

A Great Friend Remembered:

Written by Kathleen McCarthy
Tuesday, 26 June 2001 18:00

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On June 16, 2001, the world dimmed when my friend, Chris Wightman (50 years young) passed away. Chris was not your average bear. He was the epitome of kindness, gentle compassion, and true friendship. As one acquaintance put it, "Chris was a blue chip guy. " At his memorial service, many family members and friends wrote down their thoughts about Chris, which the minister read for everyone's pleasure. It was a beautiful tribute to Chris. What was so striking was the affirmation of the person he was evidenced by the repetitive words describing him, such as "kind," "thoughtful," "caring," "compassionate," "listener," "gentle," and "considerate." The list also included such descriptors as "fun," "loving dad," "gentleman," and "meticulous." The memories that characterized people's experiences with Chris all had the common theme of "wonderful human being." As I've said before, there will be no getting over this loss, only learning to live with it.

My personal experience with Chris was as confidant and friend. He had so much substance and feeling that he easily related to problems, dilemmas, and conflicts that plagued his friends, including me. He would listen carefully, raptly attentive to the issue at hand, then tilt his head and smile his famous smile of understanding, which always conveyed empathy and confidence that it would all somehow work out.

One acquaintance commented, "Chris brought out the best in people." No truer words have ever been spoken. He was so gentle and pure in his spirit. I couldn't spend a lot of time being negative around him because I felt I might taint him somehow. Another friend said, "When Chris walked into the room, it was like sunshine coming in." He smiled and laughed all the time. His smile lit up the entire place because he was so handsome and his eyes literally twinkled, sparkling with humor and delight.

Chris was a warm and soothing presence. He rarely said an unkind word about anyone, regardless of the circumstances. He put up with a lot of our failings without criticism or judgment. I always felt completely accepted, even appreciated by Chris. He was gracious, good-natured, and full of life. Chris was a rugged outdoorsman, who loved nature and the land, devoting his life to its health and our safety as an environmentalist for the Scott County Health Department. He traveled a lot, almost always to places of extraordinarily natural beauty.

There aren't enough opportunities in life to tell those we cherish how much we love them, and

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how much they mean to us. Chris was one of those special individuals whose being enhanced all the lives that he touched. It is important to acknowledge such people if we are lucky enough to know them. For all of us who had the privilege of calling Chris our friend, the bar is set a little higher. We experienced the best in this gentle man, and should honor him by striving to emulate his sincerity, his noble life, and his willingness and determination to be the best he could be...until we meet again.