

From: Vicki Jarrell
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2003 4:56 PM
To: saltyg@bellsouth.net
Subject: Donnie

Dear Salty and Friends-

My name is Vicki Jarrell, and I am Donnie's sister. I wanted to write for two reasons...First I wanted to express my profound gratitude for what you guys are doing for my brother. Since Donnie found out this past Monday about the ALS, it is like a bomb has gone off in my family. Our mom, our brothers, Kevin, Al, and Brian, and our sister Terena, and myself are all struggling to come to terms with what this means...with how to come to terms with the possibility of living...without Donnie. It is just incomprehensible...

I realize in reading about what you guys are doing that my sweet amazing brother has more than one family...and that the love that we all have for him will make him stronger. It is all about the love. I wanted to share something he said to me (which he may of said to you as well)...I was talking to him, and telling him that I was trying to figure this out...the "why" of it all...and that I was struggling...He said to me that he didn't know why this was happening...what the purpose of it was...but that he was a teacher...and that he was going to use this to teach.

I was immediately taken back to when we were children. Donnie has always been a teacher...the person who pushes you to do more...to be more. I was probably 9 years old at the time and for whatever reason still could not ride a bike. I was terrified of trying. One sunny afternoon Donnie decided that it was time for me to learn. We lived in Covington on Massachusetts street right next to the Telephone company which had a sloped drive with lots of wide open space. Somehow he got past my fear and convinced me that with his help I would be fine. I remember sitting on the bike at the top of the hill...petrified. Donnie stood behind me holding on the back of the bike. I will never forget his voice in my ear...you can do this...you can do this...Meanwhile in my head I kept thinking...I can't do this...I can't do this...We started down the hill, my heart pounding out of my chest with Donnie keeping pace on his eight year old legs...At some point my fear got the best of me and the litany inside of my head burst from my lips...I screamed I CAN'T DO THIS! From somewhere from back on the top of the hill, I heard my brother Donnie shout...YOU ALREADY ARE!...you already are...

From that point on anytime I have been afraid to do something I hear Donnie's voice in my head...You can do this...you already are. My little brother has taught me many things in this lifetime...til now I thought that, that was the most important. Now I realize that he is teaching me how incredibly important every moment is...and when it is all said and done that love is what matters most.

On behalf of the rest of Donnie's family and myself I want to thank you so much for showing the love and compassion that you have...We are a strong tight knit family, a family of survivors no matter what the odds. I truly believe that God answers prayers, so let us all turn up the volume in our prayers so Donnie can be an exception to the rule.