
A Right Perspective: Tad loomed large in lives of those he met

By Marilyn Loeffel

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Tad Sisman, his wife Linda and their two daughters moved into our neighborhood several years ago, transplants from Connecticut. They tried a "traditional" church or two in town and didn't care for the formality. My mom would have lovingly labeled Tad a "real character." He wore his hair longer than most other men around here and sported leather cross necklaces and bracelets. He called himself a grown-up hippie and that he was. He finally found a church home and settled in at Hope Church in Cordova.

He was a wiz at carpentry. He once came down to the house to help me out and requested a screwdriver. I brought him the pitiful excuse for one I had; he went home and brought back the most elaborate tool box I have ever seen. He had one of everything, two of most. The screws, nails, nuts and bolts were in their own containers, each labeled as to size. Tad gave me one of those screwdrivers-within-a-screwdriver, with interchangeable bits stored inside the handle. He said, "Miss Marilyn, this is a screwdriver. Keep it as a gift from me. Next time I need a screwdriver, give me a real one."

Tad was interested in politics, so having a county commissioner down the street was handy. He liked to get my take on things and made sure I got his. We talked about our faith and we usually agreed on the two taboo topics of politics and religion, with me often explaining Southern culture to the man I lovingly called a Yankee.

Tad was the one who organized the block party, the Super Bowl party or the pool party. He had the most engaging sense of humor. The neighborhood kids flocked to his house because Mr. Tad was fun. Summer days often found me sending my daughter to Tad's with a beach towel, a bag of Chips Ahoy! cookies and a jug of lemonade. An hour or so later I would call Tad and ask if he had bitten off more than he could chew and did he need to rid himself of a kid or two. He would say, "No, I have my ways of taking care of rowdy kids. I just duct-tape them to the wall, gag them and smoke a cigar while I watch them squirm." Needless to say, every kid in the neighborhood loved him. My own daughter told him that she wanted to marry someone just like him someday. He was ruggedly handsome and kept in shape by running. Many mornings I knew Tad had passed by because my morning paper lay on the doorstep.

At Hope Church Tad became a deacon, a member of the Stephen Ministry and a small-group leader. He led weekly Bible studies and discussions in his home. The

Stephen Ministry reaches out to the widowed or divorced, the ill and the poor -- in other words, those struggling with what life throws at you, right up Tad's alley.

Little did Tad know that his day was coming. Last Christmas Eve he was told he had cancer. He wanted to beat it and gave it a good battle. He suffered unimaginable pain. No nerve blocks or morphine pumps could ease the devastating carnage of cancer.

I visited him in the hospital to tell him how much I loved him. Yet he wanted to know all about my family -- my husband, daughters, grandsons and my son-in-law he taught the art of bonsai. I gave him a couple of really nice cigars, tobacco no longer his enemy.

At his bedside was his Bible, covered in black leather with a Superman logo. Tad said Jesus was Superman. He told me that through the whole ordeal his faith in God was the most important thing in the world to him. Tad had lived in pain for the better part of four years and most of the past 10 months. Yet he never lost his zeal for life, caring about others, or his awesome sense of humor.

This past Sunday Hope Church held an ice cream social in honor of Tad. Nothing could have been more "Tad." He said he didn't want eulogies or speeches, no sad songs, no tears, just ice cream. He wanted us to celebrate his life, not mourn his death. This is exactly what believers should do. It would have been unnatural to do anything else for a man like Tad.

In the end, it doesn't matter what titles you earn or possessions you acquire, or who rules Congress. What matters is how you live day by day, facing fame, feast, famine, death or disaster. If you are not fortunate enough to have a Tad in your life, perhaps you should be one. We need more characters like Tad.

Marilyn Loeffel's column appears every other Tuesday. Contact her at arightperspectiv@aol.com.



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