



VINCENT FREY WE LOVE YOU

Washington Irving said, “There is a sacredness in tears. They are not a mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition and of unspeakable love.” We will shed tears for our loss because we’ve been caught off guard, shoved off balance...how can it be that someone like Vincent who brought us such light and life and laughter could now bring us such excruciating pain? Chris, he was crazy about you! Because of you Vincent lived and died knowing what it was like to love and be loved completely—you couldn’t have given him a greater gift. Because of all that love you poured into him, he was overflowing with an abundance of it that he shared with us. The fact that he had the freedom to spread all the joy he did says as much about you as it did about him, Chris, so we thank you, we thank you for sharing him.

Ruth, you were the love of his life, his entire life! You gave us the greatest gift of all...you gave us Vincent. The first time I met him was about 13 years ago when you brought him to my table at Ruth Chris’, as proud as a mother could be to introduce him around, just as you had thousands of times before since he was a little boy—and everyone who met him—whether he was 4 or 40—thought the same thing: “He’s so cute, so sweet and so very special.” We will be forever grateful to you for bringing such a magical soul into our world.

Like many of you here, we got to know each other better over the years working on the same campaigns and issues, but we became inseparable after we bonded over our doggies, my Emerson and his Madison. He admitted he had always thought it was so stupid when people went on and on about their dogs, talked about them like they were children and had to rush home to check on the damn dog...but all that changed once he fell head over heels for Maddie. He couldn't wait to have lunch and show each other photos of our babies.

Since then, for the past two and a half years, he's been my date to almost everything and he was the best date ever. We never heard of an event we didn't like—we'd go to the opening of a door! Unlike most sane people, we enjoyed going to any and all political or charitable events and of course to performances at the Smith Center (he did draw the line when I wanted him to go to Willie Nelson with me, though)...I know a lot of you are thinking, "He wasn't always her date, he was my date, no he was my date, no he was mine"...you're right...that just shows we couldn't keep up with him—he needed multiple dates to go to everything he wanted to attend, sometimes two or three events in one day. And he loved having those great seats he and Chris have at the Smith Center where he could look back at others and wave, he was thrilled to sit at a VIP table at galas, and standing close enough to the evening's honoree so he'd be in all the photos was one of his favorite hobbies. He did, without shame, love the spotlight and recognition—as most of us do but don't admit—but it went way beyond that: he thrived on the human connections, the sense of community and knowing that by participating he was making a difference. And make a difference he did.

Vincent didn't just fight for equality—which you'll hear more about later—he didn't just fight for it, he lived it. That's why, other than the special love he shared

with his partner, his mother and others in his family, we were all loved equally by him. He didn't fawn over celebrities and Presidents any more than he fawned over any of us. We all knew, without a doubt, that just like he lovingly and tenderly cared for Bob Forbuss during his illness, he would care for us if we needed him. Whether you knew Vincent for 5 minutes or like his family, for almost 5 decades, he had a positive and lasting impact on you. It was as if he pulled up a big chair, sat down and made himself comfortable in your heart. He found light and laughter everywhere... After meeting and immediately falling in love with my aunts and their love story, he started referring to me as cousin and loved to tease me about sharing in any future inheritance.

Did anyone love to be in photos more than Vincent Frey? I don't think so. And as much as we teased him about them, they brought us such joy, and now such comfort...he even turned eating a drumstick into a photo op! I'm not usually crazy about photos of me, so we had a few disagreements about them. He posted a photo on FB once that I hated and I called him and said, "Take it down. I looked horrible." He was horrified—first of all, he couldn't understand anyone not liking their image because he adored every photo of himself...and second, he was stunned that I thought anyone would be looking at me instead of him!

He would get mad at me because I had this certain facial expression I would use and then not like the outcome—not too long ago he yelled, "You're just like Chris—he does the same thing!" Chris and I have committed to channel Vincent when we have photos taken in the future—so please understand when you see us striking over-the-top Vincent poses.

When our friends die, it's a lot like New Year's resolutions, we say we're going to be different...we're going to tell our friends and family we love them, we're going to see them more often, we're going to make time for what's important, but we don't. Vincent won't let us go back on these resolutions. Look to the people next to you for a minute...if you're moved to tell them you love them, tell them, but at the very least give them a big, Vincent smile.

How can we continue to honor Vincent—and make no mistake, we have an obligation to live some of his stolen life through ours—well, we can honor him by imitating him. Most importantly, we can reach out to Chris and Ruth—not just at this time, but also in 3 months, in 6 months in a year—because their loss is immeasurable. We need to be there for them because Vincent can't be. So how do we imitate and therefore honor our Vincent? Those of us in the program can live the 12 steps like he did and especially the 12th step, carrying our message to other alcoholics—and those not in the program can carry his message of love; we can be present and bring our authentic self to every conversation so the person we're speaking with knows we see him, hear him, respect and honor him; we can bravely stand up and speak up on controversial issues like Vincent did—bravely, courageously, loudly, boldly; we can send thoughtful messages to people instead of just thinking about it; we can share a book we hope will help someone; we can share a smile with everyone; and certainly what would please him the most is if we would all learn to pose big and love our own image! And so, please, one more time for Vincent, let's strike a pose!

Vincent loved life. He loved laughter. And he loved each of you.