

I've lost a role model I didn't know I had until he was called to heaven....

In preparing for the July article for Angels Teach, I had a topic that had come forward from the angels and also from the events in my life since my June article—that was before June 13th.

On June 13th, I was at work when I heard the news. The news that stopped my heart and took my breathe away. A response that has been so profound to me that I am compelled to write about it and share it with all of you---Tim Russert had died that afternoon.

Tim Russert was the Washington Bureau Chief and moderator for Meet The Press on MSNBC-he was 58 years old.



Now, for anyone who knows me, I am the farthest from a political person you could find. I have never followed politics, I was never able to understand what it all meant, how it all worked, and at the age of 39, I still am not registered to vote...I never wanted the responsibility for my vote because I never fully understood the process. What if I chose incorrectly and my vote was the tie breaker?

But, I feel completely different now and I have Tim Russert and the example he has set to thank for it.

I never met him or knew him on a personal level. But, there was something about him that was so soothing; so comforting. His words and his tone. He was someone you felt you could sit down with and have a conversation. No extravagance, no fluff. When he would speak, he spoke to the world in a voice that all could understand. He didn't use big fancy words and he wasn't intimidating. He was different from other journalists and definitely different from anyone else in the political arena.

He was thorough with his research, brilliant on his feet, tough but fair. He knew the line and never crossed it. He held people accountable. He knew he did not need to break away from his character to get the job done. He could interview someone, go after them on the tough issues, shake their hand, and still be respected in the end.

He showed me how to be in an arena of professionals and to stand tall with who you are. To be who you were raised to be. To not steer away from your morals and values.

Coming from the corporate world of ten years, it is like reprogramming myself to be myself. Many of you may be in the corporate world so you can relate.

I was raised in this company to be like everyone else..to conform. To fit in, I needed to act a certain way. To get the deal done, I would threaten to drop a company's product, to go after them for every penny I could get, make them jump through hoops to give me what management wanted and at the last minute, after months of work, the direction would change and I would need to go back on my committment and tell them it was the nature of the business and dismiss them!

It never sat well with me..it never felt right in my heart. As much as I loved what I did, I was being forced to push my character aside and become someone I wouldn't like if I was sitting across the table from them.

It has been a year and a half and I still find myself healing everyday.....

In addition to being the appointed "Journalist to the Angels"- I am also a Real Estate agent. I have struggled lately with seeing myself in this role. I am sometimes filled with the image of being a salesperson and it gives me a stomache! I spent 10 years on the other side of the desk listening to salespeople. I was conditioned to see them as the enemy. Not to trust them and not to respect them. To treat them as almost invisible. I never saw them as human beings with families, feelings, or a life outside of my office. This is what the corporate world has become. It has become only about the dollar and not about building relationships for long term success.

But then I think of Tim Russerts' example.

In an interview they showed during his tribute after his death, he remarked on a conversation he had with his dad when he first started in the business. He was speaking to him about being able to do the job, do it well, and still be himself—His dad told him to speak to the world as if he was speaking to him—to make it simple.

How powerful! Simple, but powerful.

I have been very drawn to this man since his passing. I have seen him more and more over the last year or so in various venues; but I have watched every piece of footage on him that I could since his death. It is not only his professional life that moves me—even though he has opened my eyes. How far he was able to go just by being himself and wearing that smile. How he chose to live his life everyday is what has brought about my desire to write about Tim Russert for the July issue.

This is a man who walked the walk and talked the talk. He has forced us to go back to the basics. To really start to think...it comes down to only 3 simple things.

Core values-*be kind to the world*. Speak kindly. Be respectful. Do not allow yourself to be walked on or mistreated; and do not mistreat others—

find that balance...to do it in the right way. Treat others as you would like to be treated—it doesn't get any easier than that.

Stand for something you believe in and do not sway because society says we should take a left or a right.

Do not forget the lessons of your childhood. Life was simpler then. Walks to the corner store with friends, reading a book in the grass, finding animal shapes in the clouds! Grab onto those memories and treasure them.

Life is not meant to be difficult; we make it harder than it needs to be. The world has become so fast paced and so technology driven that we have become a disconnected society. I don't mean only disconnected in a grand scheme, but disconnected under the same roof.

Tim Russert lived each day with such enthusiasm and drive. He lived his life on his terms. He was in an industry that other than the corporate world, is the most competitive and cut throat-Politics and Journalism.

No matter which side of the desk Tim Russert was sitting on, he carried himself in the same way—a man with integrity.

He never took his position for granted and was always in awe of what he had become in his life.

He was an example of how to be successful in a business that is driven by dishonesty and greed. He has shown us all how to do it at a level I fear we may never see again.

What an inspiration to see a boy from Buffalo follow his yearning for knowledge through a life that has brought so much joy to so many. He touched so many people by the little things he did and said. Just like he followed his father's lessons through his life, there are so many of us that will take Tim Russert's words and example through our lives.

The words in the tiny moments of his life with his dad stayed with him always. So I ask you all to be mindful of those tiny moments with your children for we are forming them into the men and women they will become. This is your chance to make it count. Take it.



American values-*find faith in this magnificent country.* Like everything, there are flaws.

This was the most captivating piece of Tim Russert for me personally. He spoke of this country with such belief and faith in what it offers and its endless possibilities.

He saw this flawed political process as a challenge to call on its leaders to give answers and solutions to our worries and struggles. We were blessed to have him as our spokesperson with a forum to reach us all with answers. He had the gift of coming from a struggling family to walk in the average mans' shoes so that when he was preparing for an interview, he could speak for us.

He was one of us.

He has made me come to love a country that I had always taken advantage of. Like it was obligated to care for me. He filled the world with such a zest for the political process.

Are there things that are severely broken? Yes. But, Tim Russert's role in opening up the issues and peeling back the layers has given us our forum to examine them and fix them. He researched a topic until he saw it from every possible angle.

As saddened as I am that he will not be with us through this critical election in our country; he has raised the bar of American expectation. To change how politics are looked at in this country.

To get us involved again. To show us how much he loved his country and believed with his whole heart that America was something to revel in.

Tim Russert showed me a side of America I had never seen before. I had only seen people finding the negatives in this country. And no two people ever said the same thing.

I will spend more time on the last one since without this one...the others don't matter-



Family values-*embrace your childhood*. Our parents were not perfect; and we are not perfect with our children.

But, we are in a better position than our parents were. Through the good and the bad we learned from our childhood-from our parents' mistakes.

When you look at your childhood and see yourself as a victim—the things that were said or the things that happened in that short time frame in our long lifeline; you stop living your life. You allow yourself to stop growing.

I am always amazed in working with my Life Coach clients from all age groups how the hurdles that need to be overcome stem from childhood.

This is what I learned from Tim Russerts' example.

Tim Russert had written a book about growing up with his father who was rough around the edges and never told him he loved him or showed him physical attention. And he vowed he would be a different kind of father to his son. He always knew his dad loved him; but he did it in his own way. And that was okay.

Tim Russert embraced the process and learned that lesson. What a powerful gift to be shown how to have a different life! To be given the option to choose to take a different path.

The relationship with his father was known around the world. It was loving and supportive and flawed. Yes, he was in a venue that he could talk to the world through the use of television...but he took advantage of that opportunity to share his story with the rest of us. With such pride and fulfillment. He openly spoke of how proud he was of his dad. How much he appreciated him working two jobs to support them when he was a child and how much he learned just from watching him.

Tim Russert had recently moved his father into a nursing home and they shared footage from one of his visits. He stood up and with the biggest smile and purest heart, thanked everyone there for welcoming his father in. For making him feel at home and part of their family.

He took what he learned from his dad and made sure his son carried on those values. To become a man also of integrity and honor.

I challenge you all to go back to a place from your past. Go back and embrace it. Let the memories just flow in. I recently did this and the respect I found for the process of life was remarkable. I was able to replay memories of my family going out on Friday nights to a "Drive-in" type restaurant. Where the waitresses came to the car for your order and placed your dinner on a tray attached to your car window for you to eat. When you needed the waitress, you would flash your lights!

It was the ceremony of a family sitting down for a meal each week. Finding and opening that space of time to be together even for a few hours became something to look forward to. The day before was the day to discuss where to eat—inevitably, an argument would ensue! But it was a ritual from another time that stands out for me.

Now, the family I had, I no longer have in my life. My alcoholic stepfather, mother, and a "step" family that never accepted me or allowed me in because I was not "one" of them. But, in this adventure of revisiting this place, I opened my heart and was able to smile. They were who they were. I couldn't change them. If any piece of my childhood was different, would I be who I am today? Would you?

I would not change a thing in my life. I truly love where I am and who I have become. From the alcoholic male figures in my life, through breaking away from an unhealthy relationship with my mother and sister, through divorce and cancer ; I have to say, I now am able to respect the process. But by having them in my life, it made me whole and I never forgot where I came from. This exercise helped me to really sit back and reflect on how far I have also come in my life from those Friday night dinners with a family that was meant to be with me for only a portion of my journey in this life.

Do not forget those lessons—for, they have molded us all into the incredible people that we have become. Respect the process but don't get too caught up in the details. Every step along the way you were divinely guided. Without question.

For all of you, I hope you find peace and solace in the lessons of your past. Take from it what makes you stronger and let go of the rest. Go back and re-listen to the words spoken at your dinner table and see how much they have affected you.



For Tim Russert, I am sad I had not gotten this message sooner. I wish I had read his books earlier. Or led you all to his show “Meet The Press” so you all could have heard his words and seen for yourself the magical person we were blessed to have with us.

I am sad for his family-his wife Maureen, his son Luke, and his father Big Russ.

Tim Russert has raised the bar for all of us as parents, as children, as business people and as human beings. He was a man who influenced the world and has touched my heart for the rest of my life.

I have committed to stay with the lessons of my life but also the lessons of his example...it is possible to be a teacher, a mentor, to have great success, and to be honest.

Now, could you ask for anything more?

I would also like to add that at the age of 39, I will be registering to vote for the 2008 Presidential election for the first time!

Thank You, Tim Russert...I will always be grateful to you....

Many Blessings,
Rev. Susan Smith

