

Chapter 5 - Simply Enthusiastic

Noah (Scribbled repeatedly in his notebook: *Carpe Diem: Seize the Day!*)

Who knows what future days may hold?

Why look ahead when the future is now?

Grasp this moment and the next like gold!

Don't wait for wind; make some of your own -

Unfurl your sail!

Uncle Po Po, a.k.a. Uncle Jimmy (Noah's 24th Birthday Celebration, June 25, 2005)

Recently I have had pause to consider my nephew's greatness. Make no mistake about it; this was a great, great man. Ethics, courage, humor, hunger, intelligence, charity, orneriness...he had a profound sense of destiny; but, what really set him apart was his complete lack of cynicism. He was *enthusiastic* about everything life had to offer. And you wonder, how can that be? My nephew was not just a magnificent representation of himself and his country, but of his special, genuine community. Your community *stands* for something. He is a part of you, and you were a part of him. Celebrate him and cherish what you have, and he'll look down from where he is today and he'll say, "Awesome!"

U.S. Congressman Nathan Deal (Congressional Record, June 29, 2005)

...I first met Noah several years ago when he served as an intern in my Washington office. I had been told that he was someone special, and after meeting him, I certainly knew that to be true... To be a friend to people from all walks of life, to excel in everything he undertook, to dare to dream big dreams takes someone special... His courage, his self-discipline, and his compassion should be a standard for us all...

Noah Bruce Lee Harris

Before Noah was born, we always sang to him, "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine; you make me happy when skies are gray..." We struggled with all the things that most young families do, money, bills, time; but we lived out in God's little acre and we consciously understood that just as the fertile ground would yield yummy, homegrown tomatoes, right intention would nurture a life full of gladness. We wanted Noah to be able to flourish with each passing moment, growing his confidence in the abundance of the universe just as we were becoming more confident about our own ability to build and provide. Like Adam Smith, we had faith in our own will to develop ourselves in every way; we wanted to embrace the blessings of life. To us, Smith's "invisible hand of competition" had to do with self-improvement. We felt that our self-interested yearning to go back to nature would *be* our contribution to humanity, that every day in every way, we could make life better. Ticklebug Creek in many ways is our Walden Pond where we gratefully relish the warm embrace of Mother Nature and find it to be an apt environment in which to explore and expand a reverence for all of the moments of creation that we share.

More of Noah and Mom's Morning Prayer

Thank you for the abundance of time, energy, and resources with which to seek first the kingdom of heaven and be the servant of the will... to take care of this body, the temple of God and my soul...to be totally humble and rest in the assurance that all things are perfect...

Noah never missed a thing we said; so although sometimes we struggled to blend our wills—Granny said we were both “hard-headed”—we were determined that his childhood was going to be all things positive. To be good stewards of this precious gift of life inspired our decisions; naturally, we wanted Noah to see the light. Around the kitchen table we were like the Three Musketeers; we held spontaneous “Saturday” discussions that sometimes lasted all day and led us to explore our minds, expand our imaginations, and process our feelings. We often repeated the ancient saying that the eyes are the *windows* of the soul. We had learned that if the window to the inner being is clouded, dirty, or marred in any manner, the light will be deflected and diminished, so we tried to clean things up from the inside out. We wanted to help keep Noah’s twinkling eyes transparent, and as a result, he became very conscious of how he used his word.

Master Sgt. Randy McAllwie (The Big Bad Dawg of UGA ROTC)

Noah was a quiet soul with a peaceful and calm presence, pleasant to be near. I never saw him yell. His frustration was always turned inward, seeking his own perfection. He was a self-motivator. Noah knew the way to succeed in life was to care, to place something or someone above yourself... he followed the leader’s acumen that you can always get what you want if you help enough other people get what they want... He pulled us along toward his success with simple words and gestures that made us feel important...

Ashley remembers that when Noah prayed for something, he always ended by saying, “... *in right action.*” He had big dreams, but he never wanted to override the positive forces that he felt were always working for the greater good. He got better at finding himself and that made him confident and compassionate. Alyssa seemed to capture his intent in the deeply feeling words from her poem, “Your Words in My World,” “...Your face appears in the sunshine, parting the clouds.” Noah always wanted to light up the room, fill his friends with hope, and convince everyone in his considerable sphere of influence that the glass was at the very least half-full. In our home, we were always searching for the truth, seeking it through affirmative prayers of gratitude and surrender. One of our most treasured expressions is, “When a door slams shut, God leaves a window open—find it.”

From: Noah’s Ellijay Optimist Club Winning Speech, 8th Grade

...Listen to me, and I promise that I will listen to you, and together we will create the miracle that will be the beginning that has no end. Even if we are wrong sometimes or we misunderstand, let’s pledge to keep listening. We may stumble, we may ramble, we may hear our voices crack, but if we keep listening long enough, we’ll create the dream that so many have died for, the dream of being heard and understood. Alexander Pope said, “To err is human, to forgive divine.” I’d like to conclude by restating, “To speak is human, to listen divine.” Thank you for listening to me.

Mom: BFF (Best Friends Forever)

Rick encouraged our conscious deliberation by saying, “Thoughts we entertain become our words, our words become actions and through the law of cause and effect these create the circumstances and quality of our lives.” I remember telling Noah the story I told my students when I was demonstrating the power of positive thinking and, conversely, the damage that negative intent can impose. I demonstrated that spoken words don’t evaporate into thin air; rather they go directly into the language center of

the brains of everyone who hears them, including the speaker's. I'd start by saying, "So, if you could win a million dollars for not thinking of blue, you might say to yourself, 'Don't think blue.'" Then, I'd ask them to close their eyes and I'd intone, "Don't think blue." When I asked who'd just seen a patch of sky, most hands would go up and the light bulb of understanding would come on; they'd just lost their million dollars because of poor word choice. Noah was saying, "*Think Green*," long before it became popular. When something was stressful or confusing to Noah, Rick said, "Let's put this in the light."

Lara Oakes Pulliam

I remember Noah...being like sunshine... that smile was so beautiful and warm. I remember passing Noah on campus one day, almost not recognizing him, as I had not seen him in a while and he was in military attire. We hugged and stopped and talked for a while and he told me about joining the military and how excited he was... The last time I saw Noah was tailgating after we had both graduated. I got so excited, gave him a big hug and he introduced me to his girlfriend, Ashley. He told me that he was leaving in January for Iraq and truly seemed to be excited about serving his country...

Back in 1981, the most popular boys' names were Michael and Christopher; "Noah" wasn't even in the top 100. However, it was our only choice as it first came in a beautiful dream, and then shortly we found out it was the name of Rick's grandfather on his dad's side. Rick never met Grandpa Harris and hadn't known his first name. When we told his Mom, Geri about our choice, she was so delighted that it immediately stuck and was a source of wonder at family gatherings. Noah grew up hearing about the family history as well as the etymology of his name. He knew that according to the Bible, his namesake lived to be 950 years old. As a small child he always puzzled over that one but, more important, he grew to enjoy that *Noah* was Hebrew and Greek for a lot of great words he thought were very important like "rest," "comfort," "motion," "hope," "blessing," "father"... "faith." He embraced all of the meanings of his name including the story of the Ark. He loved that Noah cared so much that he sacrificed everything to save the animals and maintain the balance of nature on the planet.

Marilou Braswell (UGA Cheerleading Coach)

I used to always sing to him, "Noah built an Arky Arky..." It was my joy to coach and love Noah while he was at UGA. His eyes sparkled when he smiled and he had a heart for people. He and Laci (Marilou's daughter) were close friends ever since Noah's prom. He was always a part of this family; I loved him very much.

Rick and I first decided that his middle name would be James after my father, and then we thought about Arthur after Rick's father; we loved Uncle Carson's name, too, because he was named for Rick's beloved Papa Carson Green. When we realized there was no equitable way to choose, we came up with an alternative. Noah could pick his own name when he was sixteen. Though ultimately he decided that he liked just plain, old Noah Harris, the name game was a source of great entertainment for many years. Of the scores he contemplated, the one about which he was most serious when he was five caused many a raised eyebrow. I'll never forget the day he told me he had decided, "I'm going to be Noah Bruce Lee Harris." From the first movie, *Fists of Fury*, our peaceful abode was frequently shattered by flying feet and hands and the loud, "Kee-

yah!” Karate is one of the many reasons that Noah’s going to school in Ellijay was a match made in heaven—from day one, but kindergarten also marked the advent of a 13-year odyssey, during which we shared the peaceful 20-mile commute to and from school, watching the seasons unfurl across the rolling terrain... from lusty, humid, green-festooned summer, to blue skied, scarlet autumn blessing the vast fields of golden rod. We loved the way the leaves flew away like flaming birds of prey only to curl up and dry into winter gray that lay heavy at the base of the purple mountains’ majesty... and then spring would come...

Noah (“Spring Buds drip From Trees...”)

*I am the wind that blows through the trees.
I am the melody on which dance the leaves,
Up through the clouds I go,
Tracing valleys and hilltops I do not know.
On my shoulder a bird doth glide,
Secrets carried on my crest that others did confide.
The only thing I know not to be a lie,
The wind I am and wander the Earth do I.*

Being his confidante during those years will always be the hallmark of my life; by virtue of sitting side by side for at least 60 minutes a day, Noah and I talked about everything. We shared each others successes, failures, dreams and fears, laughing, crying, planning, and dreaming. Most of the time it was dark when we piled into the orange bug; and often we reached town as the sun was “pinking” the night, having been the only car on the road. Except for getting caught in a snow storm one time and a sad event that involved a small flock of guinea hens, it was uneventful, but significant. An extension of our experience in nature, we daily agreed that “Today is the first day of the rest of our lives.”

The first time I picked him up after Miss Marsha’s class, he did a double take when he saw a feller not much bigger than he was walking down the street in a clean, white karate uniform. The way Noah’s eyes widened as he opened his mouth into that questioning intake of surprise let me I know I was never going to hear the end of this. Noah had been taught that if someone else could achieve the impossible, he could too! Kind of like riding a bike or throwing a rock over an electric wire, he was excited someone at his school was going to karate. It wasn’t long before he was telling us, “*It’s real Tae Kwon Do, just down the street from the school, and Ben Kiker is great. Everybody says he is the best of the best of the best. It’s just \$25.00 to start.*” “Who is Ben Kiker?” I asked. “*He is an awesome Tae Kwon Do teacher. Mama, can we please just go check it out?*” At the time, I figured, “Why not?” We went to the studio just to look around and Noah became obsessed. Rick and I told him, “Son, you know the drill. If you want something extra and it’s not Christmas or your birthday...” With the most sincere and guileless smile, he interrupted, “*I’ll give you my whole piggy bank.*” He was five years old.

Matthew Starks (Ellijay, Ga.)

I had the pleasure of growing up with Noah. Along with my twin brother, Mickey, Noah and I would go swimming at the river almost every day... I had the pleasure to eat with Noah the day before he left Ellijay for the last time. We had a good time as always, but we talked a great deal

about his mission over there and Noah's stories made the war even more real than ever. He had a mission, and for the ones who knew Noah, we can tell you, when Noah got something in his mind, he followed it to the end.

That year, we were “running on fumes” broke. Rick had just gone back to work after five years of one salary and we were still digging out, but we scraped together the coins in all our piggy banks and Noah went to karate for the two-week introductory offer. The white uniform became his most prized possession. We all loved the studio, but we knew we couldn't afford to continue, and sadly Noah did too. On his last day, Noah executed an exceptional armpit fart for Ben when he was supposed to be completing a silent, honorable bow. Ben cracked up, but I thought to myself, “Uh-oh. Noah's gonna get kicked out of his last lesson.” Ben looked over at that moment and asked to speak to me after class. I thought he was either going to tell me that Noah needed to wait another year to start or that I'd have to start paying the regular fees. I was prepared to answer and explain we couldn't afford to sign Noah up for karate right now, but maybe we could do it later. Before I opened my mouth, Ben made me an offer I couldn't refuse. Talk about invisible hands! Talk about *Carpe Diem!* Before we left that day, I had my own uniform, and I was going to become the kids' karate teacher as soon as I was ready; in return, Ben would negotiate finances so that the whole family could attend. Rick talked to Noah very seriously, “If we do this, you have to be grown up about Tae Kwon Do. If Mom is going to commit to being the teacher, there will be no off days.” Noah gave us the secret family handshake and said, “*I promise; this is my greatest wish.*” Although during his elementary school career, we frequently used that statement to remind him to be careful what you wish for, and he learned it is o.k. to “want” to quit—just don't, he mostly enjoyed being the youngest member of the Harris branch of United Karate.

Angie Clark Cheshire (GHS Class of 90)

Mrs. Harris and Noah used to pick me up and give me rides to school many years ago as they passed by my house. Those are my first memories of Noah, a small child who was always more than willing to give up his front seat and climb in the back of the car so that I could have a comfortable ride to school too. From what I understand, his character never wavered from that generous spirit... Several years ago, I met up with him in the GAP one day while shopping....I was in awe of what an amazing spirit he had. I wasn't even sure that he would remember who I was – and yet, he treated me like a member of his own family... his passion for life and goodness was infectious... he had a contagious smile. When you saw Noah, he always made you feel good on the inside...

Perhaps he learned the best lessons of life from the not-so-invisible hands of Ronald Watkins who became a lifelong friend and mentor to so many young people across the mountains of North Georgia because, in addition to his fierce fighting style and flawless nunchuk form, as head karate instructor, Ronald was never afraid to stand the kids up and teach them discipline. Mr. Watkins taught them all about the strength that comes after weakness leaves the body and the mind; he and the other black belts always kept up with what the kids were doing outside of the studio. Sometimes Noah didn't *feel* like karate, but he learned about commitment and paying sweat-equity dues. At the time, Rick was the real fighter of the family, but Noah and I learned a lot as well. Side by side we confronted issues—me, a deeply hidden fear mentality and Noah, his need to understand discipline and confront physical suffering. Ben told everyone, “No matter how good you are, you *will* hit ‘the wall of pain.’” Ben taught us

to be wise in that knowledge and, no matter what, to avoid a fight at all costs, because once committed, the warrior must fight to win. We loved every minute of it, and we paid special attention to Ben's favorite, Psalm 1, because, to Noah, it seemed to describe his own front yard.

Psalm 1:1-3 (Ben Kiker's United Karate Trademark)

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Karate fit in with the atmosphere of our house. Everything was always growing and under construction, the floors, the muscles, the mind, the spirit. You couldn't walk through a doorway without having an inspired kick come whizzing by your head. Rick often chuckles about how little Noah practiced high round kicks by kicking him in the butt. One time while sparring in class, Noah saw Rick knock me down; and then he saw me pop back up, swinging. Rick and Noah would go at it in the living room until I'd get after them with the broom because I wasn't willing to let them break the few lamps we had. Even though he was just a little kid, Noah was getting really strong because on days when he didn't have karate, he was bouncing on that trampoline. One day while cooking dinner, I looked out the kitchen window and saw him fly upside down and land on his neck. He bounced right up, but it looked so dangerous that I screamed and Rick came running. When we went over to the trampoline, Noah jovially showed us an even more spectacular stunt. It looked like some kind of rodeo-clown gymnastics. It suddenly hit me that there was something wrong with the thudding sound I heard whenever he pulled a front flip on the ground. Also, I didn't want him to grow up to be a house wrecker.

Barbara Scohier (Mother of childhood buddy, Jason)

"Lucy, I hate to tell you this, but you've gotta come over now. John and I are mad! Jason and Noah have broken the back out of my couch."

When I fussed to Ben in front of Noah about his insane antics on the trampoline, expecting Ben to straighten Noah out, I was surprised that he said, "Gymnastics is the perfect complement to karate." Noah laughed as I was about to roll my eyes and reiterate our already packed schedule and tight finances when Ben suggested that I bring him to Miss Kim, the gymnastics instructor who used the karate building on Wednesdays. It was just \$25.00 dollars to start! Instantly, Noah deflated just thinking of his piggy bank. When we got to the first class, he balked because he was the only guy and all the little girls were dressed, well, like girls, and he didn't like it. Ironically, to him, it was all about cheerleading, and he didn't want to have any part of it. He didn't want to be seen with *them*, but after meeting Miss Kim, he decided that it might be o.k. and we told him if he wanted to get on the trampoline again, he'd listen and learn proper technique. Miss Kim had arranged for her students to ride a bus to the studio, so I didn't actually watch the classes, but I noticed that on our trampoline, Noah was starting to look like a real gymnast and the front flips stopped because he said, "*Miss Kim says I can't learn those until I'm in the advanced class.*" Pretty soon he was doing back handsprings and then came the all-important back tucks. The girls giggled when Noah did his thing, but he realized they were just smiling out loud, and

he stayed friends with many of them for all of his life; and when he got to high school, he found out they were often cheering for him.

Brigitte Toon (Bobby Toon's wife and incredible, unofficial "mom" of Bayonet Company)

He brought the best out of people... a true American Hero. I am so thankful to have seen him during his R&R. I remember hugging him and he felt so strong and invincible. I didn't want to let go. I know I told you, it felt like he was holding a piece of Bobby (Major Toon) in his heart. I don't know why, but I felt so protective of Noah. It may be because of the wonderful way he had with children. He was at our house one night and found out that Daphne (our middle child) was cheerleading at her school. He talked to her about it and promised tumbling lessons when he got back. You wouldn't believe how excited she was. She called her friends and poor Noah didn't know it but he had a bunch of young girls waiting for his return... I think she saw Noah as the big brother she never had.

Noah made a big deal out of inviting me to come early to his last Miss Kim session because he was working on something special; I had to take off early from GHS to get there and was still a little late. Was I ever shocked! When I walked into the studio, he had just started his running approach to an aerial. To an uninformed mom, it looked like this: charge as hard as you can and throw your head at the floor while throwing the force of your legs up over your head. If it works correctly, your head hovers above the floor lifted by the force of the spinning legs. WOW! I covered my mouth as I shrieked, but Noah just popped up and smiled, like *"That's my Momma."* He was always fearless about trying new things. When he was a small child, we had to explain to him he could not sky-dive until he was 18 (which he did with Mike Jung and Mikey Bramlett). I remember how as a ten-year-old, he looked up at me and asked, *"Aw, come on, Mom. You'll sign for me, right?"* He was shocked we wouldn't because he knew Rick and I agreed some things are better learned young, like bike riding and language acquisition. We made sure he could count in Spanish at the same time he counted in English. Whenever we met people from another country, he would always ask them how to say something special in their language. He loved to recite, *"En el jardin de mi vida, tu eres solamente en flor."* (In the garden of my life, you are the only flower.) To him learning new things was just part of life and he was eager about everything. That day in the karate/gymnastics studio, I just smiled, quietly relieved, when he said, *"Miss Kim says I'm doing good and I should be safe now. What do you think?"*

Capt. Bobby Toon (June 25, 2005, Noah's Birthday Celebration)

This community created what Noah Harris was as a man.

When Noah was only six, on a plain, old regular Tuesday at school, I was called to the office to take a call from the elementary school secretary. When I answered, she informed me that Kathy Overstreet, better known as Ms. O, was on the line. Noah was feeling sick to his stomach. Luckily it was my planning period, so I hopped in the car and within minutes, I was helping my sick little boy buckle up. When I told him I didn't have time to take him home and get back to class by the bell, he assured me with a sweet little smile that if I would buy him a Coke with ice, he could sit at my desk and sip it and probably be o.k. I asked, "How about something caffeine-free?" As I pulled into the DQ on the way, he asked innocently, *"Does Coke have caffeine in it?"* I laughed and asked him if he was already feeling better. He said, *"Much better now that I am out of my classroom."* "What? I thought you loved Ms. O!" I was just about to pull

a 180 and take him right back to Ellijay Primary when he said, “*I do love Ms. O, but, Mom, this girl threw up on the carpet right next to my chair, and the smell made my tummy really hurt.*” I sighed with patience, remembering that he had issues with “up chuck.” As Noah hardly ever missed a day, I got him a Sprite, squeezed his hand, and headed up the long drive to the high school.

We hurried to my classroom as I had to be *super*-prepared for certain classes, and the next was eleventh-grade English, after lunch. It was full of “almost graduate” juniors who were well aware that all they had to do was pass my class and they’d forever be finished with reading and writing (1987 Georgia graduation requirements called for three units of English). It was not an advanced class, but I was friendly with my students and assured them that, if they would work with me, we’d get the job done. I was determined to help them develop communication skills that would enable them to improve their BQ, EQ, IQ, and HSQ, my terms for body, heart, mind, and spirit.

As they filed by me at the door, many of them smiled and waved at my little curly-headed friend. Noah obviously didn’t feel up to par, but he kept weakly peeking over his folded arm pillow and struggling to smile now and again. When the bell rang, I started as always like a drill instructor or a P.E. teacher. I loved my subject and I knew how to “dish it out.” Emphasizing performance, I always broke the class into small chunks that revolved around writing, speaking, and literature. It’s my philosophy that anyone who can speak and write logically as well as have awareness of the great thoughts of culture will be able to matriculate successfully. I always told my students, “I want you to be able to claim your American birthright as a strong citizen-leader.”

JK DeLapp (Sig Ep brother)

I was a SigEp at Georgia with Noah... I can remember on a number of occasions, just because he was so massive, that one of the guys would try to take him on... They'd talk the talk and try and walk big—Noah would just say, "OK," and then kindly whup their tail. And he'd almost always thank them for trying... He was always very popular—not to mention a great dancer... Noah was always very kind to me. All of us were very friendly... I'm not sure if anyone ever noticed—but... I don't ever think I'll forget just how important he could make you feel in a quick, two-minute conversation.

We might have been discussing Benjamin Franklin’s “healthy, wealthy, and wise” formula or “*The Declaration*” because I remember the desks were arranged in a circle so the students could communicate, verbally spar, or just toss ideas around. I’d always tell them, “You can pass on the discussion once in a while, but you have an opinion and if you’ll express it, it will grow.” The discussion was just beginning when, suddenly, I saw across the room a student I will call Roger make a face at a student who was sitting near where I was standing. Call him Shannon. As Roger’s face seemed more silly than menacing, I was caught off guard by Shannon’s reaction, and before I could stop him, Shannon had leaped into the center of the room and challenged, “Well, bring it on!” Roger’s sarcastic smile morphed into the teacher-dreaded sneer that says, “Here I come!” and he launched himself into what instantly turned into a grappling ring.

I'd been teaching karate for a couple of years and knew how to manage an altercation fairly well; but when the guys fell to the floor and tied up in a double headlock, I couldn't get them apart. I actually knocked on the top of Roger's head with my fist. The other members of the class were egging it on, "Get him, Roger!" "Bust him, Shannon!" Noah's presence in the room had been forgotten by all, including me as I tried a tack that had worked in other fights of pretending injury. I used my best, pained falsetto, "Ouch!" "You're hurting me, boys!" At that point, Noah leaped to his feet and yelled ferociously, "Roger, you better not hurt my Mommy!" The class went silent... And then everybody started laughing, including Roger and Shannon. We laughed 'til tears ran, and then Noah and I took Roger and Shannon to the office to "process" the situation in front of one of my favorite principals, Lex Rainey. He couldn't understand, "What was so funny about a fight in your classroom?" I always rather enjoyed making him scratch his head.

Noah kept his head up in watchdog position for the rest of the day and quietly helped me pack so we could head for home. When we got in the car, he patted my arm and asked sincerely, "*Mom, do you want me to come to school with you tomorrow?*" Oh, he was a perfect Mama's Boy, my dream child, my best friend and protector. As my sidekick, he kept refining his vision. Then, later, when he was in high school, I realized that, in fact, I was *his* sidekick through the science fairs, term papers, football, wrestling, drama rehearsals. We were always together, carrying equipment, book bags, and kids who needed a ride home. Noah never questioned our will to help the community, and when he was older, he only asked, "*Miss Mommy, what can I do?*" because he had learned to love serving and had developed an appreciative heart.

Noah (handwritten 1992 card, returned, summer, 2005, by Mr. Dan)

Dear Mr. Dimmock,

It's been a long, hard year. Before it's over, let me say, "Thanks!" I've had a lot of fun times. Your class was interesting. This is one year I'll never forget. I really appreciate all you have done for me.

Your Loving Student,

Noah

P.S. I learned a lot and I'll always remember you.

Mom continues... (God Works in Mysterious Ways)

When he was 10, he had his brown belt "working on red." We were devoted to the three-a-week practices which caused me to miss a lot of after-school functions such as basketball and wrestling. We'd be at karate while those events were going on, and when students would ask me to come see what they were up to, I'd ask, "What day is it?" One Wednesday right after school, the same Roger popped into my classroom at just the right moment. You never know when the invisible hand is going to give you just the little touch. He said, "Ms. Harris, please come see us wrestle. No one in Ellijay cares about what we are doing. We just get no respect." Noah piped up, "*Can I roll around on the mats, too?*" Roger laughed and told Noah that he could help set up. They

were already out the door by the time I said, "Okay, you guys go on and I'll be there when I finish these pa...!"

Noah had a ball that day. He joined the team effort of rolling out the mats and then he wrestled with the guys before the matches. He enjoyed just having a good old time with the high school guys and making their eyebrows go up when he showed them his full "Bruce Lee" split. They actually got out folding chairs, and he showed them that he could go beyond a full split to what looked like pain to them. They told him that he'd have to wrestle when he got to high school, and he ate it up, grinning from ear to ear. As the first match started, I sensed a change come over him. He almost knocked me over when he jumped up and yelled, "Go, Bobcats!"

When the 103 took the mat, he went ballistic. He re-enacted every move using me as his opponent. He had me in a headlock a couple of times and was hollering like his life depended on the outcome. To him it was like each of his new friends was putting his courage on the line for the Bobcats, and it meant something to Noah. By the time the match was over, I was exhausted and though I can't remember who won that day, I knew a wrestler had been born. When Coach Mark and Coach John came over to thank us for being there, Noah asked, "*Coach, can I do that?*" There was only an eighth-grade team in the middle school at the time, but Coach Mark laughed his famous, face-splitting, joyous exhalation and Coach John said, "Well, it's the end of the season. We only have a few practices left, and you're only in fifth grade." I held my breath as he continued, "But if your Mom doesn't mind, you can come by tomorrow and see what you think. Bring your shorts to the field house when you get off the bus." We let him skip karate for two weeks.

Neil Gary (Noah's 189 weight class, Marine, "Hoo-ah" role model)

... Noah was a fierce opponent... building the state champ teams we have today. He knew the petty stuff wasn't important. He put himself in a position to make a difference for his community. He went the distance. He would want us to look at ourselves... ask, "What can I do?" Individuality is important, but sometimes you gotta care about the people next to you.

The next year, when Noah was in the sixth grade, he wrestled for the middle school, but he was so small they didn't even have a weight class for him. He spent a lot of time on his back, but he was tough and each week he'd charge out onto the mat and learn a little something more. The coaches kept coaching, Rick and I were in the stands cheering, and little by little, Noah started doing better and he started growing; it wasn't long before he learned his way around the mat. Sometimes he would get frustrated, but we rode that wave together because we didn't want Noah to be the kind of guy who wouldn't come back if he ever got beaten. We'd tell him, "Sometimes, you've got to lose your way to success. Just keep working." Noah learned that competition made him strong, and he always had his friends, the cheerleaders bracing him up if he ever got down. Even his chief baby sitter, Rodney, was a wrestler at the high school. They'd use the good ole trampoline to drill and practice tricky moves; and then one day, when he was in eighth grade, Noah ran into the house and said, "Hey, Mom, look what I can do." I squealed as he swept me off the ground and up over his head never realizing at the time that he would someday spend a lot of time throwing people in the air. Although he always used his Tae Kwon Do skills, especially the discipline that he had learned, he slowly withdrew from karate and from Steve Calhoun's trumpet

instruction even though as the band director said, "Noah was a good little trumpet player." In that one afternoon he had received a nudge that pushed him in a new direction; he traded everything to don the Purple and White and become a Gilmer wrestler through and through. Oh how he loved being a Bobcat. Ronald and Ben weren't thrilled about it, but they said, "As long as you are wrestling, it's okay."

Ronald Watkins (Karate Instructor and Chairman of the Gilmer County BOE, Noah Harris Center Dedication)

Noah was my karate student; he grew up in karate and I didn't realize that I was teaching a future hero. He was the kind of kid, when he got involved in anything, he always was trying to do the right thing. We didn't realize that when his Uncle Jimmy brought the flag to us in Gilmer County from New York City and we had the big ceremony after 9/11 to honor the fire fighters... we didn't realize it would cost us so much. We didn't know Noah would give his life, but we all knew he never wanted to be a spectator. He always wanted to be a part of the right thing. That's why he joined the Army.

Noah (7th grade, Creative Essay)

I will never forget a match that I fought in Fannin County. I was all pumped up and all I could think about was winning. I was ready to wrestle that day, but I was worried because I had an orthodontist appointment. My mom had to drive fast to make it on time. My coaches and team were about to give up on me when I finally arrived. Coach Snider came to talk to me about the match. He said I would be wrestling their best guy and that he weighed 125 pounds when I only weighed 111. That made me nervous. I decided to get warmed up and keep my muscles loose. I did all my stretches and jogged in place. I was ready to win.

After a few people on my team wrestled, it was my turn. I went out onto the mat, shook hands, and heard the sound of the whistle echo in the gym. We moved around the mat and I shot for his leg. He cross-faced me and got two points. I did a reversal and got two points. He got up and away and got one point for the escape. I shot again and took him down, and that was the end of his points.

Noah experienced the same kind of family-style teamwork in each Gilmer County classroom he entered. Knowing he was the son of a teacher and had a daddy who expected him to do his best probably caused him to be more aware of his teachers' feelings, but I think it was more that all of his instructors, without exception, loved him and his classmates and did their best to nurture all the children. That's just the way it is in Ellijay; and most folks are like us: They have a moment when they experience the understanding that a great little mountain town can provide an education that goes beyond excellent statistics into the realm of exceptional quality of life.

When Noah was in seventh grade, he was enjoying his second year of the "MAT"—the Multi Age Team—a sixth- through eighth-grade "loop" that was an experiment; but it certainly was not an accident the kids loved it because they always seemed to be doing some interesting project. Noah had the same teachers all three years, and they got to know him so well they were able to build on his strengths and push him through his weaknesses, always with kindness and the utmost concern for his development. The day I knew that Gilmer County had taught him to become a joyful problem-solver was

the day the little Civic had a flat tire on the way home from school, almost at the county line. Like the punctured tire, I started to deflate; I was *kind of* whining as I got out of the car and started to remove the strange-looking metal pieces from under the carpet in the hatch. I knew it would take me three hours and several broken nails to figure out where the jack was, put it together, and then change the tire; and I had to get home and back to school to a meeting in one hour. Then, I felt Noah sort of “hip push” me out of the way and start assembling the jack. I remember how he pushed what Mikey called his “mushroom head” hair cut behind his ears and went to work at what looked like world-record speed; I started to time him as he removed the lug nuts. To my astonishment, we were back on the road in less than five minutes. I said, “Honey, where’d you learn how to do that?” and he looked at me quizzically and then patted me on the head as he so often did, saying, “*Poor Mommy. It’s just basic physical science.*”

Noah (MAT Journal, May 3, 1993, “Cumberland Island, Close to Nature”)

...I jumped up when I heard the phone ring at 5:45 a.m. It was Mr. Hyde; he was giving us our wake up call. I was on my feet and running, getting ready to go to lovely Cumberland Island... Sea gulls screamed harshly and swooped in the air; I knew it was going to be a great day... the wind was blowing in my face, the salty blast streamed into my lungs as the birds’ cries shattered the chugging of the boat...stunned by the beauty of nature...

Times Courier—(June 8, 1995, the caption under the class picture)

The EMS Multi Age Team (MAT) and parents honored Nancy Gheesling and Gary Hyde for “three years of inspired instruction.” The teachers were presented with plaques that featured the following inscription: “In order to become an eagle, you must first learn to fly. Thank you for challenging us to find our wings. We are ready to soar!”

Noah had such great training. He considered the adults in his life to be the greatest of American leaders, and he wanted to perform well for them. As his wrestling coaches were also football coaches, it was just part of a time-honored progression that he join the eighth-grade football team. Noah’s experience with football had consisted of he and Rick tossing the ball back and forth in the yard, so he was “green.” He didn’t even know what position he would play. Not wanting him to get hurt, his dad encouraged, “Son, you could be a great kicker; you have great legs!” All he told us was when we asked was, “*I’m having fun and I think I’m doing pretty good.*” Even better, Robbie Long, Mikey Bramlett, Brian Heaslip and a bunch of his friends were on the team. Were we ever surprised when at the very first game of the season on almost the first play, Robbie stepped up and threw a 63-yard bomb which Noah caught as he was stepping into the end zone. I didn’t even bother to put my hand over my mouth. We found our voices and learned how to yell, “Go, Bobcats!”

It was a great time and we never wanted the season to end, but one afternoon found us at the last game at Dawson County Middle School. Though it was a cold, sloppy day, the Bobcats added another victory to their winning season. Noah was excited because he made his first interception. All during the overcast afternoon, as a typical mom, I had been concerned because our guys had to stand in a big mud puddle that covered the visitor’s sideline. I kept feeling sorry for how wet they must have been, and I was actually glad when the game was over and the Bobcats single-filed onto the field

to shake hands with the Tigers. We were all ready to head for the car to follow the bus back to the school. That's when we saw a crowd of Bobcat purple running back toward the sideline. Just as I thought to myself, "That's odd," the first Bobcat belly-flopped and slid about twenty yards down the middle of that ugly trench, turning it into a brown spray of celebration; he was followed by a half dozen others in slippery, rapid succession. The crowd erupted into laughter as the coaches turned and started blowing whistles and hollering for them to stop. I knew that those guys were going to be required to run some "hard yards" and "pay the piper," so to speak. As I strained to distinguish the leader of the pack, I couldn't see his number, but there was no mistaking that mud splattered grin. Noah often led his buddies to victory, but more important, he led them to celebrate life.

Earl Leonard (Noah's Philanthropic Mentor, a.k.a. "Papa")

You want kids like Noah to enjoy opportunity. You know they can make a difference.

The Philanthropist: Faith Is a Decision

Our family is famous for giving funny or pet names to things. We'd be always speaking with crazy accents and made up-words, and Rick has a habit of capitalizing on his Viet Nam hearing. Noah heard a lot of "malarkey," and always laughed about it, especially when his dad expressed his own pronunciations, calling common items like the dormitory, the "dohmitory." There was that one time in sixth grade when Noah was really mad because he lost a spelling bee when he got the word "asparagus" and we had always pronounced it as-per-gas. However, we always told Noah the truth when he asked a question. When he said, "*Mom, what's that called?*" or "*Dad, what's that mean?*" we always gave the correct word or definition. Once when he asked the meaning of a word that I felt was too mature for his age, I said something like, "Son, that one's kind of rough. Can you wait until next year?" Perfect child that he was, he acted like he was agreeing. I remember how he smiled and said, "*O.k., Mommy, I can wait. I'll just ask you again later.*" What I hadn't realized was he had discovered that Granny Peggy's ancient black dictionary would answer questions about words that Mom would not. One day he charged anxiously out of his room with his finger stuck in the big, old, battered lexicon and he asked, "*Mom! How do you pronounce this word? Phila ...nthra ...pist? That's what I'm going to be when I grow up. It sounds like a great job.*" I said, "That word is philanthropist." I looked at it as he read aloud, "*One who loves people and works and sacrifices to increase the well-being of humanity.*" I smiled as Noah asked, "*How do you get that job?*" I think I may have said something like, "You just do it."

Sam Snider (Noah's Head Wrestling and Track Coach)

My greatest memory of Noah is how he treated little kids. Noah made my children and Coach Pettit's children feel special. Our kids were eight to 10 years old and they would tag along to practice and camp. Noah always took the time to show interest in their lives. My sons have learned from Noah's example and are able to show kindness to other young kids...

Rick

"I will never do for you what you can do for yourself." I remember saying that to Noah over and over when he was young and impressionable because I wanted him to be strong and independent and able to accomplish realistic goals. Noah had a tree house, right across the creek. When I built it, the trees were small, so it wasn't dangerous,

just a simple triangular deck with railings to keep him from falling out and a roof to keep him from getting wet. It was his own special spot and a little kid magnet because it had a wooden ladder that was great for climbing. As he grew up, the woods became his neighborhood, and he and his buddy Alex roamed all around to places I hadn't even gone. One day when they were pre-teens, they wanted to build their own tree house, something that was between their houses. We lived on the east side of the ridge, and his family lived on the west, and so they wanted it in between. Right down at the lower end of our property was what we called The King Tree. This old maple must be about 200 years old; its four main trunks are covered with some kind of blight which has formed huge knobs all over it; and it was "*Perfect!*" according to Noah and Alex. At that time, I had a lot of work going on, and although he said, "*Come on, Dad, let's build that tree house,*" I just didn't have the time as I'd had when he was a toddler and we seamlessly had worked and played. When he was younger, everything had been an adventure with chopping wood equal to playing ball. I pointed to the woodpile and said, "Listen, guys, there's the wood you can use, pressure treated. It's scrap, but still good." I gave them an old hammer and a box of nails and said, "Have at it." They did. From a distance I kept an eye and ear out, and periodically walked by and gave them a pointer like, "It would be advisable if you put a support under that section." From time to time, they would come back and ask me what to do about some aspect they couldn't quite fathom. To this day, pieces of their work still grace the gnarly branches; it's nothing fancy, but they took my advice and did a good job. They played in The King Tree a lot, but agreed unanimously the best part of the tree house was the fact they had worked together and built it with them leading and me guiding.

Donald Slakie

I will always remember the day that Alex and Noah met... Amicalola Lodge had just opened. We were visiting for the first time. As we walked through the lobby, I saw you guys. We said our hellos and Alex and Noah made eye contact and I could see the immediate connection between the two. Sort of like two old souls meeting up again after a lifetime of separation. From that moment on, for the next four years, Alex and Noah were inseparable. It was always, "I'm going over to Noah's," or, "Noah's coming over." They spent hours, days, weeks, and months "playing hard" as Rick would say. I remember stringers of trout arriving at the house after Noah and Alex had "fished out" the pond at the base of the falls. Large bass from Dale's Lake, forts built in the woods. Alex and Noah swinging on a tire rope hanging over the side of the mountain, on and on... I remember Noah's last words to me as we left the party at Christmas last year. He said, "I'm happy that Alex is doing what he loves and tell him I support him totally." Know that the world was made a little bit better place by your loving son.

I really loved that part of being a parent. As Noah grew, he started to stand on his own and become independent, but I guess because we had spent so much time together, he always came back to me when there were things he didn't understand. At one of our very first *armchair conversations* out in my office, I could see that he was struggling with a confidence issue, maybe it was something about karate or wrestling or school, and I wanted him to have internal tools to call on when I wasn't there with him. I always did my best to keep an eye on his progress, especially when dealing with the challenges of self-perception. At an early age, he began questioning his self-identity and grappling with the whole idea of "Who am I and why am I here?" I taught him early that thoughts entertained in the heart can become reality. So he knew the importance of keeping only good and constructive thoughts in his mind. He used positive affirmations to keep his mind focused and to help him through troubled

times. I feel blessed that he always listened so well and I was able to help him develop a spiritual perspective regarding life as well as an orientation to the teachings of Christ. I wanted him to know that we are both human and divine. We are here to live and to learn, and the struggles we encounter are for the purpose of edifying our souls. I always tried to help him keep his ego in balance by reminding him that the ancient teachings referred to the ego as the “counterfeit spirit.”

In this early stage of his development, I particularly enjoyed reading him the story, *What Men Live By* by Leo Tolstoy. It is a beautiful story of struggle, faith, and love that would always help Noah to feel secure in his own sense of destiny. He struggled, even when he was young, to overcome his weaknesses and to maintain a positive attitude about his progress so he could build a confident self-image. I wanted him to be able to deal with whatever challenges arose, and learn not just about facts, but about truth. As soon as he was old enough to understand, I told him that I was going to help develop him into a kind and gentle warrior. At one point, he experienced being challenged by an older guy who was a bully. It shook his confidence, so I had him practice a two part statement that we fell into yelling each morning as he left with Lucy for school. I'd yell from the house as he walked away, “Are you a winner?” And he would yell back, “Yes, I am a winner and I'll tell you why. I have faith, courage, and enthusiasm.” I knew that if he could handle his challenges as a boy that he'd be prepared to face the more subtle and potentially devastating struggles that were bound to come as he grew. I didn't want him to develop character flaws so I taught him to stay flexible and adaptable, and to avoid struggling against the challenges. I showed him how to gather his internal power and resources by “letting go and letting God” and how to move to a higher level and solve the problem there. We worked on his internal building blocks that would become the bricks in the wall of his leadership; he wanted to become a man of service, one who could take responsibility and lead from whatever position he happened to occupy.

Joe McCutchen (Newsletter)

Noah had lunch with me recently and he told me about his current tour of duty in Iraq as a lieutenant and platoon leader. He is excited about being in the Army infantry and fighting for the people of Iraq. Noah was a star football player and state wrestling champion in high school here in Ellijay; he is also a graduate of the University of Georgia. After he finishes his army service, Noah plans a career in real estate and politics. I hope I live to see Noah Harris elected President as he is a fine leader and a great American in every way.

One of the events I have looked back on often was when the GHS football coaches asked me to join their staff just as Noah entered high school, his ninth-grade year. This was volunteer work of motivating the team and watching over the young freshmen and sophomore players. At the time, I had a manufacturing consulting business which taught American manufacturers how to incorporate the principles of Lean Production, the Toyota manufacturing system. Part of the training for employees was motivational and performance oriented, so I brought these skills to the team that year as their motivational coach.

As any dad would be, I was excited to be there as my son began his high school football experience. The year of his middle school football had whetted my appetite to help him in whatever way I could. As it turned out, this particular year there were a

couple of tough guys in the junior and senior classes who liked to pick on the younger players; I had to work overtime to keep everyone busy. When they weren't practicing, I made sure that we were involved in something so no one had time to get into trouble. Every afternoon, I would give a little pep talk before the players went out to the field to get them fired up, and then I would encourage them all through practice and hang around on the sidelines so the guys would keep their minds on task. If there was any lull in the activity, the older guys would start getting into shenanigans and pulling pranks. So, I was there to intervene. It was a rare experience for me, and I cherished the time I spent with Noah, seeing him develop on the field as he also got to see me at work; it was a new perspective for us both. We found that during the season our relationship as son and father got pushed to the background because I did not treat him differently from anyone else. He watched as I became buddies with some of the older guys and worked with the "roughest, toughest" guys in the school to keep them out of trouble and try to give them a sense of personal responsibility. I could feel his respect for me grow; I was no longer as square as he thought I had been.

Keyla Richards Manning (UGA Cheerleading Buddy Forever!)

I smile every time I see Noah's big smile in my mind.... Noah and I always connected... You guys are amazing parents and I know you already know this, but there was NO one in the world more special to Noah than you guys. And he always talked about how awesome you both were. I am very close to my parents as well, and it was great to share with someone about how cool your parents are!

I remember an incident that took place one afternoon that involved one of the senior guys who was known to be a tough guy, but I was friendly with him because he was kind of the jokester. Anyway, as we were walking off the field from practice, headed to the field house; the joker came up behind me and jumped on my back. He was gonna take me down, just having fun; but he was kind of pushing the envelope, being a little too familiar, having fun at my expense and checking me out at the same time. Well, my karate training kicked in from somewhere, because without thinking, I immediately reached up and got my hand under his arm, right at the elbow, and I pushed his arm up and ducked my head out from under. Then, I slid my hand down his arm and grabbed his wrist and did a little pirouette and took him down to one knee. Next, just for fun, I acted like I was going to kick him in the face just to let him know what could have happened if I had wanted to unleash. Then, I laughed and gently "side-kicked" him on his way; he shook his blonde head and laughed and had a wide grin on his face, but you could see it was a big surprise! He couldn't believe I'd taken him down so easily, and the rest of the guys saw it too. I heard a lot of whoops and hollers from behind. That day, I earned my credentials with the guys because no one ever messed with me again. Noah was there as always, taking it all in.

Noah (high school journal affirmation)

*I will organize my notebooks, focus, pay attention to teachers; pretend I am in college; study hard @night, test or not. Stop watching TV, read: **The Magic of Believing, Think Like DaVinci, An Incomplete Education, Time Management for Dummies.** Carry a notebook with me to jot down ideas. Get up with the alarm clock every morning, start budgeting, make lists, learn to shop, learn to do my own laundry, clean room, keep it organized. Start managing my time and scheduling. Become cost conscious. Start a tithe and don't touch it. It's time to grow up; be mature, be friendly and sociable; don't be*

obnoxious... be funny, not annoying. Say mantra/prayer 20x a day. Run or work out everyday; do sprints and lift hard. Be compassionate, stay full of energy, happiness, power, wisdom, and strength from the time I rise until the time I go to sleep.

Allen Fox (Gainesville, Ga.)

Noah was someone that you are blessed to come across once in a lifetime. While I only spent a summer with him in Washington interning for Congressman Nathan Deal, he made a lasting impact on my life. He had such an energetic personality that was welcoming to everyone he came across. He was wise beyond his years and I can remember his words about serving something greater than yourself...one of the most honorable people I have encountered. The student body of UGA, our military forces, and mankind can learn something from the example that Noah left us. I know I have.

It was great coaching: the Friday night games, walking out onto the field with the guys, and being there to encourage and watch as Noah began to play. He didn't see much action that first year, so we got to spend a lot of time together, and I could observe him in practice and get to know him as an athlete along with his friends. He definitely showed me that he understood there is "No 'I' in Team."

Noah (ninth-grade football, riding the bench)

My position? I charge up and down the sidelines and shout, "GATA, GATA, GATA!"

To this day, I see those players and they still call me coach. That was around the time when Noah first called me a name that stuck and made sense to him and his friends. When I would get a certain look on my face and start to deal with the inappropriate behaviors of the players, Noah would say, "Look out! Here comes Armageddon." It would break the tension, but he was right. I was never afraid to bring it on if I thought the guys were out of line, and he was never afraid to crack a joke to ease the tension.

Lt. Josh Baine (UGA ROTC Buddy)

I knew Noah from the UGA Army ROTC program... He and I sat together our senior year at the military ball. His presence livened up the event. I just recently returned from duty in Kuwait... I had seen Noah at Camp Doha, Kuwait, in early June. He was returning from his R&R. The aerial point of debarkation is located at Camp Doha, so everyone that is heading "up north" to Iraq passes through. I saw Noah at lunch one day and we spoke briefly after an excited greeting; it is so great to see a familiar face overseas. The next morning we ran into each other at breakfast. I sat with him and some other guys returning from R&R. We talked about ROTC and what other students were up to. I remember him telling me why the 3rd ID had green name tapes and green backing for his rank and branch, usually used for the Battle Dress Uniform, while tan is the norm for the Desert Camo Uniform, that it was begun as a mistake since all the tan was gone and they were forced to use green backing. It quickly became a tradition...some of the guys we were eating with were making fun of that... Noah and I just sat there and laughed. He was always easy-going and made friends anywhere. The pictures in the AJC were fitting of Noah—smiling and looking like he was enjoying himself (in Iraq)...

On this one particularly important Friday night, I took a seemingly shiny galvanized bucket to illustrate my pre-game message. Except for me, no one knew the bottom of the bucket had just about rusted out. I said, "Listen, you guys are a team and you build your power as you work together and solidify; but if you get people who are

working at odds with the team, it decompresses you as a unit.” I filled the bucket with water and said, “Now there’s a team, one cohesive unit, but if you get somebody who is not with the program, it’s like a hole in the bucket.” I pulled a screwdriver out of my pocket and rammed it into the bottom of the bucket three or four times and just stood there holding the bucket, watching their faces as they watched, all eyes just glued, watching as the water flowed out into the locker room. Some of them were probably thinking, “Man, he just ruined a good bucket,” but it made the point, and they always referred to that lesson with phrases like, “No more leaky buckets!”

It really made a point with all those guys who still call me coach, the ones who really didn’t need the lesson; and it revealed to me the ones who weren’t really listening. Noah watched it all, knowing that some guys just weren’t going to listen, but he darn sure was going to improve the way he did. I think that year he learned we can become friends with the good, the bad, the ugly, and the beautiful. Through the thrill of success and the agony of failure, he became determined to be who he was. It certainly enhanced our *armchair talks* because he was confident I was going to help him stop the leaks in his own bucket. He told me or his mom just about anything and everything. Sometimes, it was just a matter of listening and telling him that what he was going through was okay, just a phase, not permanent, just his individual destiny unfolding. I told him that if he would think of it as a phase, he could work his way through it and figure out what had to be done in order to be successful and to move to the next level of growth.

Lt. Gerson Ramirez (Noah’s roommate in Iraq)

His politeness, charisma, and Southern hospitality immediately made me feel welcome to the company... He was continuously helping people solve their problems, as well as taking care of his platoon... I remember him helping some of his soldiers to get back in shape during his personal time. Noah was big on getting buff and most often he would flex his muscles in the room and say in a loud voice, “I’m getting swoll.” He gave me lots of nutrition tips and ways to stay in shape through workout routines. He was always on me about having too much sugar, and often talked to me about the importance of good nutrition. Noah was popular here, especially in the mail room where he was always getting tons of boxes that would fill the entire room. He cared very much for his soldiers and was eager to get out of the gate and lead them in missions... Noah passed the way heroes do in combat, fighting with his platoon, leading from the front—A True Warrior.

Once, when he was doing really well, I could tell his ego was swelling. Since I didn’t see the relationships he had with people at school, I didn’t have insight into how he was perceived. This gave me a unique perspective and clarity, and I could tell when there were things going on with him. I could tell that his head was swelling and I detected bravado in his voice with the undertone of his bragging, and I flat called him on it. “You’ve been reading your own press, haven’t you?” He looked at me with surprise and wanted me to explain. “You’ve done really well in sports and school, and you’ve even read about your achievements in the paper; and if you read your own press, you’re gonna start impressing yourself, and that means your ego is coming out of balance.” That opened up a whole conversation. I told him that it was his life, his choice, his decision, but if he wanted to have a clear perspective about life and himself, he needed to subdue his ego/personality and to quiet its “chattering mind.” The “mind of the ego” is self-interested and self-indulgent; it keeps us from hearing the holy promptings that guide us from within. I reminded him that whenever we do

anything, we need to do it in conjunction with God. He got that; and even though he often said he was glad he had me around to keep him in check, this time he got it enough to manage himself from then on. He always worked hard to make certain his ego never reared its ugly, arrogant head in the way it had that one time. And besides, he didn't want to see Armageddon rear his ugly head either.

Noah (High School Journal)

***The Magic of Believing** is a book that made a great impression on me because it taught me the power of belief and thought, and that everything created or invented in this world originated from thought. It gave me an understanding of the tools I have with which to create my future and make my dreams come true. It also helped me understand that there are unlimited possibilities for the future and that with the correct attitude and determination, I can fulfill my destiny and make a positive contribution to any situation or environment in which I find myself.*

Mom

It was great to watch; he just got better and better, more and more positive in thought, word, and deed. His eager heart became graceful and his personality was not just courteous, but truly cordial and light-hearted. Rick only had to remind him a few thousand times to live as a verb instead of a noun; but even when he was in middle school, we could see that the understanding of his mind was starting to saturate his heart and he could see that it was good to believe life is not a destination, but rather an attractive, winding road he intended to explore, taking all of his friends with him, planting seeds of joy along the way, and lighting torches of hope in the dark shadows. He was growing strong and he loved God, his family, his community, his country, and work/play. Noah was simply enthusiastic in a *Carpe Diem* kind of way; yet, I remember it started in high school; when people complimented him, he always said in a soft, humble, almost nonchalant voice, "I do what I can."

Joshua Carswell (Ellijay, Ga.)

Although I only had the pleasure of knowing Noah for a very short time, he was a senior my freshman year, I was lucky to have been able to share a class with him. Noah possessed so many positive qualities that I am unable to list them all, but from day one in that class I was immediately affected by his contagious personality. Noah's sincerity and generosity are two of the qualities I most remember him for. Noah would routinely stop by my desk to ask how I was doing and to offer an encouraging word. One day, while doing homework, I opened one of my books and a piece of notebook paper fell out and written in bold print were the words "THE SKY'S THE LIMIT." I asked Noah about it the next day and he just smiled... When a person thinks about all the qualities a man should possess, first, they think of dedication, then loyalty, generosity, sincerity, humility, diligence, intelligence, sensitivity and courage; then they think of Noah Harris.

Father Knows Best (Many newspapers, television, and Internet)

"Noah was the most contagious person I've ever met in my life," Rick Harris said. "Five minutes with him and he's your friend for life."