



Michael Gregory Smithers

March 26, 1961 - April 30, 2019

Michael Smithers died peacefully on April 30th at the age of 58, from cancer. He was at home, surrounded by his family and close friends.

Mike's greatest joy in life was to be with his family. He was a devoted husband of 28 years to Joseph Delaney, and a loving father to Claire Delaney Smithers and Ryan Delaney Smithers.

People who knew Mike would recognize his presence from afar whenever they heard his contagious and bellowing laughter. He was a man who found the greatest pleasure in helping others and being of service. He always wanted to do the right thing and strived to make the world a better place.

Mike was born in Encino, California, and was raised in Newbury Park. He graduated from Newbury Park High School and attended San Diego State University. He was the son of Mary Woodlief and Ronald Smithers. His mother Mary raised him to be very independent, instilling in her son a strong sense of ethics. She taught all her children to cook at an early age, and she expected Michael to be able to complete his share of the chores at the end of each week. He always said he learned his strong work ethic from his hard-working mother. His first job was washing dishes at 6am on weekends at Du-Par's Restaurant in Thousand Oaks, California. From an early age, he showed his desire to be of service through his work as an altar boy in the local church.

To support himself while getting his bachelor's degree at San Diego State University, he worked full-time driving school buses for the college band, handicapped and local school children. Immediately after college, Mike became a successful commercial insurance broker, showing his acumen for business. His goal was always to be an entrepreneur and to choose an industry that aligned with his philosophical beliefs of doing the right thing. This goal led him to build, own and run the Goddard School in Ladera Ranch, California. For the past 17 years, his passion for always doing what was best for the Goddard kids guided every decision he made. This type of leadership and zest for life allowed Ladera Ranch school to achieve the Circle of Excellence Honor within the National Goddard franchise.

Mike loved spending time out on his boat or floating in the warm water of Lake Mohave and Lake Mead. He was an amazing water skier and a very patient instructor with a hearty

loving laugh.

Mike is survived by his spouse Joseph and his children Claire and Ryan. He is also survived by his mother Mary Woodlief and his stepfather Steve Woodlief. He will be greatly missed by his siblings Dan Smithers, Carol Childers, Patti Ringo, Linda Price and Peter Lavaty. He has many loving brothers- and sisters-in-law, cousins, nieces and nephews who live throughout the country.

He will be deeply missed and remembered as someone larger than life....with his big smile and saying "It is what it is."

FOR A LIVE FEED OF MIKE'S CELEBRATION OF LIFE, PLEASE VISIT THE
ATTACHED LINK: ocmediagroup.net/mikesmithers

* In lieu of flowers the family requests donations in Mike's name be sent to The Boys and Girls Club of Laguna Beach or Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County.

Events

MAY **Celebration of Life with Reception to Follow**02:00PM

19

Neighborhood Congregational Church

340 St. Ann's Drive, Laguna Beach, CA, US, 92651

Comments



“ Dearest Joe, Claire and Ryan !

I found out about Papa last night from Drey. She told me that you are still thinking of your time at Annelieses. I have had many students in the 30 yrs.at the school, but I have thought of you all often. I used to see Papa sometimes when he was on the way to work and he always had the biggest smile . He was one of the kindest people I have ever met. I have no words to tell you how sorry I am to hear that the world has lost such an incredible human being. Claire , Ryan - he was so proud of you ! You were his pride and joy. I remember how he researched franchises , so he could spend more time with you. When he told me that he wanted to open a school, I knew he found his calling. Joe - his face lit up , every time he mentioned you. I am so grateful to have known you all and I know you will be there for each other and give each other strength . After all you got the best Guardian Angel watching over you. And even though you can not see him , he will always be there in your hearts. Be strong and be proud to have had the best Papa any child could have had. Much love, Ms. Iris



Iris Kober - Yesterday at 10:23 PM



“ MY MEMORIES OF MIKE

Claire and Ryan, it is because of you I met your papa. We met at Anneliese pick up and drop off in Pre-K. I liked him immediately. I was drawn to his smile, friendly greetings, and outgoing nature. That's where it began.

Over the years, we got to know each other from time together at all the kid birthday parties and school events. We bonded at Scooter's Jungle and Jumping Jammin... Concerts, Cotillion, Jog-A-Thon... Back to School Night and Open House. I always loved to see his smile wherever we met. Bruce and he both loved to joke around, often to the embarrassment of your dad and I! I fondly remember all the times at your house for dinner and hot-tubing. And the many dinners out we had together. And our trip to Mammoth with your family has many fond memories.

We loved to talk about you kids. Whenever we got together, we shared our parenting challenges, successes and mishaps. We laughed and commiserated about how you tortured us, and proudly boasted about your accomplishments. And we supported and encouraged each other in our parenting - it's a really tough job you know! The best parent mess up I ever heard was the time your dad was away and your papa fell

asleep on the couch. When he woke up you two babies were gone. You had crawled out the doggy door, into the backyard, in a thunder and lightning storm! I laughed till I cried when I heard that! It could happen to any of us, but I think only your papa would tell the story! I loved him for that.

I also loved that he cared about encouraging me in my parenting. He loved to tell me how he remembered Brandon from Anneliese when he never smiled (he had just come to live with us and was quite reserved), and how he grew into such a happy young man. He would say, "You did that."

I found my Face Book messages from him, and these two are perfect examples of how caring your papa was to me:

3.19.17 Brandon and Landon did a fly by last night. Ryan had a few friends over and your young man stopped in. What a change in a few years. Brandon is funny, irreverent, engaging and confident. Saba and Deeba were over and the entire group cracked me up with all of them busting each other's chops. (We know Landon as he plays soccer with Ryan.)

As college rapidly approaches, I love to sit and observe (and laugh). Brandon has grown into a nice young man!

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Let me check with the keeper of the calendar. Retired? Put that man to work. You all look great. I love your Liam posts. Blessed we are.

And that's how your papa felt about you two... blessed. At the beginning of your senior year, we talked about you all graduating and leaving for college. I asked if he was nervous about the empty nest. He told me, with a smile, "It's time. They are ready. I did my job." And he was so at peace knowing he had done well raising two wonderful young adults. And when he told me about his heart trouble a few months after that, he expressed how he felt lucky, and he was savoring life, and the time he had with you both before you left for college. He was blessed, and he knew it. You two were the loves of his life, and he was so proud of both of you.

I feel blessed too, to have known your papa, to have been a friend to him, and he a friend to me.

I still see him, his cheeky smile. I still hear him, his irreverent (and loud) laugh. I still feel him, his exuberant emotions, whether annoyed or happy. He was full of life, and love. My life is better because Mike was in it.

I love you all. Meldie





“ That is also how I remember him. He brought such a joy and love to all of us. And he is right < Brandon did not smile in the beginning . Ms. Iris

Iris - Yesterday at 09:59 PM



“ I first met Mike, or "Ernie," as I loving called him, in the early 1980's. He had moved down to San Diego from Newberry Park to go to school at San Diego State. We both worked for San Diego Unified School District driving school buses. It was a great job for college students because you could easily work your schedule around your college classes. We both had bus routes at Mission Beach OTC. I heard is wonderful, boisterous laugh before I saw him! We instantly had a connection and became friends. Even then, he had such a zest for life! We had many great times together.

On several occasions he tried to teach me how to water ski. I can still hear him laughing as he told me I was the only person he knew that could have perfect form waiting to take off but be facing the wrong direction!!! Over our 38 years of friendship we stayed in contact and saw each other, but less frequently. We were both caught up living our lives. We always called and sent each other a birthday card on our birthdays. Even if it had been a while since we had seen each other or spoken, we picked up right where we had left off.

I had the pleasure of meeting Joe in their early days of dating. Ernie was so happy! I knew instantly that they were soul mates, just perfect for each other. We were so happy when we found out that they were going to be parents! We often discussed parenting issues together. He loved his family sooo much, and was so proud of you both, Ryan and Claire. I will truly miss my dear friend, and always keep him in my heart remembering his beautiful smile and wonderful laugh!

God Bless You Ernie:)



Maria McQuillen - May 20 at 02:51 PM



“ When we think of Mike, one word comes to mind, gratitude. He was always grateful for everything in life and appreciated every experience, and was happy to share what he was grateful for.

We first met your Dads, (and the two of you—you guys were so young), through a group of dads in Orange County at Brad and Gabriel's house at one of the many celebratory gatherings! Mike always found a way to bring everyone into the

conversation, and bring people together while making us feel so comfortable and included. We instantly loved Mike (and Joe) — a charm and wit that you rarely find—and his one liners and heartfelt laugh—bigger than life.

One of the more recent special memories Andreas has of Mike was when Mike invited Andreas to take sailing lessons with him, through Aventura Sailing in Dana Point Harbor—and during the sail, Andreas remembers fondly how Mike would beam talking about you both and your achievements in high school and how proud he was of you.

One of the special memories Kamal has of Mike was when he was driving home from the school ,he would call and just want to chat and share his day, his feelings and what he was grateful for and his appreciation for all the small and meaningful things in his life.

We can't tell you how much fun we had with your dads at Black Tie Events together. As you know, it was our time to socialize once every 4 months—and cut loose from responsibility and work, and just celebrate our friendship, occasionally with a gin and tonic (for Mike) :-) So many fun memories of Mike holding court, and even though we are suppose to socialize with other members of the group, we all always hung out together, your dads, Brad & Gabriel and us, catching up and laughing our heads off!

We will miss Mike and will always remember him with a great big smile!
Love, Kamal and Andreas



Kamal and Andreas - May 17 at 12:38 PM



“ 2 files added to the album LifeTributes



McCormick & Son - May 16 at 01:35 PM



“ The first time we met Mike was 17 years ago. He drove up in his SUV with a brand new set of twins. He shared his plans for the home he and his husband Joe were building on our street. His smile and good nature charmed us instantly. We knew we would have both a great neighbor and a good friend moving in. We watched Claire and Ryan grow up into the smart and accomplished adults they have become. Years ago Mike took me to Ladera Ranch to see the house they were buying. I was so sad and kept saying 'you should not move.' It was a very happy day when he came up the street to say they decided to stay in Laguna!

Mike would see us outside when driving by and always stopped to chat. First he bragged about Claire and Ryan. How smart. How athletic. How proud he was. He also often shared how lucky he was to have met Joe. Mike and I consoled each other knowing that we would never have a body like Joe no matter how hard we worked out. He was enjoying the success of his Goddard School and loved to talk it and share the latest trip they took to receive yet another award.

I loved it when Mike, Joe, Sophie and I would go for a walk and then they would come in and have a glass or two of wine with us. He always had wonderful stories to share.

Mike's passing leaves us with heavy hearts and a wish we had walked down the street more often to share a glass and a laugh.

We will miss his smile, his rapier wit, his love of life and his many kindnesses. He continues to inspire us all to live a full and loving life.

Joy & Tom



Joy - May 15 at 08:28 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Joy & Tom - May 15 at 06:53 PM



“ 83 files added to the album LifeTributes



McCormick & Son - May 15 at 04:39 PM



“ The family of Uncle Bill Delaney purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Michael Gregory Smithers.



The family of Uncle Bill Delaney - May 15 at 02:39 PM



“ I met Mike in the mid 1980's. I belonged to a church named United Spirit in West Hollywood, California. The A.I.D.S. Epidemic was our reality in those days and we were one of the only churches that was responding to the needs of those who were ill. One of our main ministries was hospital visitation, because no one would go near the sick. Our Church promoted self love and acceptance to a group of men and women who were in doubt at that time. We were brave volunteers and a congregation of people who themselves were most at risk. So we created a ministry that would try to love everyone through it. Mike showed up one day and immediately wanted to jump in and be a part of something necessary. He was full of life and energy. He found a community he wanted to help and be a part in a movement of love. He was a brave and compassionate hero. We became friends right away. I loved to make him laugh and the Lord was generous when he gave Mike his gift of laughter. His laugh could make the sun come out on a rainy day. He didn't just laugh, he would howl and hold his belly and laugh with all his soul.

Mike bought his first home in Burbank back then. He was so happy to be building a life for himself. He would throw a party or have us over for barbecues and we would laugh, dance, sing out loud and try to forget about things that upset us. On occasion Mike and I would talk deeply about life. He was very clear that he wanted a home and a family. The home in Burbank was his commitment to that idea. I remember the day he told me he had met a man named Joe. He said "this is different", I asked "How so?" and he said "I can't explain it but, it feels right". When I met Joe I knew Mike was right and I was so happy for both of them.

I left the church in 1987 and I lost contact with Mike after that. He and Joe were

building a life together. My life took a new direction and I moved out of the area. I would hear about Mike and Joe through a mutual friend from time to time. I remember a conversation that Mike and I had about family. He wanted kids. Turns out Joe also wanted kids. They were both so excited about the possibility of family. When I heard of the birth of Ryan and Claire I knew these men would be overjoyed and there was no doubt that they would be the best parents.

There are so many great memories replaying themselves in my mind. Memories that are so fresh and precious. I hear Mike's laugh. I close my eyes and see that big smile, the twinkle in his eyes and his joy is still infectious.

Joe, Ryan and Claire I pray you find comfort at this time. Please know that Mike will be missed by many. His friendship and love was important in so many lives. The remembrance of his love for you will remain with you and your love for him will not diminish. God's Peace.

Michael Tabor



Michael Tabor - May 11 at 08:25 AM



“ I always looked forward to CQEL board meeting and conferences because that meant spending time with Mike. From the first time we met two things were clear, he was passionate about everything he was involved in and he loved his family. Mike always had a prideful smile while sharing stories about his family. We would spend much of our down time at conferences talking about kids and family. Mike was ALWAYS my go to hype man for CQEL membership. I could count on Mike to come join me on stage at at conference and tactfully shame the non-members Into joining. Ha always had the crowd laughing and I honestly think people joined just so they could spend time talking to Mike.

Heaven gained a wonderful angel. Until we meet again friend, rest peacefully.

Cindy OMara - May 09 at 08:31 PM



“ 3 files added to the album Memories Album



Linda Lavaty - May 09 at 11:48 AM



“ It was always a pleasure seeing mike at the CQEL conferences! He was willing to jump in and help with anything, always had a story to tell and was quick witted! He really was a pleasure to be around! My family sends their condolences and I especially will miss seeing him!

God speed my friend!

Dainer Bailey

Dainer Bailey - May 09 at 01:29 AM



“ The thing I loved most about Mike was that he did not "wait" to live. He saw what he wanted, and he went after it. And he made the most of every minute in the process. I remember when Cathy Fisher and I used to take him country dancing and purposely bump into the cute boys while we were on the dance floor. Then one day we saw Joey there. And there was no need for bumping into other boys. He saw what he wanted, and went after it.

Dancing, laughing, boating, laughing some more. That's how I'll remember Mike. He loved his work as well, but he always worked to live, as opposed to living for work. Family, friends and building memories were most important. I hope to continue to learn from his example, and get better at celebrating all that we have to be grateful for in our lives.

Terri - May 07 at 08:45 PM



“ We attended our 1st CQEL conference in the fall of 2018 and Mike was the right there to greet us. Mike made us feel welcome and comfortable in, for us, an unknown new environment. Mike made me feel that I was on the right track with my business and introducing new technology to the children.

I felt really inspired by hearing Mike talk about his business and how proud he was to

be passing the business on to the next generation.

We missed Mike at the last CQEL conference and were wondering where he was. We never imagined this. Mike was the reason we decided to go to the next conference and will continue to attend the future ones. We will truly miss him.

Sincerely,

Chase Thacker, Daily Operations Manager
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Check out our official blog!
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Erin Tamashiro - May 07 at 03:30 PM



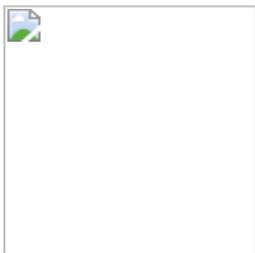
“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jan Plessner - May 07 at 01:36 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Jan Plessner - May 07 at 12:44 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



DIANA NAVARRE - May 06 at 05:06 PM



“ mike at the river enjoying the day in ..chapparal in background was pottsies..

DIANA NAVARRE - May 06 at 07:06 PM



“ 5 files added to the album Memories Album



DIANA NAVARRE - May 06 at 05:05 PM