

IN MEMORY

Never more proud

Dear Edward,

Like so many others in this community, I was deeply affected by the untimely passing of Tommy Villanueva last week. My wife Denise and I have been close friends with Edgar and Jennie Villanueva for nearly 30 years. They are godparents to our children and could not be any closer were we related by blood. I watched Tommy grow from the age of five years and have always thought of Michael and Tommy sort of as nephews.

In the hours that followed the bad news, when arrangements were being made, someone asked how everything

would be handled when all the mourners showed up in Crested Butte. I remember saying something to the effect of "Knowing the way folks feel about Tommy and the Villanueva family around here I doubt if you'll be able to get more than a couple thousand people to help!"

Well, that's about what happened. You opened your hearts and your homes and the response of this community was truly gratifying. It should be noted that the Garcia family of Crested Butte did way more than their share and showed again what a class act they are. But the wonderful

Villanueva family carried themselves with consummate dignity in the face of this terrible tragedy. Although their grief was even more intense than my own, they displayed a level of courage on Friday that I just didn't have that day. One by one, they stood up to relate their feelings about Tommy, and poured their hearts out to the hundreds of people assembled to pay their last respects.

I just want to say that I've never been more proud of anyone or anything in my whole life.

Bob Brazell

by Sherrie Vandervoort

I had the privilege of being Tommy's babysitter in the early seventies. He went from being my little brother to being my big brother (and friend) through the years. I'm not sure that I've met anyone quite as loving, positive and charismatic as Tommy V. I was always happy to see him.

As a child, Tommy V. occasionally enjoyed throwing little rocks at me when I walked past his turf, the curb in front of Sanchos (the Villanuevas' restaurant on Elk Ave.). Michael, Ruben, and David also enjoyed this fun pastime. I saw this activity as a sign of endearment and since I was older, bigger and the babysitter to all four; I found my revenge on them over the years in more subtle ways...For instance, the V. boys cannot walk by me without saying "yiggitty-yiggitty" with me and without giving me a big hug. (Sometimes a Villanueva Sandwich hug). On occasion I get to tell a story or two to their girlfriends, that's always fun. But my favorite plan was to see that Tommy V. would someday be our Flauschink King. The Flauschink Committee unanimously and secretly agreed that Tommy would be a "most awesome king" so the poem was written with hope that one year

A Tommy V. Story

he'd show up at the Flauschink Ball to claim his title and crown!

Well, that was five years ago, he never did show up. I think he must have heard something (which never happens in this town).

So here it is, a Flauschink poem for Tommy V., son of Crested Butte and Forever our King...

King Tommy V.

Now here is a tale of a guy we all know
From a youngster on Main Street
we watched this kid grow

This fellow has been here since he
was quite small
His parents and family are well-
loved by all

They came in the seventies from the
California Coast...
Soon started a restaurant—the
BEST, I must boast

Our new king's huge family, they
come and they go
But they call this town home and
they love this place so!

The guy we're describing is talented
and fun
He keeps busy all day and gets up
with the sun

He has sparkling brown eyes full of
laughter and cheer
And we're awfully glad that he still
resides here.

Our king skis so smooth—he's quick
with a smile
His ball playing awesome, he wins
by a mile

The man of our affection is a char-
acter, for sure
He's known to say "Yiggitty" and
hang at the Spur!

His brown eyes, they sparkle
through his face so bronze
Some people insist he's our
"Hispanic Fonz"!

His family's no stranger to wearing
this crown
His Uncle Alfredo once ruled this
town!

If you're in a bind and need some-
one to plumb
Just call on your King—we're sure
that he'll come...

So now here he is—we're as
PROUD as can be...
Our Flauschink crown belongs to
Tommy V!

—by Sherrie V.
1998

Editor's note:

This was written by longtime friend of Tommy Villanueva, Ceci Ervin.

Tommy V. has been my friend for as long as I can remember.

Growing up in Crested Butte, I used to hear all the time, "Who really grows up in Crested Butte?"

I would always say, "Me and all my friends."

Crested Butte has given all

of us such a gift to be so close and surrounded by so much love.

I'm sorry I was not there to celebrate Tommy's life with everyone. Tommy's soul and spirit have been such a large part of my life. Life is never exactly what we all signed up for and nor is an untimely death. I have spent a lot of time spinning my wheels in this space and I guess it is time to thank the universe

for the love we all shared with Tommy and the time we did get to spend with him.

Words can never begin to do Tommy justice.

Tommy V. was a special man and dear friend. His kindred spirit, humor and kindness will be greatly missed.

All my love to you Tommy V.
-ceci

Words cannot begin

The Tommy Villanueva Memorial Fund

After a long and very difficult week, The Tommy Villanueva Memorial Fund will benefit those involved in the accident. Donations can be deposited at Community First National Bank in his name or sent to PO Box 429 Crested Butte CO. 81224.