

Christian's Eulogy

On behalf of my wife, Sheila, my children Stephanie and Cameron, I wish to thank you all for coming today and thank you for all the support you have offered to our family.

Sheila and I are blessed to have been chosen by god to be Christian's parents. He was truly a very special child.

Despite the numerous surgeries, radiation and chemo treatments over the past six years, Christian always bounced back quickly, anxious to jump back into life every time – always with a smile on his face. Christian faced these challenges head-on, with bravery and courage. He never let his afflictions slow him down or inhibit his ability to bring joy to others. Christian had this light that radiated from him that drew people in. He had an enormous love of life.

Christian was never shy around anyone. He was just as comfortable having a conversation with an adult as he was hanging around with his classmates. He had a wit and charm about him that could warm anyone's heart. When you saw Christian, he would look you in the eye, always greet you by name with a heartfelt hello and the maturity of a young man years beyond his age. Christian loved to make people laugh. Christian had a sleepover at a friend's house, not too long ago, and slept on one of those inflatable aero mattresses. The next morning his friends' mom asked how he had slept. Christian gave her a sly look and said, "Well, I was kind of in pain." Of course she got very nervous and said, "Pain? What kind of pain?" And Christian said, "Well, you know, from the aero bed. The *arrow* bed? It was kind of sharp."

Christian was a part of Red Sox nation's greatest generation. He saw two World Series championships before he was eight years old. Most of the nation had to wait 86 years to witness those championships. When interviewed by Fox news, before attending the World Series in '04, Christian so eloquently stated in 4 year-old speak, what we all knew about our arch-rivals: "the Yankees poop in their pants." Christian made some special friends in Red Sox Nation. Its not often that a an all-star, gold glove, MVP caliber, Major League ball player, from the world series champs, comes to your house to personally deliver a birthday present.

We are very grateful for the extraordinary medical care that Christian received during his six-year battle against cancer. We are especially grateful to Mass General Hospital for Children who, over the last four years, provided our family with the opportunity to enjoy many more beautiful memories of birthday parties, vacations, holidays and other events with Christian. When others lost hope, MGH kept hope alive. We are forever indebted to the entire medical team who thought out-of-the-box to find an effective treatment. Christian endeared himself to the medical staff at the Yawkey building, whether he was

making coffee for the staff (he became quite the little barista), cracking jokes or toying with Dr. Ebb during an exam.

Christian and Sheila had much more than a normal mother-child relationship. On several occasions, Sheila and Christian could be found in clinic, right down the hall from one another receiving chemo treatments at the same time; Sheila in the adult infusion area, Christian in Pediatric infusion. The bond that Christian felt with his mother, as they battled their illnesses together, made having cancer less scary for Christian. Every night at bed time, Sheila would lie with Christian before he fell asleep and say their prayers together with comfort and love.

The generosity of our neighbors in Newton and our friends and family in Westfield and Chicago and our employers, has helped us ease the financial burden of dealing with two serious illnesses in the family. The countless hours spent by to organize yard sales, poker tournaments and picnics have been much appreciated. Your support and friendship have helped us through this time. Christian's love for life has meant so much to our family and so much to those who knew him. Christian has an extraordinary way of bringing hundreds of people together in a community of love and support.

We are grateful for the Bowen Elementary School community. All of our children, including Stephanie and Cameron, not only attended Bowen but shared the same kindergarten teacher, Mr. Kemp Harris, who has been a phenomenal educator and close friend. Christian and Kemp were inseparable. Christian loved going to school. Every morning he would happily march into Bowen greeting everyone he knew by their name. Making people around him feel special came very naturally to Christian. Maybe he couldn't walk like the other kids or play sports, but boy did he love to tool around the halls at Bowen with his blue walker or zip around the gym on the Roller Racer.

He loved his friends and classmates. They meant so much to him. Christian knew he could just be a normal kid around his buddies. Before Christian started to use a walker at school, his classmates would often volunteer to hold Christian's hand and help steady his gait. With a joyous personality like his, it was not too surprising that the kids who most often volunteered to hold Christian's hand were the girls in his class.

Christian often came home and told us that THAT day, was the best day he ever had at school. One of those days occurred earlier this Spring when his Tresca cement truck, came to visit the school. With the truck parked at the curb outside the building, Christian was lifted up on top of the fender and faced an audience of about 150 teachers and students. Christian took questions from the audience, just like a press conference. He had everyone cracking up with laughter as he answered questions.

Toward the end, aware that he was very sick, Christian was bound and determined to have a good time with his friends on his eighth birthday. He started planning the party months in advance. He had Raffi drive his buddies to the party at the Lego Store in the stretch limo (how many 8 year olds do you know who have their own limo driver). As the kids gathered to begin building their Lego Star Wars, who crashes the party but none other than Darth Vader himself, two of his clone troopers and Boba Fett. His friends later commented that this was the best – party – EVER. It was a great moment for Christian to share with his friends. He loved Star Wars; he loved his Legos; he loved his Webkins; he loved his computer games, a small cheese pizza from Bill's, a plain Flippin burger, six-piece chicken nugget happy meals, he even developed a taste for ribs.

But most of all Christian loved his family. His cousins were very dear to him – in Westfield, in North Carolina, in Illinois. He enjoyed holiday visits with the aunts and uncles, grand parents, vacations on the beach in Chatham. Christian loved his big brother Cameron, and looked up him, because he knew Cam would always protect him. Big sister Stephanie and Christian somehow always seemed to find a way to cause some trouble. Christian will forever be your little Oodoo.

The light that Christian carried around in him, through his spirit of hope and optimism in the face of adversity; his sense of courage, tenacity, love of others; the way he celebrated the gift of every day; are all things that will carry our family, our friends and neighbors forever. We were so fortunate to have Christian with us. He was a shining light in all of our lives. Sheila and I hope that our family can continue to spread the light that Christian embodied as we continue in his memory. We wish that everyone will take a little part of Christian's light home with them today.

Christian even when he was having trouble walking, he would have his bike out with the other kids, put his foot back on the pedal, and keep moving on. Any other kid would give up and go inside, he would keep riding that bike and wanted more than anything to be a regular kid. He always kept up with the other kids throughout his struggle. His tenacity for life was unstoppable.

Countless nights in the hospital were eased by your caring demeanor. I would always sleep by in the hospital with Christian at night in the hospital and he always felt safe with me by his side at night and His mother during the day.

The only other suggestion I might offer for towards the end is if you had any more thoughts about what you hope people will take as lessons for their lives from Christian's ... Courage, tenacity, love, celebrating the gift of every day. I think also of what a model he gave all of us of noticing and caring about other people. I will never forget all the times I was walking

up Jackson Street with my kids to Bowen and Sheila would be coming down with Christian in the stroller on the other side of the street and from 200 feet away he'd shout, Hi, Peter!! Absolutely heartwarming, and I can't think of any other child I have ever known who was so aware of other people and so filled with love for them, and his life has demonstrably done an extraordinary, even miraculous, job of *bringing hundreds of people together in a community of love and support*. That comes to me as an inspiration. I don't really think there is necessarily more you need to say, but if you had any other thoughts along those lines, that's the one thing I pass along as a suggestion.

