself"*

*by Walt Whitman*

*"All goes onward...and nothing collapses,*

*And to die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier.*

*Has anyone supposed it lucky to be born?*

*I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know it."*

*I* was the day after Christmas, 1980. I was twenty-three and living in a house in North Falmouth, Massachusetts, with my friend Robbie.

"Robbie, you cooking dinner tonight?" I asked him.

"Cook what? The fridge is empty. Besides, I cooked last night; it's your turn."

"How about pizza? It's Saturday night, and I don't feel like going shopping. Do you?"

"Naw, I'm sick of pizza," Robbie said.

The house that Robbie and I were renting was less than a quarter mile from the North Falmouth House of Pizza, and we probably ate there too often, in keeping with our bachelor lifestyle.

"Bobby-B's?" I asked, using our abbreviation for "Bobby Byrne's Pub."

"Sounds good. I'm gonna take a shower. Leave in a half hour?"

"Sure thing."

"It's your night to have cooked, so you're driving," Robbie quipped on the way to the bathroom.



“Okay with me. I don’t want to ride in your piece-of-junk car anyway,” I barbed back, knowing the pride he took in recently buying his first new car with his hard-earned money. The car was nothing flashy—a four-door sedan better suited for a family—but it ran like a top and was all his.

It was a short drive to Bobby-B’s, which made it very convenient for us to go there. We could grab dinner, a couple of beers, maybe run into a friend or two. Besides the lack of food in our house, there was another reason I wanted to go to Bobby-B’s on that particular night. Every time we went on a Saturday night, I would see the same, very attractive, girl. She didn’t appear to be with anyone other than her girlfriends, and several times we had made longer-than-usual-eye contact across the crowded bar. If I saw her again, I was determined to ask her out.

Robbie and I got to Bobby-B’s around seven; we ordered dinner and a couple of Buds in the bottle. *Ahhh*, there’s nothing like that first sip of ice-cold beer, even when it’s December and way below freezing outside. I finished my dinner, and, as I started on my second Bud, I scanned the room for the girl I hoped to meet. Nothing. Who knows? The cold winter weather

may have kept her home. Or maybe she had a boyfriend, after all. *Oh, well.*

Over our second beer, Robbie and I got into a heated debate with the bartenders about which team was better, the Red Sox or Yankees. Robbie argued for the Yankees only because he liked to stir things up. It was two bartenders and me against Robbie, and he loved it. I knew he hated the Yankees, like any good New Englander, but he loved to argue.

At a lull in the argument, I felt that someone was watching me. I turned in the direction I felt the stare was coming from, and there she was—the girl I was hoping to meet. Our eyes locked momentarily, and I detected a faint smile on her lips.

I’d had enough baseball talk—it was December, for crying out loud—so I made my way through the crowd in her direction. As I approached her, I noticed she was well dressed from head to toe. She had on new Bean winter boots, stylish jeans, and a beige peacoat with a complementary scarf around her neck. She looked like she had just stepped off a page of an L.L. Bean catalog. She had clear, smooth skin, deep-blue eyes, and light blond hair. She was, perhaps, out of my league, but I had a feeling that there was

something very special about her.

I made my way through the crowd until I found myself in front of her. I introduced myself and, seeing that her hands were empty, offered to buy her a drink, which she accepted. She asked for a beer, a “Corona no lime,” to be exact. We small-talked above the din of the bar crowd, and I was liking this girl more and more. Not only was she pretty but, more importantly, intelligent and well spoken. To top it all off, she liked to drink beer. A big plus in my book!

After talking for a while, we reached that point where we both realized there may be long-term dating potential in the other person. We exchanged phone numbers and agreed I would call her to make a date for the upcoming New Year’s weekend. I was excited to have met a young woman of her caliber. She was different, a step up from the women I usually dated. *Maybe this is what I need in my life, I thought, someone who would inspire me to work harder, take life more seriously, and plan a direction in life.* As I returned to my seat at the bar next to Robbie, who was still arguing baseball, I thought, *This has been a great night.* I had this strong feeling, down deep, that my life was about to

change. It was, but not in the way I imagined.

~ **December 27, 1980, 12:00 midnight** ~

*R*obbie and I left the bar around midnight. Once outside, the moonlit night and freezing temperature were a sharp contrast to the warm and friendly atmosphere we had just left. All I could think about was the pretty face, blond hair, and captivating perfume of the sweet girl I had just met. As I got into my cold car for the drive home, I could still hear her gentle voice. Robbie and I sat in the car for several minutes, letting the engine warm up. But we were too cold to wait for the heat. Robbie looked at me and said, “What are you waiting for, man? We can drive all the way home before this damn car warms up. Let’s go!”

The route home was easy. Take a left out of Mashpee Commons onto Rte. 151, follow it through one intersection at Sandwich Road, and continue all the way to the end at Rte. 28A. Then take a right at the light onto 28A, past the North Falmouth House of Pizza; our house was on the right, up about two hundred feet. Maybe a total of eight miles.

The police report states that my car skidded on a patch of black ice at the intersection of Rte. 151 and Sandwich Road. This caused my car to go off the road, out of control, and into the woods, running over small trees and brush until it hit a large and un-yielding pine tree.

It was late at night—actually early morning—and we were off the road, well into the woods. Some of the smaller trees and grasses we had run over sprang back up, combining with the darkness of night to cover the accident scene, in what seemed to be a conspiracy of nature to keep us hidden from any rescue effort. The engine died on impact, and the smashed battery could keep the head lights on only momentarily. They went from bright white to a brownish flutter to black. The sole beacon of light to alert anyone to our presence was extinguished.

How long we sat broken and bleeding in my car, no one will ever know. Doctors later speculated that the cold weather—zero degrees Fahrenheit, the same cold that caused the black ice to form—may have also saved Robbie's life, by helping to stem the flow of blood from his body.

A typical young, arrogant male, I never wore my seat belt. I

thought I was invincible, and seat belts were not cool. So, when car met tree, my body became a speeding projectile. My head hit the inside of my car so hard that part of my brain was instantly pulverized, turning into liquefied brain matter. My skull fractured on impact, and broken pieces of cranium jammed into my brain. This severe head trauma caused blood clots the size of grapes to form in my brain. Numerous other broken bones and punctured organs severely affected my health, to say the least.

Robbie did not have his seat belt on, either, and his head and body also suffered similar damage, but less severe than mine. We were both unconscious, and neither of us would wake up for a long time. So, there we sat, completely helpless on an absolutely beautiful but bone-chilling cold December morning.

Head wounds always bleed profusely, and mine was no exception. My body came to rest in an awkward sitting position, partially slumped over the steering wheel. Blood poured out of a jagged gash along the right side of my head, starting a few inches above my ear and continuing across my forehead. The blood running out of my wound mixed with the pulverized, liquefied brain matter that was seeping out through