

Taylor Hederman

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When Ed and Laurel asked me to share a remembrance of Owen, I was nervous. I've never been much of a public speaker, and already knew today would be a tough one. However, the day after Owen's passing, we spoke with Stacia who rightly said that the LAST thing Owen would want is for us to be sad. Although she also said, "Too bad Owen, this is what you get." So, I'm going to share with you a few short memories of Owen that always made me laugh, and try my hardest to keep it together up here.

Growing up in NYC was different. I've heard that in some cultures, you look to your friends for strength and support. Not in our group. Our thing was deprecation. Not necessarily in a malicious way, but rather than build one another's confidence, we grew up exploiting each other's weaknesses. It was unorthodox, but effective.

Owen was particularly strong in this practice. He was the most witty and creative person I've ever met and was never afraid to use it to his advantage. You DID NOT want to go toe to toe with Owen. He would make fun of us for everything you can imagine. Being sloppy, fat, bad sons, bad boyfriends, bad students, you name it... In turn we would make fun of Owen for being skinny... What else was there? We just didn't have a lot more to go on. Needless to say we were always on the lookout for new things we could use to fight back. And one fateful day, I found the key.

Another of Owen's strongest qualities, was that he was disgustingly competitive. I can't even put into words how much that man loved to win. In high school and college, we would play various strategy games against each other online from our respective campuses. Now, Owen was reallllllllllly good at these games. So much so, that when he lost, he felt the world was imbalanced. It wasn't supposed to happen, something was wrong and it needed correcting. So Owen would put in the work. Like a big 10 coach, he would go to the tapes. He would analyze his strategy, rethink every choice, chase every potential outcome until it was time for round two. And, sure as you're born, your streak would be over before it started.

The only thing you could really do was find a new game, learn it really quickly and beat him a bunch of times before he had the chance to figure it out or practice. I did this over and over again and then would usually say I was bored with that particular game or it was dumb or something and retire as reigning champ. You see, I had my strategies too.

But then, one day, everything changed. My brother introduced me to a little game called "Settlers of Catan." It was what Owen and I call in our nerdy board-gaming sub-society a "turn-based strategy city builder," which was kind of his forte. I was good right off the bat, sneaking in a few rounds with my brother and other friends who I trusted to keep my secret

practice rounds in confidence, in hopes that I could get a couple extra wins on him, drop the mic, and leave in style.

He came over to our apartment, and he, my wife Kathleen and I had what ended up being the first of our many, many, many... many Catan sessions. It started out well. We played three games that first night. I won two, my wife won one. The reaction we got from Owen was glorious. Just what I wanted. Everything was going according to plan. I was excited to ride it out, incite his rage a couple more times and make a clean exit. And I wish I could tell you all that that's what happened.

Owen came back the next night. He made it clear that we were playing Catan, that he KNEW I didn't have any other plans. "What could you possibly be doing?" he said. "Drinking bud lights on your couch in your boxers and watching jeopardy reruns hardly constitutes a 'prior engagement.'" But it wasn't Owen who showed up... this is the first time I met "The Guy." Let me explain. Going forward, when the Settlers board came out, Owen wasn't Owen anymore. He would refer to himself only in the third person and only as his sinister alter ego, "The Guy." And let me tell you, "The Guy" was ruthless. Seriously, merciless. He wouldn't play the game anymore, he would play the people, and usually against each other. Needless to say, the days of me besting Owen were over, and in his mind, balance had been restored. I'd put away the board to the sound of his justifiable gloating, and then he was just Owen again.

And Owen was everything. He was always one step ahead of us, and one thought before us, but so much more as well. He was also the person I called when my relationship was a wreck, or if my life was a mess. Owen was always there, and he was the one person who could give me advice that I would walk away with, knowing infallibly, "This is the right thing to do." He was the first person at your door with a six pack the second he noticed something was wrong, ready to help you through it, even though drinking beer was never really his thing...

I love you Owen. You were taken too soon and it's not fair. The world feels imbalanced without you in it. Losing you was so much more than losing a friend, and you taught us so much more than you know. The way you looked at Stacia taught me to be a better husband. The way you respected your parents taught me to be a better son. And I learned to be a better friend because you were always, always there for me.