

Church Of The Train Wreck Inspiring Stories

The Story of Rafael

I met this guy at the local coffee shop last year – he was working as a manager there - we kind of bonded after I had been there a few times - then we didn't see each other for a while. One night, after coming back from one of our shows, I learned his story:

Rafael has a family in Mexico – but he hasn't seen them in 6 years.

Why not?

Six years ago, a 25 year old guy had been stalking his 6 year old daughter, Lourdes. The authorities wouldn't listen to Rafael – so he bought a gun, just in case. One day he heard his daughters cries and came running to her aid - the guy was trying to kidnap Lourdes. This man pulled out a knife and Rafael took out his gun and shot him. He wounded the attacker but did not kill him. Everyone agreed it was self-defense, but the illegal handgun posed a serious legal problem. Rafael was charged with illegal possession and endangering others.

Rafael's attorney said the best plea bargain he could get was three years in prison. Rafael knew he couldn't do this because he needed to support his family. Instead, he escaped to the United States. He has been away from his family for over 5 years. The family pictures are on the wall in the corner of the restaurant. Every day he works hard – for them.

There are teardrops in his eyes as he speaks to me. He calls them every day – it's the dream of being with them that has kept him going all these years – and now it's almost over. The statute of limitations for that crime is passing - Rafael can go home in May. Last Christmas his children and his wife told him they don't want his Christmas gifts any longer - they just want him. He has a clothing factory waiting for him to manage and a family waiting for a loving father to come back. May is the target date for his return and what a reunion this will be – Rafael, the hero, will be reunited with his loving family soon.

God bless Rafael and his family

wife - Maria Lordes
son - Rafael II
daughter - Lourdes Elaina

The Bronx N.Y.

There was an arson fire in the apartment building of a woman named Brenda Casanova. She had saved her grandson and one daughter and escaped herself. However, she went back in to save others and perished.

Said a neighbor, "She sacrificed her life to save her family and us. She's our hero."

Brooklyn N.Y.

As an inferno was sweeping through her apartment building. Lourdes Kourani 32, first led her family to safety. Then she went back to save her neighbors

safety. THEN SHE WENT BACK TO SAVE HER NEIGHBORS.
After getting no response from banging on the door,
she kicked it in! Everyone was saved.

MID TOWN, MANHATTAN - NEW YORK CITY

I met a guy on the street today - his name was Ralph - he had kind eyes. He was homeless, living in shelters or on the street. His legs were amputated several years ago due to paralysis that set in caused by a gunshot wound. I gave him a dollar, asked his name - gave him mine and wished him a good day.

I had rounded the block when I felt a combination of guilt and lack of completion and so I headed back to talk to him again. He told me he got shot in a crossfire with his sister in lower Manhattan when he was a kid. Aside from no legs below his knees, he had one lung, poor functioning kidneys, a bed sore with a bone protruding and was in the hospital 3 or 4 days a week.

I asked Ralph , under the circumstances, what he'd like to do - if he had a wish granted. He said he'd like to help old people and poor people. I asked if he could type. He said he could. I suggested he go to Kinko's and talk to some of my friends – nice people - there. I told him I thought they'd give him some free time to type up a daily news letter - "Ralph's Thought For The Week - Regarding The Important Things In Life." It could be something about kindness, helping your neighbor - whatever - just any thought that came to him that might help somebody think about the more important things in life. I told him he could pass that out to the people who give you donations. And that "Ralph's

Thoughts" just might attract a following.

His eyes lit up. He seemed to be looking off to some foreign place when he whispered. " I like that."

I said goodbye and headed home. I was about ten steps away when I heard him asking me to come back. He looked at me sadly and said, "I'm so ashamed, Chip, I didn't tell you the truth. I wasn't caught in a crossfire with my sister. I was shot when me and my friend were trying to rob somebody."

I smiled at Ralph and after a few seconds told him that what he just did, by telling me the truth, was as wonderful a message as he could give - that "Ralph's Thought For The Week" had begun... and that at least one guy would certainly be better for it. ME.