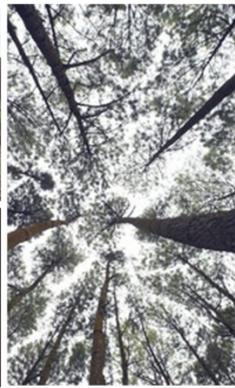




**MELISSA
DRAKE**
LIFE TRANSITION
CATALYST



Shine Through Your Brilliance and Transform Your Life Experience

This Mom’s College Send-Off to Her Only Son **By: Melissa Drake**

I can’t believe it’s time for you to go. Time goes by so fast. It really seems like just yesterday when you and I were bonding in the Lazy Boy chair. We spent my entire maternity leave together – you laying on my chest, just sleeping away. Except for the many hours when you were in a high chair while Michelle and I baked dozens and dozens of Christmas cookies. That was fun. Grandma used to get so mad at me for holding you all the time. She said I was spoiling you and that you would never go to other people if I held you all the time. “You can never love a child too much” was always my response.

You never had any problems being held by other people, you were a great baby and toddler. You let everyone hold you and you played with everyone. You never cried when I dropped you off at daycare (I did). You always slept well too. But, if you didn’t get enough snuggle time before bed, you’d be cranky until we snuggled enough.

Even when you were very little and had just started walking, I always talked to you like an adult. Grandma and Grandpa thought I was crazy. I always gave you choices like, “would you rather behave and go to the movies or be grumpy and stay home?” You always chose to behave. I rarely had to put you in time out or discipline you and you never had tantrums or had a fit at the store. You were always very well behaved.

Your dad did a good job of taking care of you when we were together. He always helped with feedings, baths and even the poopy diapers. Although I was always correcting him for something. After he left, we stayed with grandma and grandpa for a year before I bought our house. I was so proud to buy our house all on my own. I was only making \$28,000 at the time. Even though grandpa wanted me to buy a townhouse, I wanted you to have a yard to play in and the house came with the big wooden playground – remember?

It was there that you met your first friends, Matthew and Christopher. You guys really grew up together and spent so much time running back and forth to each other’s houses. I always loved taking a picture of you on the front steps on the first day of school. I’m so proud that we lived in the same house throughout all of your school days. It’s amazing how much you grew from year to year.

“There are many opportunities available to you now that won’t be available to you at any other time in your life.”



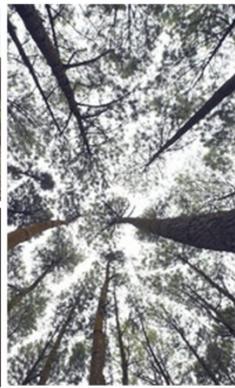
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I loved the early days of you and me at the house, how we'd snuggle up and watch TV together and you'd be in the "special spot." We'd be watching TV together and some awkward things would just seem so funny to us, like "two old men!" I love the sound of your laughter. It was great when we would turn the living room into a fort and camp out and watch movies, eat popcorn and order pizza. Or, lay by the window and listen to the thunder and watch the lightening.

Then as you grew, I'd send you off to summer camp and load you up with the most mail and care packages of all the campers. You'd come back bragging to all your friends about how cool camp was with "NO Parents!" You didn't really like the swimming lessons though – but they taught you to be a great swimmer at an early age. You also went to Vacation Bible School every summer and had the best time.

One summer I signed you up for the most fun day camps. You were off to Adventureland, the zoo, White Water University, the Science Center, and all the fun places around town. After I had signed you up, I realized that probably wasn't the best idea because you were going to a different camp every week and would have to meet new friends every week. I thought I should have sent you to the same camp every week so you could stay with the same group of friends. It did not phase you one bit. You've always been great at meeting friends – and being friends with just about everyone. I remember when we went on a mother and son camping trip. Just a few minutes after we arrived, you said to me, "Mom, go meet some friends. I did." I hope one day I can be as good at making friends as you are.

In elementary school you excelled in the gifted and talented program and got to do special programs, field trips, activities and summer camps. You also met your best friend Collin and a great group of Hubbell kids who you are still close with today.

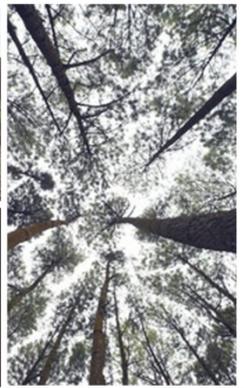
Just before middle school your dad and his family moved, and that was really hard on you. But you met Stevie V. at Callanan, and he has proven to be a great friend. You were a star basketball player in junior high and had your first serious girlfriend. You also played football for the first time. 7th grade was a tough year from my standpoint, but you made it through.

High school brought lots of changes and challenges including the loss of grandma and grandpa. While it was so tough to see them go; you, more than any other grandchild, spent loads of quality time with them, helped them when they needed it, brought joy to their lives and will always be treasured by them. They are still with us each and every day and often send us reminders of their presence when dragonflies appear or certain songs are played on the radio. Know that they are so proud of you and wanted more than anything to spend more time by your side.





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I've never been more proud than when I was on the sidelines watching you sack the quarterback or pin your opponent in wrestling. You were an awesome athlete in high school and your skills got better each year. I'll never forget when you and Chan both shaved your heads in wrestling and I could barely tell you apart. I enjoyed volunteering and helping out with the team dinners and I was always proud to say I was your mom. I loved it when you would come up and hug me in front of your teammates. My favorite picture of us is the one at senior night at football. I don't think I've ever had a bigger smile.

I loved that our house was the one where everyone liked to hang out. I enjoyed being the extra mom to all your friends and cooking for them. I always would have much rather you guys be at my house where I knew what you were up to (most times) than out somewhere else where I didn't know what was going on. I always did my best to keep you safe.

Try as I might, I couldn't make choices for you and you made some choices that I wish you hadn't. It was scary getting those late night phone calls from unknown numbers. I'm grateful that you were not physically harmed and you did not hurt anyone else. You accepted the consequences and moved forward. My love for you is not conditioned and I love you no less as a result of these incidents. I hope that the lessons you learned will make you a better man.

I'm excited for you as you start this new chapter in your life. There are many opportunities available to you now that won't be available to you at any other time in your life. Take advantage of them. You have a clean slate, a fresh start. Make the most of it.

I love you more than anything. You are the best thing that has ever happened to me. I'm very grateful for you. Know that I'm just a phone call away and I will always be there for you. Love you buddy!

