

# *Eulogy to Michael J. Martin*

Written by his father, Mike Martin, September 20, 2005



To all of you, with love from Mike,

Responding to the immenseness of this gathering, and the overwhelming support of my very large family of friends and immediate family that thrives on my strength, I will try to describe my view of the legacy of Michael J., through the eyes of a dad whose eyes are clouded with sorrow, and heart made heavy with the most intense loss that could be imagined.

I've spent hours trying to recount the memories and wit that have been shared with me by this man. I hate the cliché - "words can't describe" - but I believe his life has defined this phrase. Those who knew his face, his smile, his light, his wit, his caring, his giving, his effort, his selflessness, probably can attest to this. The gathering of people at the events of the past few days at our home, at the get together at the tree, the visitation, and here today attest to this - He has touched many - and he lived with me and my wife.

The days of our lives, the last 16 years was like living, instead of reading, the greatest story since the Bible. Every page, every chapter getting better and better. Not wanting to put it down, you blocked out many things of the world, anticipating and yearning to see the next page. Then suddenly and unwanting, you put the book down - for a rest or a spell, maybe just a drink of water, only to return to find the book destroyed - only to have read through chapter 3 or 4, finding that 5 through 21 have been torn off and thrown away. Tragically as with Michael J., this book had only one copy. What would've been, we will never be able to know, and will not be able to imagine.

His life was like making work out to be play. In his soccer, and skating, and studying, he strived to excel, work was tedious. But being the best was so much fun - that labor was worth it, and he raised his bars ever higher. Being "gifted" was something he wanted to earn.

If he loved what he did, his focus became strong, he stared through life's realities, to visualize his dreams. I think of a trip to the hospital - about one year ago, he had been injured at a soccer game by a blow to the head. It was the second half of the JV game. He laid on the field for some 20 minutes, then whisked to our car. We drove one hour from Hopewell to NE in Concord. After waiting another 30 minutes, we finally had a room and awaited a doctor to stitch up his wound. His spirit still not daunted, and with all due wishfulness, he said "I hope they hurry up." I said, "They will, be patient." "I know, ", he said, "but I want to get back to see the Varsity play."

I remember when he grew up to about the age of six, bringing home a paper from school, wanting to play soccer. Oh, what a future I saw on that day. It had been many years since I had played the game, and I missed it dearly. I had never really considered what it would be like to have a son do the same. "I had a dream..."

I coached on his teams, worked him through trials and tried to pass things to him and everyone on our trail. This past year I was blessed, to thoroughly enjoy the reality of playing, with the boy now the man, in an adult/student league. A dream come true. One memory I will share was helping to coach his U16 All Star team, we had a scrimmage with the U19s but we were a man short. I had the opportunity to play side by side, with my own flesh and blood, in a fierce competition at the highest level, and I truly thank the Lord. "You got 12 - I got 7; you got a man, I got him, you got drop, go through, I've got a wing.... good play, Dad; way to cover, MJ."

After the game, which we heartedly won, he spoke of our nemesis on the opposing squad. "You got Lance?" - "I don't know." "He likes his left, take away his left, he can't use his right, I figured it out, that's why he jukes. But don't buy it. " He was finally getting to the peak of his game, life had never been so good, for a father and a son.

The past few days, we have received an outpouring of support from many of you here, and we appreciate it. How everyone's tried to console us. Of all the regards and comments, however, one kept coming up and sticks in my mind. "You know," they said, "as screwed up and crazy as the world is today, this is probably good. We know our Michael J. has gone to a better place - he's lucky not to be here." It was a comment I had thought of, and one I expected, but my response didn't take long. 'Yeah, this is a messed up place, but you know, I think he loved it here.' He was a kid with wide eyes, high powered glasses in rose 3x; he knew of the bad, but he saw so much good- and he thrived on it. He overdosed on life, but he gave the excess to us. His charm and his smile were perpetual, and needed no recharging.

On the way to the hospital, on that nightmarish day, I prayed and I prayed. And when I realized it was tragic, I prayed even harder. Please Lord; some way, some how, we don't really care, we'll take him any way we can get him, please don't let him leave." But the Lord took him anyway, to his final resting place in heaven. As I look back I see how I was being selfish. I wouldn't wish him back in any other shape than his own, enjoying and living life to the fullest, 100% to his max.

This brings us to the heart of my struggle. My faith reassures me that God is good, and that he has a plan for us all. But this message is very confusing; I toil in my mind, to make a positive out of such a loss. As I said the other night at the candlelight, hopefully one man was sacrificed to save many, as is the Almighty's way. But as I look on past that tree, I think back to those comments, maybe that's where the answer lies.

So many of us cry like babies, when life deals us our cards, but he never did, and he usually won the pot. That took a special person, and it took a special mind. The reason so many of you are here, today, last night, and the past couple days, is because he so touched our lives. He loaded up on life, and gave twice back to us. He never met a face he didn't like, and nobody wasn't glad he was there. He could stand between opposites and make them equal and bond, he made everyone he met, even from distant parties, get together and share, because they had one thing in common. They had the same special friend.

And now I think maybe this is why he was taken from us. Our world is so small, and our problems are too small, compared to the world's, whose are often too large to fathom. He had no problem healing us in our little Central Cabarrus world. He took care of us all every time he could, and always had some left for the next one to come along. Unfortunately for us, maybe he did God's work too well. I think the Lord needed help and promoted MJ to eternity, so he could use the fullest of his gift, for the huge problems of the world. We should all be happy, maybe better days are ahead, maybe news won't be so scary, and if we ever need help, we can just bow down our heads, because we know one of the best souls ever, watches over us each day. Thank you, Lord.

There have been many signs, over the past few months and weeks, that his time was coming, and I see them now just as clear as this day. We were riding at the beach, listening to a radio station that played his songs and mine; and I remember listening to one and I heard him tell a friend, "I really like this one, it chills, I just don't know what it means." From that day in August, every time that song played, he pointed it out, but he still wondered about it. This year when it was time for the fair, with his schedule so busy, we had a hard time picking a night to go. We hated to go on a school night, but it was either Monday or Friday.. something told me Friday would be taken, so we went on Monday. On the way there that night, taking Chase to his first fair, the song played again -'Listen to this, it chills, it's such a good song - But what is it about - September - I don't understand." Michael J - now I think we know.

The song says "Wake me up when September ends." Some of you may wish to sleep off your nightmare, but you will miss my son's light, and make his loss such a waste. I think for all of us here, September has ended early. Now it's time to wake up. I think we all were lucky to be touched by his life, but I think we paid dearly, and at too high of a price. Let not our loss be in vain. Wake up - please wake up.

Kids life is precious, and there's lots of fun to be had, more love to be shared, but please don't take a chance. When you drive, be careful - we don't need any more trees. And to all of our families, from the parents on down, love each other and hug each other, every hour, every day, make sure we share our love, as did my son -MJ. Make sure when people meet us, down our paths in life, that we show the light he gave us, as he touched us in life. And always remember to be there for each other, each moment, right now. I learned through this all, that yesterdays are gone, todays are for the taking, so get all you can - because tomorrows can't be promised.

My only regret, and I'm sorry for us all, was that we couldn't share one more time Michael J with you all. But we dug and worked hard, to dig back in our past, to share many memories and I hope some will last. You knew him as a friend, but we lived with him as our son, and brother, and uncle, and friend. Our lives were blessed and we were so very lucky. So with that I will leave it to you as we all pass; Please don't leave us. We have lots more memories to share; all you have to do is ask. And please if you see us, stop if you have a chance, even just to "hey", or share some good times from the past. We tried to share him with everyone, the best we knew how, and we yearn to hear, about the chapters we don't know. The book is so sweet, we die to hear more.

Michael J., we all gather with you deep in our hearts, and so glad we could love you and you could touch all our lives. We can't imagine a life being any finer. We all here are saddened, but we try not to cry, because we know your life now is in a beautiful place. Forgive us if we miss you, because what we really do is need, you were there for so many of us, we long for your help. Your awesome example will guide us each day. Look down on us and touch us, each time when we pray.

Although my family's hearts are broken and our burdens seem heavy, we tried to share some of the love that MJ gave us, so you could see as we did, how beautiful this world can be. Be there for us, and help light up our lives as we've passed our torch, to light up the world.

Family and friends, let us not leave too sad, because what we all lived and shared and had, will never be for some - we are very blessed. What we have witnessed, was like a great shooting star, but we never had to blink, and we didn't look far. There are thousands of them out there, and most go unseen. Hopefully ours was blinding, like no other ever seen.

Thank you, Michael J., all the way to the first day, for touching all our lives, and being with us on our way. Thanks for being my son and letting me be your Dad. Thanks for touching all our lives as no one else could have. And I share him with you all, and hopefully always have, so now stand behind me in prayer.

Thank you, Jesus  
Thank the Lord  
All praise to God  
We are very Blessed.

