

He said he'd be gone 15 minutes...

Abyss

By Scott Harrup

Tammy Trent. The name came about simply enough. Tammy had loved Trent since their youth group days at First Assembly of God in Grand Rapids, Mich. They married in 1990, she became a nationally recognized Christian singer in the ensuing years, and it just made sense their relationship should be honored at every concert and on every album.

Jamaica's Blue Lagoon is also aptly named. Its deep, rich color shifts with the angle of the sun. About seven miles east of Port Antonio, the lagoon was once a favorite tourist spot with a restaurant offering open-air dining over the water. Hurricane Ivan changed all that in 2004.

But the restaurant was still there in September 2001. Trent and Tammy had come to Jamaica for a week of rest before beginning a week of ministry. The final day of their vacation found them at the lagoon.

continued on page 16

A b y s s

Trent, a veteran diver since his teens, had been free diving for a year. Ditch the air tanks, hold your breath, and then explore the depths for two or three minutes before surfacing to catch that next breath. At nearly 200 feet deep and crystal clear, the Blue Lagoon was a free diver's dream.

"Trent was always very careful," Tammy says. "He had practiced holding his breath in the bathtub until he could stay under for nearly five minutes."

After enjoying their meal together at the restaurant, Trent dove into the lagoon. He prom-

until nearly sunset.

Tammy awoke Sept. 11, 2001, to the news reports of the World Trade Center attacks.

"I was staying at a doctor's home," she remembers, "and he told me I needed to see what was happening on the TV."

She saw the second plane hit the towers. Minutes later the phone rang. Relatives in the United States were trying to fly to Jamaica to be with her but were now grounded. She would be alone.

The phone rang again. The dive team had found Trent's body.

In 2009 Tammy Trent continues



The last photo of Trent and Tammy

She injects into her songwriting that sense of God's peace as well as her greater awareness of life's pain.

"When I got my first record deal I was singing bubbly, alive songs," she says. "I look back now and think probably half the people in my audience were sure I couldn't possibly relate to the real-life issues they were going through. Now, I can see it on their faces, and they can see it on mine. It's a new season, a deeper anointing. The lyrics are different when I'm singing; the message is more powerful. I'm definitely a woman living the songs I sing,

"It's a new season, a deeper anointing. ... I'm definitely a woman living the songs I sing, and I'm trying to speak that into the lives of people."

ised to be back in 15 minutes. Swimming out to the deepest stretch of water, he turned to wave at Tammy on the shore.

She smiled and waved back, never dreaming it was the last time she would see him alive.

Seven years and counting after that day, Tammy can still walk into her garage, see the immaculate shelving Trent built and feel the tears fighting for supremacy.

"I still feel the pain, the moments I can't breathe," she admits. "I hate the new normal."

Her first day in the "new normal" found her scrambling among nearby tourists begging for a mask and snorkel to swim out to where she last saw Trent. A boat owner kindly rode her to the spot and circled as they stared over the side. There was no sign of Trent. There would be no sign all that afternoon as Tammy waited and prayed in a back room of the restaurant while a dive team explored the depths

to take the stage at concerts and women's conferences across the country. Recent ministry trips have included Singapore and Australia.

"God has given me a great life, a great adventure," she says. "In Trent, He gave me a great love. I experienced that love so richly. I'm sad that it's not in my life today, but I'm getting up today with great expectation. *What's next, God?* I would rather be a woman who embraces adventure and let the world see that I'm a real woman letting a real God put me back together again. I'm not pretending that it all makes sense and that all the pain is gone."

What does make sense is her assurance of God's peace in the midst of life's questions.

"God's peace has the power to destroy confusion and painful questions and chaos," she insists. "When we pray for God's peace, we can trust Him to break down those things that would destroy us."

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When Tammy found her way home in 2001 and first opened her e-mail, she was stunned to see thousands of messages from complete strangers assuring her of their continued prayers. Now, almost daily, she finds e-mails from complete strangers whose pain is somehow lessened by her songs.

Like the couple she learned of recently. The young man drowning off the coast of Spain during a dive. The young woman struggling to breathe in the midst of her grief.

"Sometimes I sit there and look at the screen and just cry," she says. "I wish I had the right words for someone in that moment. I wish I could change everything. I know what's ahead for them."

But she often finds words to be inadequate.

"All I can do is let them know I care and my heart breaks for them and that I will pray for

them that God will cover them with His peace," she says.

In audiences week after week Tammy Trent looks into countless faces struggling to mask life's spectrum of pain. She lets her own pain create a bond of understanding, a shared sense of often-hidden divine purposes in the midst of bleak circumstances.

"Our trials in life create an incredible faith journey for all of us," she says. "It's really what we do with those trials. We all have a story. I'm still sharing my story of life and hope and love. As long as the phone keeps ringing, I'll keep showing up. There's power in the story.

"It's not so much a story of tragedy as of hope. We all need

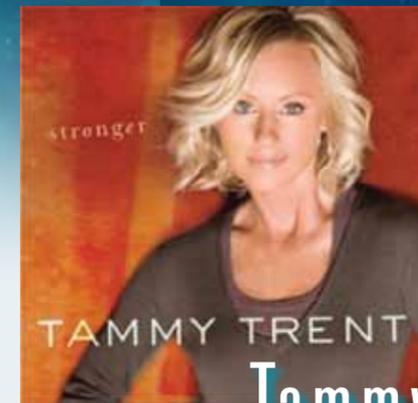
hope. We all need heroes. We all need inspiration in our lives that helps each of us get through difficult times. It might not be well with our circumstances, but it can be well with our souls." **tpe**

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Visit tpe.ag.org for a free download of "You've Already Shown Me" by Tammy Trent.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.



Tammy Trent: Then and Now

- Tammy Trent Debut: 1995
- You Have My Heart: 1997
- Set You Free: 2000
- Breathing: 2003
- I See Beautiful: 2006
- Current Album: Stronger

"On her latest album, Tammy Trent manages to be simultaneously musically effervescent and lyrically deep." — *Billboard.com*

2009 the intentional woman

The theme for women of the Assemblies of God this year is "The Intentional Woman."

In a world that too often believes in luck, randomness and chance, people head out the door every day with no idea why they're alive on this earth or how to live with purpose and meaning. God makes it clear that we can live an intentional life — one with profound meaning, clear direction, and eternal value. You can almost hear God echoing, "... and I mean it!" when Paul writes these words: **"Don't live carelessly, unthinkingly. Make sure you understand what the Master wants"** (Ephesians 5:17, *The Message*).



Ministry to women is not just a monthly meeting; it is about helping every born-again woman find a place of ministry and helping women be disciplined and ministered to according to their needs.

Visit www.women.ag.org for our 2009 magalog, theme message, drama, women's event plans, and other ways you can use this theme in ministering to the women of your church and community.

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