

July 21, 2008

Two Years --

How Can That Be?

Seems like an eternity and it seems like it was yesterday. I try not to focus on the man with the disease but the healthy man we all knew. I hope that everyone takes some time today to remember Mike "MJ" and what he meant to each of us. For those of you who didn't have the opportunity to know Mike, I wish that you had. Ask anyone to share a story or two and you will get a sense of the man.



Mike was a mentor to many young people entering the world of environmental consulting. He often said he would like to be a college professor after he retired. I know he would have been great at it. Can't you just imagine him throwing in his Southern sayings in the middle of a lecture? Some would get it and others would scratch their heads.

He was my teacher also. He taught me so many things ... how to hook up the poop shoot on the RV (yuk), how to drive the RV, connect and disconnect the Jeep. He taught me to be resilient in difficult times.

If there is ever a time when you wonder which path to take, think of Mike. He lived by the Golden Rule – treat others with kindness and respect. He was honest ... a man with integrity. Even in difficult times he would never

do anything that would cross that line of right and wrong. Mike was a man you could trust to do the right thing. A man of his word! If he said it, he'd do it. If there were ever was a misunderstanding, he would be the first to fix it.

I will never forget during the last days when friends were coming to say their goodbyes, a close friend crying as he declared to Mike "you made me a better man." That was Mike -- he made you a better person.

Mike was a builder of many things ... Justice & Associates, Butler-Justice, Blue Smoke Control, a shelf in the laundry room, the addition to our house in Saint Ignace, etc. Mike seemed to have the uncanny ability to be able to visualize what would be the next big thing in the future. He had so many ideas

and not enough time to build them all. He loved to design. Our Long Beach office, our condo in Seal Beach and the house in Saint Ignace were all his designs. And he would spend hours and hours measuring, re-measuring and working on the drawings in AutoCAD...drawing, re-drawing, drawing and re-drawing until he got it just right. Even as I was driving the motor



Mike ... measure twice cut once!



Mike - practice building our staircase for the house...leaving nothing to chance.

home he would be at his computer drawing some more. I remember he would walk into the Long Beach building during construction and immediately recognize that they had built a wall 1/4" from what the plans prescribed. When they used 3/8" drywall instead of 1/4" drywall, he ran around measuring to see if the desks would still fit perfectly. How did he do it?

Even with his ALS Adventures, he would write, re-write, edit and re-write until he got it just right. That was Mike!

Most of us can remember our Christmas float for the Seal Beach parade in 2004. You know the Santa's sleigh. He had that rigged just right. He was so proud to pull that float down Main Street with our decorated Jeep and all the employees participating.



The making of the Christmas Parade Float - 2004.

The best part of all was being Mike's wife. We'd always laugh about the abbreviation Mrs. -- that it was really the possessive form of Mr. (Mr.'s). Meaning that the wife was the possession of the husband. In fact, Mike did possess me...my heart, my love, my friendship, my co-conspirator status, all of me. We have a statue in our living room which I gave to Mike one year for his birthday. It depicts an Indian couple and each has their hand on the other's heart. The title of the sculpture is "Each to the Other." That was us... each to the other.

My addiction to donuts and coffee – his fault! I never ate donuts 'til I met

him. He even knew where the best donuts were made ... a real connoisseur. One night at 2 am he took me to a donut shop because he knew that they were just coming off the line and were still hot. And I still continue on with the tradition of daily donuts! How couldn't I? I'm hooked!



Hooked on donuts anywhere in the country!

He loved me and I loved him. We had the "specialest" of a love affair. He was my protector. He always said if someone tried to hurt me they might as well give their heart to God because he would take them out. See Adventure 13 (June 5, 2005) of the ALS Adventures for an example of that. Of course we laughed ourselves silly afterwards.

We always thought that we'd be that old couple stumbling down Main Street holding hands not only because we loved each other but to keep the other from falling face first on the ground.

Mike loved adventures whether on the high seas or on the road in America. Every new day was a new possibility. I am so thankful that we bought the motor home in 2002. We had the opportunity to have several adventures traveling throughout the United States. I remember one in particular when we were driving through Zion National Park. We knew we were in trouble when we heard they had to stop the on-coming traffic so that we could drive our rig through the tunnels which included the warning that we better drive in the center of the road. Either that or we would have one well air-conditioned coach with the roof

removed. After that experience we decided that light grey roads on the maps meant trouble for 40' coaches.



One of our RV friends said he would always remember Mike like this.

And the 4-wheel drive Jeep. They can go anywhere, can't they? That's what Mike said... wrong. But he'd try anyway. My knuckles we often white. What fun!

Kids...he loved his four kids and always wished the best for them. Then along came his granddaughter born on his birthday (October 4th) no less! She had him hooked from minute one. He was a one proud Granddaddy. We continue to tell Hannah about her Granddaddy and she recognizes him in all the pictures of him.



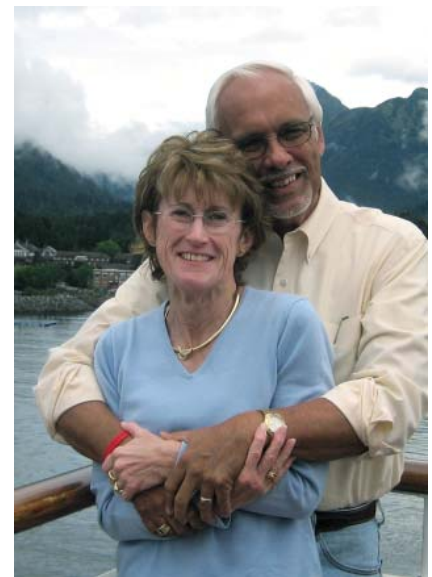
As he said, "Just call me Granddaddy!"

Saint Ignace ... he always said he could feel the weight of the world lift from his shoulders when we arrived at the house. "Up North" he called it. Something about it made him relax. And he finally got his workshop that he had wanted all his life. We loaded up the RV with all his tools...all kinds of saws, drill press, wrenches, you name it, he brought it. A man and his tools! Any trip to the hardware

store always produced a new tool he couldn't live without.

I got my John Deere lawn tractor ... he got his Kubota tractor. Doesn't everyone need a tractor? See episode "Busted" dated August 10, 2005 of the ALS Adventures to appreciate his experience with the tractor. He had big plans for that tractor!

To sum it up, Mike made the world a better place. I know for many of us, things are not as much fun as they used to be. What we have to remember is that Mike would want us to continue to laugh and enjoy life. That is difficult sometimes. I hope each of you reflect on how Mike touched your life. Take some time and re-read the ALS Adventures. What a man! I'm so glad he was my everything! I know he's still watching over me, protecting me – my angel!



PS: We need to keep the Mike Justice Fund going ... to keep his name alive. We can do that through scholarships and money to support ALS Research. We have this year's golf tournament coming up on October 2nd. Let's make it even better than last year.

Justice 4 ALS
Mike Justice Fund