

Friends

Friends

Stories by Teenagers 2

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Carl Koch**

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Carl Koch
Editor

Preface

“Once upon a time . . .”

“Did you hear about the time . . . ?”

These phrases immediately attract our attention because human beings love listening to and telling stories. Storytelling is as natural as breathing, and as ancient as the cave dwellers’ bragging and miming about the kill of the day around a campfire. We tell stories about the most serious events in our life, and the most wacky. We love stories for a lot of reasons:

Stories tell us who we are. When we tell other people a story, we reveal a lot about who we are—not only to them, but to ourselves. The poet Robert Frost says this about writing, “For me the initial delight is in the surprise of remembering something I didn’t know I knew.” In the hurry of life, we may have missed the importance of an event when it happened. Telling the story of the event helps us realize what the event really meant—even years later. So when we tell our story, we discover ourselves in new ways.

Stories help us feel less alone. As we listen to and tell stories, we realize that our story is a part of the great human story, that our feelings and experiences—while new and significant to us—are part of the universal human experience. We are not alone. Other people have felt as we do. Our story can affirm other people; their story can help us understand life better.

We encounter God in our stories. Many times when we tell stories, we begin to realize that life is filled with mystery. What we expect to happen does not happen; what does happen is unexpected. And frequently we begin to recognize the mysterious ways God has acted in our life.

We also listen to stories because they provide entertainment, because they are an outlet for our feelings and desires, and because they can make a point in an interesting way.

Stories by Teenagers

Teenagers enjoy telling their stories as much as anyone. Unfortunately, young women and men have few avenues for sharing their experiences and insights.

Saint Mary's Press has dedicated itself to sharing the Good News with young people. In the process, young people have shared their insights, courage, generosity, kindness, wisdom, patience, justice, and honesty—the Good News—with us.

Given our experience with two books of prayers and reflections by teenagers, *Dreams Alive* and *More Dreams Alive*, Saint Mary's Press decided to invite teenagers to share their stories. In October 1994, we asked the religion and English department chairpersons of all the Catholic high schools in the United States to invite their students to send their stories to us. The topic for the first volume of stories was teenagers' "most memorable experience of good coming out of a bad situation, or kindness in the midst of ugliness, or hope in darkness, or growth in the midst of difficulty."

Students could withhold their name, or use their initials, their first name, or their full name. We wanted to ensure that students could be honest in telling their stories. By April 1995, scores of stories had been submitted by high schools from coast to coast, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Six students and I selected the final forty-six stories for *I Know Things Now: Stories by Teenagers 1*. This first volume, published in May 1996, has been enthusiastically received by teenagers, parents, teachers, and all others who work with young men and women.

Friends: Stories by Teenagers 2

Given the encouraging response to the first book of stories by teenagers, we decided to publish a second volume. This time we asked teenagers in the United States, Canada, Ireland, England, and Australia to write stories about friends.

We chose the topic of friendship because our friends play such a vital role in our life. As the Scriptures say:

Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter:
whoever finds one has found a treasure. . . .
Friends are life-saving medicine.

(Ecclesiasticus 6:14-16)

The wonderful stories illuminate this biblical wisdom.

Stories poured in from all over. After an initial sorting, I asked six students to help make the final selection: Rachel Dahdal, from Winona Senior High School; Tim Farrell, from Cotter High School; and Lushena Cook, John Corcoran, Hoa Dinh, and Denise Klinkner, from Saint Mary's University, all located in Winona, Minnesota. After studying hundreds of stories, we selected the forty-five in this book.

Thanks

Great thanks is due to all the students who allowed their stories to be submitted for consideration. The only unpleasant aspect of editing this book was having to omit so many excellent stories. They just could not all go into the book. We thank all of you for your contributions and understanding.

Thanks also go to the religion and English teachers who sent in the scores of stories received. Your cooperation made the book possible.

The stories contained here are fascinating and moving. They make inspiring personal reading, will serve as excellent discussion or reflection starters, and will find a welcome spot as readings for prayer services. They might even stimulate someone to write his or her own story. Each story shows how young people cherish, understand, remain loyal in, and build friendships. We hope that all who read these stories find inspiration, great hope, and renewed gratitude for friends.

Heather Barney
Oak Knoll School of the
Holy Child
Summit, New Jersey

The Fort

The dog days of August slowly come to a close, ushering in the worst week of the year: those torturous days between Labor Day weekend and the first day of a new school year. The pool is closed for the winter, likewise the tennis courts and any other possible form of summer recreation. The public schools have already opened, so I am stuck at home by myself with time to kill. It is no longer possible to escape the scorching summer heat since the air conditioner broke seventeen days ago (and counting) and has yet to be serviced. So I sit in my sweat-soaked clothes, chugging ice-cold lemonade and trying hard not to breathe—it would only create more hot air.

I have already completely exhausted the entire supply of even minutely interesting books the library has to offer, so I turn on the TV and find myself watching Oprah discuss women who say obese men make better lovers. Despite the fact that it is the third rerun of an episode I have already seen twice this month, I watch with mild interest until 537-pound Jerry stands up and starts a conga line through the studio audience with Matt (613 lbs.), Chuck (498 lbs.), and Barry (554 lbs.). Bored with even this fabulous display of talent, I head for the refrigerator where I meet up immediately with a bowl of jello that jiggles in a grotesque imitation of Barry's rear end. Maybe I'm not as hungry as I thought I was.

All other venues eliminated, I turn to the old standby: bothering my mother. After half an hour of humoring me and trying to think of some form of entertainment for me, she finally loses her temper. "Go for a walk in the woods with the dog," she cries as her last resort. So I do.

Clipping a leash onto his leather collar, I step out the door with my six-month-old golden retriever, Cisco, in tow, and we head up Chatham Street along the same route I had once taken as fast as my seven-year-old feet would take me. Here on the left is my old best friend Charlie's house, or at least it used to be. Yet another "For Sale" sign adorns the front lawn, the fifth that has been put up since Charlie moved away eight years ago. On the right is the McAdoo's old house. Mrs. McAdoo, one of my mother's best friends, was the first person I had ever known to pass away. She died of leukemia several years ago, leaving her three children motherless. Finally, past the torn and fading signs that once said "No Dumping," I can see the woods.

We jump the fence and hop down the low bank onto a deep bed of maple leaves. The smell of fresh dirt, rotting leaves, and wild animals rushes at me. I say wild animals, but don't get the wrong idea. The wildest thing we've ever had on Chatham Street was a raccoon that the police had to shoot right on our front lawn because they thought it might be rabid. Cisco's nose is already glued to the ground as he attempts to track a squirrel. Today I am in no rush, so I allow him to lead me off track a bit, but there was a time when I would run through these woods like a bullet intent upon my target. It is just now coming into sight, and I am amazed at how tiny it is compared to the picture I have carried in my mind for so long.

I'm guessing it's been close to seven years since I've been here, although I can't really remember how old I was when I stopped coming. The fort is still remarkably intact, considering that it's been half my lifetime since we laid down the final branch. I call it a fort, but it's really just three walls made out of sticks that have rotted away to practically nothing over the years. The packed dirt floor that we had once kept meticulously free of leaves is now buried under not only this year's leaves, but those of several years past. I pick up the rock that once marked the entrance to our castle, and watch as an inchworm

and several pill bugs scurry for cover. Stepping inside, I clear away the leaves in one corner and sit down to rest for a few minutes. Even after tying Cisco's leash around a nearby tree, he continues searching for his squirrel.

Brett and I were just seven when we built the fort in the woods, which explains why the walls, just four feet high, had seemed so towering in my memory. The fort was neutral ground where neither of us had to play host or hostess and where we could be away from our older siblings and parents, if only for a little while. Its location, roughly equidistant between his house on Fairfax Terrace and mine on Chatham Street, was perfect because we could meet halfway and neither of us could complain of having the farther distance to walk. In addition, it was secluded enough to allow us the freedom to play as loudly as we liked, but still close enough to home that our mothers wouldn't worry too much about what we were up to.

We would stay for hours, playing He-Man and Thundercats and every other game a seven-year-old tomboy and her friend can imagine. Brett owned the complete Masters of the Universe set, including a two-foot-high Castle Greyskull, complete with a trapdoor, where Skeletor reigned supreme. On the other hand, I had just about every Star Wars figure ever made, from Chewbacca the Wookiee to Darth Vader. However, the highlight of my collection was my Millennium Falcon model, which Brett could touch only under careful supervision.

But what I remember most about Brett doesn't have anything to do with our toys or with the fort. Brett introduced me to peanut butter and honey sandwiches and the honey bear. Honey bear was a plastic squeeze bottle with a red cap shaped like a bear. It held the Wilson's honey and was always standing ready on their kitchen table. I used to pester my mother constantly to get us one, and I think we did have one for a while, although I don't know what ever happened to it. It's been years since I've had a peanut butter and honey sandwich, but I can almost taste the gooey concoction and feel a sticky drop of honey as it oozes out the edges and crawls down my leg. I really don't think I ever saw Brett eat anything but those delicious creations, and I often wondered if that was his entire diet. No, that's not quite true. There is a picture in the scrapbook of Brett

and me and our friend Megan sitting on a bench outside on a sunny day "eating" plastic bagels. And there was the time Brett and I picked, cleaned, and ate onion grass. We both stayed home from school the next day because we were very sick to our stomachs.

But things change with time. Brett began playing with boys because they could run faster or throw farther than I could. I found girls to play with, and in time I traded in my Star Wars figures for Barbie dolls and the like. Time passed, and we were suddenly thrown into the world of fifth grade with new faces and new unspoken social laws. In this new and strange world, girls and guys weren't allowed to be friends like before unless they were "going out." And that was far beyond Brett and me.

More time passed and more changes. We made new friends and burned more bridges. And suddenly one day, I found myself walking home from school with a complete stranger who looked like Brett and sounded like Brett but was not Brett. But still, in this stranger I find a new friend who is different from my old friend, and yet so much the same. We can no longer play and carry on with the honesty we once did, but perhaps in a way this new friendship is even more honest because we don't have to pretend to be He-Man and Skeletor; we can just be ourselves.

Cisco's relentless barking wakes me from my reverie, and I see that he has finally chased a squirrel up a tree, but is wondering where to proceed from there. It seems I drifted off for a while, because it is growing dark in the woods. I get up, wipe the dirt off my pants, and see something I had not noticed before. The moist ground has preserved perfectly a set of large footprints leading into and out of the fort, and off in the direction of Fairfax. They are perhaps as much as a day or two old and are beginning to disappear, but I know whose they are. Replacing the rock to where I found it, I untie Cisco and head back the way I came, leaving my own footprints in the mud. I have found what I came for.

All You've Got

For me, the past New Year's Eve was one that I'll never forget: I almost lost the person who has been my best friend since kindergarten.

Jack and I met one day over the Tonka truck during play-time, two weeks into my first year of school. A big oaf of a five-year-old named Craig came over and told me to give the truck to him. At first, I was reluctant because it was the best toy they had and the chances of getting it again were slim. However, this being the first day in school for me, I felt that, as the new kid, I had to prove how nice and friendly I was. So I obliged, courteously handing it over to him.

Just as Craig was saying, "Thanks, wuss!" Jack came over and told Craig: "Give it back to the new kid, Craig. Don't make me hafta pound ya!"

Now, Jack wasn't nearly as big as this kid who had practically begun growing facial hair, but he could make a much meaner looking face. Jack put his worst frown on, bunched his eyes close together so it looked like he only had one eyebrow, and said in his best "dad voice," "Give it to him now!" Craig tried to look calm, but he ended up just looking confused, which was pretty normal for this kid. He reluctantly handed the truck back to me. Jack and I have been friends ever since.

This past New Year's Eve I had gotten stuck with working at the fancier of the two restaurants where I'd been working at

the time. I was dishwashing faster than ever before because I knew that Jack was having a little get-together at his house and, call me crazy, but I felt that I would have a better time there than at work. So I called him at about 11:00 p.m. to tell him that I might be dropping by after work if everyone was still awake.

Sean, a friend of ours from our old school, picked up the phone. I asked for Jack, and Sean told me that he was in the bathroom. I said I'd wait, but Sean informed me that it might be a while. Jack had been throwing up for the past half hour, and it didn't look like it was going to slow up any time soon. He said that Jack had had too much to drink and was in really bad shape.

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Jack had never really drank before except for a few shots of liquor one time while I was over at his house. Other than that, he was the cleanest guy I knew. He didn't smoke pot, he didn't smoke cigarettes, he didn't dip. And now he was practically puking up a lung because he had had too much to drink.

My boss was starting to yell at me to get back to work, so I had to go. Worried about Jack though, I told Sean that I'd be calling back. He said, "Fine," and abruptly hung up.

As I went back to dishing, my thoughts raced. I couldn't understand what could have happened. Jack didn't know anyone who could have gotten him beer, so I figured he must have been drinking liquor. Not good for a lightweight. That also explained why the other people there hadn't stopped him earlier. When you drink liquor, you can't keep track of yourself because it takes a while to get to you. So by the time he'd started feeling it, it must have already been too late for him to stop.

I called back at 11:55 to see how Jack was doing. This time Mark picked up the phone. I asked if Jack was all right, and whether or not I should come over when I was done with work.

"No," he replied, "I don't think that would be a good idea. The police are here and so are the paramedics. Jack's going to the hospital."

I was stunned. I couldn't move. Everything just seemed to slow down to a crawl. It wasn't really as if the moment was frozen in time, but more like slowed down enough so that I

could comprehend the full gravity of the moment. My best friend, whom I had known for almost eleven years, was being put into an ambulance and taken to the hospital because he had had too much to drink. The idea was so alien to me that I had to have Mark repeat it twice before it finally sunk in. I asked if Jack's parents were there. They weren't. I told Mark to take care of Jack and hung up.

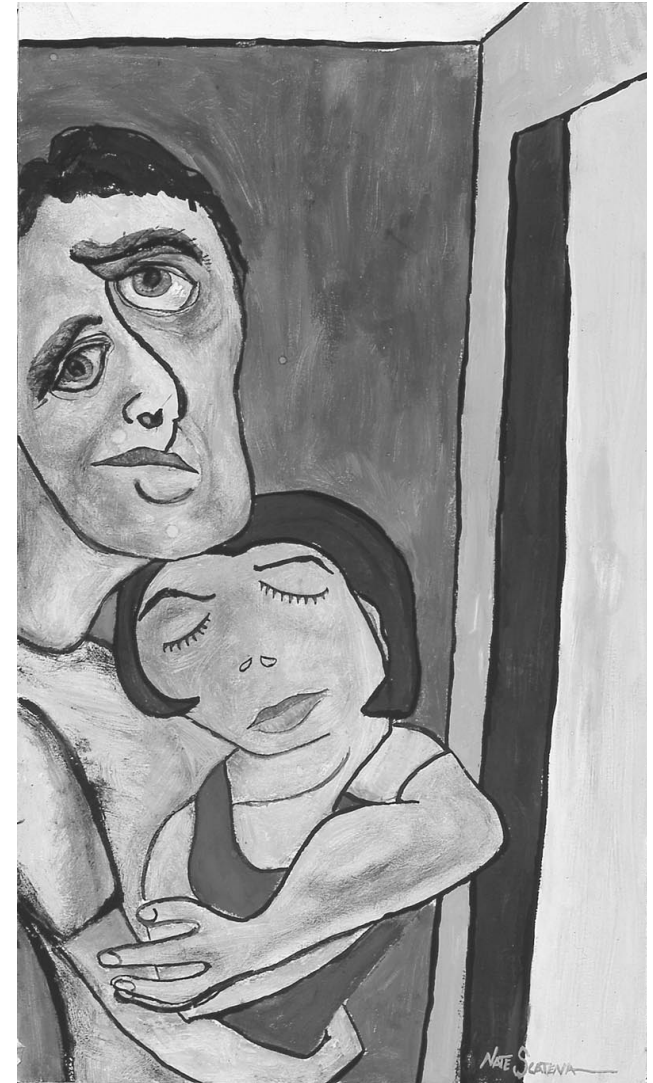
All that night I couldn't get to sleep. I kept thinking about what would happen if it turned out to be really bad, and Jack died. I began to envision life without him, but it hurt too much. I kept trying to rationalize by saying, "No one dies from one night of drinking too much. They just get really bad headaches." But the worst case scenario always popped back into my head.

The next morning I called Jack's private line and his house line—no answer at either. I left a message on his private line telling him to call me back as soon as possible. Then, at 10:30 a.m., he called. He sounded really weak. I looked up and thanked God, and then listened as he related his night to me.

He said that he didn't have his stomach pumped to his knowledge, but he was unconscious for the most part, so he didn't know for sure. He said his blood alcohol level had been .18. It was now down to .10, still legally drunk. He said that he really appreciated my calls last night and this morning, and that he had to go because he needed his rest.

Before he hung up, I told him that I was really worried and that he shouldn't try so hard to have fun next time. He told me he wouldn't and hung up. I know that this sounds like a really mushy thing to say, but when you spend practically all of your time with a certain person or group of people, you can't help but to start to care about them, I don't care who you are. Sometimes you don't even realize that it's happening, but you develop feelings for them. You start to get used to them being around. And when they stop being around, that's when you realize you need these people, because really, they're all you've got.

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Presents

Two years ago, I learned that the word *Christmas* does not mean the giving or receiving of presents, the smell of fresh trees, or turkeys roasting in the oven. No, the true meaning of Christmas is friendship.

My story is a simple one. It tells of two best friends, myself and Jenny, who come to realize that the meaning of Christmas cannot be purchased in stores or found on the inside of a card. It is found, rather, in the one place where many people seldom look—their heart.

“What do you want for Christmas?” I asked Jenny as we walked home from school one cold December afternoon.

“I don’t know. I haven’t really given it much thought,” Jenny replied with a shrug.

“How can you not give it much thought?! I can’t stop thinking about it!” I said excitedly.

“Well, what do you want for Christmas?” Jenny asked with a smile and a shake of her head.

“I don’t know. I haven’t really given it much thought,” I replied with a grin. A minute passed before we both laughed hysterically.

“C’mon. It’s freezing out here,” Jenny complained as we stood on my front step.

“I’m hurrying, I’m hurrying,” I said as my almost numb hands fumbled with the keys.

“Jen, we’re friends right?” I asked, somewhat unsure if I should continue.

“Of course we are,” Jenny replied with a puzzled look on her face. “Why?”

“Well, I don’t think this is going to be a very good Christmas for my family. We don’t have a lot of money this year, and I’m afraid I might not be able to get you anything for Christmas,” I explained, waiting nervously for her reaction.

“Kathy, you know we’re best friends, and I’ll understand if you don’t get me anything for Christmas.”

“You, you will?”

“Of course! That’s what makes me your best friend. My wonderful ability to understand,” Jenny said, trying to keep a straight face.

“Oh! But of course,” I replied in return. Both of us managed to keep straight faces for only a few seconds. When we could not hold out any longer, we burst out laughing.

Jenny came over Christmas morning to give me my gift. As I opened it, I felt embarrassed about giving Jenny her’s. I was surprised to see that she bought me a Snoopy watch.

“Thank you!” I said.

“Oh, you’re welcome.”

It was my turn to give Jenny her gift. “It’s not much, Jen.” The rectangular box with red wrapping paper and a green bow held a single piece of paper inside. It read:

Dear Jenny,

I know you were expecting to get a really nice gift this year. I told you I could not afford to get the ring you wanted or your favorite perfume. Instead, the gift is one that cannot be purchased in stores or found on the inside of a card. It is the one gift that is and always will be well appreciated. That gift is friendship. Merry Christmas!

Your friend, Kathy

Jenny looked up with a tear in her eye. A minute of silence passed.

“Thank you,” Jenny replied. “It’s the best gift I’ve ever received! Merry Christmas, Kathy!”

“Merry Christmas, Jen. Merry Christmas.”

Annie's Gift

When I was ten years old, I had a lot of friends. But looking back now, my best friend was someone I never really thought of as my friend. I only considered Annie my next-door neighbor.

I didn't know too much about Annie. She was four years older than I was. She went to an art school in the city. Every afternoon as I played in the front yard with my little brother Kevin, I would see Annie walking home from the train station. I remember admiring how mature she looked carrying her big black portfolio as her pretty blonde hair blew in the wind. I'd see her bright, friendly smile, and I'd run up to her to say hello. I admired the freckles that graced her face. Annie was the only person I knew who had freckles. I wished that I had freckles and that I was old enough to go to school with her.

Sometimes on weekends, Annie would make up games for Kevin and me to play. We'd go on treasure hunts and put on plays about stories that Annie told to us. Her stories kept us fascinated for hours. I admired a lot of things about Annie, but what I admired most was her imagination.

When Kevin and I would get into trouble and be sent to our rooms, we would look across the driveway to Annie's house. We'd look in the window to see if she was there. If she was, we had a Morse code system devised by Annie to send secret messages to each other.

Once Annie showed us the mural she painted on her bedroom wall. In every color you could imagine, she had painted an assortment of cartoon characters. In my mind, Michelangelo could not have done a more impressive job.

During the summer there was always something to do, thanks to Annie. She would teach us art techniques and show us how to make stone people. She'd make up intricate plots with interesting characters for us to portray. By September, Kevin and I had been spies, detectives, and a myriad of other characters.

One day I was sitting outside on the porch. It was my birthday, but I was sad. I can't remember why. Annie appeared out of nowhere and presented me with a birthday card and a drawing she had done of me. To this day, I still don't know how Annie remembered my birthday, but I'm glad she did.

Now I'm seventeen. Annie is twenty-one. I only see her warm, friendly smile once in a while, but it's the same smile she used to flash at me seven years ago. I'm in high school now, and when I get home from the train station, I see Alex, the little boy who lives down the street, watching me. When I smile at him, he runs up and asks me if I want to play. Sometimes I make up games for Alex and his sister Jenny. Sometimes I think of treasure hunts for them to go on. I teach them the art techniques that Annie taught me. I watch Alex and Jenny laugh as they play with their stone people. It reminds me of when I was ten and when one of the most important people in my life was someone who I never even realized was my best friend.

Words of Encouragement

The relationship shared by my sister and me is similar to any normal sister relationship. We have had our childhood fights over clothes, household rules, and many other ridiculous conflicts. She never failed to call me her shadow when I wanted to be with her because, naturally, she was agitated at my being the epitome of a tagalong.

Although I was a nuisance to her as a child, we grew out of the little sister-big sister phase, and we became best friends. As the years passed, my sister and I became partners in dancing, and those who watched us remarked about how much we resembled one another in the style of our dance and our appearance on stage. As the little sister, I was so proud to be told that I was the exact image of my older sister because I had looked up to her for as long as I could remember.

She had always watched me perform when she was not able to dance herself. Her encouragement and advice pushed me to be my best on stage. I never failed to meet her standards, for I wanted not only to win for myself, but also to impress her and make her proud of me.

I can remember back to a time when I was at summer dance camp for the week. I should have been enjoying the time with my friends, but my enjoyment was tempered by the absence of my sister. She was called out of town and was not able to see me perform with my team. Loneliness and misery

surrounded me that week, but somehow I pulled through the emptiness when the last day of competition came. I had practiced for hours.

Somehow my dad managed to find me among the hundreds of dancers in the enormous auditorium. To my amazement, he handed me a brown paper bag colorfully decorated and filled with an assortment of candy. At the bottom, I came across a card with a picture of two small girls, greatly resembling my sister and me, standing in the rain, sharing an umbrella. As I proceeded to open the card, I found a letter written by my sister:

Dear Sis,

Sorry I couldn't come see you dance tonight, but I know you will do great. During the past year I have watched you develop into a very talented dancer. Always hold your head high and keep smiling, and I am positive you will be the best. I'll see you later. Have a good time at camp.

Love always,
Me

As I drank in her words, tears flooded my eyes. Emotion completely enveloped me. The next minute I was sobbing. I could hardly breathe. I was so overwhelmed by her confidence in me because I had always strived to be just like her. Suddenly the physical absence of my sister was replaced with her spirit. Her pride in me made me feel proud, not only of my ability to dance but also of the person I had become, a person like her.

Ever since that letter, my sister and I have only become better friends. We are there for each other at any time of need, just as her presence was there for me when I felt lonely and abandoned that day. Whenever I need reassurance from someone or something, I take out those soothing words of encouragement that I saved and read them for solace because I treasure them as the greatest gift I have ever received.

Sign My Book

When I was seven years old, I moved from Mission Viejo, California, to Norco, California. I had to change schools, which meant making new friends.

On the first day at Saint Mel's School, my second-grade teacher, Mrs. Duperron, gave us little heart-shaped books. She instructed us to go around the room and have people whom we wanted to get to know better sign our books. All of a sudden I heard a voice ask, "Would you sign my book?" When I looked up, I saw an unimaginably tall second grader. His name was Todd.

Todd Ramasar was born in New York City on August 24, 1979. Right after he was born, Todd and his family moved to California. His mother, Ghislaine, was from Haiti, and his father, Oskar, was from French Guiana. Todd has an older brother named Kirk, also born in New York City. After moving to California, Oskar worked for the telephone company and "Gigi" was a nurse. However, they later started their own business, owning and operating a nursing home.

Eventually, Todd and I started hanging out together. We got to be great friends, mainly through our brothers who were the same age and also good friends. My mother was also Kirk's teacher for two years in a row. Todd and I did everything together. We would visit each other's home, and play basketball, football, and other sports together.

One day I went over to Todd's house. When my mother came to pick me up, Mrs. Ramasar invited her in to chat for a while. They hit it off perfectly and became the best of friends. In fact, soon both sets of our parents became great friends. Now that our parents were friends, Todd and I became almost inseparable. Our families met at least once a week for pizza, and we spent some weekends together at the beach.

As the years went on, our friendship grew, and so did Todd. In sixth grade, Saint Mel's School was having a lot of problems. The school went through six teachers, and was forced to close due to financial difficulties. For a while we were afraid that we would end up at different schools. Our parents did everything in their power to put us in the same school, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Riverside.

Since we both didn't know very many people at our new school, we stuck together most of the time until we became better acquainted with others. Before we knew it, we were graduating from the eighth grade and were off to high school. We both decided to attend Notre Dame High School in Riverside, which was the same high school that our brothers attended. Todd had received many offers to attend other high schools because of his extraordinary basketball talents.

In our freshman year, Todd blossomed as a basketball star. As a freshman, he was a starter on the varsity team and one of the leading scorers. As Todd's talents grew, so did his popularity. Everyone wanted to be Todd Ramasar's friend. Recruiting letters came in weekly, and I was afraid that Todd would forget about me and the rest of our mutual friends. He didn't. In fact, he still chose to spend his free time with me, and his popularity never went to his head.

At the beginning of our sophomore year, Todd decided to attend the public school near his home because of their strong basketball program. Once again I was worried that Todd would make new friends and forget about his old ones. I was wrong again. Although we didn't see each other at school every day, we still did lots of things together on the weekends. Sometimes I was even able to attend the basketball games at his new school.

As fate would have it, I moved from California to Connecticut in the middle of my sophomore year. Since I've moved here,

we still keep in touch and so do our parents. Although we live far away from each other, we still consider ourselves best friends. I know that he will come and visit me in Connecticut, and I have already been out to visit him in California. In fact, I expect that we will remain lifelong friends.

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