

My personal reflections of my husband and best friend - Jeremy Winkler

On March 19, 2023, my husband and best friend, passed away in our home due to heart complications. I am sorry to say that I just don't have enough family support here to do a proper memorial service, so I plan to do one up in Oregon where Jeremy and I have many friends. I wanted to share with you a few words that I had planned to say at his memorial celebration.

It is really hard to know what to say when the person you did everything with suddenly goes away. No one knows what to say to me and I barely know what to say back. It was completely unexpected. He did see a doctor last summer to find out why he had not lost any weight despite working a job with a lot of activity and eating healthy.

What I can say is that he was the best husband ever. He was perfect for me. He was kind and thoughtful. He loved to make and collect things. He loved to shop and share things with others. I often feel that his talents and skills were never truly appreciated or utilized in this world. (He was even considered for a part in the TV show the Mandalorian for a voice part.) Together we found joy when we could. Life was not always easy for us. But we tried to make the best of it and support each other when times were down. I could always count on him for a hug.

He was an only child and a complicated person. One of the first personal things he shared with me was that he was the first child dropped off at daycare and the last one picked up. And sometimes the daycare lady would be upset because she wanted to go home. I think this was probably the reason why he took to reading so much. It was an escape from loneliness. He loved comic books and novels; like *The Lord of the Rings*, the *Harry Potter* series, *Spiderman*, *Batman*, and *Ironman*. He loved movies and cartoons, especially action adventure like *The Last Airbender* cartoon, *Gravity Falls*, *Star Wars Rebels*, and most of the *Star Wars Universe*, *Star Trek*, and the *Marvel* movies. He loved comedies like *Big Bang Theory*, *Spaceballs*, *Blazing Saddles*, and the *Airplane* comedy series. He liked to laugh and be inspired.

He had a lot of interests and liked learning new things. We met at fencing where he eventually became a rated fencer by winning a tournament. He was really proud of that. He often struggled with the feelings of not being wanted, which I had a hard time understanding because he was so kind and easy to get along with. And when he joined a new group or started learning something new, he really put forth a great deal of energy into being the best he could....or at least very helpful. When we did *Ren Faire* he taught mini history classes and helped others with their costumes. After about 7 years we retired from *Ren Faire* activities and went to comic cons with our best friend *Bill Sikkens* and talked him into dressing as a *Wookiee*. Jeremy made a *Mandalorian*, a *Han Solo*, a *Jedi*, and even a *Kylo Ren* costume. He had started a *Clone Trooper* and *Darth Bane* from

the Clone Wars series. We worked on these things together. We were a team. Jeremy also became a co-host in our radio show User Friendly 2.0.

The three of us became real Knights but found nothing to do here in the US, so it was suggested by our Order's leadership that we look for other organizations to be helpful in. So my husband and Bill joined the Masons. This was hard on the three of us since I was not allowed to be a Mason here because I was female. This made this activity less appealing to Jeremy since I was excluded, so we searched for other activities that we could do together. During that time, we both lost our jobs and moved back home to look after my elderly mother, who found Jeremy to be like an additional son. I often marveled at how kind and patient he was with her when she asked for help with something.

During the time between doing Ren Faire and Comic Con style cosplay, he started to take an interest in making his own Hawaiian print shirts. My Mom had made several for him over the years and he wanted to see if he could do so himself. His creativity exploded with Star Wars prints, skull prints, dragons, Halloween, and even a special shirt to celebrate birthdays. I think people started to recognize him for the shirts he wore and he often got compliments about them. He also made some of the best Ren Faire hats too. I think he could have been a professional milliner if he wanted to. His creativity was amazing considering he came from a household where there was no creative inspiration or encouragement. As a kid when he tried to learn to play the trombone, he got scolded for making too much noise. He had always wanted to learn how to play the guitar or lute and was afraid he would bother me by practicing. I told him that I played the trumpet and understood the need to practice. (And I made a lot of noise.) These emotional barriers from childhood were not always easily concurred. I often wondered what his life would have been like in another situation. He really loved music and had an eclectic collection of musical tastes.

Together we played D&D style role playing games and learned Tai Chi. He enjoyed painting miniature figures, working with his 3D printer, woodworking, building Lego projects, collecting comic books and action figures, and took classes on how to make jewelry.

For the past 14 years or so life had not been kind to us. His mother had filed a complaint with OSHA, against Jeremy's wishes, and got him fired from his graphics print job in Washington and apparently got him black listed from being able to get a job for ten years. We did not realize this fact for a long time and Jeremy thought that nobody wanted him. This hurt him deeply. This is why when he got hired by Home Depot that working there meant so much. He came home so pleased with the recognition awards that he earned. He wanted to learn how to drive all the crazy vehicles that Home Depot had; the ballymore, the reach, and of course the forklift, which he already knew how to drive from previous work locations. He told me about the wonderful BBQs and fun days that were part of the store. He dressed up like a referee on sports day because he had no team

that he followed. He made the "Home Depot Man" costume for Halloween and got ugly sweaters for the Winter holiday season and loved making stuff to share with his fellow Home Depot people. He loved checking up on the owls in the garden section and sent me pictures of them when he could and enjoyed seeing the little emo - Kiwi- that was brought in by one of the girls.

Some days he would come home very tired and achy with stories about crazy customers, but he never had a bad word about any of his fellow Home Depot workmates. I missed Jeremy when he was away at work and I was home writing, but I knew he was working for people that appreciated him and gave him hope for the future. We had and still do have plans to move away, and he hoped that he could transfer to the store up in Oregon. I would say to the people at the Home Depot store that he worked at thanks for being honorable and kind to my best friend. One never knows how much a kind word or a thoughtful gesture can turn someone's day around. Thank you.

If you want to honor Jeremy, please get together with friends and make a toast to him with your favorite beverage whether that be mead, dark beer, coffee, or just plain water. Be good to each other and that is the best gift you can offer him in memory.

Gretchen Winkler

