



Tim Roslund's Journey: Goodbye is the hardest part



Lori and Rod Kirk sort through photos of Tim Roslund in preparation for Tim's memorial service in the Alma home Tim grew up in on Friday, June 7, 2013. (Sun photo by LISA YANICK-JONAITIS/@llsayj_msun)

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Editor's note: Tim Roslund's Journey is an ongoing multimedia project, in which Morning Sun staffers follow the life of a terminal cancer patient.

Timmy got his angel wings.

Mt. Pleasant resident Tim Roslund died in hospice at 2:02 a.m. Tuesday with his adoptive mother and stepfather at his side.

Lori Kirk said even though she knew her son's death was imminent, it wasn't any easier.

"His heart rate went down to 50, and his breathing went different," she said, choking back tears. "I was holding his hands and he took his last few breaths. And so I said, 'OK baby, you got your wings. Go!'"

Roslund's stepfather, Rod Kirk, said it was so peaceful because his son had been so restless for the last few days.

Roslund was 28 when his two-year battle with liver cancer came to a halt.

Lori Kirk said she had been visiting her son every day while Tim's father, Jack Roslund, stayed for the nights.

"Except for the last day, the last night," Lori Kirk said. "The nurse said, 'Are you going home tonight?' And I said, 'Yeah, I think so. Why, should I stay?'"

Lori Kirk said the nurse gently replied, "Yes."

"She knew," Lori Kirk said.

Lori Kirk spent the night compulsively checking her son's vital signs, repositioning a golden angel trinket she had placed on his chest and holding his hands.

The Kirk family then put together funeral preparations for their son.

Roslund will be buried following a memorial service, 1 p.m. June 14 at the Alma First Presbyterian Church, 495 Charles Ave.

The family has been staying busy in the meantime.

Rod Kirk has flown a Peruvian flag, representing Roslund's home country, at half-mast in the backyard of Roslund's childhood home in Alma.

Lori Kirk has sifted through albums and scrapbooks of old photographs, finding the best photos of her son to digitize for a display at the memorial service.

Keeping busy makes it easier, she said, but she isn't sure how she'll handle the service.

"He's been the one that's been doing everything," a teary-eyed Lori Kirk said, gratefully gesturing to her husband. "He's tied up everything."

The Kirk couple has arranged for a piper to follow Roslund's urn down to the gardens, where a spoon will be available for friends and family to peacefully put Roslund into the ground.

Timmy would love the piper, Lori Kirk said.

Between making arrangements for the service, the two sit together in the living room of their Alma home, talking about the memories their son left for them to enjoy.

Most of the memories were before the young man got sick.

"We heard that he liked Dumpster diving," Rod Kirk laughed. "Gosh, he picked up so many things. He was just... kind of a collector, but he'd give things away. I think that was commented on in the guestbook, too. One person mentioned he always had a gift for them. And whenever he came home, he always had something to give us. Something."

Lori Kirk indicated to an entire wall of nautical-themed trinkets, her favorite.

Most were from her son, she said.

Roslund loved to help her around the house, Lori Kirk said.

The two were always together.

Everything is a fond memory, the Kirks said, except their son's driving.

"He totaled four cars!" Lori Kirk laughed. "It was horrible."

Though photos have been picked out and the Kirks have scheduled memorial service plans, the daunting task of cleaning Roslund's Winchester Towers apartment remains.

Lori Kirk said she plans to donate everything to the Salvation Army, and the apartment complex will put Roslund's furniture out for pick-up.

Thank you cards need to be sent to friends and family too, she said.

The Kirks are grateful for the support they've seen from those close to their son.

Floral arrangements crowd the dining room table, and cards filled with well-wishes are carefully placed so the Kirks can see each one as they walk through the room.

Roslund's prized iPad, a gift from his stepfather, now sits in the Kirk household, so Lori Kirk can post information about funeral arrangements for Roslund's friends on his Facebook page.

Family members, including Roslund's three older brothers, an aunt, nieces and nephews, are coming back into town for the funeral.

Roslund's life has been a journey for the entire family, but his mother doesn't regret the decision to adopt him one bit.

He had a better life here than he would have had in Peru, she said.

Roslund was well-loved by everyone, his adoptive father Jack Roslund said.

The young man always wore a bracelet reminding him, "What would Jesus do?"

"One of the comments people made about him was how genuine he was," Jack Roslund said. "He was a genuine fellow, to everybody."

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