

By Richard Stevenson

GREETINGS FREE WORLD! I'm writing you with a heavy heart and a lot on my mind. You see, I just found out yesterday that my youngest brother Gerald (Tiny) passed away from a cardiac arrest at 48. I'm sending my deepest love out to all my nephews and nieces. Uncle Richie is loving you with everything I have. Robert and Tracey, keep your head up because you are setting the example for the next gen to follow. They are learning from us how to deal with extreme adversity. There was 4 of us, and now there is 3. I love you.

My brother came in the way he left - too soon. He was born a month premature and with a heart murmur. When my parents brought him home from the hospital my mom explained his situation to a 5 year old me. My dad has hands like a steam shovel and was afraid to pick my little brother up because he was so small and fragile. As such, he scooped him into a coffee pot and carried him around that way until he finally outgrew it. For a while he called him coffee pot. But being a month premature and so undersized we all began calling him Tiny.

Of the 4 of us Tiny and I were the closest. At 5 years old and being the oldest it was my job to exercise him. I'd take him and put him on his back, grab his little legs and push and pull them back and forth. Right then I realized how easy it was for me to make him laugh. We lived on the 7th floor in the projects. When my brother grew big enough to walk it was my job to walk him up and down the stairs. He loved it just because he was with me. We did nearly everything together. Eventually it was I who taught him about the birds and the bees.

As a tot my brother's head outgrew the rest of him. Whenever he fell he usually got up with a speed knot on his head. So we'd call him Lump-Lump when we didn't call him Tiny. If he saw me do something he thought was cool he would find a way to do it better. As you might have guessed I took several trips to the hospital for stitches. When he understood that the source of my athleticism was the weight room he began to do the same. You should have seen the look on his face when he finally beat

me in a foot race. He grinned all day and told everyone. Then he beat me in arm wrestling. The list goes on.

When I bought my first car you would've thought he was glad I hit the Lotto. So at 14 I surprised him with his first driving lesson. I think that grin lasted for years. He couldn't wait to get his own. I took him to work with me and showed him my pay check and bills so that he could truly understand the value of money and taught him why it was so important to save. I wish I could have taught him what I now know about buying and selling securities.

Watching me my brother had learned that there was a connection between the attention I was getting from girls and the clothes I wore. Since my mom required that we washed our own clothes I began to notice that my bag of laundry was getting heavier than usual. Yep, you got it. Tiny had been sneaking in my closet. Rather than get angry I took him shopping.

As adults the four of us went our own paths but was always in sight of each other. I miss my "Little brother" (he hated that) so much. The funny thing is that he always introduced me as his big brother. Everyone who knew him will miss him.

Lump Lump, I'll tell your kids and nephews all about you at first chance. I love you and miss you Tiny...We all do.
Rit.