

Tuesday, August 27th, 2013 - A Reflection

In the summer of 1962, right before I turned 15, my best friend drowned. It was a Saturday afternoon, a bunch of us had hung around the playground playing basketball that morning, several of the group made plans to walk to Twin Rivers (really a pond) while I went home to do yard work. The group decided to swim across the pond (no lifeguard). Herbie didn't make it. Herbie was everything that I and everyone who hung around with him wanted to be - smart, funny, good looking, an incredible athlete, comfortable around girls - we all idolized him. It was inconceivable to those of us who hung with Herbie that he was no longer around. It still is.

Today was the date for Bill Taylor's funeral service. Many of you either knew Bill or know that I wrote about him when he died last week. Bill was a good man and an outstanding social service leader. While his service was going on, I was in our third floor conference room attending the end of summer recognition event for the teenagers/young adults who participate in our summer internship program (please see attached pictures). All of them are drawn from families in either our programs or housing. I sat in the audience and listened as the program participants shared a little bit of what they had accomplished and learned during the summer. The internships ranged from Hoops & Homework to Head Start/Day Care to Administration and Energy & Fuel Assistance. Many of our program directors were able to attend and listen to what their interns had to say. A diverse group, some sporting ink, two wearing headscarves and a baby or two sitting on mom's lap. It's a feel good moment, while I try to avoid dwelling on how to pay for the program as there is no system dough to cover expenses.

I looked at the kids, thought of Herbie and wondered what he would have become. An old Jackson Browne lyric started playing in my head "it seemed he stopped his singing in the middle of his song"(Song for Adam). Herbie never got the chance to sing his song and Bill Taylor's song ended way too soon.

As I sat there listening to the kids in front of me, a wish formed in my mind. I wished that each of them would be able to find their voice, whether it was a sparrow-like warble of a folk singer, the pulsating rhythms of a hip-hopper, the ear-shattering cacophony of a heavy metal group, or the odd and unfamiliar sound of a world music aficionado. And then I hoped that each of those kids would be able to sing their song for a long, long time.

Jim Cuddy