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'There is an empty spot on the stage'

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Every little girl dreams of being a princess. In her short life, Lindsay **Giacomelli** was one of the few lucky enough to live the fairy tale.

A former child ballerina, she was enrolled in the University of Calgary's dance program and, when struck Thursday by a hit-and-run driver, was planning to be married in a wedding chapel at Disneyland.

The Magic Kingdom, mourners at her funeral learned Wednesday, was one of the 20-year-old dancer's favourite places. Alongside the ballet slippers and roses on a table at her memorial service was a picture of **Giacomelli** posing at Disneyland with Snow White and another with her favourite Disney character, Winnie the Pooh. Her family walked into the church to a recording of House at Pooh Corner, a choice that was both uplifting and moving:

"So help me if you can I've got to get, Back to the house at Pooh corner by one. You'll be surprised there's so much to be done."

Indeed, there was much yet to be done in Lindsay **Giacomelli**'s young and vibrant life. Students in the U of C's dance program receive intensive training in ballet and study part-time at the Alberta Ballet School. Her service, which included theme music from Peanuts, moved Rev. Drew Strickland to tell an overflow crowd of mourners at Southwood United Church: "There is an empty spot on the stage."

Lindsay's father, Gerald **Giacomelli**, eulogized his daughter with a humorous anecdote about her fear of heights.

"I'll try to keep it together for as long as I can," he began, his son Nick by his side. Throughout the eulogy, he never faltered, even when putting into words the protective feelings of every parent.

"I remember when Lindsay was born. I was there for her first breath and it was like the weight of the world on my shoulders. Somebody to take care of, somebody helpless. I thought about what kind of trouble my kids could get into crossing the street. I wanted to be prepared so that if I was there, I could stop it so harm wouldn't come to them. I never told anyone that, but it's a thought that came to me from the first day she was born."

Lindsay was alone when stuck down in a crosswalk at Bonaventure Drive S.E. near Fairmount Drive, but her family gathered throughout the night and were at her side when she died Friday.

"I knew she heard us," her father said. "What more could you ask for than to have the people you love and the people who love you the most be with you for your last breath? It's a rare opportunity, very lucky. I can't ask for more. I was there for her first breath and I was there for her last."

As Lindsay was mourned, her suspected killer was returned to Calgary after being taken into custody in Toronto trying to board a flight to the United Kingdom. Police said it was not clear if the 48-year-old suspect was attempting to flee the country or was departing on a previously scheduled vacation or business flight.

Although not deeply religious, Lindsay kept a Bible with passages that she underlined, most of them relating to themes of love and hope. Among them: "Weeping may last for the night but joy comes in the morning."

"She was a happy kid," said her father. "The Peanuts music, the Winnie the Pooh music, that's Lindsay to a T. She's a Disney fanatic."

She kept a video of Sleeping Beauty near her TV set to play whenever she felt down and was attempting to learn the difficult Peanuts theme, her father's favourite song, on the piano. Although she struggled with it, Gerald said he would

hear her play it through the open window when he was working in the yard.

"All I needed was a few bars and it felt good."

Among the readings was a passage from the Book of Ecclesiastes, popularized by the song Turn, Turn Turn and so appropriate for a dancer: "A time to build up, a time to break down. A time to dance, a time to mourn."

The family declined comment on the suspect's arrest and expressed no malice at Lindsay's funeral.

"We have no reason to mope," her father said. "For her, she's in the best place possible. All the crying and the wailing is more for us, just feeling for ourselves. For her, don't worry."

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