

If you expect Cheryl Scroggins

to break down over the memories, put away your handkerchief. If you expect bitterness or anger, look in someone else's heart.

"I'm doing well," Scroggins said calmly. "This is like coming full circle."

Full circle came April 19th, the 10-year anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing that claimed the life of her 46-year-old husband, Lanny. If the intervening years have been touched by mourning, they've also been filled with determination and conviction to keep moving forward and not let the residue of terrorism claim her life or the lives of her two sons.

Scroggins recently returned to FAA as a secretary at the Civil Aeromedical Institute at the Mike Monroney Center. Climbing the stairs there recently, it occurred to her that a decade earlier she was "doing this very thing,



Some 168 lighted chairs commemorate those murdered in the Oklahoma City bombing.

never dreaming that my life was about to be changed forever.”

The bomb was detonated at 9:02 that morning. Lanny’s move to a new office just three weeks before put him on the wrong side of the Murrah Federal Building. A friend working with Lanny told Scroggins that the building broke off right in front of her eyes. She survived. Lanny was gone.

Cheryl was left with two sons, Brad, then 13; and Scott, then nine. What she found afterwards were hundreds of new friends, the compassion of a country, and inner strength.

“It’s funny; it forces you to grow,” Scroggins said. “I’ve discovered an inner strength I didn’t know was there. I can handle anything. I’m independent. I feel real confident. I never felt like I couldn’t make it.”

Maybe the turmoil in the immediate aftermath of the bombing distracted her from her grief. Then the gifts began to pour in. There were poems, pictures, money, a quilted wall hanging, “things that took people hours of effort to do,” Scroggins marveled. And then there were the angels. Hundreds of angels, made of paper and lace and plastic and metal. They came from individuals and from elementary school classes. They grace her Christmas tree every year. “It’s a reminder of the love Americans had for us.”



*“I feel real
confident.
I never
felt like I
couldn’t
make it.”*

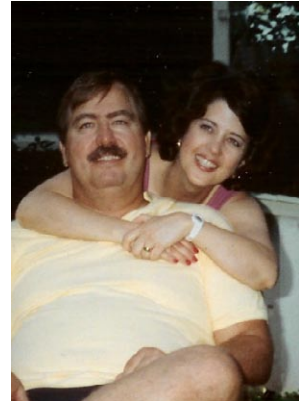
Buoyed by the outpouring of love from the country, family and friends, Scroggins immersed herself in planning for the bombing memorial. She wrote the mission statement and story line for the museum and served on the committee to select the design. “The minute I saw that design, when I saw those chairs and the way they line up in the evening, it’s so appropriate.” The 149 regular-sized chairs stand in memory of the adults who died in Murrah. The 19 smaller chairs memorialize the children who perished.

Scroggins refused to participate in the trials of the culprits. “That was negative. I didn’t want their faces etched in my mind for the rest of my life.” She makes little attempt to understand their motivations and focuses only on forgiveness and peace. “I am ready to get past it all and let it lie,” she said.

Interestingly, while many of the survivors and surviving families have moved on, Scroggins knows rescue workers who’ve struggled with their memories. “It’s still tough for those guys. They have guilt; they feel like they should have saved more people.”

She shuns the emotions that might bring her down. “Lanny was a practical person,” she said. “He would just want people to keep moving with their lives. Don’t let people like [the culprits] steal your joy.”

In her own personal way, Scroggins has fought a successful battle against terrorism. ➔



**Lanny and Cheryl
Scroggins.**