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REMEMBERING SCOTT GAST

Window from heaven

Family to restore church window in Gast's memory

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SANDUSKY

For years, a heartwarming message greeted George Gast on his cellphone each morning when he awoke.

"I love you, dad," the message read.

In early November, however, the texts stopped appearing on his phone.

Around this same time, George's morning routine dramatically changed.

Instead of texting his son back, George now visits him at the Castalia Cemetery.

"I go see Scott's grave every day," a tearful George said.

Almost six months have passed, and time still hasn't healed the deep, painful wounds burdening George when thinking or talking about his son Scott Gast, who died in a vehicular crash near Avon.

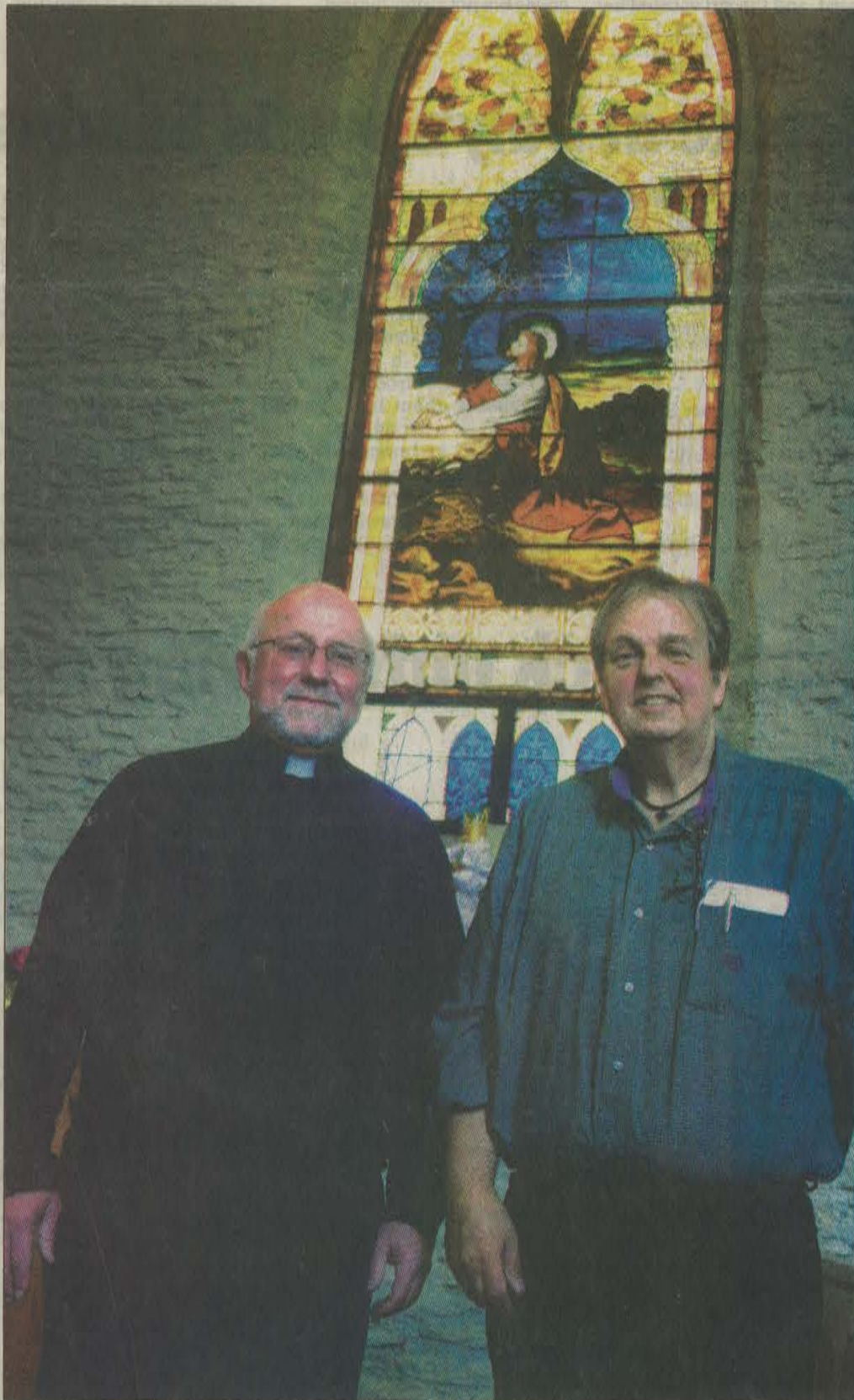
In the following days and weeks, it seemed the entire community and surrounding region mourned Scott's death. Some, such as George, still grieve to this day.

The heartache lingers, considering countless people formed meaningful bonds with Scott, who many characterized as a locally based musician with out-of-this-world talent.

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Provided photo



Register photo/LUKE WARK

ABOVE LEFT: The late Scott Gast. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Father Joseph Steinbauer, pastor of Holy Angels Catholic Church in Sandusky with Gary Gast, father of the late Scott Gast, are working to raise money to have one of the church's stained-glass windows refurbished in Scott's honor.

(OVER)

GAST

■ FROM PAGE A1

Lots of people rocked out with Scott as frontman for the local popular band CoCoBeanOs. From Sandusky to Put-in-Bay, the band played on countless area stages across Lake Erie's shoreline.

Many also recognized the 2002 Margaretta High School graduate as part of the group Start Me Up, an international touring Rolling Stones tribute band.

Before his untimely death, Scott and Start Me Up played a 90-minute set for more than 100,000 fans in Honduras.

But others, especially George, knew Scott as the energetic, kindhearted boy whose infectious smile and lively personality touched so many lives.

"Scott was the life of the party," George said. "Everyone wanted to be around Scott. Everyone wanted to talk to Scott. And as soon as he went on break from playing music, people were always around him, and he'd always be late going back up to play because he didn't want to leave anyone out. That's what made him so special."

Special song

After leaving the cemetery, George always pops a CD of Scott's music into his car player.

Among George's favorite tracks: "Carry On," a song Scott authored.

The lyrics profoundly speak to George, more now than ever after Scott's sudden death, in coping with the loss.

*"I don't know where I went wrong.
I can't say which turn led me here.
I only know that I'm afraid.
I realize I've lost my way.
Strayed away from grace.
My reflection looks right through me.
As I search it for your face.
You give me hope.
To carry on.
To fight the fight.
Endure the storm.
You pick me up.
When I fall apart.
You shine a light.
Into my heart.*

Want to donate?

■ **WHAT:** A fundraising effort to restore a church window at Holy Angels in Sandusky, which will be named in the memory of Scott Gast.

■ **HOW:** People can send tax-deductible donations by sending a check, with "Scott Gast" on the memo line, to: Holy Angels, 428 Tiffin Ave., Sandusky, OH 44870

Lasting memory

After listening to the song, George pulls up to the third stop on his sorrowful daily routine.

It's at Holy Angels Catholic Church in Sandusky, where George seeks power and peace to overcome a great tragedy.

"I pray the rosary three times a day," George said. "I'll pray and ask God for strength."

Holy Angels hosted dozens of performances when Scott played in ShoeBox, a youth Christian rock band bringing the funk factor to mostly plain, and frankly outdated, church music.

During "ShoeBox Sundays," Scott would invigorate life into the church crowd, jamming in the Lord's name when playing the harmonica, bass, drums and even the organ.

"There is no doubt that Scott and ShoeBox were the answer to our prayers," said Jeanne Cunningham, who met Scott as a part of Partners in Youth Ministry at Saint Peter Catholic Church in Huron. "Seeing a young artist like Scott using his incredible talents to spread the word of God's love was a great gift. His personality and smile warmed the heart of anyone blessed to know him."

Added George: "He brought the younger people into the churches. They were striving to get the kids between 13 to 17 and the early 20s, and Scott did that because he had that kind of influence on people. Whether you were 5 or 95, he could relate and connect to them and get them fired up with his music."

Window gazing

At times, during his daily praying at Holy Angels, George will gaze up and notice a beautiful but aging stained-glass window

depicting Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane. The window brings back colorful memories.

"Scott, like every young person, had ups and downs with life, but he always loved Jesus and loved God and loved angels," George said. "Each time Scott passed it, he would say, 'Dad, I really love that window.'"

It's the window that inspired Scott to write "Carry On."

George also sees the image personifying the notion of how people must carry on in life — even after losing a loved one.

To help preserve Scott's legacy, George recently partnered with Holy Angels in the church's ongoing fundraising effort to replace 10 stained-glass windows, each about 175 years old.

Among the windows slated for restoration: The one picturing Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane, which will be dedicated in Scott's memory.

Scott's family, friends, fans and community members recently established an account to raise money, specifically to restore the garden window.

The inscription will read: "This window restored in 2015 in loving memory of Scott Gast."

If the church receives enough money this month, the new window paying homage to Scott should go up by fall. The window's total cost is about \$25,000.

"When I see Scott's name underneath there, restored in his memory, I can envision him being up there," George said. "That window will be my connection to Scott. I want people to remember Scott. I appreciate everything that is being done in my son's memory. It helps me feel better each and every day to know how many people loved my son."

Lasting memories

Today would have been Scott's birthday. He would be 31.

George shared a brief story from exactly one year ago.

"For birthdays, we would always get together, and Scott liked nice food," George said. "Last year, he chose Melt (Bar & Grilled) in Lakewood as a place he wanted to go for his birthday meal and have dinner there with grandparents and family and his girlfriend. We then went back to his condo in Cleveland,

Battle of Bands at Ohio Bike Week to be named for Gast

For almost a decade, Ohio Bike Week has been kicked off by Funcoast.com's Battle of the Bands.

In honor of the late Scott Gast, Funcoast.com has renamed the annual event, "The Scott Gast Memorial Battle of the Bands."

Gast was best known as the frontman for local band, CoCoBeanOs.

For more a decade, the CoCoBeanOs rocked stages up and down Lake Erie's shores to the delight of countless fans. In addition to the CoCoBeanOs, Gast performed with the international Rolling Stones tribute band Start Me Up.

Tragedy struck in the early hours of Nov. 2 when Gast died in a one-vehicle crash near Avon.

The community mourned the loss of Gast, who was revered as a kindhearted man taking great pride in everything he did.

This year, when the top five nominated bands face off to determine who's the best band in the land, they will do so in honor of Gast.

The Scott Gast Memorial Battle of the Bands will take place May 29 at Jack Daniels Barrel House Saloon.

Starting Wednesday on Funcoast.com, people can start nominating bands seeking to participate in the battle.

— Michelle Pletcher

gave him gifts and ate birthday cake."

George's smile, upon recalling happier times, then immediately disappeared.

"But now, it's so hard to go through Christmas and Easter and now his birthday without him," George said. "Everyone wants to talk about Scott. Without the effort of my brother, Gary Gast, my wife, Melanae (Scott's mother), my youngest son Bryan (Scott's brother) and Father Joe (Steinbauer, pastor of all catholic parishes in Sandusky), I couldn't have made it through this."

After an 8 a.m. Mass today at Holy Angels, family members will head to the Castalia Cemetery to celebrate Scott's birthday with him at his final resting place.

"We're going to release balloons in the air," George said. "We put, 'Happy birthday Scott, and, 'I love you' on them," George said.