

Taylor Smith Our City's Loss

She had a way of always being able to make me smile and often laugh. It is a quality few possess. Not that making me smile or laugh is anything special in itself; but being full of life, love and laughter certainly is, especially as a high school student. Most students have their up and down days just like we adults do, many even more so as they deal with growing pains, changing hormones, social pressures and life in general but she always had a smile on her face and a kind word to say in the four years that I knew her. As I hugged her and wished her well on May 31st as she exited the stage after receiving her diploma with the rest of the class of 2019 I never expected to never see her in this world again.

My heart goes out to all of her family and as in the past I have no words of solace that will ease the pain and loss except to say that I always knew Taylor Smith to warm my heart with a smile and a bit of laughter. I have known people all my life that could never do that; people who seem to go through life mad at everything and everyone – bitter. Taylor was anything but bitter and in her own way often found a way to make those around her feel better; even older sometimes cranky teachers like me. I knew when I hugged her at graduation I would miss that in my classroom; that I would miss her. Like everyone else I never thought it would be permanent.

Too often I find myself caught up in all the busy-ness around me, distracted by little things, failing to appreciate the moment, those around or close to me. I can only speak for myself in that regard, but I see what seems to be the same thing in others. It's too easy to lose sight of the truly important things, those we love and care about. Taylor at such a young age seemed to grasp the importance of that though and in that sense was wise beyond her years.

As a teacher I have seen for the last time and laid to rest too many of my students. As a teacher, I have always tried to build a relationship with each student. A relationship that allows for an understanding of the student, their hopes and dreams. It makes it easier to teach when I understand that about a person, but it makes times like this more difficult to be sure. Like all those who have passed long before their time Taylor will be missed by all those left behind. And, while I have been blessed to have not lost a child or grandchild of my own, it is impossible to lose someone like Taylor from my life and not be heartbroken and deeply saddened for her parents and sisters.

Having experienced this before and borrowing a phrase from former Vice-President Biden, *there will come a time when the thought of Taylor brings a smile to your lips before it brings a tear to your eye.* For her family and friends I hope that day comes soon and is followed often with warmth in your heart.

For those of you who know me, you know I wear a lot of plaid shirts. When I get dressed in the morning I have to often choose between plaid or plaid. The thing that brings the smile to my lips even in this time of grieving are the words Taylor would say every day that I didn't wear plaid. "My, don't you look snazzy today! What's so special today?" It's silly I know but the twinkle in her eye and way she cocked her head when she said that just made smile and often I would say in response, "Why you are, Taylor!" She was always special and I hope those

most special thoughts and memories of Taylor remain forever in the hearts of those who loved her.

Taylor Smith, you will always be in my heart and even today as we lay you to rest you bring a smile to my lips because you were indeed so very special.

With love, Mr. Beitia...