

Ben

This has been the hardest week of my life, so please laugh at my jokes.

Late last night I was thinking about Queen and how Ben idolized Freddie mercury. During a queen concert, Freddie would do a call and response with the audience and I can't think of a more perfect thing to do right now. So please, all that are here and watching from home, play along (or else this will be really awkward)

Aye-o

The amount of people attending this celebration from either here or at home would be surprising to anyone who did not know Ben, but the amount of people is a testament to the joy and light he brought into so many people's lives. A lot of my friends are here right now and although they did not have more than a couple interactions with him, they loved him. I also know all of them are also here to support my family today, even if they didn't know Ben. However, I think knowing anyone in my family means that you knew Ben. If you've ever experienced my dad's wisdom and patience, you knew Ben. If you have ever experienced my mom's passion and commitment, you knew Ben. If you ever were on the receiving end of Miles' understanding and empathy, you knew Ben. And if you ever thought "hey, that Coleman kid just made a really inappropriate joke", that, too, had a good amount to do with Ben.

At a young age, I just thought Ben was different and I knew he had autism- but I didn't quite know what that meant. I don't remember my parents really describing it to me, I mean they probably did and I just didn't listen, so I kind of got the opportunity to define what it meant for myself. Ben wasn't different in a weird type of way, but more of like a pours milk before cereal type of way, but Ben didn't drink milk, or eat cereal. He was more of a guy who only eats 7 foods. And that was just a quirk of his and he had a lot. Sure, long car rides could go bad quickly, but I can't imagine any family can go on a 3+ hour car ride without some sort of debacle. He was my older brother who had luscious eyelashes, an amazing smile, and also autism.

This week, I've heard so many stories from family, friends, and people who I have never heard of. So many of these people have talked about how it was so sweet that Ben would try to remember things about them. I think that is so funny. I really don't think Ben ever remembered anything for the sake of other people. It was sweeter and more genuine, actually. Ben found excitement and beauty in the smallest things from a middle name to a hometown.

One of the best things I have ever done in my life was take Ben on a 6 day road trip to Chicago. It was our last big hurrah before I went to start my job. We spent hours in the car together and went through what he refers to definitively as the old southwest and old northwest territories. The excitement he got when we entered each territory was something I just did not understand if I'm gonna be completely honest. Our first stop was in Chicago to see Miles and Anna Kate. We

had an incredible night where we all hung out with Miles' friends and Ben, of course, was the life of the party. It felt so natural and I don't think any of us ever laughed harder than we did that night. Then we went to visit my great aunt where Ben and I caught up with someone who just adored him. Our next big stop was Springfield Illinois to visit one of my best friends, Matt Knox. Matt has a puppy named Larry. Ben was in a room where the door wouldn't close and Larry, being the rascal he was, kept stealing Ben's socks. As anyone here can imagine, this made Ben laugh and start calling Larry a thief. Matt and I could not stop laughing the whole night. For our final leg of the trip, we stopped in his favorite city in the old southwest territory, Louisville. When we pulled up to the highway, he told me to play the quiet game and turn off the music. This was his way of politely telling me to shut up. I drove as he videoed the skyline narrating with an occasional "Wow" as we passed one of his favorite buildings. I had never seen him so happy. Then Ben and I took my friend Emily Lenihan out to dinner, and followed Ben's directions as we went all the way across town just so we could do the exact same drive on that highway again. He might have actually been happier the second time we did the same drive. I just didn't understand what he saw in that city. Nevertheless, that trip will always be the best and most important road trip in my life.

I can't find this quote anywhere but I heard it one day and have always wanted to emulate it. A truly happy man finds more beauty in a blade of grass than a wonderful sunset. I can't think of a better quote to represent my brother.

His blade of grass was the thoughts and feelings of animals, the city of Louisville, criminals, British rap, going straight and fast on the jet ski, the make and models of RVs, and the historical sequence of geographical districts of the United States. They were odd, but they gave him so much joy.

For the longest time, Ben didn't want to grow up. He was neophobic: meaning he had a fear of new things. He wanted to stay a clocketer: a word he created that means ages 1 through 12 (which are the numbers on a clock) then, when he was 13, he wanted to stay a teenager. He and Miles were premature as babies so in the time between their birthday and their due date this year, they both had dilikia meaning they were two different ages. He kept making age groups and age 24 was his last year of being a young adult. Age 25 he would finally be a grown man. From what I knew, he was trying to hold off on this as long as he could. However, A few days ago I learned that I was completely wrong. I was talking with my dad Tuesday and he told me he and Ben were talking about being a grown man and Ben was really looking forward to it. He was no longer scared, but actually excited about the idea of growing up. To me, this is a true tragedy: a young man who was taken away from something he feared all his life right when he found peace and excitement in it. I sat with the pain of that sentence for a day or two.

Then I found a video of Ben singing one of our favorite songs: "March of the Black Queen" by Queen. The end of the song has an amazing build up to the last note. Much to Ben and my frustration, the apple music version of the song

left out the last note. A producer cut Freddie's masterpiece short with a mistake that Ben and I both considered to be a tragedy. This used to make me really mad. I listened to it while writing this speech and realized that they "fixed it" by adding the last note, but I honestly fell in love with how I first heard it. The last note may be a perfect way to end the song, but I thought the song was perfect with the mistake. That's the thing about celebrating my brother right now. A lot of people have focused on the last note of the song because that is how it ends and people will always care about endings. And while I often think about how there was a mistake on the last note of his life, I also think about how absolutely beautiful and perfect the whole song was.

Ben was the light of my life and of so many others that are here today. I promise you I would not be half the man, sorry- young adult I am today without him. Ben could walk into a room of sad people he never knew and would leave them with smiles ear to ear (along with a couple stories). In the spirit of the Beatles, he truly could take any sad song and make it better. While I am broken alongside every person in this attending here and across the universe, I am so so happy. Having the loss of someone hurt this much is such an incredible thing. What an honor to have loved and been loved so deeply that loss creates an irreplaceable hole. What an honor to have loved and been loved by a person who could make anyone's day unforgettable with a simple laugh. What an honor to have loved and been loved by a person who changed so many lives. What an

honor to have loved, and been loved by my brother forever, Benjamin Matthew
Kredich.