

You Are The Everything

Delivered by Sheila Kennett

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Wow. I can't believe there are so many of you people here. But then again, I can, because Chip was loved by so many. He would absolutely be blown away right now and totally love this so thanks for that.

You know, I knew this day was coming, but I still feel so ill-prepared to be standing before you. I do not claim to be the best orator, but my boy asked me if I would do this for him, and I promised him I would, so I decided to do what Chip asked me to do when all of this first started and that was to write a blog, so I wrote a blog post to read aloud, so here is my latest installment titled "You Are The Everything."

It's a really daunting task to try to write this all encompassing piece that perfectly encapsulates Chip's life, because in reality, we all had different and unique relationships with him. Each of us knew Chip from a different phase or maturity level in his life.

Theresa and Bayard, Chip was your baby boy. You brought this man into the world and reared him so well. Your loss is indescribable, and I am so sorry. Tanner, you were Chip's one and only sibling. You are the only person in this world that knew him as a brother, so own that. To the men of Patriots Football Sunday, you lost a die-hard member of the team. To be a bunch of A-holes, y'all sure turned out to be a loyal group of friends. Others here knew Chip from growing up in Conway, #15 on the football field at Kennett. Some of you Colby mules threw beer bottles in the "Hot Corner" with him. Some knew Chip as the LC with the highest letter count in the Gregg office who always seemed to have a headache that went away by mid-day. Some of you lived in The Campaign Dorm with him for weeks while campaigning for Sununu. Others knew Chip as a defense lobbyist for Raytheon. To some of you, he was the guy in your New Hampshire Fantasy Football League with the team name, Cuzzi's Mom. Some of you knew Chip as my husband and loved him, simply because you knew how much I did. Later, some of you got to know Chip as a tireless advocate for lung cancer awareness and increased funding for research towards ultimately finding a cure.

But to me, Chip was my husband, my best friend, my biggest cheerleader, he was my #1 fan, my confidant, my cook, my yard boy, my "which shoes do you like better with this outfit" advisor, my remote control operator and my resident Apple genius bar. He was

my partner. Chip was the person who really got me and loved my irreverent sense of humor. He was my glow person.

Our marriage was full of witty banter, Drive-by Truckers shows at 9:30 and The Futurebirds at Black Cat with the Ginny Johnsons. It was full of nights of Guitar Hero World Tour concerts, FNL and Mad Men marathon nights. If one of our dinner parties didn't end in an impromptu dance party--the kind of dance party that if you couldn't use it as a prop or dance on top of it, then it needed to be moved on out of the room kind of dance party--then we had failed as hosts. It was full of nights spent with friends playing Bananagrams. Bananagrams that would make Lady Linda blush. I mean, there just aren't that many words that start with a "V" that have three vowels in it--besides violin. And then when we discovered Cards Against Humanity. I mean, Game. Over. I had warned Chip it was really risky of him to be playing that game given his condition if he wanted to end up in the right place...In our marriage, we took Christmas cards oh, so seriously and we spent hours creating the perfect playlists for parties. It wasn't just about the songs selected but more about the flow and transition from one to the next. You can't just go from "Dixieland Delight" or "Callin' Baton Rouge" straight into 2Pac's "California Love." You need something like a rap duet with Rihanna or B to segue into a song like that.

Our marriage was also full of the \$10 bet. The best one I ever proffered was I bet Chip \$10 that he wouldn't answer people's questions at the Rockefeller Christmas party one year like he was Jay-Z. For example: Oh my gah, have you had one of these lobster spoons? YES!!! or Do you think the line will be shorter to the bar in the sun room? Uh huh uh huh uh huh. Maybe Chip bet me \$10 that I wouldn't work this story into his eulogy, but I'm not allowed to tell you that.

But the most important role Chip played in my life was he is the daddy of our babies. Our little nugs, Joe and Crosby. There was nothing in this world he wanted anymore than to be a Dad. He was such a charismatic and hands-on Dad. He and Joe spent hours together watching the Patriots, Red Sox, Bruins, Georgia Bulldogs and Roy Roy McElroy, as Joe calls him, play golf. They talked about what icing meant, who had the home field advantage, and poured over stats together. On the weekends, Chip and Joe practiced their golf swings together in the backyard, how to catch with a baseball glove on, practiced batting and Chip showed him where his fingers should be placed on the laces of a football. At night, we piled up in bed together and read about macaroni penguins and had contests to see who could find "Goldbug" the fastest in Richard Scarry's "Cars and Trucks and Things That Go." Joe has always had an old soul that he got from his Daddy, and I know he learned how to have compassion for others and how to be a friend from watching his Dad.

And the Cros. That little girl just has love and life, laughter and light just oozing from her pores. What a godsend she has been to our family over the past two years. Crosby has her Daddy's beautiful blue eyes and is totally a hot mess just like him. She is definitely not going to know where her car keys are when she grows up but will laugh and smile about it as she calls a friend to come pick her up. She is the type that is going to get away with crashing parties and make the host think, "Now why I didn't I think to invite her in the first place?" She adores her big brother, Joe, and I know the two of them are going to be the reason we are all going to pull through this.

I came across this quote a couple of months ago, and I just loved it, because it really summarizes what I am trying to get at, "You end up being the average of the people you spend your life with." That means that each of us were a part of who Chip was, but likewise, Chip now resides in each of us.

Chip and I have spent the last two years having many heart-to-hearts, expressing our fears and anxieties to each other, making sure we had said everything to each other that we wanted to, and asking each other questions about this other side. We tried very hard to prepare each other and our kids for this very moment. He never shut me out, and I am so grateful to him for that. We were always so grateful to have the closeness and kind of marriage that we did, because neither of us could imagine having to go through something like this without each other. We were far from perfect, but we had a solid foundation and knew what we could expect of each other. It was one of my greatest privileges in this life to walk this walk so intimately with him.

One of the questions that I continually found myself asking him was, "What do you want me to do? What do you want for the kids?" Public or private school, to be involved in sports, move or stay here, study abroad in college, etc. Chip always refused to answer those questions, because he said he trusted me to figure that out, to do what was best for us, and he would never want to limit us or demand something I simply wasn't able to do. The ONLY thing Chip ever came up with for me and for the kids was to not be angry. To not be angry about the hand we had been dealt but to move forward and find joy in our lives again. To continue living fully and be happy. Sometimes I think it would have been easier if he had asked me to move back to Marks, MS and raise the kids there. I know that anger is a stage in the grieving process, so we cannot altogether avoid it, so now I am going to ask the same of you, because the kids and I are going to need your help in redefining our new life without having Chip here with us.

I am going to miss him. I am going to miss his blue eyes. I am going to miss his laugh. I am going to miss the warmth of his hugs, and I am going to miss being a parent to our kids with him. The kids are going to miss him. We are all going to miss him and grieve him, but when we start to feel that anger creeping in, let's try to channel that towards feelings of gratitude that we had him in our lives in the first place. When we start to feel the weight of our grief, let's be reminded of the depth of our love of him. When we start to feel sorry for ourselves, let's be reminded of all of the love in this room and all of the good that has been generated. When we start to hate cancer and relive some of the horrible, horrible moments over the last two years, let's instead be grateful Chip was able to maintain such an extraordinary quality of life up until the very end. And let's move forward in our own lives ensuring that we spend our living days well, loving and giving to others, because that is what Chip wanted from each of us.

I thank you all again for not only being here today, but for having been here for us, and I know you will continue to be and that provides me with such great comfort. It truly means so, so much to me to know that so many of you loved Chip just as deeply as I do.

Thank you.