

In loving memory of my son, Jay (Joseph George Caldwell IV), who died 18 January 2010

Joseph George Caldwell
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The Death of a Son

My son, Jay, died in the early morning of Monday, January 18, 2010. Recently, he had been living with his brother, Steve, at Steve's home in

Tucson, Arizona. Steve called me at about 9:15 a.m. to give me the sad news. I caught a plane that afternoon and arrived at Steve's home about 9:30 in the evening. I stayed with Steve for the rest of the week, and returned home to Spartanburg, South Carolina, on Saturday. We were able to contact Jay's other brother, Chris, on Wednesday, and spend time with him also.

Steve and I planned this memorial ceremony to occur on a Saturday after we had received Jay's ashes. Since I could not be here in person, we agreed that I would write a eulogy, and he or others could read it for me. Thank you for doing this for me.

The death of a loved one is a severe blow – 200,000 people can die in an earthquake far away, and the event is just a headline, but when a family member dies, it hits you like a sledgehammer. It is very hard to lose a son and a brother, and it is good to be with family at times like these. Jay was born August 12, 1960, Chris on September 8, 1964, and Steve on October 12, 1967. Over the span of Jay's 49 years, we spent considerable time together in the early years and periodic contact in the later years. I moved from Arizona in 1991, spending much of the next 18 years living far from Tucson, mostly in Africa or the East Coast of the United States, and I had infrequent contact with Jay and his brothers over that period. Since they all continued to live in Tucson, they remained in fairly close contact with each other, although they lived their separate lives.

When a family member dies, one invariably reflects on the meaning of existence, and contemplates the purpose, meaning, or significance of his life and death. So it is with Jay. For much of his life, Jay suffered from depression, and this caused and contributed to other problems and difficulties. Jay possessed exceptional attributes, including a fine body, good looks, strength, intelligence, a keen mind and athletic

ability. He had a sweet disposition and pleasant personality, was enthusiastic, and had good friends. He sought the approval of his parents. He was a good help to his parents and brothers, and was loyal to them. He had a captivating smile and twinkling eyes.

In trying to understand the meaning and significance of Jay's life and death, I am writing these words as much in remembrance of Jay and in celebration of his life, as for me. As his father, I share much responsibility for how his life turned out, and I have much to answer for. In a eulogy, it is expected to emphasize the good in a person's life, and I will do that. At the same time, the significance of Jay's life and the lessons to be learned from it demand reflection on the hard times that he endured, and I will discuss his problems as well as his good attributes.

The Good Times

As a family, we had great times. We enjoyed family life, school sports, and many fabulous vacations. Family life included a rich variety of experiences, including eating in pizza parlors, Sunday picnics in the park, bike hikes, playing with friends or the dog in the yard, swim team, soccer games, badminton, tether ball, board games, television and movies. We had great times visiting the grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins in South Carolina, enjoying our beach condo at Ocean City, Maryland, winter ski trips, and fun vacations in Canada, Florida, the Virgin Islands, and the Philippines. I was pleased to serve as Scoutmaster while Jay was in Boy Scouts, and to spend time with him at Scout Camp. These are the good times that Jay's brothers and I will never forget.

Jay had a variety of interests, including sports and music. In junior high school, he played the trombone, and as a young man he played the electric bass. As a boy he enjoyed scouting and camping. He was an exceptional runner in high school, and came in second in the Virginia high school cross-country state championship. He was talented in Tae Kwan Do, spoke good Spanish, and was an excellent snow-skier. As a young boy, teenager, and young man he had many good friends, and they had good times together. As a teenager and young man, he did construction work and auto-mechanic work.

Jay was good looking and fun to be with, and he had a number of girlfriends and a more serious relationship with Rita. Although I am aware that their relationship fell apart near the end, I appreciate the many good years that he and Rita had together.

Jay had much love and loyalty to give, and his family and friends know well.

Jay had a lifelong interest in cars, and was a good mechanic. He was the oldest grandchild on both sides, and got a lot of special attention. His grandfather Leon gave him an AMC Javelin when he was sixteen. He painted this car, replaced a transmission, and learned basic automotive repair skills with it. Later on, he acquired a 1966 Ford Mustang GTO, which he kept until a few months before he died. In retrospect, his selling this long-time “companion” was a telling indicator that his hope for the future was in decline. I should have realized how desperate his situation was, and responded.

While Jay had his share of trouble as a teenager and young man, he was a willing helper around the house, and did his best to please his parents. As the oldest son, he was the first to mow the lawn, wash the car, do the dishes, and help with home maintenance. He took care of

his younger brothers. He played the trombone in school not because of a burning desire to do so, but to please me, because I had suggested it. Jay was very strong and capable. He was an invaluable help to me with construction projects on our house and in the several household and business moves we made, in Virginia, Tucson, and Sierra Vista.

Jay loved pets and children, and they returned his love. He owned a number of dogs and cats. When he was about 14 years old, he had a dog, Beau, a charcoal-colored miniature poodle. Beau gave him much love, and was a constant companion. Beau's life was short. One day, as Jay was running, with Beau in the lead, some cruel teenagers ran the dog down with their car. I will never forget the day, and I know that Jay did not, too.

In recent years, Jay was an uncle to Jonathan ("JJ") and Michael. The bond between Jay and JJ was particularly strong, and I know that JJ benefitted from Jay's love and will long remember the good times that they spent together.

I have spoken of just a few of the many good times that we had with Jay, as a family. Although Jay was given many talents and much happiness, he was also burdened with many problems and much tragedy. I will now speak of some of them.

The Bad Times

Jay's mom, Timi, died of breast cancer on September 10, 1989, at age 50. She was a strong force in my life and in the lives of our three sons, and her death was a tragic loss to all of us. Jay loved his mother dearly, and he wept when she died. Although Jay had dropped out of college, she and I urged him to resume his studies, and he did so for us, earning

a Bachelor of Science degree in Mining Engineering at the University of Arizona on May 14, 1994. I am so very proud of his doing this. He did it for his mother and me. It was an ambitious challenge and a major accomplishment, and shows well how much he wanted to please us. I can still recall seeing him working on a mining engineering project on the mall of the University of Arizona, operating a rock drill.

Unfortunately, Jay was not able to capitalize on his academic accomplishment. As a young man he had made some serious mistakes, which were not easily overcome. These mistakes haunted him. They led to feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, increased depression, and greater difficulties. He was not successful in finding work in his chosen profession of mining engineering. I wish that I had worked harder with him in this area. To a very large extent, Jay was on his own, and he needed – and deserved – help.

In a sense, Jay may have been somewhat of an anachronism. He derived much satisfaction from working on personal and family projects, such as repairing his own car or that of a friend, or working on a home project. Such things were very relevant to him and motivated him, whereas impersonal jobs in the competitive labor market brought him little satisfaction. Once, when I had business in the Philippines, Jay took over and completed the large home project of tiling the patio of our Catalina Foothills home. If I had had a family business, Jay would have been a good worker and a loyal and valuable asset.

Jay's mother and I did not know how to address his depression, and the problems that it led to. When he first got into trouble as a teenager, the catch-word for social workers and counselors was "tough love." Following the conventional wisdom, we told Jay that if he wanted to live in our house, he had to obey the rules. He then ran away from home in his Javelin. Very upset, his mother and I went to the Fairfax

County Social Service Department for advice on what to do. Fairfax County was into “tough love” big time. The lady counselor advised us to request the police to issue a warrant for his arrest. This was not at all helpful. After a few days, out of food and money, Jay returned. Dispirited and embarrassed, he camped out in our back yard for several days, until I saw him. Our tough-love approach was totally ineffective. “Tough love” is ineffective. The term is an oxymoron. There is only one kind of love, and that is unconditional love. It is the kind of brotherly love that Steve extended to him in his last few months, when he was sick and depressed and had nowhere else to go.

In his later years, as his problems worsened, I was not there for him. I know that he must have felt alone, rejected and abandoned by me, and that this must have caused him much pain. I did not offer him either the physical or emotional support or encouragement that he needed. You deserved better, Jay, from life, and you deserved better from me. Jay fought depression throughout his life, and appeared to conquer it many times. But it always returned, and gradually wore him down.

Recently, while living at Steve’s home, he seemed to be making good progress in regaining his health, when, a couple of weeks ago, he was struck by a serious ear infection. He was left with permanent hearing loss and intense pain. I spoke with him on two occasions while he was suffering from this. The first time, I advised him to return to the doctor. He did. The next time I spoke with him, about a week or so before he died, he was beside himself with the ear pain. He probably thought himself a burden on his family, and his anxiety was no doubt heightened by his inability to find work. At that point, he was suffering from depression, anxiety, insomnia, and ear pain. This was more than he could bear, and, to my great sorrow and embarrassment, I had no useful advice to give him. It seems that no matter how hard he fought to get back on the track, there was always a more difficult challenge,

another cross to bear, to break his spirit. In desperation, he took increasing amounts of pills for the anxiety, insomnia, and ear pain. It was these problems and pills that dealt him a final blow, and on January 18 he collapsed and died.

The Bible (Psalm 51:17) says, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite hearth, O God, you will not despise.” Jay’s life exemplified this verse. He had long ago put his rebellious behavior behind him, but he was never to benefit from his repentance and resolve to do better.

Thank You, Jay’s Brothers and Friends

But for the ear problem, he might have made it, with continued support from Steve and his friends. Steve and his friends were there for him, where I had not been for many years. I offered him sympathy and compassion over the phone, but no real support. I pretty much told him that his recovery was up to him. This was not responsive, and his recovery was not to be. I could have done more, and I should have done more.

I have spoken of Steve’s support for Jay, but I want to emphasize that his brother, Chris, was also there for him many times in times past. I want to thank his friends. I don’t know all of them, and I will name only his recent friends of whom I am aware – Albert, Scott, and Roger. Please forgive me for not naming others of whom I am not aware.

I want to thank Steve, Chris and all his friends for their friendship and support for Jay, both in good times and in bad. Words cannot express my gratitude to Chris and Steve for their lifelong loyalty and support for

Jay – especially for Steve, who was primarily responsible for making Jay’s last days as comfortable and loving as possible.

Searching for Meaning

Jay’s later years were especially tormented. The best chance that his mother and I had to make a significant impact in his life was when he was young, and we were not up to that challenge. Another missed opportunity, perhaps the best one, was when he had earned his Bachelor of Science Degree in Mining Engineering in 1994. At the time, I was working and living in Africa. I should have returned home to work with him in getting his first job, and I did not. I regret this very much.

Jay’s life was one of great hardship and sorrow, but he also brought Mom, me, his brothers and his friends much happiness. For this happiness and these good times we are grateful, and we celebrate his life.

In 2006, I was working in East Timor and was evacuated to Darwin, Australia, during an insurrection. At that time, a national psychics’ convention was being held in Darwin. With a lot of time on my hands, I checked out the convention and had sessions with a number of psychics. These ladies were very good. One, for example, told me as I was sitting down that I was married, my wife had blue eyes, and the first initial of her name was “J” (her name is Jackie, and her eyes are blue). Another one told me that she saw that I had three sons. She was very sad to tell me that one of them would die, and that another of them would be affected much by his death. There is much about the universe that we do not understand, particularly about the nature of life and spiritual existence. In our physical lives, it seems that most of us will never find answers to life’s most important questions, such as

why Jay's life was at times so tormented, why he suffered much, and why he died young. How do we make sense out of life and death, and why do bad things happen to good people? I do not have answers for these questions.

Over the past few weeks, I have been reading the book, *High Strangeness*, by Laura Knight-Jadczyk (Red Pill Press, 2008). In her channeling, she is told that, with respect to the meaning of life, "All there is, is lessons." Through his life, Jay has taught me many lessons, and they have helped me to be a better person.

In his life, Jay made a number of mistakes and bad choices. The source of these choices, however, was not an evil or malicious or mean or jealous or greedy or angry personality. I don't know what caused them. They did not come from the gentleness, tenderness, kindness, loyalty, affection, admiration, respect and love that he displayed daily on a personal level to me, to his mother, to his brothers, or to his friends. In addition to his gentle personality, Jay had a wild side that sought expression in unconventional ways. I am sure that Jay's problems were made worse by our not being there for him as much as we could have been. Life is complex, and I do not have the answers.

When someone dear passes, you remember every unkind thing you every said or did to them, and the guilt is crushing. This happens even though you may have done much kindness. In this life, it is not possible to be perfect – we are not Jesus Christ. It is good to remember the maxim, "Don't sweat the small stuff – and it's all small stuff." All we can do at this point is to learn from our mistakes, and to do better in the future. All there is, is lessons.

What lessons have I learned from Jay's life and death? I have learned that when you are pursuing a worthwhile goal, you should never give

up, as I did with Jay. Jay was a good person, with problems. When a person has problems, it is important to understand the cause and to treat the cause, not just the symptoms. With more and better help, Jay's life could have been radically different, much more fulfilling for him and for those around him. I have learned that true love is not tough love, but unconditional love. I have learned that there are things that we cannot control. I have learned that we will remember and regret unkind remarks, and to hold my tongue. Thank you, Jay, for the sacrifice of your life to teach me these things. Thank you for loving me unconditionally, when I failed you. You led a hard life, and ran a hard course, and your love has affected me greatly.

On the Issue of Forgiveness

I love you, Jay, and I wish that I had had the strength, knowledge and will to help you solve your problems. It seemed that success was always within your grasp, but destined never to be.

As time passed, it seemed that your problems became more intractable, and for a long while I was half a world away. Even after returning to the United States, I was not there for you as I should have been. Jay called me shortly before going to live with Steve, and I was not responsive. I feel much guilt that I could have done more, and did not. For this, for my shortcomings in helping you, I ask your forgiveness.

Jay told me that he was sorry for the trouble that he had caused his mother and me by his bad choices. I told him that his mother and I were heartbroken at his sorrows, and that we simply did not know how to deal with his problems. Both sides in this relationship recognized the

mistakes that they had made, and both sides sought forgiveness from the other.

When I was sorting out Jay's belongings after he died, I came across his wallet. In it were a number of pictures of JJ and Michael, and of Kai and Macy, Chris's children. In addition was a small card about "forgiveness." On one side was a picture of Christ holding a collapsing man, and on the other was the sentence, "Forgiveness. Do you know the joy of being forgiven? Through forgiveness the arms of Jesus lift you. His blood cleanses you, and His love changes you. It is His free gift to you. Turn your heart toward Jesus. Pray to receive Him and His forgiveness by faith today ... He will come into your heart and make all things new. 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come!' II Corinthians 5:17 NIV (<http://www.dayspring.com>, Masterpiece Collection, A Division of DaySpring Cards, Sloan Springs, Arkansas)."

Jay, please forgive me for my inability to have served you better. I love you dearly, but I know that I did not help you as I could have. I could have done better, and I should have done better. I have deep regret for these shortcomings. I believed that your problems were more than I could solve, and I had given up trying.

I do not know why you carried that card with you. If it was with respect to me, I have nothing to forgive. In my view of the world, an all-powerful God/Creator/Universal Spirit is responsible for everything. Even if you have "free will," you were created to make the choices that you made, good, bad or inconsequential. I do not hold you personally responsible in any way for the tragedies in your life, and I was not wronged by them. I am just so pleased to have known you, and to have enjoyed the pleasure of your company. The wonder of existence is not that there is so much that is bad in life, but that there is so much that is

good. I feel the love that you gave me, and I thank you and God for that.

It has been said that you may forget what a person does, and you may forget what a person says, but you will never forget how a person makes you feel. Jay makes me feel loved, and I will never forget that.

Saying Goodbye

Music has always been an important part of my life. Three songs that come to mind as I write these remembrances and reflections are the following. A few years ago, I learned to play the guitar and sing. Jay never got to hear me do this. If I were here today, I would play the guitar and sing these songs for him.

Last Thing on My Mind, sung by Anne Murray, written by Tom Paxton

It's a lesson too late for the learning
Made of sand, made of sand
In the wink of an eye my soul is turning
In your hand, in your hand.

(CHORUS) Are you going away with no word of farewell
Will there be not a trace left behind
I could have loved you better, didn't mean to be unkind
You know that was the last thing on my mind.

You've have reasons a-plenty for going
This I know, this I know
The weeds have been steadily growing

Please don't go, please don't go.

CHORUS

As I walked along the street, alone this morning
Without you, without you
Every hope in my heart died of mourning
Without you, without you

CHORUS

You know that was the last thing on my mind....

[There's Nothing I Can Do about It Now, sung by Willie Nelson,
written by Beth Nielsen Chapman](#)

I've got a long list of real good reasons
For all the things I've done
I've got a picture in the back of my mind
Of what I've lost and what I've won
I've survived every situation
Knowing when to freeze and when to run
And regret is just a memory written on my brow
And there's nothing I can do about it now.

I've got a wild and a restless spirit
I held my price through every deal
I've seen the fire of a woman scorned
Turn her heart of gold to steal
I've got the song of the voice inside me
Set to the rhythm of the wheel
And I've been dreaming like a child

Since the cradle broke the bough
And there's nothing I can do about it now.

Running through the changes
Going through the stages
Coming round the corners in my life
Leaving doubt to fate
Staying out too late
Waiting for the moon to say goodnight
And I could cry for the time I've wasted
But that's a waste of time and tears,
And I know just what I'd change
If went back in time somehow
But there's nothing I can do about it now

(REPEAT PREVIOUS VERSE)

I'm forgiving everything that forgiveness will allow
And there's nothing I can do about it now

Build My Mansion (Next Door to Jesus), written and sung by Dottie
Rambo

I have no castles, no earthly kingdom,
But my cabin will do 'til I get home.
My mansion's yonder on the hills of Glory.
Oh, I hope my mansion sits near God's throne.

(CHORUS) Build my mansion next door to Jesus,
And tell the angels I'm coming home.
It doesn't matter who lives around me
Just so my mansion sits near the throne.

My mother's mansion may be close by me,
Across the golden avenue.
She was the first one to teach me of Heaven
And the very first one, Lord, to tell me about You.

CHORUS

We love you, Jay, and we shall miss you. Thank you for the pleasure of your company. Thank you for being my son, and for the love, affection and gentleness that you showed your mother and me. Your troubles are over. You are at peace with your mother now. May God rest your soul. The unconditional love that you gave to your family and friends will never be forgotten. I love you, Jay, and will cherish the love that you gave me, and the memory of you, for all the days of my life.

Dad

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