

Remembering Ron

David Echt
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So Sheba, Aviva, Ev, and Lincoln, I don't know where or how to begin. Who does know where to begin when things like this happen. I guess I wanted and maybe needed to share some feelings with each of you, though I know you must all be dealing with so much now that each of you must be overwhelmed with your own feelings, your own thoughts, and so bombarded by people who loved Ron, like me, who also just wanted to share their feelings with you.

Ev, when we spoke the other night and you asked us to wait before coming over we certainly understood your feelings and respected your sense of privacy and family at this time, though we both wanted to drive up and be with you and your familywe totally understand and appreciate your needs, know please that our hearts and thoughts are with you even if we at this time cannot be there in person with you. We shall anxiously wait until you feel the time is right for us to visit with you. And of course we want to be in attendance at any service you may plan for the future.

I loved Ron so much and he meant so much to me as a special friend, always. Your entire family means so much to us, you always have and you always will. I have this sense of emptiness now, it feels like a part of me is gone. More than several times I felt as though maybe I was simply having this bad dream and that I would soon awake to find that this awful news we received was nothing more than a bad dream.

Hearing about these kinds of episodes always seemed like it was "someone else" it was happening too, never a loved one, just a poor stranger you would read about in the newspaper having this awful accident happen to them. It was sad reading, but in time the sadness and sorrow would go away, and soon it would be all but forgotten as we got caught up in our daily schedules and our own affairs of the day and the week. The memory of that stranger in the newspaper would somehow almost totally fade away as we moved on with our own lives.

Ron's memory and his spirit and his love will never fade away from me, nor from countless others whose lives were touched in so many different wonderful ways by Ron. Each time I reached out to talk to someone about Ron, new stories would come to my mind, and deeper and more and more lovable feelings I have for Ron would surface within me, and each time this would happen I would begin to understand how all of these examples would merely intensify the sense of sadness I was feeling and the sense of loss I was feeling of a dear dear friend. When I thought about how each of you must be dealing with the such horrible news, I simply couldn't imagine the sense of loss you were feeling for

your Dad, for your husband, and for your friend too. I still am having difficulty in understanding how and why things like this happen as they do. How can the life and work and love of such a special person in this world, and for so many years, be taken away from us in this way, and so so fast.

Earlier today I was describing my relationship with Ron to my sister. She said over the years she felt my relationship with Ron was as a brother to brother. She was right, he was like a brother. There was never, ever, anything that Ron wouldn't do. There was never, ever, anything that we couldn't talk about with one another. And in word and deed, to me Ron did act as a loving brother would act. I don't know if you know this or not, but when my Dad was really suffering not too long before he died, I asked Ron for help. I needed help in understanding how best to deal with my Dad and how to better understand what my father was going thru, he was not in very good shape. Ron listened to my questions, and then said, "it would be much better for me if I were to talk to your Dad, I think I might be able to better understand things." The next day, Ron drove from St. Barbara to San Diego, met with Dad, drove back to Santa Barbara the same day, it was a 10 hour day for Ron. He helped me, he helped my Dad. I remember Dad's words when he would talk to me about Ron, it went something like..... "Son, this guy is such a mench. What a great friend you have, what a lovable guy. I like this guy." Dad knew. I also knew.

When I told one of our kids about what happened, he said to me, "I don't know if you know it or not Dad, but Ron made a big big difference in my life, he helped to get me back on my feet again." Of course I knew it. And I knew he did it because of his love and his caring and his genuine concern for all people in need, but especially those close to him that he truly cared about.

I remember once being present during an intake interview Ron was doing at the hospital. It was a homeless young woman. He interviewed her for maybe an hour or so, he had the woman admitted to the psych ward as I recall, he dictated his notes, he turned to me and said words to the affect.....I really don't know if this woman needs to be committed, however I do know she needs some medicine, she needs to feel as though someone cares about her, she needs a decent shower to clean herself up, and she probably needs some food and a few good nights sleep. She will probably be gone in a few days. The woman stayed for a few days, when I asked about her several days later, she was gone. Ron knew exactly what he was doing, and in his way, he helped her as he had helped so many others.

There was no way that Ron would let me pay him for his help, it was even difficult to get him to accept a gift of gratitude. And you try looking for a gift for Ron. Clothing? I wouldn't know what thrift shop to go to, much less which department to shop in, men's or women's. (I loved teasing him about his clothes.....which more often than not were really someone else's clothes. Something for his car? (that should always be plural at least, were there as I remember 5 at one

time???) The thing with his cars is that I always felt buying something for his cars would simply be encouraging him to keep the dam cars, a better gift for him might have been for someone to call "Cars for Causes" to come over immediately and pick up the cars and take them away, at least take away "most" of them. I guess it is really not funny, because in truth those cars provided so much enjoyment for Ron in so many different ways. I am smiling a little bit now as I am thinking of how proud he was bolting that golf rack bag holder, which of course he made, on the back of one of his Fiats. I remember thinking that it looked like he fashioned the thing out of old rusty baby buggy parts from a 1942 baby carriage. But that was Ron....he made it, he did it, it was practical, it worked (when it wasn't broken) and so why not use it. Who can forget the expression on his face when he would "explain" these various contraptions that he either worked on or made outright. His expressions to me were always suggesting a kind of a combination between joking, pride, and this sense of genius or wisdom.....all of which by the way were all truly very much "Ron."

There are so many wonderful memories that I will always hang on to, mostly all joyous and all shall I say "uniquely" Ron. I loved him very much, and I will miss him so much. He was so special, and he was so wonderful to me, one could not ask to have had a better friend in life. And after we moved away from Santa Barbara and after we began to see less of one another because of the distance between us, even though we would meet for lunch and dinner occasionally, and even though the emails were at times between us almost daily (even when Ron would be in Chicago I would get these emails....."love from Chicago, Ron") I was beginning to feel as though our relationship was different than it was, of course the love was there, the memories were there, but physically we didn't see one another as much as maybe we should have, and I blame myself for this. I knew that Ron wasn't feeling as well as he would like to, both emotionally and physically too, and I knew that he was feeling lonely at times, and that he was wrestling with all kinds of feelings about work, about life, about security, about aging, as we all do I guess at our age, and yet I don't think I was ever there for him as much as he was there for me in my times of need. I feel really lousy about this now, and now am beginning to feel I think guilty as well. And now I guess I will have to learn to live with my feelings, I have only myself to blame.

I know that you have lost a father, a husband, a great friend, and a very special loving person in each of your lives. I hurt and am so sad for each of you and I can only imagine how difficult times will be for you in your having to deal and to cope with such a tragedy for each of you individually and for you collectively as a family as well. I didn't know how to start this letter to you and now I don't know how to end it, other than by telling you that we love you all very much and we shall, like so many others, miss Ron and his presence in this world and especially in our lives. I will always continue to feel both lucky and honored to have had Ron in my life, and in our life.

Our love to you all.....carole and david