

Eulogy for Casey Beaupre

Delivered by Molly Barnes, 3/15/2010

My name is Molly Barnes and I like Casey Beaupre. I have the great privilege of being the Head of School at the Rocky Mountain Semester in Leadville, Colorado, where Casey was a student in the fall of her junior year, 3 years ago.

Leaving Leadville yesterday morning, I gave both my young boys an extra long hug and again, tears came to my eyes. Jack asked me- are you crying because you miss Casey? I said yes to him, but what I was really thinking is this: As a parent myself, I simply cannot fathom the depth of grief that comes with such a senseless loss. To Rosemary and Bob, and to Tim and Liz, I am sorry.

I am known for being super direct and so I'll say the hard thing first, as is my nature – I can't make any sense of this, and I can't explain any "goodness" into Casey's death. Bearing witness, albeit from afar, to her illness from start to finish, I can see the fabulous impact she had on others, the tenacity she role modeled for us all, and the good humor she relentlessly applied to every moment. Yet I am still struck by the obvious, her passing isn't fair. It is not right. And I don't understand it.

In the best possible way, Casey never doubted her abilities and as a result- every one of us felt sure that she would overcome this. As Rosemary has said and written so many times- Casey was destined for greatness. Not for this.

I am honored to be here today, to speak on behalf of one of Casey's many communities, but I sure wish I had a magic wand to make this all go away.

Now Casey probably would not approve of my tone so far– even though I teased her relentlessly and she joked back with me about her great love of emo (or as I would say- angsty, depressing teenager music). So now I want to focus not on the loss of Casey, but on the gifts she gave us.

I know Casey from her time as a student at the Rocky Mountain Semester. The lives of the students, apprentices and faculty of RMS 17 were enriched by having Casey with us for 3 ½ months. Think about that for a minute. 3 ½ months. Only 3 ½ months of our lives and yet Casey had an incredibly profound and positive influence on all of us. We were SO LUCKY to have had that time with her and with each other.

I remember when I was sorting pictures for the Parents' Weekend slideshow, I noticed that we had a bunch of really lousy pictures of one student named Clay. I soon realized that the best ones of Clay were all with Casey. She brought out the very best in him (and all of us). So I put together a series of photos for that slideshow of the two of them together. Picture after picture after picture had the caption "I like Casey Beaupre." And that line, "I like Casey Beaupre" became one of my favorite things to say.

Before Casey was diagnosed with cancer, before we all became witness to her incredible strength in the face of this illness, everyone here knew that Casey was someone special. We admired her courage, her strength of character, her athleticism, her gift with a camera, her love of film, her laughter, her unending positive attitude, the fact that she saw the world in

beautiful colors, that she was wise beyond her years, and her ability to find humor in absolutely everything. I like Casey Beaupre.

We end each semester with presentations by each student to the entire community. Many students mentioned Casey in their final presentations. Emily already spoke today about her first conversation with Casey at the porto-potty. In her presentation, she said *"After talking to Casey for five minutes I realized that this girl had herself figured out way more than any 16 year old I had ever met."* I like Casey Beaupre.

Clay illuminated the way many of us feel today as we try to make sense of this loss. Three years ago in his final presentation, he said, *"There is always someone who might turn out to be one of your best friends. For me, that person is Casey. And I don't mean to dwell on or monopolize the whole Casey thing. But the fact is – I can't talk about my time here without talking about her. Casey made it all worth it and 50 times over."*

Casey helped us all to get more out of the RMS experience and by extension, out of life. This is a profound gift and one of her great legacies. I like Casey Beaupre

At the Rocky Mountain Semester we intentionally teach a variety of things outside the traditional academic subjects. One of the most important is what we call "EB" , or expedition behavior. It is really a very simple concept. Good EB can be boiled down to putting the needs of the group first.

Casey's EB was exemplified by her sense of humor, more often than not- her inappropriate sense of humor!, and her ability to live in the moment. I

can't say I never heard her complain about the weight of her backpack, but somehow she even managed to complain in a way that made us laugh. We all loved hearing her make up silly songs about the Dilbert Zone (our name for the faculty offices), songs that poked fun but also reminded us to take our purpose, but not ourselves too seriously. I like Casey Beaupre.

While Casey was funny and light hearted, she was not just that. She thought about her personal ethics and those of the people around her. She thought creatively and deeply about the natural world and her place in it. While backpacking and hiking down the trail, Casey was just as likely to talk about the Red Sox or what she missed about home and her family, as she was to engage in a more philosophical and introspective conversation about concepts bigger than herself. She helped us to have fun while learning more about ourselves and more about the world around us. I like Casey Beaupre.

As a life long educator, it is my nature to try to find a lesson in all of this. To figure out what we can learn. So I hope you will join me in promising to leave this service today, enriched by our experiences of Casey and our lives with her. I think Casey would want us all to take a lesson from her- to inspire joy in ourselves and in others even in the face of this devastating loss.

I like Casey Beaupre.