

Memorial to Rick Anderkin, editor of the Mount Vernon (Ky.) Signal

By his son, Aaron Anderkin, May 2010

I stand before you today realizing that these next few minutes are without a doubt the most important I will spend in my life. From a personal perspective, I face the challenge of honoring the man that shaped everything I am and will continue to be. I face the challenge of honoring the man who was not only a wonderful father to my sister and I, but also our best friend.

But, my father should be proud to know that what makes this task even more daunting is that his influence traveled far beyond the confines of his family and into the lives of so many people who would also consider him their best friend.

And before I get any further, I want to get one thing out of the way. All of us that knew Dad, who REALLY knew Dad, have no concerns or worries about where he spends today – and THAT is because we knew his heart. I cannot think of any one person who carried around as much compassion as my father. His thoughtful nature was inherent to who he was, and I have no reservations that he was just as thoughtful in his relationship with the Lord.

I'm not going to deny that Dad faced a terrible disease, a disease that brought demons for him to confront every second of his day. What I will deny is that the disease won out because it DID NOT! And I say this because it didn't dictate the man that he was. What I have the great honor of doing today is reflecting on just what kind of man he was.

We can all give a testimony that would ultimately help us put into words the man that he was. But, allow me to sum it up from a son's perspective. He was a Dad, a brother, a husband, a son, and a friend—but he was SO much more than that. Working as the Editor of the Signal, Dad had the opportunity to interact with a lot of people from a number of circles and different backgrounds. He was a man who had this unexplainable way of leaving footprints on the hearts of most everyone he encountered. His business was all about people, and his life was all about people. And I believe those footprints came from his ability to connect with those people, to let them know he really cared about them. And as most of you know, as your relationship with Dad grew, the footprints just got deeper and deeper because he demonstrated loyalty to you, and because of that, today we all carry heavy hearts.

And I wanted to talk about these footprints, these heavy hearts, because they are the reason we grieve. And I'm going to approach this for a second taking the opportunity to grieve because that's the only way we can ever begin to gain closure in losing this fine man.

I grieve and I hurt for my Grandmother, for Vonda, for Megan and for all of his siblings. I hurt for all of his friends, those he had from childhood to the more recent ones. I hurt for the inner-circle. As Judge Burdette said, I hurt for a community that he personally changed with barrels of ink, a camera, and a can-do attitude. But more than anything, I selfishly hurt for me.

I hurt for me because I no longer will get to call him 4 times a day to talk about the same local politics or UK basketball. I hurt because I'll never get to give him a hard time about beating him in golf, even though we both shot scores we should be ashamed of. I hurt because I'm going to miss seeing the way he looked at my little sister glowing with pride because he knew he had really raised a "Daddy's Little Girl". I hurt because I'm never going to get yelled at for my voicemail being full when he had a urgency message to leave. "Son, you are supposed to be a professional now, and you can't even delete your voicemails," he would say.

I hurt for his friends that will miss seeing his infamous smirk that always followed a sarcastic remark that sometimes made you want to hit him, and sometimes made you want to hug him. Regardless of your reaction, at the end of the day we all loved him because he was "Rick", and he cared about people.

But, in addition to grieving, I think Dad would want us to highlight what made us smile about him, and not only what makes us cry today.

It makes me smile to hear Paige say that growing up, she always thought she was “the Bomb” because Rick Anderkin was her big brother. The fact of the matter is we all thought we were “the Bomb” when we were around him because he found a way to make us think so.

It makes me smile to know that he was a man that absolutely could not stand the thought of someone being mad at him. Dad was always very straightforward and candid in his opinions and ran the risk of offending his friends from time to time. When he did offend you and got mad at him, he would do everything in his power to make sure you weren't mad anymore. If there's one thing he couldn't stand, it was the thought of you being permanently mad at him.

I will smile every time I see my aunts and my grandmother. He would tell you that he basically raised his five younger sisters, much to Granny's dismay. While nobody can take credit for raising them except my grandparents, he left a lasting mark on each of them and the evidence of those marks will always allow me to smile.

I smile when I think of him put his arm around Travis and say, “There's my little brother.” Gosh Travis, he loved you and the relationship you had with him is similar to mine, and that's why I consider you my brother.

I will smile every time I think of Megan spiking a volleyball right in a girls' for the 10th time that night. I smile because I picture the Rick Anderkin smirk of pride right after it happened that she so often brought to his face.

I will smile when I think about the fact that Dad just had to take Vonda to Disney World last year because he thought absolutely nobody should go through life without going to Disney World. While he used the excuse of taking Vonda, he was such a kid at heart that I know it was actually his wanting to spend time at Magic Kingdom that took us there.

I smile when I think of how much he enjoyed his time with the “inner circle”, when I think of he and Jim Clontz almost dropping me in the lake at four years old because I'd flown out of a golf cart and they were driving way too fast around a curve. I smile when I think of he and Steve Owens bantering back and forth for hours and hours about nothing in particular, it was just there way of showing affection. Although I must admit, that often gave me a headache instead of a smile.

I will smile when I hear his friends tell stories about how in their time of need, he was the first one there for them. He was always the man to hold the puke pan for you, take you to a doctor's appointment, be the first one to bring you a couple bags of groceries when you'd just lost a dear loved one. Those stories will always make smile.

I will smile when I think about the pride he held when he found out I would get the prime opportunity to come back and help change Rockcastle County for the better, just like he worked to do for years and years.

Lastly and most importantly, I will smile when I think where he will occupy the rest of his time for eternity. As Jamie said, there's no doubt that right now he and Granddad are already working on the first edition of the Heavenly Gazette.