

Chet Meeks

by Wendy Simonds

I miss Chet's smiles.

Up until the day he died, he would smile that smile that lit up his face, that lit up the room, that lit up our lives. That happy-to-see-you smile.

I miss his wry smile, when things were just ridiculous – which they were a lot. That grimace, eye rolling smile.

And I miss his wicked smile. Chet was irrepressibly irreverent. No one could be more sarcastic, more sardonic, more gossipy. Chet did not suffer fools gladly, but he gladly lambasted their behavior.

I miss his story-telling smiles, the teaser smile as he would build the story, the adorable smile that showed he knew how hilarious he was, and the kind of self-satisfied smile he'd smile when people laughed -- how he *loved* to make people laugh.

There was the story where he got a lunatic mail carrier fired, and the one where he took on the security staff at the airport and narrowly escaped a strip search (which he might have actually liked because he found airports to be incredibly erotic). He had stories from his childhood, such as the one, where, as a little boy, he ran away from home for half an hour, or the time he was an innocent unsuspecting passenger in the car when his mom casually stole her own dog back from its new owners (*Heidi's* version is a little different, as you might expect, but Chet's version starts: My mother is a *complete* sociopath. . . ).

I can't really tell this story; only Chet could.

*He was so, so fucking funny.*

As I struggle to imagine living without him, and try to reconcile myself to his physical absence, I keep replaying a conversation I had with him a few weeks before he died.

He said he had no regrets.

he said he had led a charmed life.

He said he had achieved things that, as a kid, he would have never have imagined possible.

He said he had enjoyed a rich and fulfilling intellectual life.

He said he had gotten -- and loved having -- the job of his dreams.

Most of all, he said he was incredibly grateful to have the people in his life he'd had in his life -- his family, his friends, his mentors, his students -- all of us -- he felt surrounded by our caring and our love.

He said: *I've been so lucky.*

I worry he might have said these things just to console me, but they do, in any case, console me. And I hope they will console you.

He did not want us to stay sad, or to be bitter about his dying.

What a sweetie pie. He was always taking care of other people, always worried about how we would get through his suffering. I don't know how anyone musters the kind of courage he had.

Knowing Chet and being in his life for the last chapter of his life has made me hate things I already knew I hated with more clarity and intensity: pain, inhumanity, injustice, the medical and pharmaceutical industrial complex and other soul-deadening institutions, the government that supports their practices and their profit-mongering, and our powerlessness to change so many things that are wrong. But I think we should all work to diminish these hateful aspects of existence however we can; Chet would want us to. Chet was all about liberation from oppression, freedom from shame, freedom from fear.

Knowing Chet has made me also so sharply aware of what there is to truly value in the world -- all we really have to bring us comfort and to make us happy: if you can find them, hold on tight to love and laughing, peace, pleasure, and passion, in whatever forms you are fortunate enough to find them. Chet would want us to.