

Benjamin Haley Jensvold Barnhard

We gather here as a community connected to Ben and his mother Margy to mourn the loss of a young man of thirteen just beginning his life and to consider the now-irreversible consequences of non-intervention in his loving, but disturbed mother's life. The consequences were fatal. We acknowledge this and hope that lessons can be learned: ~~When is morbid obesity a form of child abuse? When is a profoundly messy house more of a manifestation of a psychiatric condition than an expression of a highly casual attitude towards housekeeping? When is a history of litigation an expression more of paranoia than of actual legal wrongdoing? When is being a devoted mother / advocate more of an expression of obsession than concern for a child's health? What is a colleague's duty to be aware and intervene in a fellow mental health professional's life? Could she have held her job if she herself needed treatment? Could any of us, in our interactions with Ben and Margy over the years, done anything to prevent this? Do we need new rules on involuntary treatment as a society? All of these are worthwhile questions to ask ourselves.~~

Comment [DWB1]: This list of probative questions was not read at the ceremony but it was alluded to.

~~In cherishing their memory, all of us should strive to be aware of the patterns that lead to this waste of precious life. We need to change the rules that allow such needlessly tragic outcomes that continue afflict our families and wider communities. We owe this to each other and to Ben & Margy.~~

Comment [DWB2]: Apparently I do repeat myself.

We do not have a choice as to whether we worship, rather a choice as to what we will worship, value, honor, cherish, and strive for daily in our lives. ~~May we disembark from the good ship Nightingale today resolved to do just this.~~ Let us be more aware of this and in so doing act to prevent this sort of needless tragedy from repeating itself on an all too regular basis.

Comment [DWB3]: Lifted more or less verbatim from DFW...steal from the best I say.

In the Algonquin language, Potowmack meant "the place where tribute is paid" let us pay our tribute to Ben and his mother and in so doing to ourselves.

Comment [DWB4]: All gifts are a projection of the giver, the place of giving is a hallowed place upon which we found ourselves that day ..aka the Potomac River.

Think of Ben scampering around his dad's boat, asking him in his changing adolescent voice, "When are we going down to Florida to see Grandma Ruby next and swim in her pool? When did you say we are going to Maine"? We don't know the answer, but wish we did.

DWB