



'I STILL SEE HIM EVERYWHERE'

"I Still See Him Everywhere," which appeared in the July 1984 issue of Reader's Digest, was the top-rated article of the year, according to our 50 million readers.

No magazine article in 1984 was more widely read.

No magazine article in 1984 was more deeply felt.

And, perhaps, no magazine article in 1984 will have such a lasting impact.

Read it and see why.

"I Still See Him Everywhere"

By RICHARD MORSILLI, WITH JO COUDET

ON FEBRUARY 22, 1983, young Todd Morsilli of Warwick, R.I., was struck and killed by a drunk driver. He was one of 19,500 Americans who lost their lives last year in accidents caused by intoxicated drivers. Last October, Todd's father was asked to speak to students at Riverdale Country School, just north of Manhattan, about teen-age drunk driving.

As he looked around the assembly hall, Richard Morsilli wondered what he could say to persuade the students to listen. They seemed bored, restless. He felt he couldn't lecture. All he really wanted to do was to tell them how much he missed Todd. Which, more or less, is what he did.

His talk, interspersed with his thoughts as he addressed the teenagers, follows.

GOOD MORNING. My name is Richard Morsilli. Eight months ago my son Todd was struck and killed by a 17-year-old drunk driver. Todd was 13. He was a wonderful boy.

Why did I say he was wonderful? Every father thinks his kid is special. But Todd really was. He had a knack of making people feel good about themselves. The day before he was killed, I heard him say to Carole, "Hey, Mom, my friends think you're pretty."

Todd was a tennis player. He was ranked No. 3 in his age group in New England in singles, No. 1 in doubles. He was also a baseball player, and when he was younger that's all he cared about, even after we got a tennis court. Then one day his older brother had no one to play with and persuaded Todd to pick up a racket. In six months Todd was winning tournaments.

That's what made us so close, my driving him to tournaments, and having all that time in the car together. That fellow in the third row with the sun-bleached hair has the same thoughtful look Todd would get when we'd discuss things.

It sounds like Todd was really competitive, but he wasn't. I'd say, "Todd, how will you play this guy? I hear he's got a terrific cross-court return." And he'd say, "Gee, Dad, I don't know. I haven't thought about it." He liked to win, but he didn't much like to beat people. His coach urged him to play older kids to sharpen his skills, but he hated to do it because he knew it upset them to get beaten by a youngster.

I was the one who had visions of Wimbledon. All Todd ever said was, "That's a long way off, Dad. A lot can happen." Did he sense what was coming, like the garden that blooms like crazy just before frost?

Last February 22, Todd was walking along the street with his cousin Jeff. The two boys were only five weeks apart in age, and inseparable. Jeff had been watching Todd play tennis that morning, and they were on their way to rent skis for a Catholic Youth Organization weekend. First they stopped at our house to get money for ice-cream cones. "You know, Mom," Todd said after she had given him what change she had in her pocketbook, "what we'd really like are milkshakes." His mother laughed and went upstairs for more money.

That girl in the third row with the sweet face just caught her breath. She's thinking what Carole can't help but think—that if she'd said no, the boys would have left the house earlier; they'd have turned the corner before the car came.

An elderly neighbor told us afterward that he was out shoveling his driveway when the boys went by. It was a holiday, Washington's Birthday, and the sun sparkling on the snow made the world seem paved with diamonds. The boys offered to finish the job for him, but he said he was glad to be outside, and they went on. The neighbor saw the car coming, Jeff saw it too. The car was weaving. They both shouted and Jeff jumped into a snowbank, but Todd... Todd... couldn't get out of the way.

Oh, God, help me get through this without crying. I've got to keep going. The car... struck Todd. He was... thrown 90 feet... The car didn't stop...

It's been eight months. Will I ever be able to talk about it without breaking down?

I'm sorry. Forgive me. You just can't imagine how... overwhelming it is. I got a call at my office. It was someone at the hospital. The voice said a boy's been hurt. We think it's your son. Can you come right away? All I remember is saying, over and over: Just let there be a chance. He'll make it, if he has a chance, because he doesn't give up. He didn't get his chance. At the hospital a priest met me and took me into a little room... Todd's mother and I didn't even have time to hope. By the time we knew about it at all, he was gone.

He's gone, and I still see him everywhere. I see him as I glance around

this hall. In the clean line of your chin, there on the aisle. And there, first row middle, in your slim, strong frame. And in you, too, young lady, in the way he bit his lip to keep the tears from coming.

The next thing you know you're preparing for a funeral. You're saying things like: His grave's got to be under a tree. You're making telephone calls. You're answering the doorbell. His friends...

Little girls asking if they could have one of Todd's tennis shirts. Little boys intending just to shake hands, but then moving into my arms as though, if we hugged hard enough, we could blot out the emptiness.

Nine hundred people jammed the church for his funeral. "It was like he was everyone's best friend," a 15-year-old who spoke at the service said. "You were just glad he was your friend too."

We buried Todd in his warm-up suit and his cap. Everyone knew that beige-felt cap. It was like the one worn by Fiew McMillan, the South African tennis player. Todd admired him because he was always a gentleman on court.

Afterward, we got letters from all over the country—hundreds of letters—from people who'd met Todd at tournaments. They pretty much said the same thing: We knew your son. He was a terrific tennis player. But, even more, he was such a nice boy.

I called one father to ask if his son Andrew, a black friend of Todd's, would be a pallbearer. "Andrew would really like that," his father said. "He thought the world of your boy, ever since the first time they played a match against each other. Andrew had forgotten his water bottle, and Todd leaned over and said, 'Share mine.'"

A black boy, a Chinese boy and two Jewish boys, his tennis rivals and friends, helped carry Todd to his grave. They followed everyone else up to the altar for communion.

Then the funeral was over. You've buried your son, and you go back to work. The world goes on. But things don't mean the same. I'm no different from your fathers. I wanted to provide a bright future for my family. All I can tell you now is I'd give up all I have in a minute if I could just have Todd back.

Shall I tell them about the fox? No, probably not. I don't want them to turn me off.

Because of Todd's tennis playing, there was a lot in the newspapers about the tragedy. They called it a hit-and-run accident, which it was, except that the girl ran into a tree a mile down the road so the police caught her right away. She'd spent the holiday drinking beer at a friend's house, starting at ten in the morning, and later they switched to vodka.

She goes to school. I see her at the supermarket. Is her life going on as usual? Did Todd's death make any difference?

People wanted to do something.

They started a Todd Morsilli Memorial Fund. Somebody suggested renaming the tennis courts at Roger Williams Park in Providence in honor of Todd. In June the first annual Todd Morsilli Memorial Tournament was held there.

Sometimes I tell myself: He was just a 13-year-old boy. How could he have touched so many lives? Sometimes I think: It was just another tragedy. How could so many lives be so terribly changed by it? But it's true.

I worry about Todd's brother David. He looks so much like Todd that people expect him to be Todd. I worry about Todd's sister Lisa, because she and Todd were closest. I worry about Todd's kid sister Kristin. She was visiting a friend before the accident and hadn't seen Todd in two days. She's recently become very enthusiastic about tennis. Is she genuinely interested? Or is she trying to make up to us for Todd? And I worry about Jeff, Todd's cousin, because he lost his father four months before Todd was killed.

I pray every day he'll make it. I pray every day that all of us make it.

They say grief brings people closer together. It's not true. Grief is isolating. It locks you up in your own heart. If Carole and I hadn't had such a good marriage, I think we'd have come apart. I was out of the house all day, but Carole was home, and everywhere she looked there was something to remind her of Todd. And I think the strain began to tell.

What saved us was the squirrel. If Kristin hadn't told Carole about the car in front of us hitting a squirrel and my getting out, pointlessly, to move the poor broken body to the side of the road and then sitting down on the curb sobbing, the silence might have won out over us. But that squirrel saved Carole and me. We talked to each other then. We realized we had to get help, and Carole took a part-time job to get out of the house.

I'm not on a crusade. As you know by now, I'm no speaker. And I didn't come to tell you not to drink. I only came to say that when you do drink, please, please, don't drive. If you're with someone who's drinking, please, please, call your parents to come get you. Because if something happens to you, it won't be just another tragedy; it'll be their beloved child. And if you kill someone else's child, it'll be someone like my son Todd. It doesn't have to happen. Don't let it happen.

I guess that's all I have to say. Thank you for listening.

Did I say enough? Did I say too much? Why, they're applauding. They're all standing up. That fellow is coming up on the platform. He's holding out his hand. They're lining up. Are they all going to shake my hand?

Thank you. I'm glad I came too. No, she didn't go to jail. Her three-year sentence was suspended. Her probation terms included regular

psychological counseling, work at a halfway house and no drinking. And her driver's license was suspended for five years.

Thank you. Take care of yourselves. All of you, please, please, take care of yourselves.

WHAT NICE KIDS they are. I think if I'd told them about the fox, they'd have understood. They'd have appreciated how astonishing it was, when we'd never seen a fox before, to have one come and stand on the patio two days after Todd's death—just come and stand there staring at the kitchen window before it turned and slowly moved away.

Carole's pregnant sister came to be with her that afternoon. "I've been looking at a book of baby names," she said. "Did you know when you named Todd that it means 'fox'?"

Was Todd trying to tell us he's all right? I think these kids would understand how much we want to believe that.

Freshman Survival Guide

by Jim Higgins

Are you among the many freshman students here at dear, old Penn State living in fear and anxiety of:

- An intimidating professor
- Your next set of exams
- A misleading advisor
- A sexually attractive person
- All of the above

Then do not fear, because believe it or not we superior sophomores at Penn State have been through it all. So here are some tips on how to conquer any and all of your paranoias checked above:

Tip -1: Professors, believe it or not, are people too. If you fear their authority or ignore their assistance outside of class, you are only hurting yourself, and your chances to improve communication with and recognition by your professor.

Tip -2: To worry yourself about something you haven't even faced yet is pointless and discouraging. If you keep up with the assignments, attend classes, and discuss the material with other students ahead of time you can still have time to review all the material prior to the big exam. Remember: relax, and budget your time efficiently so you can achieve the grades you desire.

Tip -3: Advisors may seem oblivious to your individual needs as a student faced with many decisions, but they're not. Although they are supposed to guide you along the path of course requirements, they cannot make your decisions for you. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to gather the information about course requirements. So be persistent and respect office hours, and be on time for any appointments previously arranged. You can be less worried about next semester while more concerned about this one.

Tip -4: That beautiful or handsome college student next to you in psychology looks like a nice person. So what are you going to do? You're going to meet them. Introduce yourself, and at least try to learn his or her name. Making friends (especially in your respective classes) makes the burden of college work less demanding. You can share thoughts and ideas about the material outside of lecture. Who knows? Maybe you'll learn a phone number along with the slope of x when y⁰.

Tip -5: Study Tips 1-4 very closely.

The Lion's Eye in Focus Again!

by Hetal Parmar

After a long absence, the Lion's Eye presses are rolling again. The credit goes to Colleen Kelly, a sophomore majoring in marketing here at the Penn State Delaware County Campus, and the editor of the Lion's Eye. As a freshman, she admitted articles to the Lion's Eye only to find out that nothing would become of them due to staffing problems last year. This made her twice as determined to put out a paper this year — not just a paper, but one that will leave its mark as one of the best.

Colleen is a full-time student, the founder of S.A.D.D. (Students Against Drunk Driving) at this campus, a member of the Dean's list, and a 30-hour-a-week employee. Although she has many responsibilities pulling away at her, she made sure that she saved some time to bring the Lion's Eye into focus. She was well aware as she took on the task of becoming the editor that this was not going to be an easy job, but her

2 years worth of experience as the editor of Sun Valley High School's paper has been very helpful.

Colleen was discouraged at the turnout from the first meeting, but the students that did attend share her enthusiasm in getting a quality paper out. In order to do this, many different features have been added on — features such as a Lion's Mouth section (Dear Abby column), comic strips, and entertainment events, to name a few.

There is no doubt that with the dedicated staff this year, the Lion's Eye will be a success. So, READ ALL ABOUT IT . . .

THE LION'S EYE IS IN FOCUS AGAIN!

During their lifetime, one of every two Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related traffic accident. Your chances of being killed or seriously injured in such an accident are one in 33. That should be a sobering statistic. But last year, more than 23 thousand deaths and 65 thousand injuries were caused by drunk drivers.

