

Oh, the kids you have influenced!

Reflections from just some of them.....



“Hit it, Mikey! I know who would like the last bite of my chocolate ice cream.....Mikey!”

Oh, the kids you have influenced!

A father figure to a few, an uncle to hundreds and a teacher to thousands.



Life's Lessons

- Were you ever provided answers to questions you hadn't yet considered?
- Handed inspiration on topics you hadn't quite contemplated?
- Been given a rough map to places where you hadn't thought to journey?
- Had you ever sat in a room, for a long while, and when suddenly a bright light is turned on and the room, your surrounds, takes on a totally different dimension?

Well, that was my brother Mike, always a couple of years and many changes ahead of me. He was, and perhaps still is, my "Light Bulb of Life."

I can remember embarking on my first major unchaperoned adventure outside of New Jersey; at 17, fresh out of high school, incapable of really reading a map & quite clueless of our route or what we might encounter along the way. I bought into an idea, hatched by Mikey, which forever changed my perspective towards adventure travel. My 1st of many more to come.

Growing up with a love of working with wood and a disdain for the classroom, I was destined to be a carpenter. Vocational HS was a dream come true for me. But as life usually goes it tends not to be in a straight line. By the time I was 20 I can recall reaching out for advice. This is what I got, "you can always go back to swinging a hammer, but you can't necessary experience a full college life past your 20's". So Community College it Was!!!

At the not so ripe age of 23, I hadn't yet realized I possessed a dream to build a complete house from start to finish. But just after a few "what if" conversations with Mikey, an idea became desire, and a year later a dream became a reality. We had the framework for speculative House Construction Project. Even though we lost money on this venture it still remaining one of the Greatest Accomplishments of my Life....

There are mentors, teachers and leaders among us, but genuine visionaries are oh so rare. I just got lucky; I happen to be related to one, and sensible enough to listen, trust and act upon the inspirations shared.

Even today as our noontime sun treads towards late afternoon; his Life Lessons are as valuable as ever: Question Authority; I'd rather try and not succeed then never try at all; there isn't much in life you can't accomplish if you really want it.

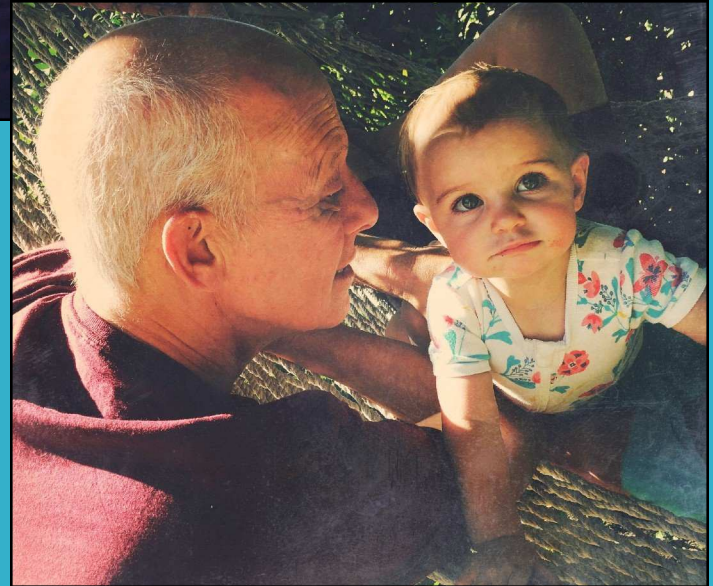
Mike, I'm forever indebted. -Rich

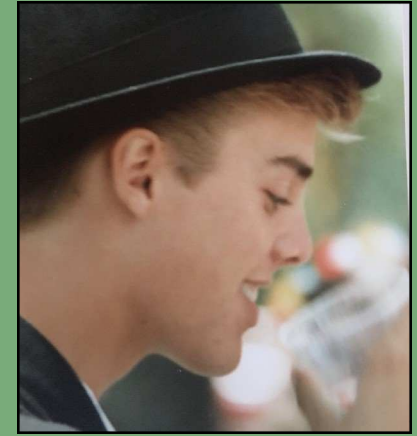
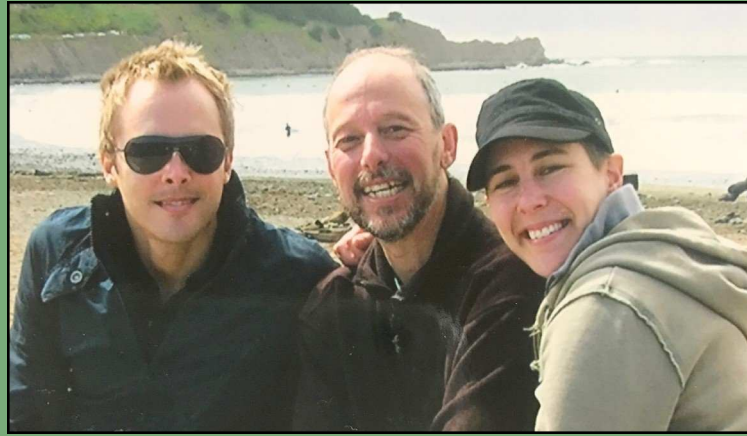


Mikey, you've touched my heart from the moment you taught me how to run and catch a Nerf. I knew we'd be soul play mates forever. You've always supported my intrepid nature, nourished my inner strength, coached through my insecurities, and guided my wanderlust. I have loved taking my life journey with you by my side. I couldn't imagine it any other way.

I love you! - Tanya







Mike has been an integral – amazing, wonderful, generous – part of my family for a long, long time, certainly before 1983. But, that’s the year of a memorable summer. I was 13, and New Wave music was playing everywhere on the radio. We lived in the High Street House, our big house, full of family, friends, activities, wonderful smells of a well-used kitchen: pasta sauce, enchiladas, chocolate chip cookies, and the occasional apple pie, and lots of love. As the benevolent patriarch of the High Street House, Mike was core to creating a space and time for Tanya and me that was warm, open, fun, and adventurous. From throwing the Nerf with Tanya to many walks, day trips to the coast, his relationship with my mom, his playfulness, openness, and equanimity set the tone for what I value most in my friendship with Mike to this day.

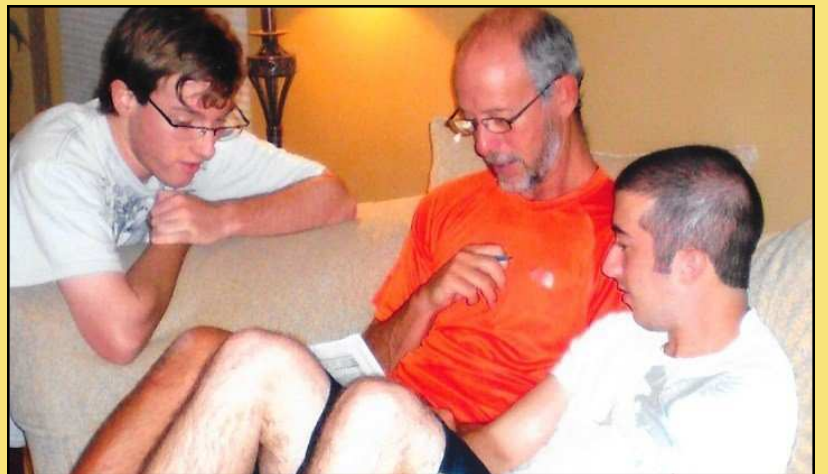
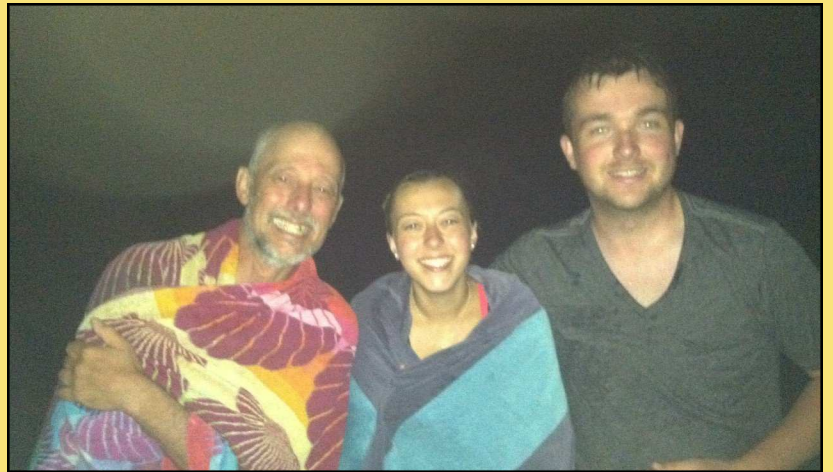
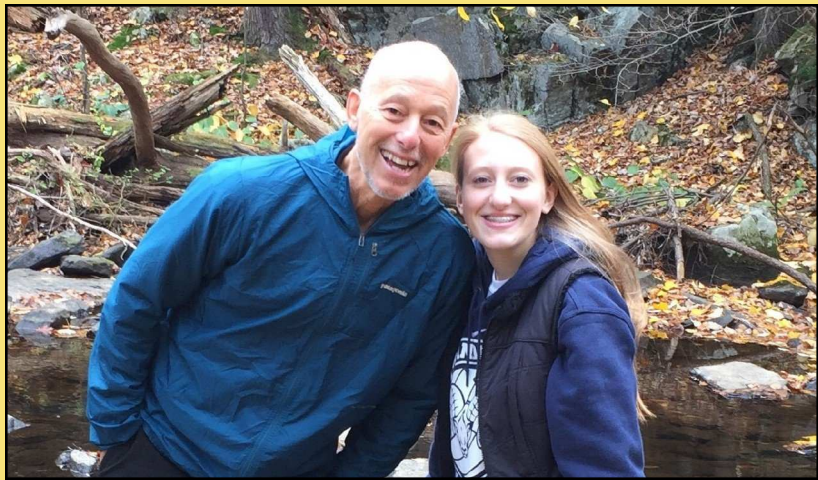
It was no different during my high school years. In the winter 1984, I moved up to Bremerton with Mike and my mom in the middle of my freshman year after a particularly trying time in Southern California. While I wouldn’t say that I was a particularly difficult teenager, I was fiercely independent, a gene I most certainly inherited from my mother. I negotiated what was functionally a no-curfew policy. I went dancing Friday and Saturday nights regularly – sometimes across the Sound to Seattle. I no doubt caused my mom copious amounts of stress, which she no doubt shared with Mike who shouldered it with aplomb.

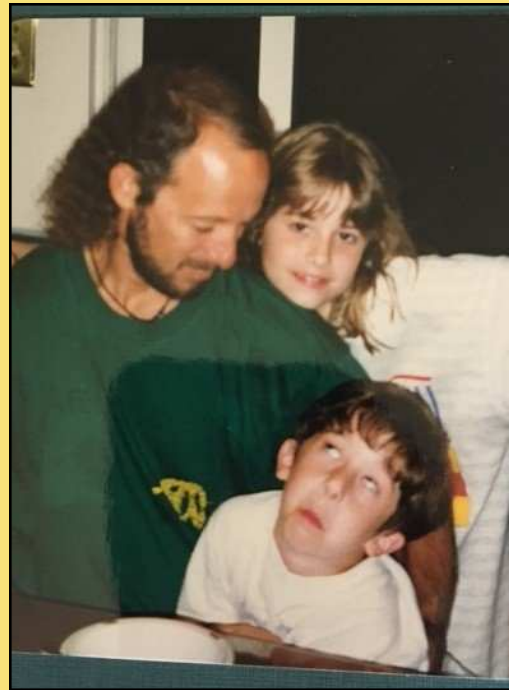
In the summer of 1985, we moved to Eugene, which while better for everyone would introduce me to my third high school in a third state. Tired of moving around for most of childhood, I wasn't exactly the most helpful. My sense of autonomy and independence increased in Eugene, my hair color changed with more frequency, and Mike and my mom somehow white-knuckled through it with grace, support, and kindness.

Mike and I shared intellectualism, a fondness for mathematics, and really good, edifying conversation most days while I was a teenager. While I can't remember a lick of it, my AP Calculus class was an emblematic moment of life learning from Mike. I would want to race through calculations because I could see in my mind's eye the outcome – 3D shapes the equations represented – but I would make mistakes, and in his methodical approach, Mike never did. And, then he would pause, focus me, and explain the approach, always sound, always well thought through, always gentle. He is a patient thinker. He was beyond patient with me. When I feel the pressure of deadlines and the raciness of decisions to be made, I think about Mike, take a deep breath, and my thinking is always the better for it.

I am immensely thankful for Mike's devotion to my family, his incredible friendship with my mom, and his continuing and invaluable parental impact on Tanya. I cherish our relationship with him and love him dearly for it. -Steven



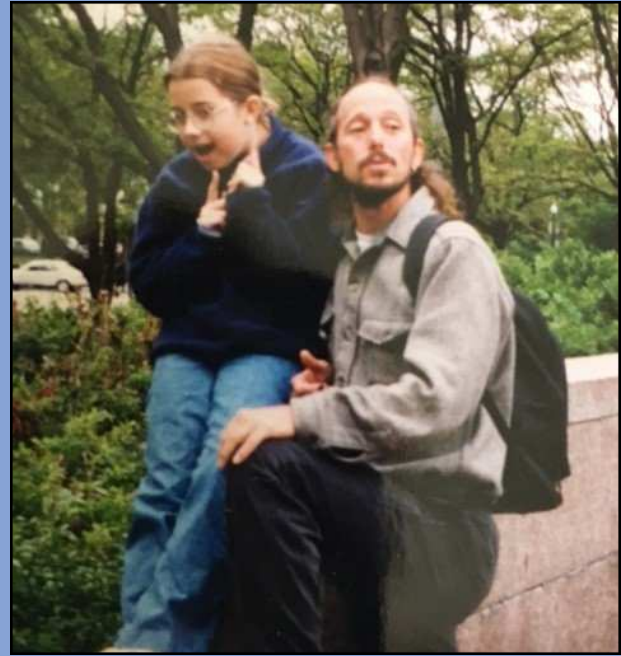




I'll always remember hiding under blankets in the back seat of your Volkswagen Van and the feeling of relief to hear you were successful in sneaking me into the Oregon Country Fair. I remember trying on colorful wigs at the camp site behind the vendor booth with Laurie and exploring all the unique artwork and crafts with you. As someone that grew up in the suburbs on the East Coast, there is absolutely nothing like walking around the Country Fair for the first time, and seeing so many non-conforming and free-spirited people celebrating life together in one place. It was wonderful sharing that experience with you.

I have countless more fun and unforgettable memories with you, like building card houses on the floor of your old house and playing card games with you and grandma at your table. You were my very first encounter with revolutionary ideas, and to hear them from a family member made it even more special. I couldn't be more grateful for all the mentorship, support, and love you've blessed me with me over the years. My heart has a special place for you. It's hard to put into words how much of a positive influence you are and have been to me. You helped guide me in the direction of becoming the organizer and activist I am today. I am sending you all the love in the world. Thank you for everything.

-Danielle





If I had to describe Mikie in one word it would be 'open'. Open for whatever, open to fun times and an open mind to making good memories. While many memories from my childhood have faded, some of Mikie remain; me on his shoulders wading out into the Del Mar beach, reading a book at Timberwood and ice cream for breakfast at Timberwood to name a few. One recent of particular fondness is our mini road trip to the White Wolf Sanctuary. That for me was an especially memorable trip. In all the memories that I have, both near and far, fuzzy or sharp, the part that resonates with me most was his smile. Uncle Mikie always had a smile on his face, though he could be serious when necessary, his default expression seemed to be a smile. Coupled with that smile was laughter, a positive attitude and an overall fun guy to be around. -Eric



Ciao amico,

When Laurie first sent out the call for messages from people who knew you when they were kids I was super excited. I had so many ideas, but I was struggling with exactly what I wanted to write and how it would flow all together. I knew I needed a little inspiration. A little push to set me in the right direction. So, I sit here now writing to you using a photo for a little help, one I know we both cherish greatly. The classic image of me sitting on your lap in Ree and Dave's garage looking up admiringly at my newest best friend.

My neat bowl cut, blinding bright shorts and spiffy sneakers contrast amusingly with your unkept beard, long hair, and shirt with more holes than I could probably count at that age. Although we may have grown older I believe the imagery of the photo still stands true today. No, not our differences in style - thankfully my Mom doesn't dress me anymore. I'm thinking more so about how I am looking up to you as if in that moment you are literally the coolest person I have ever met and I want to grow up to be just like you.

As I've gotten older I've thought a lot how my relationship has changed with adults I knew as a kid. From neighbors to my friends parents, family, and especially my parents it is interesting how at this point in my life I would simply just put them all under the category of 'good friends'. With you it is certainly no different. While our youthful interactions were highlighted by card houses, keeping those huge waves at bay, and generally just focusing on having as much fun as possible, I love how our relationship has evolved to similar interests such as poker and climbing. But the focus has always been the same - make the most out of our time together. Make the most out of life.

You were always the king of making the most out of our time together. Looking back, seeing an adult tackle the scary world of responsibilities and obligations with a wry smile and an incessant desire to have fun was comforting to say the least. As I grow older I appreciate it more and more. I'd say it is even more reassuring now to see after over 20 years you still have the same approach. Keeping up with you blog has led me to read about your relationships with other kids, such as Hayden, and the interactions you recount never fail to put a smile on my face and send me down a path of reminiscing of our own adventures.

While you have always provided advice through 'living by example', you never shied away from deeper conversations either. Hanging with you and Laurie on your back deck, discussing my thoughts on exploring the housing market, and introducing you and Laurie to Charlotte over wonderful food at the Food Market have meant just as much to me as the times where we'd be laughing and having fun.

Despite living over 3,000 miles away I'd say the evolution of our relationship is quite remarkable. The fact that I am just one of many family members and friends in your life that I know you've had a similar impact on is even more incredible. I can't wait to see what else you have to show me over the next 20 plus years.

All the love in the world,
Ribosome



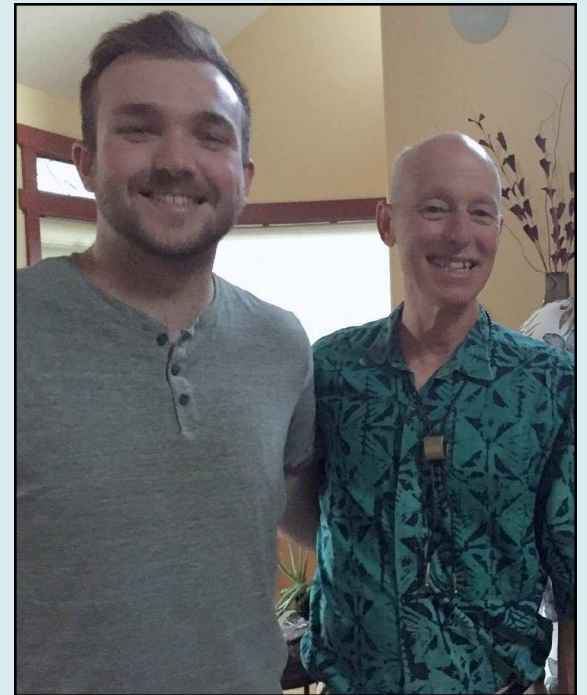
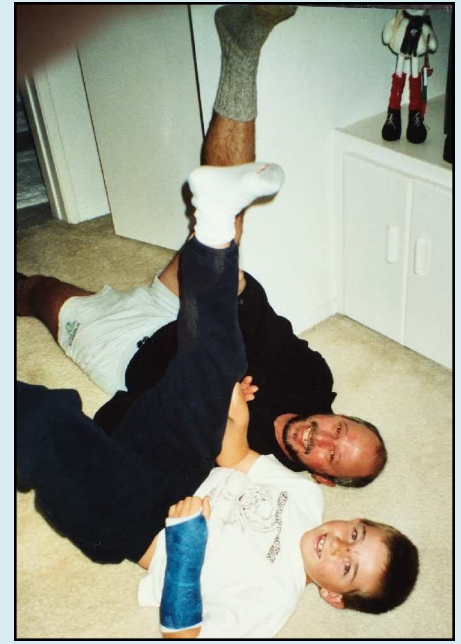
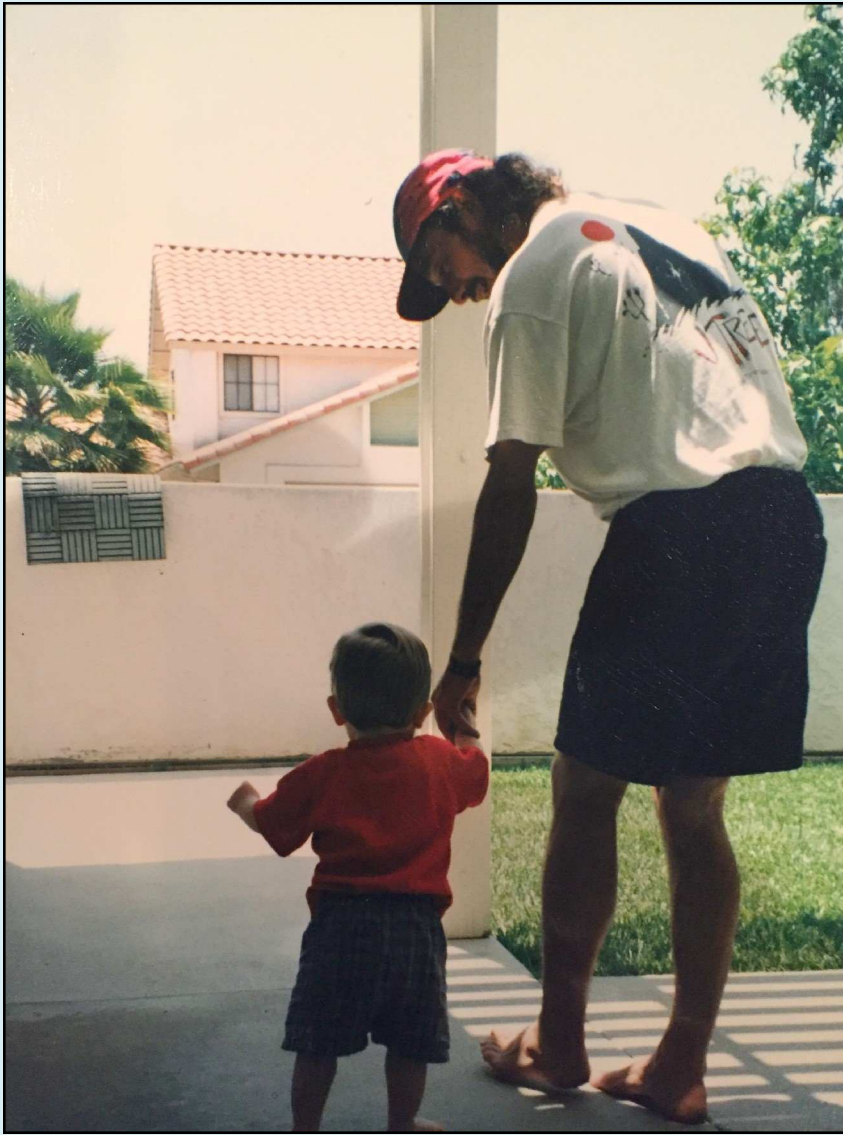
Where do I even begin, our experiences and memories could be their own novel. I would say my earliest memory would be jumping on you to wake you up on the futon at Timberwood, even though you had stinky socks. Your visits to us were the BEST because we got to play handball with the X-Man, make breakfast burritos in the kitchen, and most of all, play tennis in the culdesac. Although seeing you and Laurie leave made me cry, a wise man once told me, "You can never say hello unless you say goodbye". Side note: I really, truly wish I could remember you helping me take my first steps outside... but a picture is worth a thousand words.

It's hard to believe that time has passed so quickly. Throughout the years, you have taught me so much about life and all of its aspects. You have been a mentor, someone I can be open with, but most of all, one of my best friends and the best Uncle I could ever ask for. I can't put into words how thankful I am for your influence on me and how through thick and thin, you continue to help me through my early adult life. To me, it is absolutely unbelievable and you motivate me every single day to achieve my dreams.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done and continue to do for me.

-- O





Uncle Mike,

It has been awhile since I have written a letter, actually it has almost been a little over a year since I have written my last letter to you. I am currently sitting at my desk, listening to some country music as I take a break from studying for my organic chemistry final. As I sit here, I reminisce about my year as a college freshman. It is hard to believe how quickly this year has flown by and how I only have 5 days left. It feels just like yesterday I was receiving my high school diploma. Well, to say the least, this year has been quite the whirlwind. I am going to be honest with you, my college freshman year certainly did not live up to my expectations, but I am sure that does not surprise you (details to follow at our family reunion woo!)

I have caught up on your blogs, as I do refer to them quite frequently. I continuously read them over and over again as I find them very inspirational. I often pick them apart as I try to understand the deeper meaning behind your words. I must say reading your blogs are a good excuse for a study break! One of my favorites you have written is the entry titled 'Anniversaries.' In this entry you mention how it has been a year since the diagnosis and you state how it feels like a lifetime ago. I think the reason I like this entry so much is because you have come so far and express your real and raw emotions. I respect you so much for doing this because people often like to sugar coat their feelings for appearances. Every day I am amazed by your strength, positivity, and ability to push forward. Whether you know it or not, you have taught me some of life's most valuable lessons that cannot be taught in the classroom. You have shown me to live each day to the fullest, take every opportunity that comes my way, and most importantly, take nothing for granted. You are an amazing person and I am so honored to call you my uncle.

Love always, Julia





You, Uncle Mike, have made me realize how valuable life is and how no one should go a day with trying something new. You have shown me how to be a good person and taught me to live every day to the fullest just like you do. Here are a couple memories that have made a lasting impact on me over the years that I will never forget.

- Camping in a tent in the living room & eating ice cream out of the carton, of course
- Reading all the Italian stickers you put up around your house to teach yourself a new language
- Eating ice cream out of the carton again with Aunt Kay's hot fudge and playing unique instruments on the front porch
- Making the watermelon drinks in NJ and drinking them out of champagne glasses
- Going rock climbing all the time at the columns
- Seeing pictures from your biking cross country trip
- Hearing about your constant trips with your friends to different, sometimes unusual places
- The family reunions we have had over the years

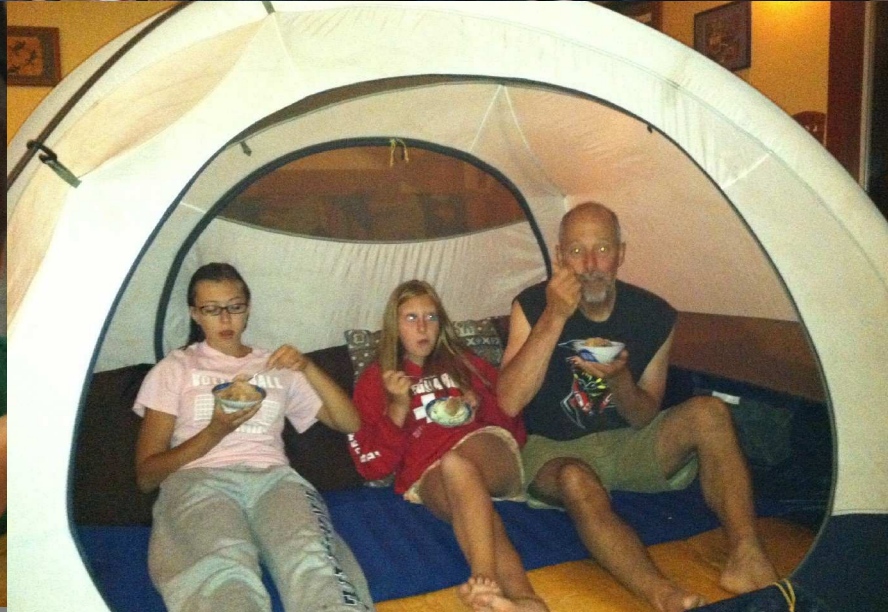
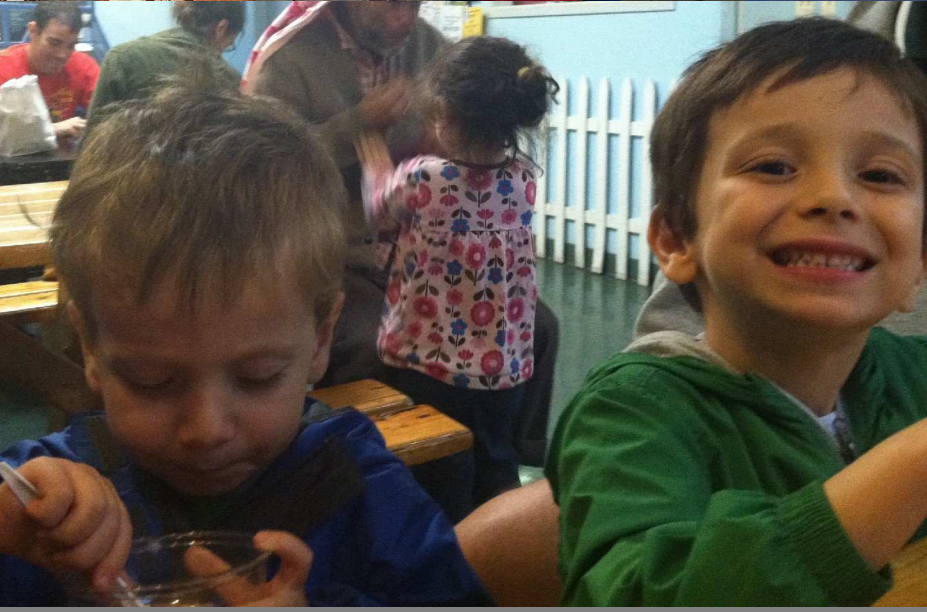


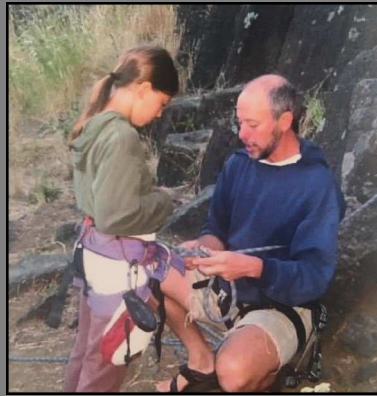
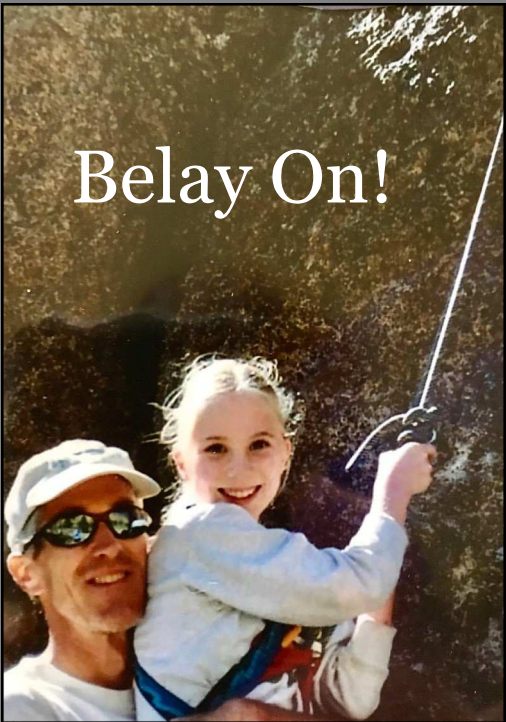
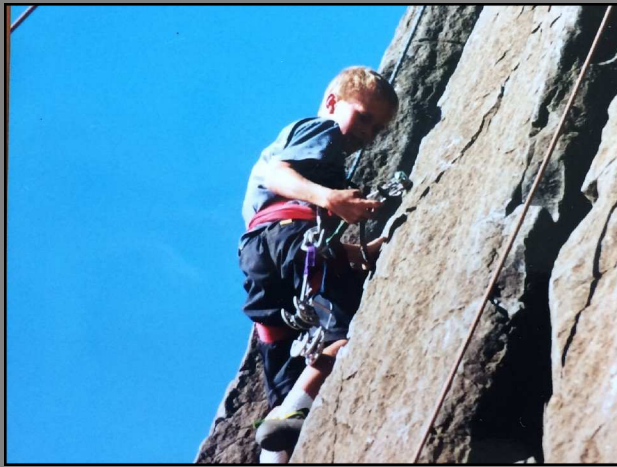
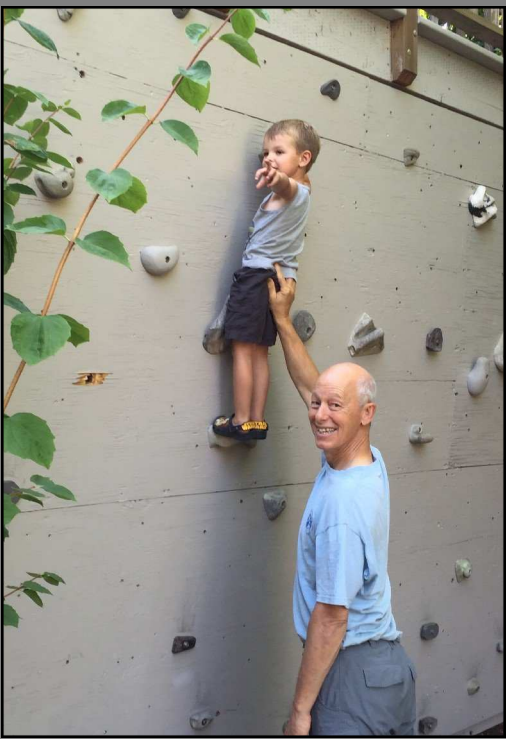
And finally the endless support you to give to everyone around you and the smiles you put on people's faces.

Love, Jenna :)

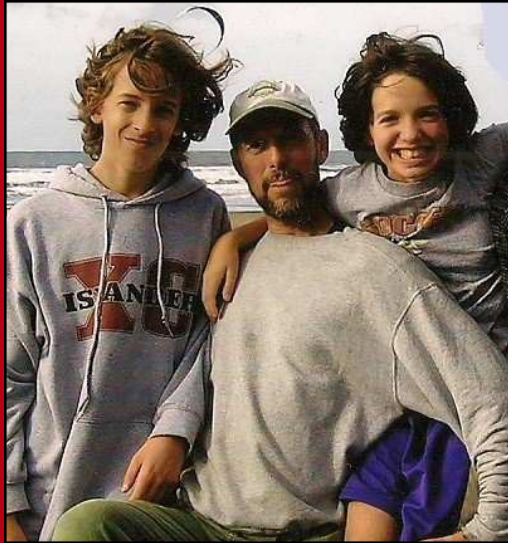


Did someone say ice cream?
Ice Cream shooters?
Chocolate of course!

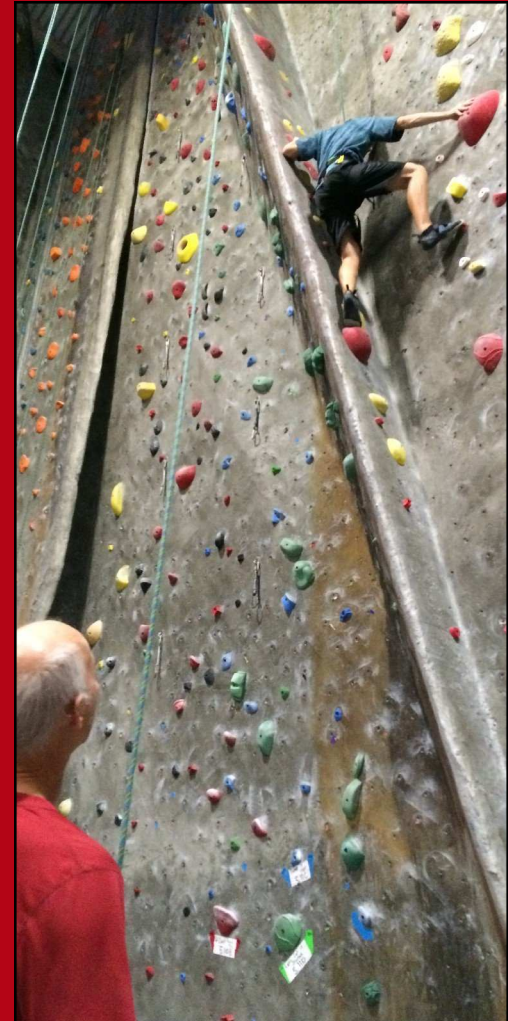


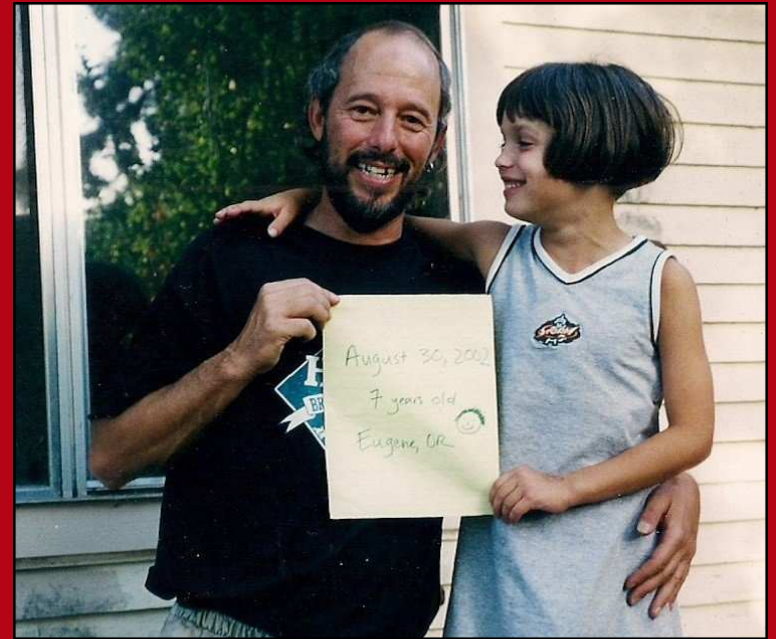


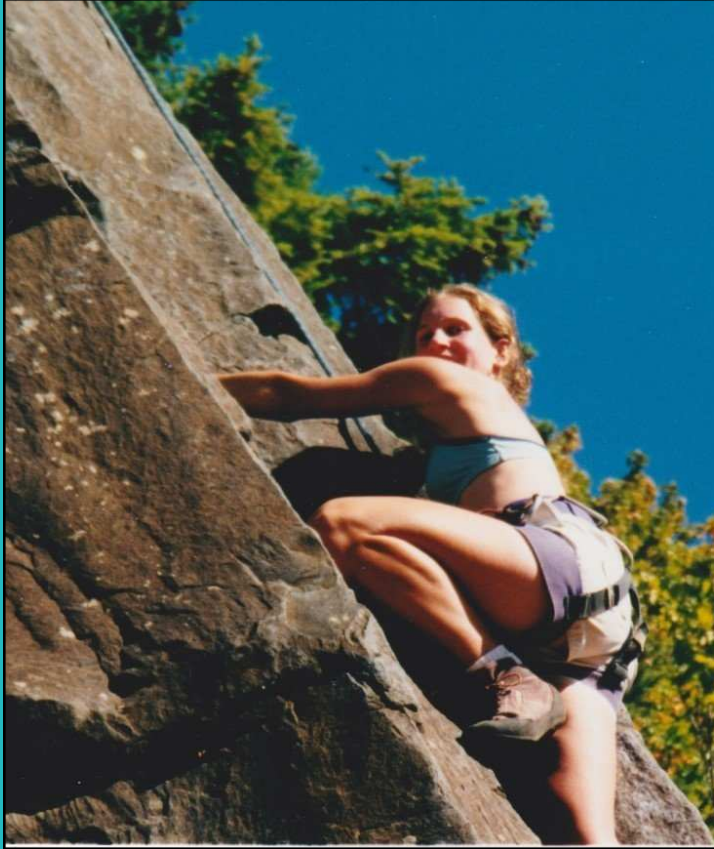
I've known you my whole life! Which is now 21 years of life. That's a lot of visits, thanksgivings, secret handshakes, rock climbing in your backyard, poker, eating food, and just FUN. Thank you for being so much fun and making me feel better about goodbyes (you can't say hello without goodbye!!). I can still recite all those digits of pi, by the way. Thank you so much for always being willing to play with me. You also look great in my soccer shirts! You make my life way more fun and I know you might be my fan #2 (mom is a big supporter) but you are #1 in my heart! -Corey Goelz #9



I don't know when I met Mike but I assume it was pretty soon after I was born. More than any experience with Mikey, though, I remember the stories the stories. My dad used to tell me story after story of adventures all over the world and all of them with Mike. Dogs and hills and black ice and nerf and guards. And in all of them Mikey had a laugh and a smile. I want to be that in somebody else's stories one day. So thanks for making that clear to me, Mikey.-Nick







As long as I can remember, Mike has been part of family reunions and Thanksgiving dinners. When I was little, he would burst through the door - a hurricane of energy with his characteristic huge smile - and peppered me with questions about school (especially my math classes) and soccer. He was just back from Guatemala, practicing his Spanish. Or Thailand. Or planning a climbing trip to Australia. Hard to keep track. It sounded so exotic: this guy has figured out *how to live!*

After Mike upgraded the van, and realized that it and I were both of the '87 vintage, he insisted I give it a spin around Manzanita. We slipped out the rental house door and he coached me through the tricky manual as we pattered around the block.

And then there's the time Mike took us climbing at the Eugene basalt columns - even letting us use his shoes. Little did I know that more than 10 years later, Mike and I would be pouring over a Joshua Tree guidebook - me eager for his recommendations and stories. Now we fall into conversation about rock and routes and lose the interest of anyone around us.

Laurie, there are so many more wonderful memories - when you and Mike cooked me Pad Thai at the house in Eugene during one of my long drives between Portland and Arcata. I could go on-and-on.

Lots of Love,
Diana

I have so many memories of Mike from over the years that it's hard to focus on just one. I remember very clearly the first time I found out about Mike, when I was 12. My siblings and I were driving from Portland to California with my mom and Uncle Chris, and we stopped at his house in Eugene. Mike wasn't there, and I was very concerned about how he'd feel about five people invading his house while he was away. But once we were inside, I quickly forgot that concern because I was captivated by what a cool house it was: drums in the living room, worldly souvenirs throughout, and a climbing wall in the backyard.

I finally met Mike at my parents' house a few months later, and his personality matched the house—full of an open-minded and heartfelt love of learning and people, and an appreciation for different perspectives. These are qualities that have led to a large number and wide variety of conversations with Mike over the rest of my life that I continue to think about and appreciate.

One way this has manifested is in playing cards. This has been a favorite family activity on Mike and Laurie visits, since before I existed, but one that I wholeheartedly enjoy. We usually play Bridge, though there were a number of years where we played poker. His enthusiasm for it fits perfectly into the Goelz family reunion activities, be it a larger event like Thanksgiving, or a random rainy weekend in Portland. Either way, I have always loved playing Bridge as Mike's partner. Especially when I was a teenager, I felt less pressure when playing with Mike, and felt like he truly enjoyed being my Bridge partner, too. I remember once, during an early poker match, when I went head to head with him, after everyone else had folded.

He is competitive, but laid back during play, in a way where I always knew he was enjoying the experience, as was I!

When he finally paid (probably pennies) to see my hand, he had 2 pair and I had a full house. He asked me if I understood that without the last flop I wouldn't have won, and then explained the poker hand hierarchy to me. That has always been a recurring theme in my interactions with Mike—he teaches me something while making it fun, and without making me feel like I should have already known it!

-Laura



I thought about this long and hard. I pondered what I could possibly recite that hasn't yet been said regarding the phenomenal venerability and rarity of our Mike. We all know Mike enhances lives, teaches beautifully, gambles brilliantly, laughs shamelessly, and lives blissfully. I know Mike has a way with words and a method to his mathematical madness. I know Mike consistently leaves me feeling like the cat that drank the cream because with Mike, I'm special. I'm exceptional, valued, and loved.

Mike has the ability to make each individual feel like the star of the show, the captain of the ship, and the best expert in the field. He sees merit in many. So I suppose I could detail Mike's ongoing inventory of awesomeness, but I'd only be reiterating. I think what makes Mike so sensational is his reminder of a life worth living. Mike evokes my gratitude for a life full of play, friendship, food, climbing, laughter, mistakes, and times tables. At the very least, Mike makes the kitchen remodeling discussions somewhat less soporific.

A memory comes to mind here of Mike and me at Smith. However spritely in my childhood, I was also decidedly apprehensive about scaling a razor-edged wall in the sweltering heat fastened to a mere rope and nervously clutching my camel-toe inducing harness. Alan's soothing could only do so much. It was only when Mike began to holler out the times tables I could ease each step.

Last spring when I was released from the Behavioral Health Unit, one of the two people I agreed to see was Mike. During our stroll along the river, Mike reminded me to kindly desist from hurling myself over the bridge, as he had no intention of following. For the first time in a long time, I threw my head back and laughed. Mike was the first to humanize and ease my grief with humor. By doing so he once again reminded me of life's worth, and the gratitude we may find there.

On that same walk, we by chance happened to pass my abusive ex-boyfriend whose behavior had ultimately aided in my hospitalization. I barely blinked an eye; I had the protection and force of Mike Heil on my side. I was the resilient, valuable, and loved young woman whom Mike helped mold. I held my chin a wee higher knowing Mike would keep me in motion, moving forward.

If we're asking how Mike has influenced me, I'll tell you. Mike taught me how to live in gratitude, in laughter, in fear, and in joy. Mike revives my sense of courage, validates my worth, placates my worries, and encourages my audacity. Best summed up by this picture here, of Mike conjuring up my smile. Mike is an upstanding man, an outstanding friend, and a superb role model.

Besos a ti,

Hannah

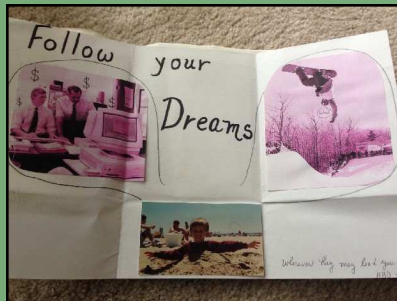
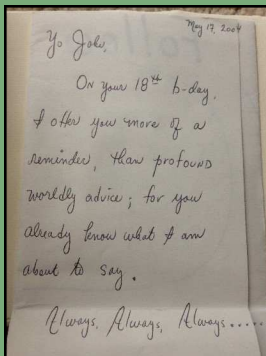


It was about 1989 when we met at a family wedding event. I have such wonderful memories with you, especially of rock-climbing, our letters in Spanish, and your visit to NIU. You are the most fun-loving, adventurous and witty guy I'm lucky to know!
Love, Carlissa



I've known Mike since the day I was born and his presence at gatherings of family and friends is something that stands out in the hazy memories of my early years. Mike has a way of interacting with kids that made me feel special and important. As a kid, Mike was always genuinely excited to see me and interested in what was happening in my life, which is a feeling that stuck with me.

When I picture Mike now I think of a moment at Smith Rock my sophomore year of college. A friend and I were hiking up Asterisk Pass to eat lunch and out of the blue there was Mike getting off a multi-pitch route with the same smile and enthusiasm he's always had. I admire Mike because he pursues his passions regardless of age, work, or any other adversity life throws. That moment with him encapsulated that for me. Mike inspired me to live life on my own terms and to pursue what I love, which is something I will forever be grateful for. Love, Jacob



We thought this is what Andre would say.....

I am writing this from Yosemite in the midst of granite walls and spectacular waterfalls. It's spring- everything is green and beautiful. The waterfalls are crazy. We stood in the spray of Bridalveil falls and got soaked. Mike should be here with us because he loves this stuff. Enthusiasm- that's Mike. I know he'd be saying- "look at this" and " Hey climb this... you can do it." He encourages everyone to find their strength, to do their best, to celebrate, to laugh. With his forever smile and open heart, he is my friend. And that I can have a friend like Mike. That's something. He makes me feel special. I can't stop smiling when I'm near Mike. Thank you Mike !!! Love, Andre



Mike is a great encouraging guy to be with. I love hanging out with him. He always makes me feel good about myself. I also liked that math challenge he gave me. Love, Evan



You are a shining light in many people's lives, including mine. I look back on Field Camps from decades ago and one thing stands out to me the most: your smile and your infectious laughter. Your love of life and positive attitude always rubbed off and me, which is part of the reason I loved going on those trips with you and my dad.

Even being only eight to ten years old at the time — early-mid 1990's — I *knew* Field Camp at Kelly Middle School was a memorable experience for those students (I remember one student had never been camping before! I was flabbergasted). Frying up bacon on the camp stove, "garbage sweeps," The Catacombs, collecting water samples in waders from the Sprague River are just some of the memories that come to mind. You and my dad provided students with an opportunity to push boundaries, experience the outdoors, and see new things. No doubt it has immeasurable worth in their lives to this day. As a little girl, I got to witness this over and over again: the care and energy you and my dad put into the trips and your devotion to these kids. Not only was the trip *so much fun* for me, but I also had you guys as role models of great teachers leading with integrity and totally amazing human beings. It's something I didn't realize at the time, but it was helping to shape the person I am today: someone who is compassionate, confident, and has an urge to change people's lives for the better. Thank you for that experience and for touching my life many many times. I only hope I can pay it forward! Love, Haley





I cannot name a specific memory of Mike's influence because all these memories blend together into a feeling. Mostly, I want to let you know the shape of these encounters. When I think of Mike, I think of his smile. I don't think anyone who knows Mike can fail to mention his smile. I never saw a day when his grin wasn't dominating his face.

Mike's zest for life is unparalleled. This above all else, has influenced me. Mike was the true epitome of a life well lived. It appeared to me that he did not settle for the mundane. He lived exactly the life he wanted and it made him happy. This happiness was radiant and contagious. It felt unacceptable to be in a bad mood around Mike, it simply wasn't possible because he made you want to live well. Being near him filled you up. It gave you energy to play harder, to strive for more, to send a bigger climb. It was never exhausting, Mike left you craving more, more, more life.

Mike is best represented to me through this quote from National Geographic Explorer Mike Libecki "Death and/or old age is coming...we must live sweet. The time is now. Why ration passion? Dream big...and climb those dreams. After all, it is not only life, but the quality of this life". From what I know of Mike, he never rationed a day of passion. Cheers, Caitlin Goodman



"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

-Maya Angelou

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

-Benjamin Franklin

"Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each."

-Plato

"The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled."

-Plutarch

"As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

-Marianne Williamson



Mr. Heil was my teacher at Cal Young Middle School, he was the only teacher I had that I could understand. Math was a subject that I loved, until algebra. No matter how many times I took it I didn't understand it, then Mr. Heil became my teacher. He has a way of teaching that I could understand. I finally could get it and felt confident and proud of myself especially during testing.

When I moved on to High School I again started getting lost in algebra class so I reached out to Mr. Heil. He took time out of his life to set up tutoring at the University of Oregon library with me, not just one time, anytime I needed help until I felt ready to go back to class and take tests. I loved those times I got to spend with him, he not only explained and taught me math, he also talked to me about life.

My father was in the military and I was lucky to see him for one week a year, some years not at all. Mr. Heil was the strong, kindhearted, understanding role model of a man in my life when I needed him the most. I consider him my teacher, my mentor and most of all, my friend. Thank You Mr. Heil.

I did it, I am graduating High School in one month and I believe you helped mold me into the confident man I am today. I am forever grateful.

Your friend,
Joey Livingston



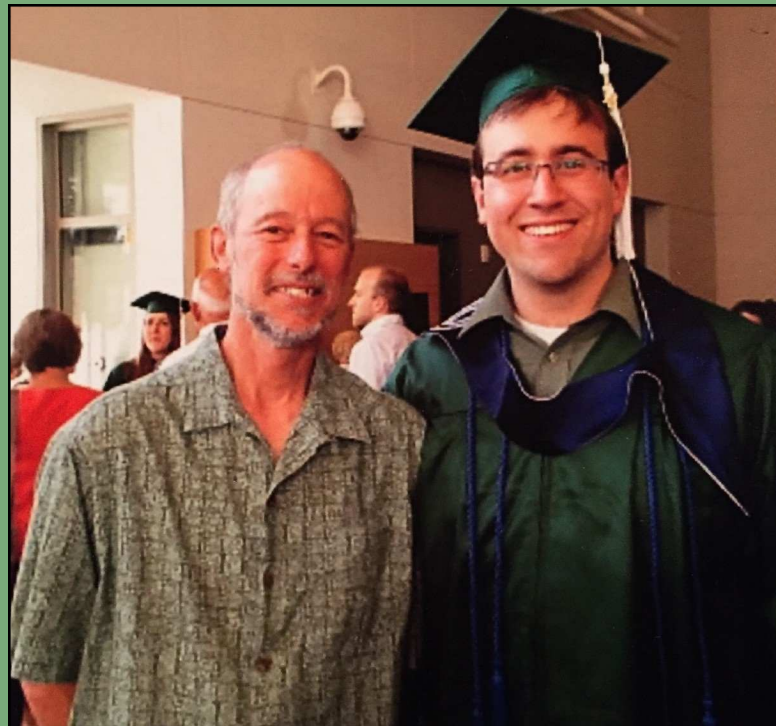
My most important interactions with Mr. Heil, as I think will always call him out of habit and reverence, began in 8th grade Algebra at Cal Young. This was late 2004. Prior to that I don't think we knew each other except that I do have some recollection of him bouncing in and out of Terri Simmons' freezing-cold classroom when I was a 6th or 7th grader, but I had no idea who this bouncy, enthusiastic man was at that time.

My first recognizable encounter with Mr. Heil immediately showed me he was unique: On what was likely the first day of 8th grade Algebra class, he took the giant stack of administrative overhead transparencies designed to teach us "school rules" for an hour, and placed them—at once—onto the overhead projector. This act blasted the words onto the wall in a chaotic jumble, with all the words from all the transparencies being projected one atop the other. He then said something to this effect: "Here are the rules for the school. I think you know them. If anyone would like to review them, I'll give you this stack of transparencies. The rest of us are going to do math because MATH is cool."

True to his word, math was very cool. The checker-board project, the birth year project, and the poker project—which took me about 10 attempts over a month or two to finally get a passing grade—stand out memorably. On the poker project, I recall spending one lunch with Mr. Heil, desperately trying to understand how to predict poker hands. At one point, both of us went wild with laughter as he excitedly explained to me that the graph I had made looked less like a graph of mathematical relationships and more like a 1960's personality test. "Look at the dots and tell us what you see, and we'll tell you your personality." Earlier, at some point in the second week of school, perhaps around the time of the birth year project, my friend Joel Chapman and I were walking down the hall at the end of the school day. Mr. Heil stopped us and asked, "What is your second favorite class?" We thought about it and responded, "Yours. Math." Heil looked shocked and started jumping up and down, exclaiming, "WHAT?? MY CLASS IS ONLY YOUR *second* FAVORITE?!?!?! I have to work harder!" Interestingly, I cannot recall what we thought our first favorite class was, and Algebra with Mr. Heil quickly ascended to heights of "unforgettable"—well beyond "favorite."

Beyond a great Algebra class, I'm most thankful to Mr. Heil for changing and challenging how I see myself and the world. How unprecedentedly great he was at teaching led me to observe the many missed opportunities for learning, fun, and greatness in our education system. He has inspired me to make some changes for the better in education, whether that's as a teacher or something else. I would not be half the teacher I am, though, without him. He has also challenged me—just through his example—to be more present. I benefit from this in all parts of my life.

I don't know how long I will remain a teacher—more than likely I will venture into politics at some point—but due to Mr. Heil's example and friendship, I will always be one to Stand and Deliver.



Hi Mr. Heil,

I guess I can call you Mike, now that my time at Kelly / DaVinci was more than 20 years ago. This is Scott Elliott... I'm sure you remember my family (Don, Carol, Myself, and Julie) from the many School On Wheels trips we joined from around '93-'97. By a mile, those trips were the coolest opportunity for us kids, some of whom were camping for the first time (but not me!). I always remember you and Tim taking us all the way to the back of The Catacombs, turning off the flashlights, and watching BreathSavers spark in our mouths. More than anything though, I'll never forget the night at Pine Mountain Observatory. It's an opportunity that few people ever get, and you made it happen for a bunch of kids that could never experience something like that in little old Eugene. I was lucky enough to join School on Wheels during both my 7th and 8th grade years, and again as a high school helper. That was the year my entire family was on the trip. Remember the forest fire near Collier State Park when we had to evacuate camp and leave tents and gear? Remember when my dad was towing the gear trailer through the Head of the Metolius parking lot and his black Chevy truck broke a ball joint and had to be towed into Sisters for a few days? Remember the (not to be named) girl who ate cold ravioli out of the can for an entire week because she didn't like the real food?

I assume that School on Wheels is no longer available at Kelly Middle School, which is a shame. Everything you did to make that possible for us did not go unappreciated. Every student should have that opportunity to explore Oregon and learn about its history. Thinking back to my time in 4J schools, not many teachers left me with life-long memories like you did. You were different. You were funny. I can tell you that in my days at Kelly / DaVinci, you and Tim were the teachers that everybody wanted. Thanks for your dedication to making school fun. And, thanks for the memories! - Scott Elliott



I looked high and low searching for pictures from the travelling school, but alas I think maybe I wasn't quite responsible enough at the time to be entrusted with a camera. Over the last spring break, Jess, Tristan, Max and I went over to Eastern Oregon, with rock hammers in hand, in search of the elusive thunder egg. Although we found no thunder eggs, I found memory after memory of those trips. I think I was the only student to go on every one of them and they remain the highlight of my middle school years. I remember estimating fish populations at the fish hatchery, looking for arrow heads at Newberry Caldera, mapping caves at Lava Beds National Park, Looking down for the first time at the majesty of Crater Lake, and eating s'mores around countless camp fires. Those memories are treasures that I will have for the rest of my life. I remember writing about the feelings I had when we went to the Japanese internment camp for my history thesis in college. Now that I am a teacher, I realize how difficult those trips must have been to plan and pull off. Thanks.

I never imagined that I would become a teacher, let alone a math teacher. Now that I am, there is not a day of class that goes by that I don't think about my time in class with you at Kelly Middle School. I don't have a single memory of a math class from high school, yet I have dozens of memories of specific lessons and classes from middle school. On my first day at my new job, I walked into the class next door to me and had quite the surprise. The teacher teaching was Ryan Brummett who you taught the same years as you taught me. The first thing he asked was if you were the reason I became a math teacher, and I responded, "Of course."

I have been a little busier this school year than I had expected, but this summer we should definitely get together for a chess game, poker game, bike ride, or a climb over at the columns. Sincerely, Jesse Light



This is definitely from eighth-grade (1992). You should recognize a few of these fellows. I'm third from the left in the back and that is Ryan Brummett next to me. I printed this and stuck it in his class the day after I found out he worked next door.



I've always wanted to make a difference in the world; impact people's lives in a positive and lasting way. Sometimes, I'm not sure if I do. But I do know that you made a difference in my life.

In primary school, I thought I wasn't very bright when it came to mathematics, or much of anything, for that matter. I couldn't complete the math timed-tests. I wasn't able to memorize multiplication tables. I couldn't really remember the process for long-hand division. I had great difficulty with reading comprehension. In fact, as I sit here and reflect back,

I think you were the first teacher that EVER made me believe I had any degree of intelligence. You made me feel that I was worth the extra time it took to explain a concept to me until I fully understood it. You cared, and it showed...and that made ME wanna care. And so, I did care. And I continued to care. I came to love math, and even came to feel like I was good at it, because of you. And that was fortunate for me, because I ended up earning my B.S. degree in Human Physiology, and with all the physics, chemistry and other science classes and equations that came along with it, (not to mention all the math courses), I used math A LOT. Getting a child to love math is an accomplishment that can't be overstated. It didn't hurt that you were always upbeat, interesting, free-spirited, and I'd even go so far as to say fascinating. I thought your fold-up bike and the places you took it was absolutely marvelous!

Over two decades later, you remain one of the only influential and invested teachers I had in my entire educational experience (that's 19+ years of school!), and certainly one of my top favorites ever. And who knows, if you hadn't been the one to encourage me first, in middle school, I might not have had the courage to take A.P. classes in my senior year of high school, where I met the only other teacher (besides you) that ever seemed to truly care. You two were a huge reason I had the confidence to start and persevere through college. My kids have even heard about you. I told my son (who's current 7th grade math teacher is the polar opposite of you) that I wish he had someone like you as a math teacher, because I think he wouldn't dislike math so much if he did. It grieves me that he doesn't love math, but I often times find myself hoping he'll soon have a math teacher more like you, because that will make all the difference. I wish every kid could experience that. I hope that someday I too can make a positive, lasting impact in people's lives the way you did in mine. Thank you.

With Love, Lisa Haniuk (Kelly Middle School, 1994-1997)



What I remember most about being your student in the mid-90's was how you made me FEEL about math. Not every middle school student is so lucky to have a teacher that inspires her to feel so excited about math class through his enthusiasm, kindness, and positive energy. Now, in my first year as a high school math teacher, I think about how lucky I was to be in your class during those formative years. And, if I can provide for my students even a fraction of what you did for my love of and confidence in math, then I will feel that I have done my job as a teacher. I will continue to channel my inner Mr. Heil in the classroom!

Thank you for the inspiration, Mike.

Sincerely,
Stephanie True



Mike told me a couple times over the years in our conversations that he saw me being an environmental lawyer someday. I am enrolling in Law School this fall with a focus on Environmental Law. I appreciate him planting the seed!

Best wishes,
Che



When I was 17, if there was one thing that stood between me and the possibility of a college education, it was math. The total bane of my existence! Due to my complete apathy for numbers, I had begun to let my math grades slip into F's in my Senior year of high school. I realized I needed to pull it together, but didn't know where to start. I think that without your help, I wouldn't have graduated with more than a 3.0 GPA. Once we started getting into the swing of things, I realized that I only needed to understand math before I could actually develop an appreciation for it. You made those lessons fun, interesting, and meaningful; something only a great teacher can do. I can say with such confidence that you positively affected my academic career. You were also one of my adult mentors, at a time in my life when online high school was making me feel isolated and confused. Thank you for all your help and support. I wish you the best of luck and health going into the future, and beyond! In other words, forever!

- Josephine (Riley) Estrada



My experiences with Mike were nothing short of heartwarming and thought provoking. Mike had a great way of making anything fun. During our tutoring sessions, I was not only able to catch up on the in class curriculum, but Mike allowed me to discover the new concepts in my own way. I was never told once to do something a certain way, rather, I was allowed to think through problems on paths that made sense to me. After figuring out how I thought, Mike helped to strengthen my connections with the concepts and refine the mathematician within me. Mike was great at allowing me to feel unique in my thought process and free to solve problems in any way I'd liked. This allowed me to get an A, not only thanks to his magnificent tutoring, but also because of his wonderful friendship.

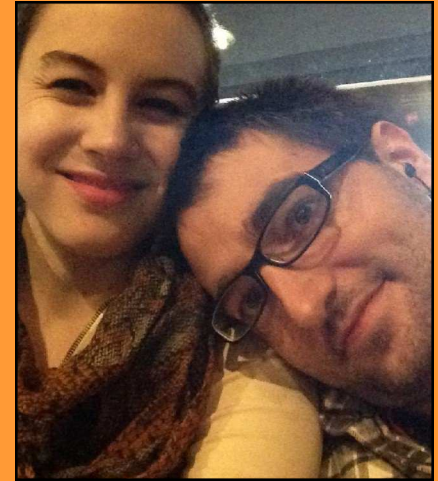
-Cole

My wife and I both had Mike as a teacher. She and I didn't really know each other in middle school, But fairly early into dating I remember us talking about our favorite teachers and Mike was at the top of Both of our lists . I Enjoy math, In part that may have been instilled in me by Mike, he was certainly a great teacher and passionate about his subject. I remember learning about probability in his class which is likely the single lesson I use most in my life, I am an avid gamer, and I win far more than my share of games largely because I can figure out the odds

every step of the way. The subject matter was however not the reason he made it to the top of my favorites list. For me at least it was the way I was treated. I never felt looked down upon. My thoughts and opinions were always treated with just the right amount of gravitas. Even those that were in retrospect maybe just a tad childish. Thank You. -Donovan Light

Student in... 99 @ Kelly middle school? Friends for life, despite him always calling me by my brother's name

To be a great teacher, you must believe in your students in order to make them feel inspired. Even as a small child I had been told that I was not good at math. My mother had never been good at math, so It made sense that I would never be as well. I took this to heart. I cringed every time my teacher looked in my direction, or whenever a difficult math question was presented to the class. I felt totally defeated when no one could or would help me with my homework. I would burst into tears when faced with a problem I felt I could not solve. Over time I had become an expert, a "ninja" at math avoidance. Consequently, I had so many holes in my mathematical foundation that the house it was supporting would crumble in the slightest breeze. Mike helped build my confidence by giving me the support I had needed for so long. Rather than run away from a challenging math problem he helped me to engage. Over time I realized that mistakes are a necessary part of the learning process. I realized that by raising my hand and engaging in conversation I was building on my knowledge and that of my peers. I am so thankful to Mike because he helped pave the way towards a better understanding... a love of mathematics. Now I am a teacher and I cannot help but smile whenever I teach a math lesson; My favorite thing to teach. I hope I can leave a legacy of confident mathematicians like Mike left in me. Sincerely, Krystle Rodriguez-Light
Student in 99?



Adam and his daughter

I remember Mike (then known only as Mr. Heil) striking me immediately as a fun teacher. Reflecting now, I realize that was due to the passion he brought to the classroom, and the respect he gave to his students. He was the one that taught me the first building blocks of math more advanced than arithmetic. He used this metaphor in class, that the formulas and strategies you learn in math are all tools. Your job as a mathematician is to survey the problem, look in your toolkit, and properly apply the tools you have. In that sense: Mike was one of the finest craftsmen I have ever known. His lessons, and indeed his demeanor, stuck with me through the years. As with so many of his other pupils: Mike ranks among my favorite teachers.

Two anecdotes stand out special to me, both highlighting the jovial relationship Mike had with his students. I clearly remember Mike teaching us about Pascal's Triangle. He explained the triangle, drawing it by hand four or five levels deep, then posed the question: "What is the sum of the 12th row?" He did this to show the drawbacks of recursive sequences, where you can't just calculate $f(12)$ without knowing $f(11)$, $f(10)$, etc., but I was young and stubborn, and felt it would be more interesting to write the whole stinking triangle out by hand. And so I did. To about 40 or 50 rows deep, while he talked about the explicit formula for the sum of a row of Pascal's Triangle, I labored over the "wrong" method. This taught me a lesson I still use today developing software: value cheap algorithms, but memorize expensive ones. That recursive formula is slow, but its results are still correct. By keeping the results, you can oftentimes relegate whole swaths of your algorithm to a lookup table rather than calculation.

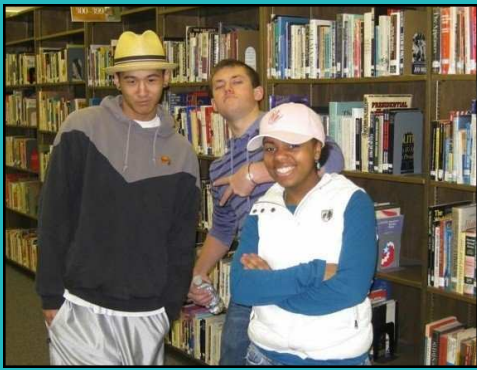
My friends and I would play some card game in the back of class when we were done with our work for the day. I can't today remember what game we were into at the time. Mike gave us a hard time about it, and rightfully so as we were distracting other students (who WEREN'T done!) Kelly had a tradition, though, and did a Students vs. Teachers game each year at a schoolwide assembly. I don't recall what they played (was it basketball? Volleyball?) but I remember making a bet with Mr. Heil, writing out a "contract" -- such as a 6th grader can draw up a contract -- and my friends and I signing it. "IF THE TEACHERS BEAT THE STUDENTS AT THE ASSEMBLY, NO MORE CARD GAME."

Mike, damn him, easily qualified as MVP as the teachers squashed the students.

To our eternal shame, my friends and I rushed back to Mike's classroom after the assembly and destroyed our contract before he got back to his office. I'm not sure if we ever discussed it with Mike again afterwards, but we never pulled out those cards again in class. Even with the contract gone, it just didn't seem right. Mr. Heil, in all his holy wrath as our teacher, could have simply forbade us from playing our game, but instead he treated us as equals and gave us a chance to win the right to play our game. That was beyond rare, and I've never forgotten it.

Mike Heil instilled in me the idea that a teacher can be more than someone who drones on at the front of class. That math can be more than just getting the right answer after the equals sign. In a greater sense, he showed me that adults don't have to talk over or talk down to children to get their point across -- something I'm more thankful for than ever now that I have a child of my own. Few other teachers have ever affected me in such a profound way in such a short time.

Thank you. -Adam Smith, Student in 1998-99



Mr. Hiel was my teacher in 6th grade at Cal Young middle school that was back in 2003 before they tore down the old school! I remember him riding his bike and sharing stories of riding around the world! Me and my closest friends had his math class and we talked a lot, even when we weren't supposed to. Now I am about to graduate from UO with a degree in public relations. That was 14 years ago!!! Me and my friend Justin Pham always say "remember when we met in Mr. Hiel's class?" We are still good friends today! Thanks for being such a fun guy Mr. Hiel! Sorry if I spelled Hiel wrong, I never got it right.

-Samira Lobby

You were the first teacher who ever made math fun for me, and it actually became one of my favorite subjects after that. And you not only cared about your students' academic work, but clearly cared about our personal lives too. You're still one of my favorite teachers!! - Stef Gough

Mr. Heil will always be one of my favorite teachers. He kept his classes fun and engaging, and the students respected him for it. We all thought he was pretty cool for riding his recumbent bike to school every day. - Brady Gough, 8th Grade Algebra (2004)



Proof that math is still cool: Brady Gough, First Lieutenant, United States Air Force. Holding my diploma, a M.S. in Optical Science and Engineering, from the Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. 2017



Mr. Heil taught me math in seventh grade and most of sixth grade (2001-2003). I was one of a handful of younger students taking advanced math courses filled with older students, and I appreciated how Mr. Heil treated us like mature people. He would delve as deeply as necessary for us to understand concepts, but he always spoke to us with confidence that we had the ability to do even the most complex problems. I clearly saw his love of his subject, too. My favorite memory of those classes was during a day when many of the other students were absent, and we were reviewing the last chapter we had read. I asked a question about something in the book that differed from what Mr. Heil had written on the board. He jumped over the empty desk in front of me, sat down backwards on the chair, and examined the page I was referencing. After he read it, he looked right at me and said, "Good catch!" What a kind, humble, and jolly teacher he has been in all of my interactions with him. -Whitney Simpson

In 2002 I was in 7th grade and had recently lost all my friends due to a very important argument that 12-year-old girls have. So important, that the details are forgotten. My friendlessness only lasted a short while until I met my new best friends, Dani Wright and Joanna Wayland. However, the cafeteria and dining areas still caused me some anxiety due to being ousted from my old group. Enter Mr. Heil.

Students weren't allowed in the main halls during lunch, but one day I stayed after class and he let me eat in his room. The relief of not having to face the cafeteria was immense. I soon began eating in Mr. Heil's classroom almost every day, bringing Joanna and Dani with me. And Mr. Heil wouldn't just let us eat there; he'd engage us in conversation and make us feel like we weren't just little kids. He listened to our problems, he cared about what we said, he made jokes, and he let Joanna try his recumbent bike in the hallway. I even remember a unicycle at one point. He was fun!

When I look back on my time at Cal Young I think of him first. I think of his big smile. It's a smile that spreads through his whole face, not one of those forced ones that never make it to the eyes. I'm happy to look through his blog and see that he still wears it often.

Now that I'm an adult I can fully appreciate all the help that Mr. Heil provided me. I can understand that there were probably days when he didn't want students eating in his classroom, he probably wanted a break. I can understand that he probably wasn't the happiest guy every day; we all have bad days. But the thing about Mr. Heil is that I never suspected that. His generosity of spirit is so big that I never felt anything but comforted. It was a small part of my day where I didn't feel like an inconvenient kid. He made me want to be that kind to everyone, to pass it on.

On a studious level he also taught me to answer everything with a full sentence, and for a math teacher, that is pretty remarkable. He said if I could turn in work that no one has to ask me any clarifying questions about than I've done all the work. I still follow this when I attempt anything.

Mr. Heil, Thank you for dedicating your life to helping kids like me. Your kindness and happiness entered my life right when I needed it and has truly helped shape me into the person I am. And I like that person. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Much Love, Samantha LaVasseur





"Stop, you're on my bike going the wrong way!"