

## From Matt Kendra . . .

Hi, I am Matt Kendra. I met Joe during my second year at Miami University. He lived right across the hall from me in a single room. We became friends, and third year, we became housemates. He lived right through the paper thin wall from me. We were supposed to be roommates in Swing Hall my fourth year, but Joe got cancer and called me when I was in Europe to tell me.

Joe and I used to have these philosophical (well, more like pseudo-philosophical) discussions about “thinkers” and “do-ers”. The thinkers, we decided, were the people who just sat around all day *thinking* about how they were going to *do* things. Being a psychology major, I was the thinker. We just sat around thinking about things all day. Joe, on the other hand, was the do-er., the architect. He got things done. Whenever I would finish a paper, Joe would say, “I’m so amazed you actually got something *done!* Must have taken you a long time because all you did was sit around and *think* about it all day!”

But the thinkers and the do-ers need each other, though. “Do-ers aren’t quite as good without the thinkers,” I argued, “They can get things done, but without thinking about what to do, it’s likely to be done very badly.” Do-ers, of course, were necessary because thinkers would get nothing done without them. I guess that means Joe and I needed each other, too, and I think that’s why we became such good friends.

I was thinking about a good memory I could tell you all...hmmm...oops, there I go *thinking* again. I’ll start to *do* something soon, Joe, I promise!

So, a memory. I remember that Joe was very nervous about coming to visit me in Louisville, Kentucky this summer of 2007. But, perhaps he had a good reason. You see, just a few weeks before that, my dad and I were out fishing on our lake and I stuck him with a nice triple Rapala hook – nasty looking thing – right in the chest! So Joe, after having survived cancer, was quite freaked out that I was gonna put a hook in him. *Thank God* I didn’t – I would have *really* felt bad about that! Yikes...

A couple months went by, and I had a dream about Joe. Usually, I need to write dreams down to remember them, but this one stuck with me. The dream began with Joe and I out fishing on our lake. We were catching these giant silver sea serpents and having a great time fishing out on the lake in the canoe. Then, it flashed, and we were suddenly up in my room. This room had a view of the lake through the window. Joe was by the window, and I was between the window and the door – I had him cornered. I badgered him: “Joe, what are you gonna do? You have cancer. We have to do something about it. What is wrong? How are we gonna fix it?” But Joe just stood there for a while and didn’t say anything. He turned his back to me and looked out the window, then looked back at me and said, “All I wanna do is go fishing.” And with that, he walked right past me out the bedroom door, walked downstairs and right out the front door. There was no stopping him - he didn’t want to worry about his cancer and he didn’t want me – us – to worry about it.

I told Joe about my dream. I emailed it to him after I got done talking with him on the phone one day a couple months ago. He called me right back and we started talking about the dream. I could hear the wheels turning in his head – perhaps he was becoming more of a thinker. He said, “So, you were more worried about the cancer than I was?” I told him I was, and that I thought that was the really weird and surprising part of the dream. Joe, however, didn’t seem surprised at all.

I guess that’s because Joe was so strong. I can only hope that Joe can leave me, and all of us, with even just a little bit of his strength. He was such a good friend. Thank you, Joe...

### **From Jack Veasey**

I am Joe's dad. My story has to do with the way Joe allowed me to help him during his days at home from August to just before his death.

First of all, my roll was, at best, the roll of the "water boy" I could do the grunt work but I was never able to handle the medicine. This was mom's job. (I was actually thankful for that because I could have easily given him the wrong "stuff".) However, when Joe did call me, I'd get there as fast as possible. Often the case was that I'd get to wherever he was quickly only to hear him make this request: GET MOM.

One day he called me and did not say "get mom". After I asked him what I could do for him, he answered: "Dad, would you please empty this container (urine) in the bathroom, rinse it out and bring it back."

That's when I gained awareness of the different ways I would be allowed to tend to his needs.

There was one thing, however, that had great importance for me because I was permitted to touch him. When he wanted a back rub, he told me that I gave better back rubs than mom. I think it was because I have bigger hands than she does. Just the same, I was extremely happy to establish closeness with Joe in a manner where my touch was needed.

We all need one another. Just as a son or daughter needs a mom and dad, so do a mom and dad need the love of a son or a daughter.

### **From John Reynolds**

It’s hard to begin to discuss a favorite memory of Joe- there are so many! Our last day together, the day before Joe entered heaven, was so remarkable! Joe was so full of life, sharing great memories of his friends at Miami. He talked about ideas, his love for his friends, and how he liked to challenge everything- this teacher included! Joe always

wanted to know why- and you'd better have a well-thought out answer! He looked at the examples of the student work we brought along that day with great intensity- asking questions about the work, recognizing some of the makers and expressing his admiration for them and how he would direct students to each other to capitalize on their skill sets and ideas. Joe was always directing students to ideas and each other with a sense of great respect and authentic admiration.

Joe visited my office frequently, pulling up a chair with his ND - Irish baseball cap slightly cocked to one side and leaning back in his chair as to say "I don't believe a word you said today in class" and then we would discuss for minutes or, at times hours, the "issue of the day"! How much I loved these moments! He would later join my class a second time as a Miami University Undergraduate Associate Teaching Assistant. Here he was in his element, as I sensed Joe had all of the attributes of an amazing teacher. Joe was so generous, giving hours to students in the studio helping them with their assignments and interpreting project statements or "Reynolds-Speak" as Joe used to say. The students adored him and many attributed their success in the class to Joe. My course never went as far or as smoothly as it did with Joe at my side.

Most importantly- Joe was a lover! He was kind, generous, thoughtful, and aware of others and their feelings. He had a unique sense of timing and always knew what to say to pick up a student when they were down. I sense that Joe was simply a mirror of the divine love that God pours on us through others-like Joe! Joe was a lover in the sense of St. Ignatius- he didn't count the cost!

I miss Joe so- as I know so many do- but his love, like his life, is inextinguishable. He is a shining star, the product of a loving home, with loving parents and family surrounding him. I am much better for knowing Joe and his family.

Joe will remain a part of my life forever.