

## Pride in you

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From Andrew Corser <AndrewCorser@pm.me>

To Ben Corser <bmcorsers@gmail.com>

Date Monday, June 27th, 2022 at 09:13

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Hi Ben,

I sent this first bit to Mrs Brown (and a bit more at the time)...

...and the rest was for everyone in the church. Your coffin was a beautiful basket, and we tried to put in there the things you might need - no electronic devices: I thought you would only be able to do things manually up there: don't know why.

And Lorraine vetoed the skateboard - maybe you'll have another route to get one of those.

You'd have loved the Wake...probably even the party at Lorraine's...but you saw the wake anyway, we decided: you were breathing on us all ...

...I'm going to keep on sending you emails...don't know what Google are doing to do about letting me in to your account, and if they do whether they will stop incoming mail...but I will send things anyway: you never used to answer that much before, so that won't be much different.

Love you!

Dx

*Querida Sra. Moreno,*

*Es muy difícil escribir esta carta...*

*Dear Mrs Moreno,*

*It is so difficult to write this letter ... my tears are falling on the keyboard rather than the paper you will receive.*

*I still find it difficult to believe that my Ben is dead ... You must have the same kinds of feeling about Claudio's, and Alfredo's deaths, and understand that feeling of denial, desperate denial of the awful fact that they will never, never come back.*

*Here in Cornwall, the thought of three young men being gunned to death, is so distant, so remote, so alien, that to find out that one of my two son's had been killed in that way, would never be coming back to me, would never hug me again... is so shocking, so unexpected...*

*...the reaction (which has been the same with everyone who we have told) of shock, disbelief, horror, then realisation of the devastating fact...followed by a numbness, a feeling of loss, of a chasm having been torn out of my heart...out of my very body, is so hard to bear: how can we bear it?*

*I loved and cared for Ben from the very first: at three weeks old he had a high fever and had to go back to hospital, but ever since has always been so strong and healthy and resistant to life's trials...*

*...but in the end not resistant to the awful violence of a bullet.*

*He was always the 'wild child' - the classroom clown, the boy who seemed to take that little extra risk...but always, actually, the risk was within his capability to cope with:*

*But he was also the person who would think about others, help others, understand how others felt. I believe ... that his qualities of thoughtfulness, sensitivity and helpfulness were being manifest in his time in Mexico ...*

*I do want to say thank you, Signora Moreno, for allowing Ben to be part of your household: he was clearly feeling happy, relaxed and appreciated ...*

*... I am so, so sorry for your loss, the pain you are feeling, the loss and heartache and emptiness. In my loss I feel your loss too.*

*In memory of Claudio, Alfredo and Ben, I send much love to you and all your family, and the family of Alfredo...*

That was some of the letter I wrote to the mothers of the two other boys killed with Ben.

But, how can it be borne? Ben – a man full of life and potential at only 36 years old – he could have easily still lived the whole of my 68 years – he could easily have still been alive in 2090.

I guess it can only be borne only by accepting the brutal, cruel fact...and making what we can of what we are left with, accepting that the Ben we have now is only in our heads, only in the ether around us, as we project him into our presence, only in the photos, and videos, where he speaks, speaks in a voice that will never get old. Only in our hearts, which are broken now but will, we are told, some day mend.

And the memories, the stories, the thoughts, the ideas, the artefacts that he has left us.

What also does go forward is the *'Ben would have...'* thoughts and comments – projecting, playing with what Ben would have said, done, thought: *that is a Ben moment...*

...I've done it already: playing the Giant with Emily and her friends, I said

Uncle Ben would have done that!

No, she said wisely - he wouldn't have just made noises: he would have picked us up by our ankles and hung us upside down!!

Maybe Ben's teaching will also carry on his being: challenging us into being more like him - more in the moment, more brave, more open-minded, more compassionate, more loving.

When we first lived in Cornwall, Tabby says she will always remember playing with Ben when she was little, Ben who was always so wild, climbing and jumping around the bonfire. She says that although she did not see Ben for many years, her memories of a young Ben are so vivid.

Alec and Alex told us how they have loved Ben since he was 4 and a half and watched him grow from a cuddly little boy into the man he became. They say Ben lived life to the full! ... something echoed by many of the tributes we have received.

Alec and Alex talk about all the adventures and unorthodox things he did; how he was so intelligent, but often chose to clown around and make people laugh ... but how, underneath was a thoughtful, caring, very deep thinker with beliefs he was passionate about.

'A shining star has gone out of the world...'

Ollie told me that Ben was his best friend at school, particularly at Sennen primary - I remember the gentle and kind friendship the two young boys had - and Ollie's got some fantastic memories, he says, of their times together.

Jemma says she was lucky enough to experience how fiercely protective and kind Ben was to his friends. Jemma and Ben did a lot of GCSE and after-school drama together - and art - and she says that Ben was so talented. They lost contact when they went to university but Jemma is so glad that she had Ben as part of her life. She says he definitely shaped some of her thinking and perceptions.

Ben went on to Truro College and UWE, where he was awarded First Class Honours in fine art.

At that point, Ben was really not sure how he would earn his living, but he was sure that he wanted to carry on his art, so, along with 4 or 5 other new art graduates, the Bristol Diving School art collective was formed, and kept Ben directly in art and curation for another year. Ben was also part funded by the university to earn money as a programmer, which would lead to many subsequent jobs in London.

I guess he must have been working in London for about 5 years when he announced that he was going to do a second undergraduate degree, in Maths, at Birkbeck College. His programming work had progressed so that he was able to save up enough money over part of the year to be able to take time off to focus on end of year exams (and/or a summer in Cornwall, maybe 'coding' with Paul). He told me that in every job he had done he strove to find something new to learn, and this resulted in him commanding higher and higher daily rates in his work contracts.

During all of this time, he was still doing art, and stayed involved with the Bristol Diving School, but also was doing maths, coding in his free time, and, of course, living life to the full. Ben again achieved a First Class degree in Maths - no mean achievement!

The pandemic was very much a mixed blessing for Ben, and his family and close friends I think the first six months were really disruptive for him, and for those he was living with.

Then he moved down to Cornwall, and started to chill out, and seemed to be enjoying life much more. He spent lots of time with us, his family: with his Mum, with his brother (and

Emily), and with me and Scamp, his doge. What a blessing all of us feel that year was for us to have spent so much time with him...not knowing that it would be the last of our time with him...

In January 2022 he announced he was going to Mexico - it felt to me like the 'gap year' that he had never had, and, as I said in my letter to Sra Moreno, Ben was clearly very happy, engaged and busy in Mexico - and he had really joined in with the local community.

What happened, whilst a horrible and shocking surprise to everyone, was an accident. By that accident, we are shown how precarious life can be - and how we have to, somehow, learn to accept 'outrageous fortune', and the losses it can inflict, on us and others.

And where is Ben now? Who can tell? The Christians among you will have him 'at God's right hand'; the pagans will have him in nature, in the sea he swam in down at Cot; the Vikings have an attractive picture of him passing over Bivrost, the rainbow, into Asgard, where he will no doubt be sitting in Valhalla with Callum, toasting us with a Punk IPA whilst he drags on a Marlboro; I would love to see his sketches of the Hall of the Slain. I did suggest his skateboard be included with the cigarettes, pad, letters, and protection rune in his coffin, but Lorraine was probably right in denying him that: I'm not sure Viking warriors appreciate skateboarding.

So, dear Ben, my father's tribute to you is to tell everyone assembled here in honour of your passing over, to wherever you are going, on whatever journey you are now on,

My tribute is to say that I am more proud than any father could ever be

Your all too brief life shone SO brightly right across the world

You achieved SO much, and showed us how it IS possible to be a master of many trades

You touched SO many people in such a loving and positive way

You will be remembered by a multitude.

Farewell Ben - we love you. We will miss you for ever.

😊 Andrew Corser

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