



In Loving Memory of Justin Carr, by Susan and Darrell Carr

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JAY AND MARY AND DARRELL AND SUSAN (A LABOR OF LOVE)

SEPTEMBER 1, 2014 LEAVE A COMMENT

JAY AND MARY AND DARRELL AND SUSAN

My entry tonight - "Jay and Mary and Darrell and Susan" is quite different from the old movie "Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice". However, an old review of the movie caught my attention. Today, my message of hope is about "life-swapping" and is far from the plot of this movie of wife -swapping -but there are a few similarities like what Roger Ebert wrote about "Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice":

"Roger Ebert
December 22, 1969
"Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice" isn't really about wife swapping at all, but about the epidemic of moral earnestness that's sweeping our society right now. For some curious reason, we suddenly seem compelled to tell the truth in our personal relationships."

Last month my USC sister friend Merike (aka my southern belle from Arkansas) sent me a copy of the poignant obituary that was written about a young man Nick Fagnano (Venice Beach lightning strike victim) by his beloved Mother Mary. Merike wrote " Sue, I'm quite sure you have heard of this News story, and after you read it you will see that Justin and Nick's lives and characters were uncannily similar. He was an only child too. In bold she wrote: "If you CHANGED the name to Justin, and the sport and activities to swimming, painting, and singing...it would be about yawl's BABY!!"

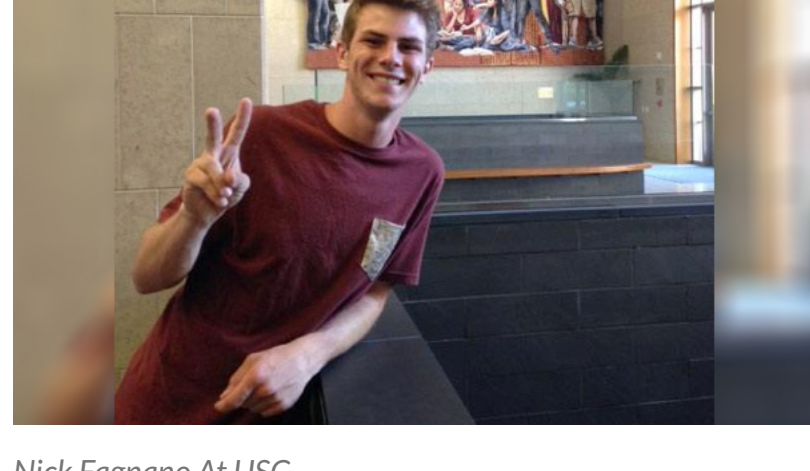
Nick as describe by his mother Mary...
"Taken to heaven by a flash in a cloud, this beautiful young man, who radiated joy, kindness, humor and love touched the lives of everyone he encountered. He had a maturity and wisdom that was beyond his years, yet an innocence of spirit that was evident from kindergarten all the way into his adult life."

As you know Justin died suddenly (from and undiagnosed heart condition) during swim practice mere minutes after concluding a happy call with me. His 1st grade classmates described him as being kind, talented, great singer, actor and artist. At 16 years old, these latter same traits were used by his high school peers. Justin was, an old soul, selfless Earth angel, Renaissance man, scholar, singer, actor, artist, Junior Olympic BUTTERFLY swimmer, an underdog supporter- who repetitively since age 4 prayed, "God help us achieve world peace"

After I re-posted Nick's Obituary on Facebook, a lot of my friends said I should reach out to Nick's parents. I said that I would after the fanfare dwindled down. But, the roar of the crowd said: " You need to do it now!!" So, a few weeks ago, I did. I wrote to Mary and Jay and I can't even remember all that I said, nor did I think that the letter would even reach them. Well it did. Last Wednesday when I was with my 8-year-old niece Mia, I looked at my phone and there was an email from Mary. She was writing me on the one-month anniversary of losing her only child- and I was speechless. I gasped and started to cry. Mia looked at me in silence and then down at the ground because she did not know what to do. After the lady next to me asked me if I was okay, I nodded and gave her a cursory breakdown about the tale of losing two beautiful sons... without warning. She then began to cry herself (as she grabbed hold of her young son sitting next to her). She then said:" I can't even imagine." I rushed Mia to the car and I told her: " I want you to always look out for your friends, and help others when you sense that they may need your help. You will never know how you can impact someone's life even with small acts of kindness." She said:"okay Tauntie"...

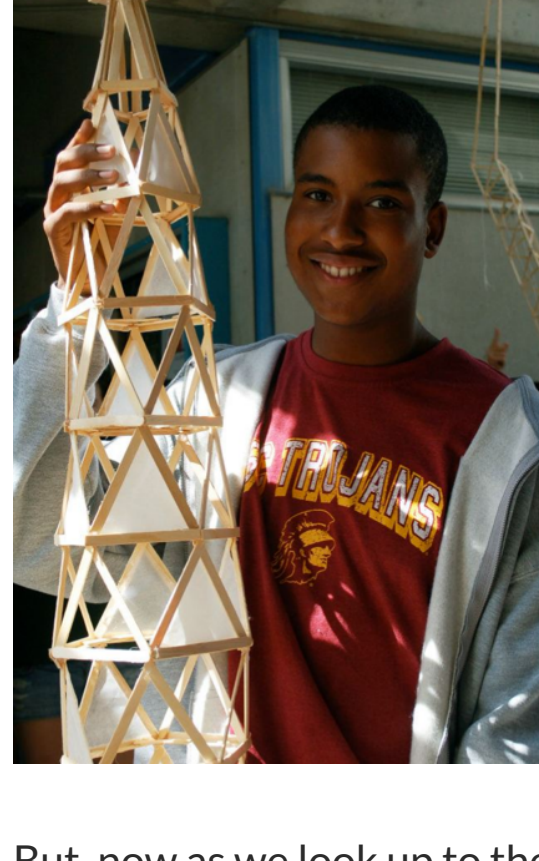
Late last night, we made plans to meet the Fagnano's early this morning for breakfast. You know how it is trying to find a decent place to eat so I asked my number one Foodie Ed Hu where we can go that was quiet, and convenient with decent food and hassle free. He suggested Little Dom's in Los Feliz. I called yesterday and was told that they could not take a reservation for parties under six. I tried to see if they would make an exception, but the hostess said:" No, Exceptions! Well, here is where Merike steps in AGAIN. As I hung up the phone, there was another ring and it was Merike. She asked: "What are you doing?" I told her I was trying to make a reservation but they would not take one for a party of 4. She slyly asked the name of the place and got off the phone. Five minutes later she sent a text saying: " You have a reservation under Darrell's name at 9 a.m. at Little Dom's. I told the Manager that you are VERRYYYYY popular on Facebook and we would really appreciate them making an exception"!! My beautiful southern belle was at it again! She said: " DON'T COME FOR ME UNTIL I SEND FOR YOU... LOL!!!"

For the first five minutes after Jay and Mary entered the restaurant, all we did was embrace, look at each other in silence and shed a few tears. The rest of the time we proudly shared stories of our precious boys and shook our heads in dismay to the thought of their lives ending so soon, when they were both at the top of their game. Nick was accepted into USC for Real Estate and Urban Development.



Nick Fagnano At USC

Had Justin been accepted into USC for Architecture, their paths would have surely crossed.



But, now as we look up to the sky we can only see hope and believe that the images in the clouds are in fact Nick playing baseball, surfing and dancing with Justin (Uju) in tow singing, dancing and swimming with the biggest beautiful smiles ever. Jay said that they got a special call from Tommy Lasorda the night before Nick's celebration of his life. Tommy asked them "Would you trade the 20 years you had with Nick, for no years at all? Maybe his work was already done... We all agreed that we would not trade what we had, but only wished for more..."

Well this Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is a holiday for the labor movement and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers. It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well being of our country. Today, Jay, Mary, Darrell and I spoke about the work that we now have to do so that our boys continue to live through us and shine and light up the lives of the people they touched and those who never met them. Jay and Darrell agreed that since their lives have changed forever, they are now working and dealing each day with the Labor of Love that they have for their boys. The ones they proudly raised to be strong viable, kind, and loving young men. Labor of Love is described as " productive work performed voluntarily without material reward or compensation". Jay wants to help coach a baseball team, and Darrell opted to teach young boys how to use their hands constructing and building things from scratch- one rock at a time. Mary and I seem to get through the day by writing. It is imperative that we all stay connected to our boys dreams and visions and their friends. It helps us get through each day as we continue to reveal our endless love we have for our young men and for the new found friendship that we have as we grieve with gratitude knowing that we are not alone. Like Ebert said in 1969 about that movie "Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice": "For some curious reason, we suddenly seem compelled to tell the truth in our personal relationships." We have learned to tell the truth how we feel each day. It helps us and it helps those all around us.

And one more thing, Darrell and I have to agree with Mother Mary's (Fagnano's) words to us: "Joy is the infallible presence of God" and that if, even in our deepest sadness we see reasons to smile each day, to see a glimpse of the joy that was always there with Nick, that we will be able to somehow get up each day and find a way to honor him as you have Justin. When you transition from living a life of infinite possibilities to living a life of infinite questions, it changes the way you look at everything." As for Miss Merike, she was too busy trying to make sure we got a reservation even though she was carrying a extra heavy heart today in her own right. Twenty-three years ago today she delivered her a stillborn daughter. I can't believe that she put us ahead of her sadness and day of reflection, trying to make sure our day went well. No words... So, it was a blessing for all of us today Jay and Mary and Darrell and Susan and Merike too that we have each other. The right people will always find their way into your life if you are open to it and receive.

** One more thing that connects us together with the Fagnano's. Nick was a very close friend with Molly Chapman's older brother Jake when they were in preschool. Molly was one of Justin's very good friends at school. The world is too small. I can't make this stuff up!!!



Mary & Darrell & Susan & Jay



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SEPTEMBER 2014

Calendar for September 2014 showing dates 1 through 30.

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