

## IN MEMORIAM

Andy Howard

# 'His greatest super power was his optimism'



*Andy's daughter shares an excerpt of the eulogy she wrote for her father*

**BY KATELYNN HOWARD**  
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

**H**ow do I write something that captures the essence of my dad? How do I find words to describe his depth, his character, his soul?

There are no words to describe how my dad made people feel. He was an angel on this Earth who did God's work in miraculous ways.

My dad was funny. He had the ability to make anyone laugh at any time, including himself. A lot of the time he was the biggest fan of his own jokes.

My dad was intelligent. He was fascinated by human anatomy and physiology, Bigfoot, fighter jet planes, gadgets – anything science-related, really. He loved to learn new things and to learn them well. Then he loved to teach me. He told me, "Knowledge is power" and "Ignorance is not bliss."

I believe his greatest super power was his optimism. My dad was a wise man. He taught me that there is good in every situation, you just have to be willing to see it. My dad had gone through some horrific experiences, but not once did he lose his smile and his ability to see the silver lining or his faith in God.

My dad was understanding and compassionate. He had such a tender heart. He'd tell me not to judge people because I don't know their story. My dad took the time to get to know people, to really hear them. I learned this through my days spent downtown with him. He loved introducing me to his friends. He always gave me a back story to

each person, and I was repeatedly impressed with the details he knew. This showed me that people trusted him.

My dad was a friend to anybody and everybody. He exuded an energy that drew people in.

I remember walking the streets with him, and as I just mentioned, he was always so proud and excited for his friends and me to meet. He'd tell me about them as we'd approach them, and I not only learned my dad was a good listener, but meeting these people taught me that they weren't just "bums" or "transients." They are ordinary human beings just like all of us. And just like us, our stories are all different. And just like you, me and my dad, we all end up in different places.

It became clear to me in these moments that his friends felt a sense of comfort, love and acceptance around my dad. They found a true friend in him. It doesn't surprise me because that's what my dad embodied – love, kindness, compassion, understanding, adventure and humor. A true extension of God.

To be honest, when my dad first became homeless, I spent so much time and energy feeling confused, frustrated and deeply struggling to understand my dad's lifestyle. Why was he here? How could this be his path? It was in the moments of me meeting his friends, his street family, and hearing their thoughts, feelings and how they viewed my dad that it became undeniably clear, time and time again, he was indeed on the right path. He was undoubtedly living out his purpose. He was right where God wanted him ... duh. He was touching lives, changing lives and saving lives. Literally. My dad talked two people out of committing suicide. He didn't know either of these people. They just happened to cross paths with my dad and he could tell they

weren't OK and that they were having trouble. So, of course, he became a friend to them. He got them to open up, he listened, he shared his heart and wisdom, and he saved them. Tell me that's not powerful.

He may not have been able to buy me winter coats or school supplies, which I was provided with in other ways, but I'm so grateful I've never lived a day without knowing my dad loved me, that he was proud of me, and that he felt the most blessed to call me his daughter. Not everyone gets to have that. Not everyone gets to call their dad their best friend and genuinely mean it.

My most favorite days were days spent downtown with my dad. Spending the day in the life of my dad, walking all the streets of downtown, eating meals at the Mission, Night Watch and churches with his friends, exploring his favorite spots to relax and hang out, where he sold his papers and even where he slept.

These were the most humbling, mind opening and fulfilling days. I loved when he let his walls down and fully welcomed me into his world. It may not seem like it from the outside, but it was such a beautiful place to be.

I feel so privileged to call Andy my dad. For 23 years, I got to know him. I got to know his heart, his mind, his soul. I got to love him and to be loved by him. That is the greatest gift of my lifetime. I can only hope to become close to the human being that he was. I can only hope to touch as many lives as he did. Although I desperately wish I had more time with him, I am so dang lucky for all the years I did get. That is the silver lining my dad has taught me to see.

Dad, you are the most influential person in my life. I've learned the most valuable lessons from you that have helped shape me into the young woman I am today. You are my hero. I love you.



David Testawich

## Farewell, my friend

**BY ART GARCIA**  
STREET ROOTS VENDOR

**I** had known Dave over 15 years, and it truly saddens me knowing he is no longer with us.

I miss being able to take him coffee and visit at Trader Joe's. I never stayed long, but I always felt better after talking with him. Dave was one of those rare people that just made you happy to be around.

If you ever bought a Street Roots from him, you would see the little message he wrote on the corner of the front page. It wasn't so much what it said as it showed he took that moment to brighten someone else's day just a little. That was Dave, the true definition of the Golden Rule.

Thanks, Dave, for the opportunity to know and call you my friend. Rest in peace.