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Mikey

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What do you say about a person who has been murdered? It's one thing to write about a person who dies, if from a more reasonable form of death like sickness, though nothing said could do justice. But when a person is murdered- and someone you know- rather, KNEW, what do you say?

I'm going out on a limb here- few will eulogize "Mikey". He wasn't that kinda guy that people cared about. He was the type of guy that most would turn away from, a guy who wasn't popular in the prison- and possibly anywhere else.

But- he was a human being, and deserves to be remembered.

On Friday, December 18th, Mikey was murdered in the dorm here at USP Tucson. I remember the day. They called recreation move early, about 12:30 and I was going to the softball field. I remember the call when about 10 officers were running to A1, the dorm Mikey lived in. At first, there ~~seemed~~ ^{seemed} to be a calm.; the officers stopped running. Then, there was a "9-1-1" call and about 40 officers came running, with a stretcher. They called a Yard Recall about 1pm, and as we all were headed back to our dorms, I overheard on a hand unit, "homicide". We were put on Institutional Lockdown from

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Friday afternoon until today, Monday, at 2:30pm. I learned today, it was Mikey who was killed. The killer also nearly killed another person... that was the first rumor.

Turns out that wasn't true; THREE inmates jumped and killed Mikey, luring him to the cell, and as I heard, one of the three has murdered someone in prison before. How USP Tucson could allow a person like that to a prison RARELY known for violence, is beyond me. Up until now, we've not had an Institutional Lockdown for about a year. And about 2 years since the last time there was a death of such magnitude. This is NOT that kind of prison that is stereotyped on television. How this prison allowed someone with such a violent past here is a discredit to this place, because there is now a person dead because of this.

Mikey wasn't known by a lot of people, and fewer liked him, not for the reasons you'd think. I can speak about him because I DID know him. So, let me tell you about Mikey, since it's likely no one else will.

Mikey was not the guy you'd call "Mr. Popular"; yet he was a good person. He was as timid as a kitten. Very shy, soft spoken and often reclusive; the circle of Mikey's friends was very small. He, at times, reminded me of a grown man, with the mind of a 10-year old. Without being insulting, Mikey was "simple-minded". Yet, Mikey was completely harmless; he never, ever, brought harm to anyone. He was often too shy to even talk to anyone. He was heavy set, balding on the top, with thick glasses. Most people didn't see him as "cool" and

combined with a likely mental condition, he often was shunned.

I first met Mikey about 2 years ago, when he took a Strategic Card Gaming class, to learn "Magic: The Gathering". I knew how to play, and taught him some of the basics of playing the game. Mikey wasn't a fast learner by any means, but he made up for it with enthusiasm. He enjoyed playing the game, laughing at simple accomplishments and pleased in his progress. I remember playing him, and at times my competitive nature would spurn me to "play to win". I could have played much better, but I saw how much he was enjoying it. He had the enthusiasm of a child learning a game for the first time. So, I let him enjoy his victories; after all, the idea is to learn the game. And if Mikey was having fun, why ruin it?

I personally didn't "hang out" with Mikey, I got to know him gradually through the game, "Magic: The Gathering". His strategy was most simplistic, not too much in creativity, but he loved playing.

Mikey had a couple of friends he always hung out with. He was, by NO means, athletic, so when his friends played handball, he was always the "retriever". Here at USP Tucson, handball courts are simply a huge wall on a court. Because there's no side walls, there is often runaway balls. Mikey was always the one to chase them down, and bring them back, like a loyal Labrador Retriever, valued for his gentleness and unwavering loyalty.

But as I said, he was woefully unathletic, and had the coordination of a child learning to catch a wiffleball with his dad in the back yard. Often I would help Mikey retrieve balls, and if I did, I had to be mindful of how I threw the ball to him. It took a great effort for Mikey to catch even the simplest of tosses. You had to roll the ball to him, and he'd use both hands to securely get the ball. Yet, Mikey was absolute in his loyalty. He was always there, and never complained. It seemed he was content just to be with his friends.

Last year, Mikey, Youngbear (A Native American) and Abe (my former cellie, much like a little brother to me) formed a bowling team for the Prison Bowling League. Abe was the captain, and the three were... a decent team, being gentle. By far, Mikey was the worst of the 3 bowlers, not that Abe or Youngbear were great. I was one of the better bowlers on the compound, but this year, had no team to bowl with. But early in the season, Abe went to the SHU (Special Housing Unit). With the loss of their captain, Mikey was given the mantle. Mikey would ask me if I could pinset for them, since a third member was necessary. Although not really interested, I joined because Abe was like a little brother to me, Youngbear was a friend and I realized Mikey needed this. This was very likely the biggest thing, athletically speaking (or possibly anything else) Mikey has ever done; the captain of a bowling team. To him, this was very important. So, I decided to help.

For weeks I pinset, until it was feared that Abe would not return. Prisons often fail to seek the truth, and will often cover their mistakes by shipping the innocent WITH the guilty, washing their hands of a problem they failed to address. But with the fear of Abe not coming back, Mikey asked me to rotate in bowling, so they could have a full team. So I joined, and bowled. I rarely, if ever, bowled a gutterball; Mikey bowled SEVERAL a game. His high handicap helped many a game, but his poor bowling put us out of as many. Yet, Mikey never took the game too seriously. He did his best, to be sure, but I never saw him get upset. Sure, you could tell he was disappointed in his gutterballs, but Mikey did the best he could.

We ended the season with an average record, and went into double-elimination playoffs. We lost the first, based on Mikey's half-dozen gutterballs. I carried us as best I could. The second game, the game we HAD to win- we were in the thick of it, with about 4 or 5 pins separating us from our opponent. On the 9th frame, I picked up a spare. If I could simply knock a few pins down, we'd likely win. I was bowling pretty well...

But we ended up losing...by THREE PINS.

Three PINS!

Mikey bowled 5 gutterballs, that certainly contributed

to our loss, but I won't let him fall by himself. With the spare on the 9th, I simply had to make contact with any of the pins on the 10th, and we would likely wrap it up... but I bowled my FIRST gutterball of the season. If I had hit anything on the first roll of the 10th, we would have won. But, for the first time all season, I bowled a gutterball. I blew it, and we were eliminated.

Mikey was disappointed, but pleased. He remained optimistically hopeful that next year, he'd be better. Up until last week, Mikey was at the gym on Tuesdays and Thursdays, looking for me, to bowl with him. He was looking forward to this year's bowling league...

Mikey was completely harmless; he caused no problem to anyone. He never caused trouble to anyone, and was as gentle as a lamb. Mikey was, in my opinion, failed by USP Tucson, who did not ensure the safest environment to do time, which every inmate ought to have a right to have. How this prison allowed a killer, a man who did this BEFORE, to come to a prison of low violent activity, is a disturbing discredit to the dorm, the prison and the Bureau of Prisons as a whole.

Sadly, none will admit guilt, or show sympathy. It is quite possible that some of the officers here will have absolute no remorse for Mikey, because of the nature of his crime, so they will try to justify (privately of course) that perhaps Mikey DESERVED to die. No doubt, there are officers here with the same kind of demented moral beliefs as the

killers that took Mikey's life. I suspect they'll sweep Mikey's death under the rug, while the murderer lives on-likely to do it again. So... Mikey's life will be forgotten by BOP.

But not by me. I'll remember Mikey's life by my words-far more than USP Tucson will ever do.