

 There are moments that make you stop - and pause. Moments in which your awareness is heightened, and your mind goes into "retrospective mode".

I had one of those moments a few days ago. A sad moment. A funny moment. A disheartening moment.

I still get my Queen's Alumni newsletter sent to me. Some months, I read it with greater attention than others, and as luck would have it, this was one of those months. Sitting at the kitchen table, cereal bowl in front of me, Queen's Alumni Review being reviewed. I like reading the sections that have brief little reports from my decade of graduation. Occasionally I will see a little tidbit on someone I know, or perhaps someone that lived in Gordon House (my dorm) or was affiliated with the physiotherapy program. It's great to see what has happened to people as they have gone down the many roads that life provides all of us ... and where we end up - mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually - in the process.

They have birth notices, career and life updates, and death notices.

And as I turned the page, there it was - on the bottom of page 43 ...

It was old news (from the [http://www.gogaelsgo.com/news/2009/2/25/bball?0225095850.aspx](http://www.gogaelsgo.com/news/2009/2/25/bball?0225095850.aspx "Queen's Basketball mourns loss of Mark Alessio") target="self" title="Queen's Basketball mourns loss of Mark Alessio">end of February</a> ), but apparently it was new news to me. And it was in a section that I rarely note anything of personal importance - the death notices.

[http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2009-02-26/sports/former-queens-basketball-player-killed-madagascar/](http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2009-02-26/sports/former-queens-basketball-player-killed-madagascar/ "Alessio killed in Madagascar") target="self" title="Alessio killed in Madagascar">Mark Alessio</a> was [http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2009-02-26/sports/former-queens-basketball-player-killed-madagascar/](http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2009-02-26/sports/former-queens-basketball-player-killed-madagascar/ "Alessio killed in Madagascar") target="self" title="Alessio killed in Madagascar">killed</a> in Madagascar.

Mark was a player on the Queen's men's basketball team when I was working with them as a student PT/athletic therapist. That was back in the 1987-1988 season. It was the best year of my university days, without a doubt. I traveled with the team, worked all of their home and away games and most of their practices. Day in and day out, the players would come down to the training room before practice to get their ankles taped. Every time they entered the room, they were timing me on the clock on the wall behind me (just under a minute, on a good day). I always felt that at a school that focused on football and rugby (yes, rugby), the basketball program deserved the same level of attention.

Those were great days. The players and coaches all welcomed my involvement, and truly made me a part of the team. In an environment like that, you really get to know everyone on a much deeper level. The road trips were often long. In Canada, the athletics budgets are nowhere near those in the U.S., and typically most away games were scheduled with the women's basketball team on the same trip.

They were a hilarious group. The road trips were full of jokes and smack talk. There were plenty of antics, as you can imagine from a group of 14 collegiate hoops players. There was Doug Laughton (the guitar player) ... Tom Cavanagh (of "Ed" fame on NBC) ... Mike Scotten (the eccentric All-Star) ... I can't even describe all of the great and memorable personalities.

During the season, they all took the time to sign a copy of our "press guide" for me, and in it are the words of none other than Mark Alessio, #33 ...*"Al, you're the king of physiotherapy. I hope our relationship remains on a friendly level. Love and shit, Mark"*. I can hear him saying it - with his sense of humor and smack talk.

 There was the victory against #1 ranked University of Toronto - the night I posted a poem - "Believe In Yourself" - in the locker room. And there was Color Night, the night that I was presented the Hal Dunlop Shield (one of the seven top athletics

awards at queen's University) for "significant contribution to athletic therapy" at Queen's. And there was the ensuing standing ovation from my teammates. But the best of all of it was the comradery with people like - Alessio. There are so many fleeting memories and smiles to this day.

And now, there's the sadness that one of our own has passed away - at such a young age. One of "the team" has died. One of those great people that would be sitting at the back of the bus, just enjoying the life of a collegiate athlete on a bus trip to Sudbury ... or Ottawa ...

Mark, thanks for contributing to some of the great times in my life. Your persona will be remembered. And I pause today - to do just that - remember.

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