

## **Eulogy for Sean Travis, given by Herschel Travis**

I am here today representing just one of the many families who have been devastated by the tragic events. There are the Malkiewiczzs and the Winepols of course. Then there's the Salt Creek, Don and Maggie who provided a great place to work for our loved ones. And all the great folks over there, Billie, Mike, Kayla, Craig, just to name a few. And you are a big part of one of those families. The Breckenridge family, a small town, a very close knit community has wiped out on a double black diamond, several times. And it's gonna hurt for a long time. How much can one family take? A town, a family of good, adventuresome, caring people... a few of you may have lived here all your lives but, most, like Sean and Lindsay and Michael and also Ben and Jason were lured here by the beautiful mountains and the thrill of adventure, the snowboarding. Enjoying life to it's fullest! Something that people like me only dreamed about or would come to share on vacation. They followed their dream, fulfilled they're desires and their spirit touched so many of us along their short journey. Sean and Lindsay and Michael had an appreciation for music, a passion that I never knew. I could only admire them. Their beloved Phish, following them religiously from town to town and now to what was to be the final tour... turned out to be, for sure, at least for them.

Through Sean, I was privileged to get to know this town and this family the way no tourist ever does. Everyone that I met, Sean's friends, accepted me as one of your own. I so looked forward every ski season to my vacation with Sean. And Sean would take me everywhere he went and say. "This is my Pops. I'm hangin' out with him this week." And I'd sit at the bar over at the Creek as it's affectionately known, nursing a gin and tonic while he worked. And he'd introduce me to everyone as "my Pops". And I'd admire what he had become. Sure, I'd wish that this adventure would run it's course and he'd move on and use his abilities and education and get a career. But for the moment, he was doing what he wanted and he did it well. His infectious smile, his quirky sense of humor, his hard work, his compassion, his passion, many of the traits we all admired in him. He had goals, his own restaurant, a brew pub some day. But for now he was living the fun life. They all had goals. I know Lindsay was going back to school to teach high school English.

And, while I don't believe I had ever met Michael Winepol, from what I have read, I imagine he had many of those same traits. I wish I had met him and my heart goes out to his family and friends.

Then about January this year Sean began to talk to his Mom about Lindsay. As my annual visit in late March approached I looked forward to meeting her. Hoping that maybe he had found that special someone. I think the first night I was here, Sean had her over for dinner and we talked and played cards. I was charmed by her, too. A lovely young lady, a gorgeous smile, a flirtacious sense of humor. So much in common. Of course, snowboarding but that's a given here in Breck. Disc golf. A love of music and

yes, Phish. One day Sean and I were on the slopes and stopped by the Bergenhof where Lindsay and Billie worked. She had recently hurt her leg boarding and it was sore. I told her I had some great stuff and would bring it to her. I dropped Sean off for work at the Creek and hurried to get the sports cream and back to the mountain. I took this opportunity to talk with her alone. I especially liked that when we talked she would move into my space and let me in hers. A sign of an open and warm heart. We talked a lot but the main thing I remember I told her was that I hadn't seen Sean this happy in a long time. She said I hope that I continue to keep him happy.

We saw Lindsay a lot that week, working at the Creek, going to the Beach at A-Basin, and my last night Slavin, Sean, Lindsay and I had dinner together. When we parted, she gave me a big hug and I told her how special she was, that I knew that their relationship was young and that neither knew where it would lead but that they had so much in common that at a minimum, I was sure they would always be great friends and she was always welcome in our home. She told me I was special too.

Not long after that they were going to Las Vegas and Sean was all excited because he was surprising her by taking her to see Wayne Newton. When he purchased the tickets Sean sweet talked the lady into getting a table down front where Wayne would come out and kiss all the ladies. Of course, Sean and Lindsay were not anywhere near the average age of the typical Wayne Newton fan so they were a big hit at their table. When Wayne came out to kiss them, he came to their table and when he got to Lindsay, he kissed her and then he shook Sean's hand, took another look at Lindsay and kissed her again, stood back for a 3<sup>rd</sup> look and kissed her again and gave her a hug leaving his perspiration running down her cheek. She didn't wipe her face all the rest of the night. Sean was so proud.

Sean's Mom wanted me to say something to a couple other girls who were special in his life. In her words that like the Julio & Willie Ballad

"Don't be alarmed, I'm not going to sing:"

To all the girls Sean's loved before  
Who traveled in and out my door.  
I'm glad they came along  
I dedicate this song

For they were all special to me as they were for Sean.  
Again, I'm still speaking for Vicky.

Although I never met Lindsay, I heard a lot about her from Sean and his Dad. Lindsay, was really something special to him. When we were last with him in New Orleans at Jazzfest, I could just tell. He was floating on a cloud with a glow of happiness I hadn't seen in a long time. As my friend Jo always

told me, he's so handsome and so personable, one day someone's gonna come along and sweep him off his feet. I know that day came. Sadly, for all of us, it has ended here on earth but will go on for eternity in the better life beyond.

Sean's Mom also wanted me to share a couple stories about his childhood.

When Sean was born, a dear friend gave him a stuffed elephant she had made, it was like a pillow and it got the name Ellie. Ellie became Sean's security blanket that he dragged around everywhere by the trunk. After a couple years and several trips through the washing machine it became pretty ragged. His mom told him he was going to get Ellie some new clothes. So she sewed a new Ellie and told him it was the old Ellie with new clothes. This happened several times over the years. When Sean was 8, his older cousins were teasing him about still carrying around Ellie. Sean finally came to his mom and said "I don't need Ellie any more" His mom stood there and cried and said what do you mean you don't need him any more. So mom stored Ellie in the attic.

Ironically, I had just finished this part of the story and Sean's belongings came home that he was traveling with and we unpacked it. One of the first things I came across in his duffel bag was this plastic elephant? Could this be Ellie?

Another time, Sean's goldfish died and Vicky said that he wanted to go see his mother in the ocean so if we flush him down the toilet, that's where he will go. And Sean accepted that. Do you get the feeling his Mom is trying to tell you he was gullible?

Many of you called me this past week. And we cried together and we tried to console each other. How could this be? How could God let this happen? Five vivacious young people were taken from us way too soon. Sean, Lindsay, Michael, Ben and Jason. I have given this a lot of thought in the past days. Some will justify it as God's plan! You may take comfort in this and that's OK. That he has a better future planned for them. Sure. I trust he has a better future planned for all of us and we will all be reunited some day. Otherwise what happens here on earth makes absolutely no sense.

But, for me personally, I have come to believe in the following. It's the only thing I can accept and continue on. I believe there is no way God would intentionally take away these young people and cause so much sadness. I think with God, it's like we as parents, we can raise our children and teach them values and try to protect them but eventually they must make their own way. People make mistakes and accidents happen. This is not God's will. God is not a puppeteer controlling every event. God gives us the gift of life and a heart and soul and he doesn't take it away. He can't save us from ourselves, our temptations and other evils on earth. But he receives us into his care when our time is done here on earth. And so it is with them. They are in God's care now.

Sean loved many kinds of music including jazz and bluegrass and as I leave you, I'd like to play a song that if you listen to the words, I hope will bring just a bit of comfort. Ironically, it is performed by a group called Blue Highway.

SOME DAY (The words)

Some day when my last line is written  
Some day when I've drawn my last breath  
When my last words on earth have been spoken  
And my lips are sealed in death  
Don't look on my cold form in pity  
Don't think of me as one dead  
It'll just be the house I once lived in  
My spirit by then will have fled.  
I'll have finished my time here allotted  
But I won't be in darkness alone  
I will have heard from heaven  
The summons to come on home  
And when my body is in the grave  
Don't think that I'll be there  
I won't be dead but living  
In the place Jesus went to prepare  
And after all is said and done  
No that my last earnest prayer  
Is that my loved ones be ready  
Some day to meet me there.

After the music

We thank you for today. Your friendship, your love, your memories, your stories, that's what we have to cherish in the future about our wonderful friends and family. We Love You Guys!