

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE JORDAN MARKLUND

Honourable Senators, today I rise to tell you an incredible story.

It's an indelible story that is etched in the hearts of his father Wayne Marklund, his mother Wendy Burghardt and her husband Ralph Burghardt, his friends (Tess Morgan, Kate Lawson, Tristan Douglas, and more); and is being written around the world by perfect strangers like Andrew Smith and fellow globetrotters who have been inspired by this story of death and loss and life ever after.

It is the story of Jordan Marklund born April 1, 1984, who died unexpectedly on January 30, 2016.

He is memorialized by the trees planted by his friends after his passing: one on Vancouver Island where he grew up and went to school; and the other planted in Christie Pitts Park in Toronto, ON where he lived and worked so he could do what he loved most - travel the world he so loved.

Inscribed on the tree are the words of Oscar Wilde: "It takes great courage to see the world in all its tainted glory, and still to love it."

His family and friends gather each year to decorate the trees and remember Jordan.

On the night of Jordan's death, 3 hours apart on the west coast, Wayne thought of texting his son but decided to wait until morning. The next morning, the RCMP were at Wayne's door. Never wait to call or text the ones you love, Wayne posted on this year's anniversary of his only son's passing.

Less than a week after Jordan's death, Wayne travelled to Toronto and met Wendy to take on the daunting task of removing Jordan's belongings out of his apartment. Among Jordan's possessions were 3 backpacks: one that he used on his travels, the most recent to Vietnam.

February 6, 2016: Wayne was curbside holding the backpack Jordan had last used when a perfect stranger by the name of Andrew Smith walked by. On that fateful day, having chosen a route he had never taken before, he met Wayne. This is what Andrew wrote later that day as he created a Facebook page called "Jordan Marklund's Backpack":

"Today I walked past a collection of belongings on the side of the road. A nice man named Wayne offered me a simple traveller's backpack.

"It belonged to a young man named Jordan Marklund. A loved son, friend of many, an avid traveller of the world. I accepted the bag to take with me on my upcoming trip to Vietnam, a country Jordan had just visited and loved very much.

"I plan to bring his backpack with me and its help will surely be invaluable. I will carry along his spirit and joy with me to ensure that he will continue to be a citizen of the world.

"My hope is that when I return, we, as a group, can pass his backpack along to further help more travellers, make sure that his spirit continues roaming the world he loved, and to honour his memory."

Vietnam, Canada and the United States, The Philippines, Italy, Nicaraguan, Indonesia, Czech Republic, Cambodia, Thailand, Australia, China, Morocco, Ireland, Netherlands, Cuba and counting, including Parliament Hill today.

Wayne and Wendy are following the journey and healing as miles are covered and the backpack of their beloved son continues to traverse the world for as long as the seams hold together.

Honourable Senators, thank you for letting me honour Jordan Marklund's legacy in our Chamber today.