

a short Preface

I looked through some great poems preparing for this day. Sift through the canon of great poets like John Donne, Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, Derek Walcott, and Langston Hughes, but I didn't quite find what I was looking for. They didn't know what I would be feeling.

I knew the love you had for poetry and Jazz, so I desperately needed to find one.

I failed in my search, so I wrote one.

A Groovy New Rhyme (A Villanelle for Winton)

I wish we could have had, just a little more time
There were so many things, left unspoken
A little more time, for a groovy new rhyme

A few more years, would have been sublime
But only silence remains, the rest is bespoken
I wish we could have had, just a little more time

I wish we could have had, a few more dreams to climb
And that your joyous laugh, could be gently awoken
A little more time, for a groovy new rhyme

You left on your own terms, a dancing pantomime
Despite your battles, you remained unbroken
I wish we could have had, just a little more time

A little more time, just a little more time
For a few more words, which now remain unspoken
A little more time, for a groovy new rhyme

People spend their life in love with a dime
Restlessly embracing a sickly cold token
But I wish we could have had, just a little more time
A little more time, for a groovy new rhyme

The Eulogy

Dear Winston,

I can still see you standing there, in your window that night, watching me, as I cleared my car of the snow that had fallen while we were talking. Watching me labour for a little while, and then you simply watched me drive away.

For the last time.

It was just another evening.

Another moment, of many countless moments.

Another pepperoni pizza. Another curry goat dinner with rice and peas. Generous on the goat. Easy on the rice and peas.

Another night; filled with memorable stories, inappropriate one liners, philosophical musings, political angst, and dreams, many dreams, some within our grasp, and some, a bit out of reach.

But you never did that before.

You've never watched me leave before.

I could always count on another weekend. Another day. Another hour. Another one of those magical moments.

Another chance to be, and have, a friend.

This, despite the fact that there was always someone coming to see you. Someone who knew you better. Who went way back. Way back. Way, way, way, back.

There was always someone who needed you and you were there.

To pick your brain for some training advice, diet advice, prep advice, posing help, relationship help, and in some cases, some mental health.

You were a friend to so many.

And some, couldn't make it today, but the rest of us are here.

And we miss you.

You came from *St. Vincent*. A little Caribbean island, which you loved, but an island, which was too small for your heart. You needed a bigger place to run free.

You became a citizen of the world. A worldly ambassador. An intellectual hermit. A benevolent, infectious, inconspicuous traveller. A true inspiration to those of us who had the pleasure of your company.

In *St. Vincent*, you were a member of the *Bridge Boys*. A group of young men who spent their days and nights, dreaming and encouraging each other, to be great. Pushing one another, to be better. Better at anything. Better in everything.

It is around that bridge that you learned how to dream.

And you dreamed a lot.

You never stopped dreaming. Connecting. Uniting. Inspiring.

You came to Canada on an academic scholarship, but you didn't boast about it.

You were a bright young man and chose to study at *Mount Alliston University*, in New Brunswick. At a time, when many universities, did not expand much effort into their weight training facilities. Not like today.

So, because of your immense passion for bodybuilding, you trained with brooms and potatoes sacks.

Someone took notice and you just couldn't help yourself. You helped Mount Alliston to develop and build, one of the very first weight training centres in New Brunswick. You won't get the credit, but with you, it was never about the credit or the applause.

It was always about a dream fulfilled.

It was at Mount Alliston that you learned to become a great historian.

You loved human history. Canadian history and Black history in particular. The rise and fall of empires. The innovation and relentless pursuit of progress, along with darker side. The stubbornness, ugliness, and wretchedness, that rises now and again.

After Mount Alliston, you followed your brother Alfie and settled with him in Montreal.

Along with a few others in your community you created *CariFete*. The very first festival of its kind in Canada. You gave the Canadian people, in the early 1970's, a chance to see Carnival. A celebration you loved so much.

Little did you know that the Weider Offices, were only a few blocks away where you lived.

You didn't ask permission. You didn't wait for an invitation.
You were Winston.

You walked in. Introduced yourself. And the next thing you knew, you were shaking hands with *Ben Weider*, and walking out with as many magazines, as your hands could carry, and the rest as they say is history.

Ben Weider introduced you to many people over the years, and your passion for the sport of bodybuilding gave you an incredible life. You gave your heart to the sport. You gave everything you had. You sacrificed a lot. Sometimes, regrettably, perhaps a bit too much.

It was during this time in your life, that you began your long friendship with trainer and physique photographer per excellence, Jimmy Caruso. You had the pleasure of honouring him in Toronto, in recent memory.

Those early days in Montreal is where you weaved yourself into the International Federation of Bodybuilding. The IFBB.

You wrote their constitution.

Others have sometimes mistakenly taken the credit, but who else but a great historian could have been entrusted with such an enormous task?

You wrote the judges handbook too, and selected the mandatory poses, but what you enjoyed the most, was running and watching things, from behind the scenes.

You built the stage, and let other people take their curtain call.

Above everything else, it was your presence that was so magnetic.

It is your presence, that all of us, today, probably miss the most.

You could brighten a dark room. Straighten people out. Encourage them. Make them laugh. Make them feel like they were the most important dignitary of the moment. And no matter what. No matter how they felt, they knew, you were always on their side.

Unless you weren't, but those people aren't here.

This all feels strange. Very strange. I can't believe I am reading your Eulogy.

I think one of the most misunderstood decisions you've ever made, was to lead the IFBB, to stage a contest in South Africa. It was 1975 and it was your decision to host the contest in Pretoria. The backdrop for the now famous documentary *Pumping Iron*.

You were a historian.

You knew that Nelson Mandela was in prison. You knew the fight that was going on there. You knew about the embargos.

Your decision wasn't easy.

You knew you would be misunderstood.

But the final decision to go, was yours and you went.

You went because of something that the black delegate from South Africa, Fred Tadebe, told you in private, that evening.

The rich white folks have enough money to come and go as they please. The embargos don't really impact on their daily lives. They are still free citizens of South Africa. They are free to travel, to go wherever, and whenever they want. But those of us who are denied that freedom and full citizenship, have no-where to go. Unless you came.

Fred Tadebe promised you, that you would be embraced.

And so, you were.

To your surprise, the racist government of South Africa, capitulated to all your demands.

You demanded that South Africa had both black and white athletes represent their county, and they did. You fought against division and demanded that, all the athletes, all of them, stayed in the same host Hotel.

You demanded that all the whites only signs were taken down around Pretoria.

You also demanded that there would be no segregation at the Theatre. Everyone was equal, and could purchase their tickets on a first come, first served basis.

And so, it was.

How you must have relished that week. How you must have loved being politely unkind, and unnoticeably cruel. How you enjoyed making a political statement that nobody really noticed.

You were a true Colombo.
(Not Franco. The other one. Peter Falk).

You never ran away from a challenge. You always followed your heart. Right or wrong, you took the road less travelled.

To some you are *Winty*.

But to a few of us, you will always be; the *Dark Knight*.

Your favourite movie was *Batman*. He was your favourite superhero. Just one man, raving against the unjust world, and paving his own destiny.

Dear Winston.

Thank you for listening. For smiling. For making us laugh.

Thank you for sharing your life with us.

Thank you for the *Winstonian Vortex*.

You held court whenever and wherever was possible.

You travelled the world. Visited every continent, many times over. Dined with dignitaries, and shared a moment with all of us present.

Back in Montreal, you opened a legendary gym called *Winston's*. You had your very own television show, along with your wife Alison McIntosh, which was titled *Black Is*. During those glorious 1970's, along with Alison, you explored and highlighted the black experience in Canada.

You were the General Secretary of the IFBB. You were in charge of all the Judges. You started the Canadian Bodybuilding Federation, the Quebec Bodybuilding Federation, and you had your hands in establishing the Ontario Federation as well.

You worked until the end.

You left us, as the Southern Regional Director, but you were always above all the titles.

You did all these things, because you believed in people. You had a dream.

You competed in Bagdad in 1972. You were the first black Mr. Canada, not once, but twice. You ran a restaurant called the *Runaway Slave*. Your life intersected with some very shady

characters, who walked on the other side of the law, but never once did you become seduced, or forgot who you were, or compromised your principals.

Above everything else.

Throughout the years.

In all of our conversations, it was clear that you loved your daughters.

You were so proud of your girls.

So proud, of Ayanna. Nataki and Kamillah.

You loved them always, despite some of the struggles.

You spoke of them often. Spoke of your wonderment and awe, of who they became.

You were so very proud of their independence. So proud of their accomplishments. So proud of how they lived their lives. The great men they married. The wonderful children they were raising. With such kindness and purpose. And always with love and meaning.

I guess the only thing left to mention before we say goodbye, are the years we both spent teaching at Notre Dame.

We met when I was 337 pounds of solid blubber, and I needed to desperately lose at least forty of them, just to be able to even step on a treadmill.

Dear Winston, I can't thank you enough.

Through your love of weight training, you saved me from a lot of cardio.

You were a great teacher!

Perhaps leaving the R rated film Training Day, for young impressionable grade 9 students, while your principal watched your class, because you were sick and recovering in the desert air, judging the Olympia contest, might have not been ideal. But hey, it was Danzel.

Maybe telling the custodians that the fridge in your room was only a prop, wasn't a good idea either, or safe for that matter, but then again, no one ever reported anything to anyone, and if you didn't take it with you when they pushed you out, it would probably still be there.

There is not enough time for more stories, and there are so many wonderful people here, who are waiting patiently to tell theirs.

There are so many people here, because you meant a great deal to a lot of us.

Dear Winston.

Thank you for being my friend.

Thank you for being *our* friend.

Thanks for your guidance. Your encouragement. A kick in the pants when it was necessary. For your support, and for introducing me to some really, really strange, and truly bizarre people.

I wouldn't change a thing.

We have all gathered here Dear Winston, to pay our final respects.

We are here to celebrate your life.

This is not a goodbye because there will always be more time to think fondly of you. A time to remember what you meant to us.

We will continue to remember you, in our own quiet way. We will continue to think of you.

We will continue to love you and speak your name.

Thank you for blessing our lives.

Until we meet again.

Written by Greg Kieszowski
www.tenminas.ca
greg@grzegorzkiesskowski.com