

My Son Matthew's Opus

It is important to understand that Matthew was an unplanned surprise. Not that we did not want another child, we had just planned on having one in another year or so when I was going to be on shore duty and we would all be in Navy housing. But, like everything else with Matthew he did not want to wait that long so on the afternoon of October 26th, 2003 (my brother's birthday), with the smell of ash and fire in the air (The L.A. Brush fires were going on at the time), Matthew was conceived. Mind you, if you looked on all the ways on planning on not getting pregnant his conception was impossible, at least by normal parental planning doctrines. This goes to show you that it is like our parents always told us; abstinence is the best form of birth control.

A month later after I had come back from my time at sea, I had received a call from Dawnise. She brought up the fact that she was a couple days late, I believe the number was 3, I told her not to worry about it that she had been late before and if she was still worried to buy herself a home pregnancy test to put her mind at rest. 3 to 4 days later she called me back and said she had done what I had suggested and that both tests were positive. I was shocked at first, but when the shock wore off a minute later I was thrilled, probably more thrilled than Dawnise was at the time...because she was worried about the problems with her other pregnancies including one miscarriage that we had before Matthew.

So needless to say that Matthew's pregnancy was very closely watched, as most pregnant women have one obstetrician, Dawnise had 2, and the last couple of months before she was expected to deliver I had arranged to be temporarily moved off sea duty and transferred to the Navy Recruiting District in L.A. so I could help Dawnise with our 2 other blessings Stewart-Glen and MacKenzie, since by this time Dawnise was ordered pretty much to strict bed rest.

Coming up for a name for Matthew was not hard. We had decided on Matthew previously, I believe when we were still waiting to find out if MacKenzie was to be a boy or girl. We then found out the name meant "Gift from God" so that sealed it right there because he was. I had told Dawnise that he was not to be called Matty because I thought Matty was a girl's name; of course Dawnise did not listen and called him that anyways. I ended up getting with the program and calling him Matty too, of course Dawnise had to rub this in my face later on.

Matthew officially made his appearance on July 5th at 9:45 pm at Northridge hospital. This was not the first time we had made this trip, we had 2 other early false alarms, But Dawnise's doctor felt she was not quite ready yet but he had told Dawnise that the next time that they would let Matthew come no matter what. Well, the next time was actually on July 4th, but Dawnise refused to go to the hospital that day because she did

not want Matthew to have to share his birthday with a National Holiday, so she finally conceded the next day when he was born. His birth was very special to me because out of my 3 children, I was actually able to stay for the whole birthing process. With Stew-Glenn I had to leave due to complications, with MacKenzie Deonna got to help with the whole process, since this was to be our last child I wanted to take part in and experience what I had missed with my first two. I surprised myself, not only did I not get grossed or passed out, I got to experience the coming of life first hand, even now there are no words to describe that kind of experience to another human being.

His first week with us was easy; due to the medications that they were giving Dawnise at the time to make her relax this also relaxed Matthew (benefits of breast feeding) so he basically slept for the entire first week of his life. However, once we got him home the following week and was no longer receiving those meds through his mother (breast feeding minus the medications), he made it quiet clear how things were going to be and started to set the tone of his schedule. I have always thanked him for giving us that first week.

My memories of Matthew vary over that next year; there are so many...so bear with me if they are not all in order.

Matthew loved to eat, food was one of his favorite past times. This especially included breast feeding from his mother, he would get such an emotional high of happiness after eating with her. His smiles and mood afterwards spoke volumes.

Part of Matthew's nightly routine was his night time feeding with his mother, and then spent about a half hour in the rocking chair with me, after which I would put him into his crib (usually asleep). Any deviation from this, for example being rocked first instead of his night time feeding or not having his time with me and we would hear the consequences.

I remember when I had picked him up from Dawnise at Disneyland so that he would not stay up too late, one the way out he waved bye-bye to every body in Downtown Disney, all the way back to the parking lot.

Matthew also allowed me the pleasure of holding him and Dawnise whenever we would be laying in bed together, something my other 2 would not let me do. They were very possessive of their mother.

Matthew also like to assist me in my Computer repair endeavors, he would take my screw driver and start to help me take a part the towers I would work on or try to help me screw them back on, I think this may have impeded what I was trying to do but it made him fell important.

Matthew also liked to play Army crawl catch, he would hand me one of his balls, and I would then proceed to throw it a little ways down the carpet from him. Matthew would then crawl to get it at top speed and bring the ball back to me so we could do the whole thing over again.

Something Matthew also liked doing quiet frequently is making sure to wake up around 1 or 2 am in the morning so I could carry him into his mother so that he could sleep with her the rest of the night.

Matthew was also the world's greatest flirt; he loved to flirt with girls of any age. He always had a great time with our next door neighbors, the four girls ranging from ages 8 to 17 and their Mom. The girl he really enjoyed being around was his Uncle Bryan's girl friend Olga. We had invited them for Easter dinner and he took to her immediately. Matthew sat on her lap for over 2 and half hours right through dinner and dessert. Matthew's 2 other prides and joys were his Sister and Brother Stewart-Glenn and MacKenzie. They each had a special bond with Matthew that spoke volumes when you saw them together. You could see MacKenzie always making sure that Matthew had enough to eat, even to the point of giving him the food off of her plate (I think however that she had alternative motives). If MacKenzie was getting in any sort of trouble and started crying, he would join in. But the most important thing was that she felt Matthew was her baby and Momma only had him for her. Stew-Glenn was Matthew's Idol; He would follow Stew-Glenn where ever he went around the house, he would always have a big smile whenever Stew-Glen held him, and most importantly Stew-Glenn was always remembering to buy Matthew something with his allowance.

One of his very unique qualities was how good he was with other people; people would always tell us what a good baby he was for them, like in the Osborne Church Nursery, he would never give them a lick of trouble.

One of my richest memories of Matthew was when I had taken him and his brother to see the movie Charlie and the Chocolate Factory; we had arrived just in time as the movie trailers were starting before the movie itself. Now as we all know no movie is complete without Popcorn and Soda so I had gone to the refreshment stand to take care of that problem and had left Matthew in his older brother's charge while I was getting the items. As I returned to the theatre, an older lady had come up to me to point out what a good Baby Matthew was, to sit perfectly and contently still in his older brother's lap while enjoying the preview. Once I had taken him back and put him on my lap it was down to business, he had promptly started to raid the popcorn and soda that I had purchased for the three of us to share; I also had to explain to him that he had to also share with me and his brother. He loved that movie; he loved the vibrant colors and the different musical numbers. Half way through the movie

however he fell asleep, he had worn himself out from all the things that I most likely should not have let him do in the first place.

Matthew had not quite gotten around to walking; he had just started to stand on his own and move around aided by his toy chest, table or couch. But this was not to say he had not mastered how to get around, he had learn to crawl so well that he would have put any Marine or Army Ranger to shame.

Matthew loved his toys, he loved being able to access them anywhere in the house, to make this easier for him his Momma would have a toy chest in our room, toys under the T.V. set in the living room, Toys in his room, and toys in his crib. Matthew was never alone; he always had and will have a toy of some type with him.

There was and is only one person that knew Matthew better than any person in this world and that was his Momma. Momma knew what and when Matthew needed before Matthew knew himself; When Matthew really needed something from Momma he would say “MUMUMUMUM” and she would know what to do for him. The thing that Matthew’s Momma enjoyed the most doing with Matthew was cuddling and holding him in her arms.

I truly believe in my heart that Matthew was able to fight for the 52 days that he did because Matthew’s Momma never left his bedside the entire time except for a couple of hours at a time. She was able to help the medical staff even in the condition he was in to try to give him what he needed.

Matthew left us almost the same way that he came to us, with the smell of ash and fire in the air (another L.A. brush fore, how is that for Irony) and in the union of his father’s and mothers arm’s. After almost 2 months of fighting he was finally free of the machinery that had help keep him alive for so long and the utter look of peace and contentment that followed on his face not only a reward to him, but to the ones that loved him as well.

I along with some of you who knew Matthew or just knew of him are probably asking ourselves if we understand why, why was Matthew taken to the Lord when instead of these 5 short pages that I have just read to you there should have been untold volumes upon volumes of unwritten tales and stories that should have gone well beyond the books that would fill just any one normal library. If you understand why, then I commend you in obtaining the wisdom that I hope one day to understand myself. Until then, The only thing that I know or understand for certain at this time is my little baby boy Matthew, of which I know that all he ever wanted out of life was to be held and cuddled by his father; and just to be loved and fed by his Mother.

What Lesson can we learn from this tragedy?

Well, the only lesson that I know for sure from the last 2 months of my son Matthew's very short time with us is this...

Never turn your back on them for a minute or even a second, because in that minute or second that you do, you may never see them again.

Thank you.