

Michael Longfellow Memorial Service; 04/19/26; 3:00pm

The Barn at Evergreen Memorial Park

[Michael Longfellow Memorial Talk](#)



Good afternoon, and welcome.

- My name is Karl Shackelford, and it is my **pleasure** and **privilege** to say a few words on **behalf** of **Michael Longfellow**
- Many of you were **fortunate** to have **known Michael personally**, while I am one of those who knew him **simply by his constant presence on Hwy 74** and his **familiar shuffle!**
- **Thank you** so much for being here today to **remember** and **honor** Michael, a **long-time resident** and in many ways, an **Evergreen icon**
- **Michael was an only child**, born **June 24, 1958** in **Evergreen** to **Alva and Barenice** (also known as "**Bunny**") **Longfellow**
  - The **home** he was **brought to from the hospital** was the **home** he was **living in** when he **passed** on **March 15** of this year
  - For the **last 8 years** or so that **cabin on Valley Road** didn't have any **electricity** or **running water**, but Michael **loved his home** and he was very **comfortable** there
  - He lived **most of his life** with his **parents**, but for the **last 30 years** or so he **lived alone**
- **Robyn Jaslow and her brother** are **Michael's only two surviving relatives**, his **cousins**
  - Robyn **shared** with me that while her **interactions** with Michael were **few** over the **years**, she **first met** Michael when she was **10** and he was **14**
  - Robyn's **father**, Michael's **uncle** invited him along on a **family and friends backpacking trip** to the **Wind River Mountains** in **Wyoming**, and **Michael** was **thrilled** to **attend**
  - Robyn had some **very specific memories** from the **camping trip**
    - **Michael had a horse** as a **young child**, and Robyn was **envious!**
    - She said she knew him as the "**cool cousin**"
    - They were **camped on a lake**, and **early** in the **trip**, Michael gathered a **huge number of sticks** and with **twine** built a **raft**, and with one of those **sticks**, **poled himself** out onto the lake, **floating around the lake** on a **homemade raft** all week
- At the request of his mother, **Michael attended school down the hill in the Denver metro area**
  - His **first job** was mowing lawns in his neighborhood
  - Over the years Michael worked for **McDonalds** and **Cactus Jacks**, and many of those years he **walked back and forth** to **Cactus Jacks** from far **North Evergreen!**
- **Bill Troyanos, a chef and manager with El Rancho for 16 years** told me Michael was working in the restaurant when he **started there in 1995** and was still there **when he left El Rancho in 2011**
  - Bill described him as a **hard worker**, always a **good person** with a **kind heart** who **meant well** and had a **passion** for **helping** people
  - Michael would **clock in** and **work** any time he was asked **whether it was his shift or not**
  - Bill said he **never saw Michael down** or **depressed** in his **attitude**, and he would always **lighten the room** by **cracking jokes**
  - Michael had **fond memories** of his **association** with **El Rancho**

- **Eddie Fincher and Annika Aspen and their daughter were friends and neighbors of Michael, connected daily with him for almost 10 years**
  - Their daughter had a **close friendship** with Michael, and Annika **told me stories** of how she would hand out the **sidewalk chalk** and **Michael** and her **daughter** would **draw pictures** on the **driveway**
  - Michael would often **shower at their house**, and from time to time **they would help him with buying clothes** and **doing his laundry**
  - He spent a lot of time just **hanging out** on their **front porch**, enjoying the **warmth** of the **sun**
  - Annika told me **Michael could eat more than any person** she had ever met!
  - Sometimes she would make his **favorite meals** - **tuna fish, tamales, and salmon** - hopefully not **all in the same meal!**
  
- **Michael lived a very structured life**
  - He had a **path** he would follow, **businesses** and **people** he would **visit**
  - And after he **stopped driving**, he would **walk everywhere** he went
  - Michael said that **walking kept him warm**
  
- **With the exception of walking on Hwy 74, Michael's second home was the Starbucks near his home**
  - He **walked there daily**, and had his favorite **coffee, water, and pastry**
  - Michael **loved people**, and he especially loved the **staff and patrons of Starbucks**
  - He would **greet people warmly** and always had a **cheerful smile** or a **wave** for all who came in
  - Starbucks was **one of those places** Michael felt **safe** and **connected**, a place where **he felt he belonged**
  
- **We all want to belong somewhere; to be seen, heard and made to feel important**
  - **We want our life to matter**
  - To know that our **existence** somehow **made a difference** in the **world**
  - Michael was **no different in this way**
  - **Your presence** here today **gives witness** that **Michael Longfellow's life** had **worth** and **value**
  
- **It is my belief that no man can give or take away worth and value in another man**
  - That is **something** only our **creator** can do
  - But what is **within our power** to do is **give witness** to the **value** of **another human being** and **press the pause button** in our life **long enough** to **acknowledge** that **worth** and **call it out**
  - ***This is what you are doing for Michael Longfellow today***
  
- **Michael, we saw you**
  - You did not **hide**, or **shrink back**, or **fade into the sunset**
  - At times you would **stomp your feet in joy**, **laugh out loud**, or **scream at the top of your lungs** while you walked
  - You lived your **fullest life** to the **best** of your **ability**, and you have **caused us all** to **reflect** and ask questions, and to **ponder our own lives** and **their meaning**

- **Robyn told me something I thought very profound about her cousin...**
  - *"If I had been dealt the hand Michael got in this life, I'm not sure I would have been able to do with it what Michael was able to do with his."*
  
- **Sarah Straub, a friend and neighbor of Michael told me his presence was quiet for many, but powerful in its way**
  - He **made the most** out of the **life** he had
  - He **genuinely loved his life** and **loved being here**
  - And he always had a **cute smile** and a **wave** for me
  
- **Each of you is here today, because whether in a grandiose way or a simple way, Michael touched your life**
  - I think that is **significant**
  - It **deserves a moment** of **reflection**
  
- This is **one of those moments** where we all **take a breath**, look **outside of ourselves** at something **bigger than we are**, and ask **important questions** whose **answers** tend to come from **one place**
  
- **When I pushed back from the laptop this week and took a look at this incredible story from 10,000 feet...**
  - With the **exception** of the **final hours** of Michael's life, I saw a **preponderance** of **love** and **kindness** in this **story**
  - I saw in the **businesses** of this **story**, **care** and **compassion**. These **businesses** are to be **commended** for their **acts of love** and **kindness** for a **community member** in **need**
  - I saw in the **neighbors** and **friends** I got to **know** through this story, **amazing people** who provided Michael with **food, clothing, showers, love** and **care**, and in doing so have **put into practice** what **Jesus** said was one of the **two most important things** we could do **on this planet**, to **love our neighbor** as **ourselves**
  - I am so **inspired** by the **love** shown here **toward Michael** in our **Evergreen community**
  
- **The final revelation I received from this story is in Michael himself...**
  - In spite of his **living conditions** and his many **physical, psychological** and **emotional** challenges
  - **All challenges** that would have **caused** many of us to **give up on life** years ago, or **at least** have become **angry, bitter** and **resentful human beings**
  - Michael was **known** in our **community** for his **stamina** and **resilience**, his **smile**, his **friendliness**, but **mostly**, his **genuine love** for and **interest in people**
  - **We saw** in Michael a **loving** and **kind-hearted soul**
  
- **And we have all wondered and asked ourselves the question, "How?"**
  - How did **this** happen?
  
- **Michael's friends and neighbors, Eileen Sloan and her dog, Teddy, helped me discover the answer to that question, and see what is probably the most significant example of loving-kindness in this great Evergreen story**

- Michael would often join along with **Eileen** and **Teddy on their walks** in the neighborhood, and within the last year, as they were walking, Eileen **looked over at Michael** and **asked** him, "**Michael, do you believe in God?**"
- And **without missing a beat**, Michael responded, "**Of course I believe in God! You know I was named after the 'Archangel Michael'!**"
- **I chuckled a little, and then it hit me...** in **spite** of a **life** of what **we would describe** as **interminable suffering** and **insurmountable challenges**, Michael was **given a gift**
  - Somewhere **along the way** in Michael's life, **God wrote his love on Michael's heart**, and **through** that love, Michael was **able to find meaning** and **purpose, worth** and **value** in his days
  - His Creator had **loved him** and **taught him how to love**
  - So **Michael lived what was in his heart**
- It seems to me, **our Evergreen world** would be an **even better place to live** if we all **found what Michael found**, and **loved God with all our heart**, and **our neighbors as ourselves**
- **Let's pray**
- If any of you would like to **step up** and **share** a few of your **favorite Michael memories**, now would be a great time to do that! If you would **rather not speak to a crowd**, I will be here **along with others**, and **we would love to hear your stories**.