

The Best Man

I love Patrick's mother -- my sister, Gail. I love my Bill and I love my Tina. I love my nieces and nephews. I love my daughter Katrina and her kids. You know I love my husband Tom. I also love and am so proud of all of you. **But Patrick is always the Best Man.**

"I'm always the Best Man" --that's what Patrick told me shortly after serving as his brother's best man. I actually wasn't surprised. In fact, Patrick has that responsibility for two weddings this year. You see, Patrick was a **natural-born Best Man.**

The Best Man's role is to "take the burden of stress off the groom -- onto his shoulders". The Best Man plans the bachelor party. He manages the attire of the groom and his groomsmen. He stands next to you -- assuring yours passage from bachelorhood to being a husband. He makes the first toast. He dances with the bride and all of the bridesmaids until he sweats. He waves goodbye to you through his tears when you leave. He even invites you over to his house to play Xbox when you have you and your wife have your first fight. And for some of you, he is your child's godfather.

On the surface, the Best Man's role seems **thankless**. It seems that he gets the temporary responsibility of being a husband -- but **none of the benefits** of taking a bride. But that's **not really** true -- because there is a **plus-side** to being the Best Man. **The Best Man gets to be one who celebrates You.**

Celebrating You -- that was what Patrick did best.

Now -- many, if not all of you -- are struggling with the question, "Why did this happen to my friend?" But let's be honest -- what you are actually struggling with is the question of whether it could happen to you! (Sorry, but Auntie Colette can be pretty tough on you sometimes). After all, you tell yourself that you need more time to do all many things that **you** need to do! You haven't put "die" on your to-do list.

Maybe Patrick can help us one more time. You see -- I talked to Patrick on what - I didn't know was going to be his **last day** in this physical world of ours. That afternoon, he telephoned me to help him big decision – one that could change the course of his life.

Since it seemed to be a really big decision – one that could change the path of his life, I asked him: “How would your decision impact your future? What do you want? He immediately responded with “I have everything. I love my life”.

I didn't think that he got it so I told him that our **priorities change** as we get older. “You are 33 years old now. What we want in our twenties is different than what we want in your thirties or even forties. Do you want more security or adventure? You might want to buy a house or start a family.

I really thought that I sounded very wise.

He paused and then told me again. “There is nothing that I would want to change.”

I was **exasperated**. **He still didn't seem to get it -- so I asked him, “Surely**, there is something that you want. Don't you **even** want a **second** bedroom?” And he answered, “No, Colette, there is nothing that I want to change to about my life. I am just having so much fun. I love my apartment. I love my neighborhood. I love my work. I love my family. **I just love my life.**”

So, I gave up.

Like some **sour old woman**, I told him that **very few** people could say that they were **totally satisfied** at **any** point in their lives. I told him that I had no advice for him and instead just encouraged him to do what he wanted.

By the way, I told one person this story and they told me that maybe Patrick was afraid of changing. You know who you are. I love you darling but the last thing that my Patrick was afraid of was change. This guy flew a plane, got his bartender's certificate, moved to Upper Westside Manhattan, brought in \$23 million dollars of revenue for his firm, attended his second Presidential

inauguration, rode his bike in Central Park almost 100 times, took boxing lessons, and found his girl – all during 2013.

You see, Patrick was **not** only blessed to have a great life – he was wise enough to know it.

I think that Patrick would tell you to love life that you have today. Open your eyes to what is good about your life NOW, what is working in your life NOW, and what you can **do** NOW. I want you to take those worthless doubts, disappointments, and disagreements and throw them into the trash. It's where they belong.

The fact is that we all have a **tremendous** amount to celebrate and an **unmeasurable** number of people who are ready to celebrate with you. Your **joy** is what this world needs – **not** your discontent. The world needs what is great about you. It has no use for your weaknesses.

But I have one last question for you.

How can you celebrate You – you know -- the way **Patrick celebrated You**? Of course, I have a suggestion. Celebrate Others.

Waking up distraught a few mornings after losing Patrick – I cried to my husband that Patrick would be forgotten. I knew that his family and friends would never forget him but I wasn't satisfied. I wanted something more concrete -- but I had no idea of what that meant. So, I started reading all those posts on Patrick's Facebook page.

I learned that Patrick was not only your best man – he was competing for the title of **World's** Best Man. He was very quietly putting a surprising amount of his free time into working with other young business professionals to help young people – mostly young people with scarce social and economic resources – discover how they too could impact the economic health of their community. The major focus was on helping these kids have hope in the power of education.

This was **good stuff** and I could swear that I could hear his voice in my ear saying, "Go Auntie go"! But I didn't know what to do. Luckily, Patrick has boasted

many, many times to me about his wildly smart and successful friends -- so I reached out to you. I asked, "How can we continue Patrick's work?" Your response was immediate -- and -- I suddenly had access to **more experts** than Donald Trump.

So today among other good things, such as scholarships that are being established by the MBA society and Fordham University in Patrick's honor we are working on forming a foundation **in Patrick's name**. **My hope** is that the Foundation will be a vehicle for **young professionals like you** to address not only the educational needs of our next generation but also the factors that need to be in place so a person can strive academically – **namely – good health, political participation, and a strong sense of family**. **Most importantly, I hope that it will embody how much Patrick loved having fun**.

The formation of the foundation is being spearheaded by Peer and Dr. Jessica Mumme. Lupita Gonzales, an expert in non-profit management is leading us in the strategic planning. Mishka Garel will guide us in connecting us with major corporations to support its efforts. ***I want you to know that most of these people are barely in their 30s!***

We are also having a party in Manhattan to celebrate Patrick's life on February 28th –Patrick's 34th birthday. This event is being headed by Chip and Patrick's best girl – Martine. I'm hoping that we will launch the foundation at this party.

I have to confess that I'm a little scared. I'm good at coming up with big ideas but I really don't know what to do. So I really need more of you to help. Call me if you have ideas. (Tom. please remind me to pay the cellphone bill).

Now, it is time to say goodbye to my baby boy.

Colette

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