

Bestowing the Gift of Forgiveness

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an who would have been her daughter-law, and Capizzi entered the well. Capizzi shook Yakkey's hand. She didn't embrace her.

When Judge Mackston returned to the courtroom, he summoned the Babsons to the bench and asked them if they were sure about this. The Babsons nodded and said it was the only way for them. Since last fall, Yakkey had visited 33 schools to give the speech, in which she tells about her drinking and driving and how it caused the death of Edward Babson, a wrestling champion and senior class president at Vermillion High School, Vermillion, Ohio, a lover of boats, adventure, food and his fiancee, whom he would have

married this year.

"I want you to know that I am . . . deeply moved . . . by your magnanimous spirit," said the judge, who choked up a few times before he was able to pronounce sentence on Yakkey. He gave her 5 years' probation.

Then the judge left the courtroom; and for a time, the families kept their places, just as they had during the recess. Then, Yakkey's mother, Arlene Bosico, moved toward Lois Babson; and after a moment's pause on both their parts, the two women embraced.

Bosico said many words, though from a respectful distance the words "sorry" and "thank you" came across most often. Yakkey's husband joined his mother-in-law, waiting his turn to hug the mother of Ed-

ward Babson.

"We went through all the various stages of grief," Don Babson would say later. "And then we tried to look for answers. If you're a Christian, you believe, as my wife and I do, that you have to have forgiveness, as long as the other person wants to be forgiven . . . Her going to jail would have been another death. We knew she was remorseful . . . And when we met her, we could see it in her eyes, the grief . . ."

"She's a person like any other person," he said.

When he had hugged Lois Babson, Robert Yakkey turned to Don Babson. The father of the late Edward Babson shook Yakkey's hand vigorously.

"You take care of her now," the father said. "Make the best of it. Make the best of it."