

COOL BREEZES

The older I get, there are more things that I am aware of that I might have taken for granted in my younger days. I don't know if it is the wisdom of aging, or a maturing of some sort but I find that I am more appreciative of things that I probably took for granted when I was younger. Likewise, there are things, that when I was younger, used to be really important to me which seem now to be trivial and meaningless.

One of these things that I have come to appreciate more is a cool breeze on a hot sunny day. A day when you are outside and have things to do and the sun is beating down on you. It is one of those days when there is no mercy from the heat. You try to focus on your task but the heat is so relentless that you want to give up and just quit. Unfortunately, quitting is not an option. You have to finish your task. There is no one else who can do it, it's your responsibility but the sun and the heat are unforgiving.

When you have almost had it, almost given up hope, you start to notice a little movement in the leaves. Next, your sweat soaked shirt starts to give you the first signs of relief. Then the cool breeze flows over your body and all you can do is sigh and enjoy the moment. Thank you God for sending me what I needed just when I really needed it. I think I can make it now, Thank you for that cool breeze.

How many cool breezes do we get in our lives? One of my cool breezes was named Ruben. When we met, Ruben was a 30 year old gangsta looking Colombian and I was a 44 year old "kracker" from Tennessee. He was one of the first people that I met when I started a new job at Empire Seafood three years ago. We had nothing in common and yet we became the best of friends.

We went through management changes together, good times together, bad times together, friends come and friends go, and through everything our friendship grew.

Ruben was one of the most positive people that I have ever known. If I was having a really bad day, I would find my cool breeze and talking and laughing with Ruben would be the relief that I needed to keep on going. He made me laugh, he kept me focused, he reminded me what was important in life, and he kept me from giving up and helped me to continue on my path. He was my brother from another mother!

The entire time that I had known Ruben, he was battling cancer. This positive, uplifting, and encouraging young man was battling a terrible disease that just would not give him a break. He would beat it down and it would just keep coming back. Despite the pain of his cancer treatments and the uncertainty of his future, he was always positive and upbeat. He was appreciative of every day of life that God had blessed him with. His positive attitude lifted everyone up.

About a week ago, on a Thursday night, I talked to my friend on the phone. It had been a while since we had talked, he had moved to North Carolina about a year ago and we hadn't seen each other since then. It was an emotional and difficult conversation and I thank God that we had one last chance to talk.

I received a message from Ruben's wife, Flor telling me that Ruben wanted to talk to me. She said call anytime but call soon. When I called my friend, he told me that he was in the hospital and that he wasn't going home this time. He was tired and he was weak but he still was Ruben. We shared our thoughts and feelings and at the end, for the last time, we said goodbye to each other.

As I shared earlier, I am now aware of more things. I am more appreciative of things, but even more aware and appreciative of people in my life. Like a cool breeze on a hot sunny day, Ruben came into my life and gave me just what I needed. He gave me respect, he gave me a positive outlook on life, and he gave me a deep, close friendship.

The next time you are out in the hot sun and the heat is beating you down, when a good cool breeze blows through and brings you relief, I hope you think of Ruben or someone in your life that has blessed you with a deep, close friendship. We need to be aware of the blessings that we have and we need to be thankful for special people in our lives. We need to be thankful for cool breezes.

Jeff