

A letter to Corey on his 42nd birthday

Dear Corey,

Today would have been your 42nd birthday, and I want you to know that we all miss you just as much today as we did when you left this world 9 years ago. We all know you are in a better place now and your struggle with diabetes is over. You fought a long and courageous battle with this disease that we will never forget, and that will never stop inspiring us. Every year that we are able, Carol, Katie and I take part in the march in Santa Barbara to raise money for JDRF research so that someday other children and their families will not suffer the way you did. We are all trying to live in a way that would make you proud of us, and I often feel your presence with me when I find myself worrying or in a tough situation. When I make a speech or face a new class I imagine you in the audience or sitting in the classroom and all goes perfectly.

I watched you come into this world all those years ago. The doctor said, "It's a boy," and there you were, ready to begin your life. Then, 33 years later, I watched you leave this world as well. Every year in December we go to the Angel of Mercy ceremony in Santa Maria that is for families that have lost children, and every year I tell them a little about you and what you meant to us. It's a good thing that it happens in December, because I remember how much you loved Christmas and the holiday season. I remember how we used to drive down to Mission Viejo and then to Hemet to visit your grandparents at Christmastime, and how when we came back Shiva would snub us because he didn't like being left alone. Those were some wonderful times we had.

I remember you as a baby, I remember when you took your first step, I remember when you started to talk. You said, "My Dad! My Dad! What are you doing, my Dad?" I remember you're first day of school. I remember you playing Little League baseball and I was your coach. I remember how you called me when Faith was born, a happy new father with a baby girl of your own. I remember how you called me from your classroom in San Jose when you were teaching first grade, and the children all said, "Hi, Mr. Miller!" I'm so grateful that you were able to find some joy in life, and you brought joy into mine too. Those and a thousand other memories will be with me always, for they are too precious to be forgotten.

I know we'll be together again someday; God will decide when. Part of me died when you did; I know that. But the rest of me goes on, trying to live in the way you want

me to, trying to make the world a better place in my own small way. You were an inspiration to me, and you still are. We bonded in love from the time you arrived in the world, and that is a bond too strong to ever die. So, farewell for now, and happy birthday my son. Until we meet again, Dad