

This is the End

Aaron Thaler

Hola, and welcome to my life celebration. I have no idea where we are located. Maybe we're in a funeral home. Maybe we're in a church. Think from your heart. Speak from your mouth. And laugh as hard as you can. But please, don't embarrass me.

There are some of you who I haven't seen since the turn of the century. (Remember those days when Clinton was president? What's happened to this world since then?) And there are some of you I saw or spoke to just days ago. Amen to all of you. Lastly, there are some of you that I barely knew. Welcome. But keep your thoughts inside and let those who knew me, my desires, and, of course, my bizarre sense of humor hold the court we call funerals. (After all, it is my party, people!)

My life was good. Real good, in fact. I had the family, friends, and love that most people desire and have to search an eternity to find. Everybody's time runs on a different schedule. Yeah, mine's on the short end, and now's the time for me to bid all y'all adieu. Which is too bad because I wanted to see whether Al Gore was right about global warming.

Back in high school, we read this book where the narrator starts off mentally retarded. Then he's given some amazing drug that makes him brilliant. With this newfound genius, he learns that eventually he will return to his former intelligence level. Well people, that's kind of how I feel. The tumor in the left temporal lobe of my brain took its toll after almost eight years. I read painfully slowly. Even though my fingers move with the dexterity I had in high school, it's almost like they work too fast for my brain. Yeah, it sucked. Yeah, there were times when I wished that I could go back to life before I turned 21 and had to use a sketchy fake ID for fun.

(How many people wish for that?) Then you realize that there's reality, and nothing can be perfect.

Rico, our beloved black lab, there was a day when I woke up and you were lying on my bed. We made eye contact and your face read, "foo, I'm black and I'm proud and I'm not leaving you... or your bed." Ever since then you have provided that natural dog support we all need in life. Stay by my parents' side as the black lab who never awakens blissful sleepers to ask to go outside or be fed.

Sadie, you're cute and fun, but give ol' Rico a freakin' break. Maybe as you mature you'll understand that some creatures get awfully upset when a little pest attacks them.

Sasha, you've been a part of this family, since, what... 1998 or something? Well, you and Jesse are now the sole Thaler offspring. Keep Jesse sane. Don't let physics drive him over the top. And for everyone else in the audience, Sasha will be offering pro-bono legal help after this is over. Enjoy.

Jesse, for lack of any better words, you are effing crazy. But stay that way. All of a sudden, your nerdy, nerdy, nerdy brain is über, über, über cool. Don't let university bureaucracy distract you from your creative process. After all, you only have a few more years to make your mind blowing famous discovery. But Sasha, make sure that he doesn't walk away from this. Not that I can see that occurring, but there is a thing called "burning out" and that's the last thing I want to happen.

And, when the two of you have children, make sure that they are effing cool. Make sure that all of my musical equipment stays in the family. There will be many options for these children, and I want all of my guitars and my amp to be by their side from day one. (And Jesse, if playing my instruments help you to relax or be that cool physicist, enjoy them as well.) One of

my responsibilities as the lone uncle or aunt was to prevent your children from becoming ridiculous nerds. I wanted to teach them guitar. I wanted to throw a baseball and kick a soccer ball with them. I wanted to show them that there was a man named Zappa whose music is brilliant and unbeatable. I wanted to say: “physics and the law are cool, but your options are unlimited. But do your homework, alright?” I wanted to walk down the street with a niece or nephew on my shoulders and with a dog like Rico at my side. But my time has come. I know that Mom, Dad, and Ania will be there for you two. Jesse, hopefully the badass Johnson uncles will be there for you, too. Ben, Jerry, Elizabeth, and Louis: the pressure is on!

Mom, you have been the rock in my life. Growing up, you made me the man I became. Anytime I needed a hand with my writing or my cooking (not to mention my taxes!) you were there for me immediately. You taught me to be responsible in life. I prided myself in being so. Yeah, you were a pain in my arse when it came to getting my homework completed. But I learned as time went on that your attention made me who I am and who I aspired to be. Without you, I wouldn't have done schoolwork with such passion. Part of me thought that if I were to get good grades that you would just leave me alone. Yet, what your encouragement really did was to motivate me to achieve beyond the expectations of York High School. And that prepared me for my life outside of Maine.

Also, you stayed out of my personal life. Maybe it was because I was hanging out with some no-good students of yours. Maybe it was because you knew what you should know and what you didn't need to know. I can't say that I was perfect and stayed away from all them drugs we teenagers do. But I believe that I saw more trouble from the friends who had parents breathing down their necks. There are deceiving lies that arise when parents are overly involved. Mom, you knew when I needed a push and when I could discover right and wrong on my own.

As Dad would say, “she’s a keepah.” Yeah, Mom, you are a keepah. A strong Jersey girl who worked hard for me my whole life and did last minute favors whenever I needed them. I know we rarely said this to each other, but, Mom, I love you with all my heart and soul. In the words of Zappa, “you are what you is”. And you is the rock hard wife in a strong/maybe even perfect marriage and the perfect mother to Jesse and me. You’re also not too shabby with them dogs we got...

Dad, what is there to say about you? How many kids can grow up saying, “yeah, my dad’s a doctor by day and a harmonica player in a blues band by night”? How many people can say that his father built a little house AND a Japanese teahouse on their property? How many people can say that his father is best friends with some cool mofos from high school who have shared the words of wisdom that I needed at pivotal points in my life? Lastly, how many people can say that his father got him out of a pot possession charge. (Not to mention that it was legal for me to have possession in Maine... but that’s another story.) Dad, you are the most badass man I ever knew. Not only did I grow up body surfing at the beach, having daily baseball catches in our backyard, or hanging out with cool local musicians, I could really talk to you about anything, whenever. I often got told what a cool father I had. Yeah, Fred’s a badass mofo. Some of you already know that; some of you who know him as Dr. Thaler might not. But trust me, he is.

Over the last several years there have been lots of transitions at my Dad’s workplace. He has been über nervous of late due to increasing work responsibilities. Now this guy has had to deal with the loss of his youngest son. I’ve had enough personal doctors in my life to know that my father is amazing at his job. Think about how lucky Mainers are to have a good Long Island Jewish doctor checking their bodies out! To my dad’s co-workers, give him all the support you

can. But don't feel sorry for him. I hated it when people felt sorry for me because of my brain tumor. Life's life, and you go through it dealing with all the plusses and minuses.

For the last decade I have been fighting against cancer. Whether I liked it or not, this was my reality. I tried to forget about it and live life in San Francisco like a new person. But you can only do that for so long. Even though they were on the other side of the country, I always felt like I had my family with me.

Okay. My spiel is over. Let me set some rules for the remaining parts of the service:

1. No God or Jesus will be mentioned. If that's your thang, by all means, say it quietly within. But traditional religion has never spoken to me. And throughout my life I have fluctuated between atheism and agnosticism. Keep this day as a memory of me, and how I lived my life.
2. Play some music. Sing some songs. Read some poetry. Or just talk. But don't embarrass me.
3. Laugh, cry, sing, sneeze or walk out. Whatever floats your boat.
4. When people perform, please clap. This isn't some "oh my god, this is terrible that someone passed away." In reality, it's a performance.
5. Hug, but don't make it too kumbaya. Where are we? Summer camp?

Adios amigos. Live life strong. Live it to its fullest. I'll see you in your dreams...