

Just Like it was Yesterday

by Mary Gutheil Anderson

Time flies whether we are having fun or not it seems. Another Mother's Day has passed and this one has been bittersweet for me. Last year on Mother's Day I rounded up my three children and decided once and for all it was time for a 'family photo', which I knew, hadn't officially happened for probably ten years. We all went out for breakfast and then met with a professional photographer at Vasona Lake park and with lots of sighs, smirks and whining succeeded in compiling both a group picture and individual shots of each member of the family. It seems after we arrived back home that each child went off in their own direction and the unified moment of the Mother's Day celebration was over.

I had made a request that particular Mother's Day to each child that instead of picking out a gift for me I would like them to write me a note about what they had each learned from me, as their mom, over the years. My daughter, Emilie, age 26, went into great detail in her note about all of the fabulous friendships and social skills she developed by watching me entertain and visit with such a wide variety of diverse personalities over the years. She was especially touched by the fact that I have kept close friendships with people from being a toddler, to grade school, to high school, to college, to Hewlett Packard, and more. My son, Hunter, age 15, wrote the funniest note about how he finds my prosperity program very amusing. He said that the money jar I keep full of change to attract even more funds, will now instantly grow as a result of the silver quarter he taped to the inside corner of the card. My middle child, Taylor, age 22, didn't present me with a note or card on that Mother's Day but I was confident that it would show up at some point and I didn't mention the oversight as I recall.

A typical gorgeous early spring week followed that Mother's Day, although oddly at mid-week an unusual rainfall occurred out of nowhere. I remember it was a Wednesday, and of course, Emilie, had returned to her work and home in San Francisco, Hunter was off to high school and Taylor was out pounding the pavement looking for a new job. As usual and in most homes-- kids come and go, doing just exactly what kids do. It seems, as they grow older that home is just a place for a quick snack, clothes change and maybe a handout of much needed cash. That day ended quietly until the phone rang at 1:30AM and I awoke to hear the words that every parent dreads. It was the Valley Medical Center calling to let me know that my son Taylor had been a horrible car accident and he was barely holding onto his life. In disbelief I said that was impossible, as I knew he was home in bed with a bad cold. Not so. Driving alone without anyone close by to call, I finally reached the hospital in the dark night with the rain pouring down. The doctor met me at the elevator door; Taylor had just died from massive internal injuries. He was gone. Just like that. It was then that I became numb and only now that a full year of holidays and reminders has passed, am I beginning to know the indescribable pain of losing a child.

It was a few weeks after his funeral when I was searching in the back seat of my car for something and I found the Mother's Day card from Taylor. It was tucked carefully in the seat pocket behind the driver's seat. He must have put it there before we went to breakfast that day. He wrote to me about what he had learned in his short life from me. He talked about unconditional love and really being there for somebody, he talked about the connection that he had shared with my father, my mother and my brother—all of which have passed away in the last couple of years unexpectedly.

Looking back now I think, if I had only known—I wouldn't have wasted time getting my hair fixed that week or going to that baseball game—I would have sat and stared at him, knowing that he would soon be gone forever. There is something about kids that we often forget about our own past and ourselves. Kids almost always reach an age when they truly believe they are invincible. Ideally some magical angel watches over them as they tackle the entire wild, crazy rites of youth—driving, snowboarding, skateboarding, motorcycles and more. If any one person could define how much living could be packed into 24 hours, Taylor was the one. He had a dynamic personality, he was very funny

and smart--he lived every day as if it were his last. I guess Taylor's angel just couldn't keep up with his wild spirit that blustery night last May.

I am the woman who was blessed to be his mom for 22 years. I wrote this article to honor him and let him know how much I miss him every day. Luckily, with the support of other kindred souls close to our family and Taylor's group of loyal friends—there has been a tight circle formed around Emilie, Hunter and I over the past year as we deal with the grief of this unimaginable loss. I admonish you to listen carefully to those close to your heart and remember, we just never know really what's next—cherish those moments, memories and milestones.

Finally, in Kahlil Gibran's masterpiece The Prophet, he says, "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth."

Taylor Scott Anderson

March 11, 1983 ~ May 19, 2005

*Master Taylor you are the star~ Shining brightly from afar
That risen in evening sky~ Fell to us without a mar
To our new star I proclaim~ Our lives will never be the same
With your precious innocence~ We have our own eternal flame*

*Perfect soul and symmetry~ Our eyes rejoice at what they see
From the heavens you were cast~ God, please welcome him home to you at last...*

(Formerly, the last line, welcome home to us at last, was his birth announcement)

~WSA to TSA on 3-11-83

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