

A Tribute to Thomas S. Dooley by Jeannette (Dooley) Cleveland

Thomas you made me a big sister.

From as far back as I remembered I was so grateful to have a little brother even when you decided to smear makeup into my carpet or pee in the kitty litter box in my room (and when I say in I mostly mean in the general vicinity of). Little baby Thomas you were so full of life and energy. You were fearless. By the time you were two years old you were jumping off the high dive at the pool the really high one that still sort of scared me even as a 7 year old. Those poor lifeguards. And attempting to climb over the 6 foot fence in our back yard or up the grain bin at the Dooley farm in Kansas. Or escaping after bath time and running butt naked down the Mountain Branch Lane with Mom chasing after you.

You grew from an adventurous toddler to such a sweet and fun little boy who loved your friends, Pokémon, power rangers, and Christmas. You started the tradition of sleeping on the floor of my room Christmas Eve night. A tradition that oddly continued even after I got married. At Christmas Eve candlelight service you were always the very last person to blow out your candle out into the parking lot (and probably would've brought home in the car if mom would've let you). Which I guess might have been the start of your love of fire. As the years passed other passions changed but the passion for fire remained. Every Fourth of July you and your friends would shoot off fireworks from dawn til well past dark. I just stuck to my sparklers mostly, but y'all were pros. You hold the award for most fire extinguishers ever used by one person. Although to be fair you have also saved several houses from fires both in New Jersey and Alabama. After saving the one house you told mom, "I think this makes me a hero". Side note: I promise not every story will be about fire But just for fun here's one more. You were always my coconspirator in convincing our parents we needed to start a fire inside even in 60 or 70 degrees. Every time is a good time for a fire.

Teenage and young adult Thomas you were definitely not lacking when it came to your own personal style. Not many people can pull off wearing head to toe Under Armour topped off with a fur thrift store coat. But somehow with you TDog it just fit. You had spunk and a unique sense of humor that made so many people laugh. You also had a special love for people that were hurting-like how you sat next to Grandma Dooley all day after grandpa's funeral just to be with her. Or how you were there for your friends when they faced hardships...when they needed you the most. Like one friend said yesterday you were a diamond in the rough.

So many of the memories I most cherish of you are of the funny, the happy, the sweet, but I also saw you walk many tough dark roads. It was really hard as your sister to see you experience those struggles, that pain, the sin, & hardship but my biggest prayer for you during those dark times was always that you would know, ...really know, how much Jesus truly loved you. I often felt due to your struggles that you maybe didn't feel worthy of that love. But the beauty is God sent his son for us not because we were worthy but because of his great love.

Now Thomas we are the ones facing a tough road ahead...a road of grief, a road of sadness, a road of missing you...our dear friend, cousin, nephew, son, brother. But my biggest prayer for us remains the same that we would all know, truly know, the height and depth and width of the love of our Heavenly Father. Even in the heartbreak and sadness of losing you. Especially in the heartbreak and sadness of losing you.

Thomas I'll always cherish being your sister, and I'll love you forever. May you Rest In Peace little brother.

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