



## G. Anthony "Tony" Smith

June 17, 2008

SMITH G. Anthony "Tony" Smith, age 29, suddenly, June 17th, Tuesday. Preceded in death by father, Gary A. Smith, grandmother, Jean L. Banks, and grandfather, Walter F. Gnezda. Survived by mother, Nicole Gnezda, stepfather John Snouffer, sisters, Yvonne Smith and Katharine Smith, grandmother Mary Winter, stepgrandfather Chester Winter, uncle Eric Gnezda, aunt Vicki Gnezda, aunt Therese Gnezda, and many other dearly loved relatives, including aunts, uncles, and cousins across the country. Tony dedicated his life to teaching and mentoring kids who might otherwise have slipped through the cracks of traditional education. His humble manner and respect for all people left an enormous mark on this world. Funeral Service 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, June 25, 2008 at RUTHERFORD-CORBIN FUNERAL HOME, 515 High Street, Worthington, Ohio 43085 where friends may call 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. Tuesday and one hour prior to service on Wednesday. Burial Resurrection Cemetery. In lieu of flowers please donate your time to someone in need. Condolences to [www.rutherfordfuneralhomes.com](http://www.rutherfordfuneralhomes.com).

# Tribute Wall



“ G. Anthony "Tony" Smith

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January 28, 2023 at 10:24 AM

CM

“ Dear Niki and family, It is with great difficulty that I write to you on this occasion. I feel Tony's loss keenly and my heart breaks at the thought of your sorrow. When we first met Tony, he seemed a sweet, quiet, shy young man, but we also felt the immediate warmth of his open friendship towards us. As he came into and out of our lives over the next several years, we followed his various pursuits with much interest. Whether it was detasselling corn in Iowa, working as a cook in Memphis, or maple-sugaring in Vermont, we admired his curiosity and eagerness to take on such different work experiences. At the same time, he was an avid reader, writer and musician with whom we enjoyed sharing literary and musical interests. I loved being able to discuss with him my favorite books and hear, in turn, about the writers he most admired. It was when Tony began teaching at Baltimore's Lab School that we knew he'd found his real niche. We were so pleased for him. He shared with our family the letters that his students had written him at the end of his first year teaching them: their love for him, so endearingly expressed, had us all wiping our eyes. Clearly, Tony had a very special, intuitive understanding of these children and their individual challenges. Having wondered from time to time whether Tony might one day become a part of our family, it was a sad day when he made his last visit to our house. We hadn't seen him for a number of months, and in that time he had grown into a poised and self-assured young man who spoke with a degree of confidence we hadn't heard before. When Tony left that day, I regretted very much that we probably would not see him again, yet I was glad to be able to imagine him tucked into a bright future, as such a promising young man should be. I shall remember Tony as he was on that last day a few years ago, think of the young lives he strengthened through his gifted teaching, and feel thankful to have enjoyed his friendship for the few years that we knew him. With great sympathy for you all, Clemence Mertaugh

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Clemence Mertaugh - June 29, 2008 at 12:00 AM

JK

“ When I met Tony a couple years ago, it was immediately clear that he was a person full of creativity, empathy, and curiosity. I am very saddened by his passing, but I am glad that he had so many people in his life with whom he was able to connect and inspire along the way.

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**Jen Kiluk** - June 27, 2008 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ Dear Nicole, Katharine, and Yvonne, please accept my deepest condolences for Tony's passing. It sounds like Tony was following in his father's footsteps which means he made a lasting impact on the lives of those he came in contact with. I still fall back on the lessons Coach Smith taught me and I'm sure Tony's students will take his lessons with them throughout their lives. Very Respectfully - Jon Beck

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**Jon Beck** - June 26, 2008 at 12:00 AM

MH

“ Jesus said, "You will grieve, but your grief will turn into JOY". John 16:20 At a time like this it is hard to find a reason to be joyful, as the world has lost a wonderful man in Tony. I met Tony at Baltimore Lab, and I will never forget his patient, kind spirit that was always ready to lend a hand. He was one to always work for the good for those he befriended and for those he sought to teach. He was a kind and gentle spirit, always there to encourage and to listen. Yes, it is hard to find joy now, yet our prayer is that you will find joy in your memories, happiness in knowing that Tony made a difference in the lives of those he knew, and peace in knowing that he is in the arms of the Lord. Blessed to have known him, praying for you all now, hoping that I am a better person for having known Tony. Blessings and Peace ~ Melissa [Hults], Bob, Hannah, and Dominic Mokros

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**Melissa Hults** - June 26, 2008 at 12:00 AM

HM

“ Dear Niki, Catherine and Yyvone, It's taken me a long time to be able to write a testimonial about Tony. He was a focal point of my life for many years, and although we had grown apart as our lives took us in different directions, he continued to be a large presence in my life through the impact he made on how I understand the world and how to live in it. Through the time and love that we shared together, he had become a part of me, as he did with everyone he loved. I love Tony immensely, perhaps more than I knew how to handle at the young age when we were together. He taught me a great many things through the example that he set in his life and how he lived it. Tony remains to this day the most genuine person I have ever met. He was genuine in his interactions with others and in his approach to living. He truly lived a life that was all his own. He lived it according to his unique philosophies about how the world operates, and according to his own moral code of treating each human being as equal, interesting, and worthy of love and compassion. He cared deeply for his fellow humans, and that compassion showed itself in the gentle, humble manner through which he related to each person he interacted with, be they his family, friends, students or even complete strangers. I admired his constant drive to seek out inspiration in the gritty corners and overgrown parts of this country, to express himself through his writing, music and instrument-making, and to give love and support to his students who otherwise might get overlooked. You raised a truly exceptional human being, and although his presence on this earth will be deeply missed by those whose lives he touched, he lives on in each of us who loved Tony in all that he taught us. Love, Hilary

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Hilary Mertaugh - June 26, 2008 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ To Tony's family: I first got to know Tony during our Grinnell years right after he had graduated. Tony had decided to be a self-sufficient roamer and was in search of the romance of blue-collar life. A friend and I were going back-packing in Colorado and Tony came along. I got to know Tony as a thinker and a dreamer and a truly amazing person. Six years later, I met Tony again when we both happened to find ourselves in Baltimore. I'm so glad I got to know him years ago and again now. I will miss Tony the dreamer. I feel lucky to have been a friend.

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**Jessica Schmidt** - June 25, 2008 at 12:00 AM

TM

“ Tony and I met during the second week of college. Soon after we met we fell in love in a head-over-heels sort of way. We were with each other through many of life's transitions and supported each other through those rough first few years of adulthood. We shared many conversations, travels, study sessions, laughter and eventually heartbreak when, after 3 years, it became obvious that we were no longer the right match for each other. We each grew immensely during the time we were together. He helped me realize the importance of being true to myself by setting an example with the way he lived his life. He could be a real pain in the ass sometimes (and he would admit it) but he always had the best of intentions and followed his heart. Even when he was driving me crazy, I had to admire his attempts to be fully honest with himself and to interact in a meaningful way with those around him. Even though we were no longer together, we still stayed in touch, updating each other on life's major events and just checking in to say hi from time to time. We were no longer in love, but still had love for each other. He was such a huge part of my life and it deeply saddens me that he is gone. I'm sorry that I couldn't be there for the service today. I would have liked to be there. My heart goes out to his family and to everyone that knew him.

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**Trinity Muller** - June 25, 2008 at 12:00 AM

HJ

“ In her senior year of college, I remember my sister Hilary telling me about a shy and quiet (but oh so handsome) guy who used to frequent the music library where she worked. That guy was Tony, and they ended up living and traveling together on and off for several years after college. For a short time, they lived in Montpelier, near where we live in Vermont, and we got to know Tony a little better. He quickly revealed himself to be gentle and kind, and very accepting of people in general. It was not hard to like Tony; he had so many of the qualities that are most admirable in a person. I will always remember how he and Hilary came to stay with us shortly after the births of our first and second children. With each of our daughters, Tony could scarcely put the baby down – always cuddling and holding them so sweetly as they slept quietly in his arms. I also remember reading the birthday cards hung on the wall in their apartment in Baltimore that had been written for Tony by his students at the Lab School. It was clear from reading them how much his students loved him and how much he appreciated them for who they were. Thinking back, it seems like Tony managed to touch more lives in his twenty-nine years than most people do in twice that. I’m so glad I had the privilege of knowing him, if only for a short while.

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**Hannah Jensen** - June 25, 2008 at 12:00 AM

MM

“ Dear Niki & family, Mike & I are so saddened by Tony's passing. Although we didn't know him very well, it sounds as if he left his mark on this world during his short life. I'm so sorry we were not able to come to the services. May comfort come to you and the family that now we have another Angel to look down on us and help lead us through the challenges we are now dealing with. Our sincere sympathy, Kelly, Mike, Taylor & Michael Merullo

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**Mike & Kelly Merullo** - June 25, 2008 at 12:00 AM

MM

“ Tony came into our lives as the friend of our daughter, Hilary, over the space of several post-Grinnell years. He came to our house in McLean, Virginia several times during that period, and my wife and I were guests of Tony and Hilary when they lived in their walk-up apartment at the top of the hill on Charles Street, in Baltimore. I did not know Tony well, but he left with me the impression of a shy romantic, who dreamt of a simpler, quieter life than we find around us today. He was a welcome visitor in our suburban world of jet-setting people with large ambitions and even larger pretensions. Tony had none of that (which must be one of the reasons that he was so loved by his students.) Tony was a gentle person. Like Thoreau and other dreamers, he took the time to pursue his interests – however far they might be from the interests of the masses. Something that I especially appreciated in Tony was that he nurtured some of the same dreams that I did as a younger man – of traveling this land on the back roads (or back rails), and getting to know the kinds of people that he met and loved in the pages of William Faulkner and John Steinbeck. But, unlike me, Tony actually took the time to travel that road. Like all of you, I was deeply saddened to learn of Tony’s death. Although I did not know him as well as many of you, he will leave a void in my life.

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**Michael Mertaugh** - June 25, 2008 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ Dear Friends and Family, I am deeply shocked and saddened to learn of Tony's tragic passing. Until recently, when I moved away, we played in a band together in Baltimore. Tony was one of the most gentle and creative souls I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. His voice was both rustic and angelic. It will resonate in my mind for the rest of my days.

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**Jeremy Caradonna** - June 24, 2008 at 12:00 AM

SW

“ Our condolences and deepest sympathy goes to the Smith and Gnezda family. Tony was a maverick amongst mavericks that approached the world with as much curiosity as respect. We loved him for his wit, charm, and compassion towards others. You are in our thoughts and prayers. With love, Wayne, Lelonna, Adrian, and Shannon Wheatley amf4life@hotmail.com shannon.wheatley@gmail.com

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**Shannon Wheatley** - June 24, 2008 at 12:00 AM

MW

“ What kinda crazy back-woods banjo is that?? I later saw other resurrected parts of this and that, crafted into twangy instruments that were one of a kind. Tony was interesting, just like his creations. I also played soccer with Tony, admiring his abilities and that KICK that usually sent the ball sailing "over" the goal..but man did it sail!! I wish, like so many others, that I could have spent more time with him and I feel he had much left to give as a friend, but I am thankful for the while that we were acquainted, and will hold on to that with happy feelings.

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**Mischa Wagner** - June 24, 2008 at 12:00 AM

AS

“ I met Tony about 3 three years ago. We had begun to play a weekly soccer game--Tony probably recruited more players than anyone else. He found what was there and left it better after his involvement. In the course of the last three years I've come to find that his talents were abundant and certainly not limited to soccer, music, and teaching. He seemed to have a thirst for knowledge and expression. I feel extremely grateful for having known Tony. He was a good friend and a great person.

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**andrew steeble** - June 24, 2008 at 12:00 AM

MW

“ We played with Tony with Train O' Thought from Feb-Oct '07 around D.C. and Baltimore. He brought much original material and a drive for success to our fledgling group. Tony was a creative and prolific songwriter with an inspiring grasp of music theory and was serious student of piano and old-time banjo. We will miss him and be thinking of him at the festival in Clifftop, WV which we know was a favorite of his. Our most sincere condolences to his family in this difficult time.

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**Mike & Tara Ward** - June 24, 2008 at 12:00 AM

LP

“ Tony and I met 5 years ago when he came to work at Baltimore Lab School. We were both house hunting in Baltimore at the time. Some how we began driving all over Baltimore on Monday nights looking for HUD homes that were part of a program to make housing for teachers more affordable. Soon Tony discovered that a local restaurant had half price burgers and beer on Monday nights. This began several years of Monday night dinners for Tony and I that continued after we each purchased homes and then turned into Monday - Sunday night dinners when Tony moved in with my husband and I for the 10 long months that he patiently waited for the renovations on his home to be complete. Tony was a member of our family and recently became "Uncle Tony" to our new baby boy. I am so grateful for all of our conversations over the years and to have known Tony as a friend, a fellow teacher and artist, a musician, a writer and a truly unique person. I will miss him more than I can express. Matt and Jamie and I love you Tony!

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**Laura Parkhurst** - June 23, 2008 at 12:00 AM

NV

“ Our hearts and prayers are with all of Tony's family at this time. We loved spending time with Tony and we are proud of all he did to make a difference in this broken world. Our hope is that his inspiration will lead others to also make this world a better place. We know that Tony will humbly enjoy the view from above. May Tony's smile and warm personality be the enduring reminder of the joy he brought to all in this difficult time. God Bless the Smith and Gnezda families and all those who had the privilege to have Tony in their life.

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**Nick, Jody, Dora and Lydia Vrettos** - June 23, 2008 at 12:00 AM

LB

“ I met Tony five years ago when he came to teach at Baltimore Lab. He was so thoughtful putting others' needs before his own. The students knew he was genuine in all of his interactions with them: he wanted to have a positive impact on their lives. He lived selflessly and honestly. His family must know what a fine young man they raised. Best wishes, Laura

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**Laura R. B. Broughton** - June 23, 2008 at 12:00 AM

LO

“ To Tony's Family: My mother told me the other day of Tony's passing. I first met Tony when I was in middle school in the early 1990's, and I shadowed my mom at work. She taught with Tony's father, Gary Smith. Tony happened to shadow his father that same day. When I met him, he was a quiet guy, but so quick with a smile. I got to know him better later in high school, as he was a close friend of a high school boyfriend of mine. During my senior year, during one of the darkest periods in my life, Tony was there, at my side. He gave me the support, understanding, and friendship that I needed to get through it. He even took me to the Valentine's Dance my senior year when I didn't have a date. I remember how he made me laugh with his "free style" dancing. I think I mostly remember how easy he made it for me to laugh. Tony was truly one of the gentlest souls I have ever had the honor to know. I could never say a harsh word about someone and get away with it around Tony. He was a good friend, but an even better human being. He was an example to all of us. I've missed his friendship many times over the years. And today, I miss him so much more. No words can express the sympathy and grief I feel for Tony's family. The world will be a sadder place without him in it, but those of us who had the distinct privilege of having known him, are better people for it. God bless you Tony, Thank You, and you and your family will be in my thoughts and prayers. - Lindsay

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**Lindsay Oppenheimer** - June 23, 2008 at 12:00 AM

TC

“ Dear Nicki, John, Yvonne and Katharine, I am so very saddened by the loss of such a wonderful and promising young man, son and brother. I know Tony is in Gary's embrace. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you. T.K.

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**T.K. Cellar** - June 23, 2008 at 12:00 AM

GL

“ Nikki, Katherine, Yvonne and family; My sincerest sympathies for your loss. Tony was the embodiment of each of you and Gary. While it has been a few years since I've seen Tony it's obvious from reading other's entries that he had a caring heart for those less fortunate and a passion for teaching. Those are all qualities that his family instilled in him and are things I'm sure you each are proud of. I am sorry that I will be unable to attend the funeral as I am in South Carolina this entire week attending an educator's program sponsored by the U.S. Army. My thoughts and prayers are with each of you during this difficult time. God Bless you all, Love, Greg

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**Greg Lee** - June 23, 2008 at 12:00 AM

TS

“ Dear Nikki and Family-- Our hearts go out to you. Please accept our deepest condolences. We are deeply saddened by your loss. Tuck and Suzanne Saul

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**Tuck and Suzanne Saul** - June 23, 2008 at 12:00 AM

LN

“ Dear Ms. Gnezda and friends and family, I first met Tony at soccer on Sundays two years ago, and then had the privilege of being in a band with him, hanging out and playing music for the last half a year. Tony was an amazing musician, we met twice a week and each time it seemed like he had written a new song or been working on something new. He was so talented he pushed me to be better musician. He was an honest soul and a loyal friend, anything he did, whether it was making instruments, writing stories, or growing plants, he would put his whole heart in. The past six months I got to spend with him especially will always be cherished as some of the most enjoyable of my life.

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**Luke Naden** - June 23, 2008 at 12:00 AM

SB

“ I first met Tony when he came to Jemicy School to teach and his classroom was down the hall from mine. Because of our proximity to each other and the fact that he was a new to the school, we would talk every so often. It did not take me long to realize that he was a talented and intriguing young man who truly exemplified the spirit of helping children to learn and believe in themselves. I always looked forward to our conversations whether it was about the instruments that he was hoping to have the students make or the music that we liked or sharing something that the students had created or his progress on his house. At the end of his first year at Jemicy I let him know that I would be leaving and going to Baltimore Lab where he had taught before coming to Jemicy. He hugged me and said I shouldn't go, that I was his role model. I hugged him back and told him that it was I who had learned from him. Every time I would see him after we would compare notes on how the Jemicy and Baltimore Lab students were doing. I feel blessed to have known him and my heart breaks for the loss of him in our lives. I am still learning from him and will continue to do so for many years to come. My thoughts and prayers go out to his loving family and friends.

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**Susan Bryant** - June 22, 2008 at 12:00 AM

SR

“ My husband and I met Tony when he came to work at Baltimore Lab 5 years ago. I don't remember a time when we were becoming friends, I just remember that we both loved him from the moment we met him. He was good at everything he did -- sports, writing, music, art, cooking, coaching, and of course, teaching. He was fearless in his teaching, constantly challenging himself to foster creativity, intellectual curiosity, and academic introspection in his students. Tony was a blend of contradictions -- On the surface, you wouldn't know how passionate and committed - and loving -- he was, but if you listened really closely, you'd know. When Pat and I had a baby boy 3 1/2 years ago, Tony was one of the first to come to the hospital and hold our son, Seamus. Tony was absolutely unreserved in his love for Seamus, and Seamus calls him "Uncle Tony." I considered Tony a brother, and worried about him like a mother does. Nikki, John, Yvonne, and Katherine...I am deeply and profoundly sorry for your loss -- and what we all have lost. There was not an individual who knew Tony who was not changed - made better - for having known him. Love, Susan

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**Susan Rome** - June 22, 2008 at 12:00 AM

PZ

“ I know joe will take care of Toni and Toni of Joe. My prayers and thoughts are with you all. Toni is in a place of pease and with God to keep him safe and happy. He will be missed but never forgotten in our hearts.

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**Patricia Zelnik** - June 22, 2008 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ I was one of Mr. Smith's (also known as Tony Smith) first students. He was more than just a teacher at Baltimore Lab, he was a great friend that inspired every one to push themselves to the limit and reach their goals. Mr. Smith was also my coach for cross country, basketball, and track and field. Even if you were the slowest runner and always gave up, Mr. Smith never gave up on you. The first time my parents met Mr. Smith, my mom said “oh, look my long lost cousin” because they both had the same last name, and though it was only a joke, Mr. Smith seemed like a part of the family. When Mr. Smith’s new school and our school would race against each other, he wouldn’t only cheer for us, but he would actually say our names while he was cheering. I don’t think he ever forgot anyone. When Mr. Smith left the Lab School to go to Jemicy, unlike some teachers, he was not forgotten, and he never will be because of the wonderful impact he made on us. From my mom, my dad, and me, we all want to say we’re sorry about your loss and we loved Mr. Smith. Love, Breanna, Diana (Smith), & Greg Stewart

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**Breanna, Diana, and Greg Stewart** - June 22, 2008 at 12:00 AM

MF

“ Dear Ms. Gnezda and family/friends- I offer my deepest condolences on the recent loss of Tony. I first met Tony when he lived downstairs from me before moving out into his new house (which actually took another 6 months or so for him to be able to move into!) Even after he moved, Tony and I remained friends, and I consider myself very fortunate to have gotten to know Tony. We used to play golf, soccer and music together, although most often we just sat on our front stoop (baltimore style) and talked about all manner of different things. Tony was and will remain an inspiration to me, both with his kindness to others, and his unrelenting ability to stay true to himself. I will truly miss Tony, even as he will continue to live on in the many fond memories I was able to cultivate in his company, and the smiles that those memories will undoubtedly continue to bring to my lips.

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**Matt Frazao** - June 21, 2008 at 12:00 AM

RS

“ Nikki and John, we are so sorry for your loss. Tony will be very missed. Our thoughts, prayers and love are with you. Rich and Kristy

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**Rich and Kristy Smith** - June 21, 2008 at 12:00 AM

LR

“ MR. SMITH AND MS. GNEZDA AND FAMILY, MY NAME IS LEE COHEN AND I AM THE PARENT OF AMANDA COHEN AT BALTIMORE LAB. OUR DAUGHTER AS WELL AS MY WIFE AND I WERE VERY SADDENED TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR LOSS AS WELL AS LABS. YOUR SON DID COACH OUR DAUGHTER AND HE SEEMED TO BE A YOUNG MAN WITH PASSION. PLEASE KNOW THAT TEACHING AT BALTIMORE LAB IS SPECIAL, SO FOR HIM TO HAVE DONE SO SHOWS HIS CARING SIDE. WE WISH YOU THE BEST AND OUR SYMPATHIES, STACY, AMANDA AND LEE

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**LEE COHEN AND STACY RUDIN** - June 20, 2008 at 12:00 AM

JA

“ Dear Mr. Smith and Ms. Gnezda and Family, My name is Jorge Amaral, I am a classical guitarist and I knew Tony for a couple of years. We used to play soccer every Sunday in Baltimore. He was a very kind, caring and generous person. I feel terrible about your loss. Tony will be missed by all of us. Unfortunately I cannot come to Ohio, but my thoughts will be with you and your family.

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**Jorge Amaral** - June 20, 2008 at 12:00 AM

RS

“ Tony lived next door to me in Baltimore. What a nice guy. He was so proud of his new house and really enjoyed his plants. I knew him not very long and am completely shocked. I just loved hearing him and his friends playing music next door, I miss it already. Handsome, kind and creative- he left an impression on me as genuine as a fingerprint. My most heartfelt condolences and prayers are with your family at this time. Peace Always- Richard Smith, Baltimore, Maryland

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**Richard Smith** - June 20, 2008 at 12:00 AM