Here's a question for you: how long have you known your best friend? A few years? Maybe a decade? Since college?

How many can say that they've had a best friend since before kindergarten? Well, I can ... and it's a very cool thing indeed.

I've had the good fortune of knowing Richard since I was 3 or 4 ... and yes, that would be 38 or 39 years now! You think it's a long time - but when you look back on it, you realize that it's all gone by so quickly and goes faster every day. It seems like yesterday that we were in kindergarten together - and yes, I do vaguely remember that. Growing up in a small town, it's pretty easy to envision going to the same elementary school and the same high school. And what never ceases to amaze me most is that no matter how long we've not spoken to each other or seen each other, when we pick back up again it's like no time has passed. We invariably pick up where we left off last time.

That's the beauty of a strong friendship.

What also amazes me when I look back in time is how much has happened to us, in both of our lives, over the duration of it. A lot of water has passed under many bridges since I've known Richard. Hell, when you think of it, it's my whole life that has passed with him being a part of it. I don't know many people that can say that about someone in their life - other than their direct family members. By now, we know each other pretty well - the foibles, the strengths, the pet peeves (yes I am sure we both have them!) - but isn't that what makes it all so special?

There have been so many things that have happened over time - good and bad - that he's been there through. I remember those trying teenage years ... when we'd sit and talk about sports and life and what our lives would hold for us in the future. We were from very different backgrounds - but always managed to find some common ground, one way or the other. College years came and went and we were still in steady contact, even when he was in Scotland! I was a groomsman at his wedding - where I met my ex-wife. I've watched his two amazing kids grow up ... and there is nothing that marks the time quite like watching young children grow up right in front of you. I see him and his family about once a year - and a lot happens with kids over the course of a year! I've coached him since he started doing triathlons. We even shared our Ironman experience at Lake Placid - two first-timers chuckling as we

embarked on our adventure into the washing machine swim frenzy that was Mirror Lake. It's amazing how many landmark times have been impacted by this one person - in one way or another.

And ... I am so glad that's the case.

Because if you're like me, you can only be so lucky to have the same best friend for almost all of your years on the planet.

This week, he's in Austin for the first time in 15 years - to spend some quality time here, and to do a triathlon here. It's been a fun weekend. I am sure it will not be the last time - and I look forward to the next time - as I always do.

The race today was canceled due to some abysmal weather conditions. But while we waited for the race directors to make a decision regarding the race, we could be found standing there, waiting, shooting the breeze effortlessly as we always have.

The triathlon may have been canceled - but as always, our friendship just stepped forward and around this little glitch. Hey, this gives us more time to talk smack with each other and enjoy the day, regardless of what the weather (or life) brings. That, my friends, is the beauty of it all.