10/19/2001

Dear Tom,

How do I sum up your life into a few brief moments? I can’t possibly do you justice with this eulogy, but I’ll try. How surreal it seems to even be writing these words. I wish I could think of something funny to say, but that was always your department.

The last time I saw you was through half awake eyes as you said, “See you tonight.” It was just a normal day. Who could have ever expected it to turn out as it did? We always knew something like this was possible, we even talked about it. We would never allow ourselves to utter the words “be careful,” because we felt it was bad luck. We dismissed the bad thoughts from our minds, because we couldn’t let them get in the way of living our lives. Maybe that’s why you lived everyday to the fullest and were so frustrated when you wasted time. You were so ambitious and you loved the journey. I’m glad I was able to share part of that journey with you.

Our first date was October 18, 1980. You picked me up in that old Ford Fairlane and we never looked back. The first time you met my father you were dressed as a cheerleader for Halloween. 6 '4'' wearing a Catholic school girl uniform, a wig and lipstick – just the type of guy my father always wanted for his daughter. You kept me laughing all those years. All we had to do was look at each other to know what the other was thinking. I was the straight face and you were the clown. There are too many inside jokes and romantic memories to mention now.

Your accomplishments are many, though you would not agree. You went to Africa when you were only 21 and came back a changed man. You saw the beauty in nature and in all living things. You opened up a whole world to me as together we explored the Rocky Mountains, the Adirondacks, the Grand Canyon, Hawaii, California, Bermuda, whale watching in Cape Cod and all those trips to our beloved Maine. I will cherish our special weekend we had alone this summer in Shelter Island. You showed me places I never would have seen without you and now I have a new perspective because of knowing you.

You meant so many things to so many people that I don’t even think you realized it. So many words describe you: firefighter, scientist, teacher, photographer, writer, hockey player – but most of all, loving husband, father, son, brother and friend. To me, you were my best friend, the only one who truly understood me. You change my life with your love and though you’re not here physically, I feel you’ve never left me. You are so much a part of me that we can never truly be separated. There was something special about you that you weren’t meant for this earth. God has other plans for you I guess. Perhaps you’re teaching everyone in Heaven how to create their own website or maybe you’re starting up a hockey team or a radio show.

Many did not know that you were also a spiritual man in your own way. You were always searching for answers. The books on your nightstand can attest to your varied quest for knowledge and truth – *The World’s Religions, What the Great Religions Believe, The Road Less Traveled, The Prophet*, books by Freud, Joseph Campbell, Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, Frost, Wordwsorth – not to mention all the science textbooks and field guides. There was nothing phony or pretentious about you. You were seeking inner peace and were looking forward to the future when you’d have more time to read and learn.

You lived your life with honesty and compassion. You dedicated your life to saving others and made the ultimate sacrifice for your fellow man. What could be more Christ-like than that? Trust in this – that you are alive in your children and they have the same kindness and sincerity that made me fall in love with you so many years ago. You gave me great joy and I’m honored to be the mother of your children.

I do not feel anger or hatred, but a great, great sorrow for mankind that you and so many other innocent people had to die in this way. Like the huge hole that was once the World Trade Center, so is the void we feel now that you’re not here. We will rebuild our lives somehow brick by brick, day by day, and each of our friends and family will fill your void in some way. You left this world, and we are now empty, but those of us who remain will fill each other up with love. Out of the ashes we have witnessed such great compassion and love. Love is stronger than hate. We will make this world a better place for our children’s sake. We will use the gifts we’ve been given to do something great in this world. I hope we will make you proud. One thing I’ve learned from this is that life is too short. We have to experience life now and not wait. If there is something you’re waiting to do, somewhere you want to go, something you want to see, don’t wait. Do it now. I know that’s the way you would want it.

Tom, I hope you are walking the trail, soaring with the eagles, conversing with Oppenheimer, Darwin and Thoreau. Don’t feel like you have to take care of us anymore. That time is over. You were such a good provider, always concerned for us. Look in on us now and then, but go explore and do all the things you never got to do here on earth. No matter where you are, you’ll always be right nearby. You’re in every song, every funny story, every memory. We’ll keep you alive in our hearts. I think of it like this: you’ve just gone ahead down the trail a bit to set up camp. It’s good to know that you’ll be there with outstretched hands to lift me up when I reach the summit, as you always did for me here on earth.

So I won’t say good-bye. I won’t say “be careful” – just see you later my best friend, my one true love. I miss you.

Forever,

Liz