

Caper Chronicles

"Behind Closed Doors" Edition

A True Love Story

By: Katie Kincade

Mr. Ed Jurewicz and Mrs. Lisa Jurewicz are local legends when it comes to the students of Lower Cape May Regional High School. To many, they may be that quirky couple with no worries or cares, but only a few know what has changed them forever: Mr. Jay's death scare in the spring of 2001. The story I want to tell is not a sad story, but a love story. The Jays share an unbreakable bond that many hopeless romantics only dream about.



Mr. and Mrs. Jay

Mr. and Mrs. Jay met at Mansfield University in Pennsylvania as music students. During this time, Mrs. Jay took quick notice of Mr. Jay and wanted to get to know him better. Her piano lesson was right near one of his music classes, so every day before her lesson she would wait on a bench outside of his class. When he would come out, Mrs. Jay would do some "pre-lesson flirting." While she would "blab" away, Mr. Jay just listened and did not say too much. On one particular day, the two were sitting on that same bench, and during the conversation, Mrs. Jay noticed something shiny on Mr. Jay's ring finger.

"I freaked out!" said Mrs. Jay. "He had a wedding band on!"

Then Mr. Jay took his ring and turned it around revealing not a wedding band, but a class ring.

"I felt so embarrassed. He obviously knew I liked him."

Mr. Jay finally made the move to ask Mrs. Jay on a first date. The two young musicians went into Elmira, New York to catch a Mel Brooks movie. After that, "things evolved

weirdly." Mrs. Jay would go back and forth between "yes, he likes me" and "no, wait, he doesn't." He was very quiet so it was hard for Mrs. Jay to figure him out.

Today, Mrs. Jay realizes that Mr. Jay "fell in love with me when he first saw me." Mr. Jay even named his violin after her, Lisa Marie.

At the end of that year, Mr. Jay graduated, while Mrs. Jay had one more year to go. He went on his way to Willingboro, New Jersey, and Mrs. Jay stayed in Pennsylvania to finish her last year of college. From there, the relationship was long distance. Mr. Jay had a teaching job at Willingboro High School, so it was hard for them to see each other. When they did decide to visit, she had to drive four hours, and he met her, driving three hours. It is a feat only a true couple could withstand. At the end of the year, Mrs. Jay graduated and the Jays got married in January of 1978.

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Mr. and Mrs. Jay have been married for 34 years. Since the day he put that gold band on her finger, she has never taken it off.

“Not for a shower, not for cooking, nothing,” said Mrs. Jay.

Mr. Jay started working at LCMR in September of 1977. He was the start of the music department. In 1983, Mr. Jay interviewed Mrs. Sandra Beane-Fox for a job.

From that point on the Jay family and Mrs. Beane-Fox have been each other’s “stable presence through many personal times,” said Mrs. Beane-Fox. “There has always been a Jay during my time at LCMR. Mrs. Jay did the band front, and Mr. J was the band.”



When Mrs. Jay was pregnant with her first child, Mrs. Beane-Fox took over the band front, giving Mrs. Jay the opportunity to be a stay-at home mom. Mr. Jay and Mrs. Beane-Fox were the only two music teachers in the building. While they were very close colleagues, they were also each other’s support system. Whether a parent passed away, or a child was sick, they were there for each other.

In the spring of 2001, Mr. Jay had a health scare in front of the Lower Township community. After finishing conducting the last song of the band’s spring concert, Mr. Jay went off stage and was rushed to the hospital. Mrs. Jay was in the audience watching him and knew something was not right.

“I was thinking of everything that could go wrong,” said Mrs. Jay.

At the hospital, the doctors ran a CAT scan revealing “the largest brain tumor” the doctor had ever seen, giving Mr. Jay a slim chance at survival.

“The only thing I was thinking about was what needed to be done, who needed to be called. It was so surreal; he was still young,” said Mrs. Jay.

The next day they ran a second CAT scan on Mr. Jay, revealing something completely different.

“I overheard two surgeons arguing about him. The surgeon from the night before swore up and down that it was a brain tumor, but the surgeon from that day said it was only an AVM (non-fatal aneurism). Do you believe in miracles? Overnight that tumor turned into an AVM, and I truly believe that.”

The next morning was Mother’s Day. Mrs. Jay was expecting a call from the hospital saying that Mr. Jay had not made it, but she instead got something astonishing: “Happy Mother’s Day, honey.” It was Mr. Jay and he was okay.

“It was the best Mother’s Day present,” said Mrs. Jay.

When I asked Mrs. Jay what this experience has taught her, I saw her eyes water up as she said, “It made me realize how much I loved him. I’m not saying I didn’t love him before, but even the thought of not being with him made me so grateful. It taught me to never say die. Things are not always what they seem.”

This experience is a testament to the bond that the Jay’s share.

“Mr. and Mrs. Jay share an unbreakable bond; they are inseparable. I have never seen two people as in love as they are. It is beautiful thing to see,” said Mrs. Beane-Fox.

Mr. and Mrs. Jay are two of the happiest people I have ever seen when they are together. It is a true love story, one for the books. When I ask Mr. Jay how he is doing, he always responds, “Happy to be alive.”

Superstar Athlete to Superstar Coach

By: Jon Staples

It all started at Frostburg State in Maryland when defensive end, Jeff Wunder, severely injured his knee during a football game. Wunder has been involved in sports most of his life. He played baseball and football at Frostburg State for two years. He enjoyed playing first base and catcher for his college baseball team. Although he enjoyed baseball more, he played defensive end in football and excelled more in football. In his second year of football he had a devastating injury that would change his life. He could not play football or baseball anymore because he could not sprint.

Wunder stayed positive about the injury although he was upset about it. He continued college and became a gym teacher for Lower Cape May Regional High School. Wunder has been teaching at LCMR for a long time now and is like by everyone. He was a football coach for 13 years, a golf coach for 13 years, and was a baseball coach for seven years.

Wunder has coached some of the teachers in LCMR when they were in high school so they know how good of a coach he is. "Wunder was like a father figure to me," said Mr. Dan Olson, teacher at LCMR. Wunder coached Olson in baseball his senior year. Wunder's first year was Olson's senior year. Olson said that Wunder was a great motivator and great coach, especially since it was his first year there. He took his team to the South Jersey finals two times. Both times the team lost to Toms River South.

Wunder has coached football for 13 years. He was head coach for a long time but then stopped coaching. He came back to coach again and is now an assistant. "I like all the sports I coach the same, but football is the most intense," said Wunder. All of Wunder's players seem to like him very much. "Wunder's coaching technique is excellent," says Pat Dunn, football player for LCMR. Wunder said that what he likes about football is that it is really "in your face" and physical. Football is very different from baseball and golf because it is a lot faster pace.

Wunder has also been a golf coach for 13 years. He has had a big achievement in coaching golf. His team won the group two South Jersey Championship in 2007. I have played golf for Mr. Wunder for the past two years. He is a very good coach and everybody likes him. He really knows what he is talking about when it comes to golf. He knows everything there is to help anyone with any of their problems on the golf course. He knows all of the rules and knows what to do in any situation there is on the golf course. "Wunder is an excellent golf coach and really knows what he's talking about," said Pat Dunn, a former golfer for Wunder.

Wunder really likes coaching golf because it is very laid back. He coaches the golf team in practice to get them ready for matches. When it comes to matches the golfers are completely on their own. "I like golf because it is just your own world, until it comes down to a final score. You don't have anyone to blame anyone for messing up but yourself," said Wunder.

Since Wunder hurt his knee he cannot run very well anymore. Golf has been a sport that he can still compete in without having to run. Wunder did not let his knee injury get in the way of his love for sports. Since he was unable to play the sports he loved, he became a coach for the sports he loved. He has helped many people in the sports he loves throughout his years of coaching.



Seize the Day and Live to the Fullest

By: Hannah Lamey

Lively, sporty, humorous, and full of spunk. These words describe the AP English, College Bound English, and News Media teacher Jackie Siscone. Although sometimes she may be upset or frustrated, she always lived her life to the fullest. However, Ms. Siscone was not always like this. When she played basketball in high school and college she had bad temper issues and did not appreciate all the good things that she had. It was not until she was 24 years old that she started living each day like it was her last.



Siscone and Beth

When Jackie Siscone was 24 years old she was teaching English at Lower Cape May Regional High School. One day she received a call that her best friend, Beth Hartman, was diagnosed with cancer. Siscone said, “When I found this out I was beyond shocked. Beth was always so healthy and she was an athlete, it just seemed impossible.” Siscone’s first reaction was that her best friend was going to die. She was being very optimistic about the situation. After a while, Beth had been improving and the doctors thought she overcame the cancer. A little while later the doctors found more cancer spots on Beth’s liver and spine. At this point, Siscone knew it was only a matter of time. She was in denial that this was actually happening. Siscone said, “I was numb to the whole situation. I didn’t want to believe it was actually happening.” She began to brace herself for Beth’s death. Siscone said, “It was like a nightmare that I couldn’t wake up from.” Siscone began to distance herself from Beth. She thought it would be easier this way.

Sadly, Beth then passed away on Saturday, October 6, 2007. When she passed away it was very surreal for Siscone. On that Saturday Jackie Siscone received a call that Beth had died. She had no reaction. It was a huge shock and her stomach dropped. Siscone said, “I was relieved that Beth was not suffering anymore.” Siscone wishes she would have been there more for Beth than she had been. At the funeral one of Siscone’s guy friends started crying and everything started to become reality.

It was extremely tough for Siscone to literally lose her best friend. All of a sudden she could not call Beth when she had a bad day or wanted to talk. Siscone misses her each and every day. This really opened Ms. Siscone’s eyes to the world and showed her that something like this could happen to anyone. Ever since Beth’s passing, Ms. Siscone tries to appreciate every little thing in life. She tries not to complain as much. Siscone does things she never thought she would do in her lifetime. She makes the most out of everyday.

Ms. Caruso, a dear friend and colleague of Siscone’s has been there to help everyday. Caruso says that Siscone talks about it a lot. Caruso stated, “I never try to tell her how to feel. I am just always there for her.” Caruso knows that Beth definitely had a positive outlook on life and that has rubbed off on Siscone. Out of all of this, Siscone has realized that nobody is untouchable. She also had to understand that sometimes bad things happen to good people.



Siscone and Beth

For a few years, Siscone has been doing an activity with her AP English class about *carpe diem*. She tells the story of Beth and how she has learned from it. One of her former students, Taylor Finley, was really touched by this. Taylor went through a similar situation with her father. She knows what it is like to lose someone close to you. It was easy for her to relate to this situation. Finley could tell that it was a really sensitive subject for Siscone. Finley says, “It was like she lost her other half.” Finley says that it made her have even more respect for Siscone. Taylor knew she was not alone and there was someone she could talk to if she ever needed comforting. It brought their class closer together and it became more like a family than an English class.

I have also done this activity and saw first hand how this affected Siscone. It really was eye opening for me, as it should be to others. It taught me to never take life for granted. Even when times are tough there is always something to be thankful for. I have learned to live life for myself and for the ones who are not able to live theirs. I try to make the best of everything and always take chances when they come my way.

Daddy's Girl

By: Amanda Vassar

Taylor Finley asked everybody to please leave the room so she could have a few moments alone with him. To those outside of the room, it seemed as though she was in there for a long time, but to her the clock was moving faster than ever. She held his hand the entire time as she sang to him in a desperate attempt to tattoo the feeling of his hand in hers onto her mind.

“And I loved deeper and I spoke sweeter;
And I gave forgiveness I'd been denying.
An' he said: 'Someday, I hope you get the chance,
To live like you were dyin.'”

She believed Tim McGraw's "Live Like You Were Dying" was a very appropriate song to sing to him. Taylor knew that this was one of her last opportunities to do this. After only a short period of time, Taylor's mother and younger brother came into the room. "Not yet," she thought. She looked at her mother with a look that needed no explanation. When her mother nodded her head, embracing both of her children with her eyes full of tears, Taylor began to sob.



This sick nightmare was proving itself to be a reality. Was this really happening? Was this goodbye? After many tears and moments of embracing her father, her mother led Taylor and her brother to the waiting room to be with the rest of the family. An hour later Mike Finley had no more machines attached to him, and Taylor would never be able to sing to her father again.

Everything began in Taylor's sixth grade year. Her parents, Violet and Mike, sat her down in their bedroom to tell her "something important." They proceeded to explain that her father had been diagnosed with lung cancer. "Okay. And...?" was Taylor's response to the news. Mike had quit smoking about three months before his diagnosis; Taylor figured that everything would be fine. At the time it didn't seem serious at all.

About a year later it was obvious that things began to get very serious. Mike spent hours at Burdette Tomlin Hospital receiving chemotherapy and radiation treatments. About once a month he would receive seven hour treatments in the hopes of defeating the cancer cells in his body. His hair began to fall out; he gained a lot of weight; his skin started changing color. As time went on and the treatments continued, Mike began to look and feel progressively worse. Taylor stayed in the

house with him a lot, afraid to miss anything important.

After about a year of monthly hospital visits, Mike was admitted into Burdette Tomlin Hospital. Things then began to move downhill very quickly. He was ordered to use an oxygen machine to help him with his breathing. Even with the help from the oxygen machine, he was still unable to breathe correctly. He then became unconscious.

Though this was a heartbreaking experience, Taylor would still talk to her father, asking him questions about memories, family, the weather, anything that he could answer with a "yes" or "no." Though this particular type of conversation is typical in a hospital, Mike was very unresponsive. His "yes" to Taylor's questions was an eyebrow raise. Unable to speak or even open his eyes, he still found a way to communicate with his daughter until his last day on earth. Mike stayed at Burdette Tomlin for 11 days. Two days before the last day of Taylor's seventh grade year, she took a field trip to an Atlantic City Surf baseball game. Once Taylor came home, her mother told her that her dad had been flown to the University of Pennsylvania Hospital. Violet tried her best to explain to her children that their father may not make it through the night.

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They quickly got into the car and drove up to visit Mike. The next day all were in favor of Taylor and her brother attending school on the last day. To Taylor's surprise, her mother came to pick her up from school early. They then rushed to the hospital to be greeted by all of Mike's family whom they hadn't seen in a while. The sobbing seemed to never end. Though there was hope, there was also a heavy feeling of dread pouring over everyone. All of them took turns talking to Mike, hoping and praying that he would wake up and talk back to them or move his arm. Something, anything would satisfy his brokenhearted family. To their great dismay, Mike Finley passed away the next day surrounded by his loved ones.

Although Mike's time with Taylor was short and his death was very painful for her and her family, I have never seen a parent's effect on a child be greater than Mike's effect on Taylor. Mike would undoubtedly be so proud of the young woman that Taylor has grown to be.

Going through such a tragic event at such a young age has taught Taylor that life does go on. The positive attitude and strong personality that Taylor possesses has been an inspiration to many, and certainly to me. Taylor has given me strength to move past tragedies that I never would have been able to overcome without her.

With everything that Mike taught her in the very few years they were in each other's lives, Taylor enjoys life and certainly leads it the way her father would have wanted her to.

Like Father like Daughter

By: Taylor Finley

On the day that her interview rolled around, Kalyn Magee walked through the threshold with the same bubbly personality she always had. She looked down at me and I asked her to have a seat. I asked if she was ready to begin and she nodded. She seemed more willing than I expected to talk about such a tough situation she had been through. Most people already knew about Kalyn's situation, but she had never really publicized it. I knew my first question could be a difficult question to talk about, but we both knew it was the basis of my story. I took a few moments to gather my thoughts and finally asked my opening question. "How did your dad die?"



She started telling me the story with no hesitation. She proceeded to tell me that her father was diagnosed with Mild Dysplasia, a rare blood disease. Her father, Jim Magee, was very active. He played basketball as an adult and as a result of that he was prescribed to Prednisone, a pain medication. When the doctors prescribed the medication, they were not aware that he had the disease and the medicine had made it worse. When the doctors finally realized this, it was too late. He passed away in the Intensive Care Unit in a Philadelphia hospital.

Kalyn and her father were very close. Taryn McCullough, one of Kalyn's closest friends, said, "Kalyn was dealing with a man version of herself." In fact, everyone that I interviewed said they were insanely alike. When I asked Kalyn what her dad was like her face brightened and a smile appeared on her face that had just been completely serious. "He was wild," said Kalyn with a grin. Everybody loved "Big Jim." Her father was known by so many people in Cape May. He was widely known for singing with *The Cape May Diamonds*, a local band. Kalyn stated that her fondest memory with her father was when she would watch him sing during happy hour. Although she was not supposed to be there, she always went to watch and support her dad.

Kalyn's father had one of the biggest funerals in Cape May's history. Kalyn was very strong at the funeral. Although everyone knew she was extremely devastated by the loss of her role model, she seemed to hold it together throughout the service.

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“Oh my god, oh my god, the funeral was the worst. We hugged for like 20 minutes and our shoulders were soaked from us crying,” said Taryn as she recollected her memory of the funeral. As well as Taryn, Connor Magee, Kalyn’s cousin, also recalled that the funeral was extremely sad for his family, but that Kalyn remained strong throughout the funeral.

Kalyn’s friends and family also had a hard time with the fact that Big Jim was no longer around. He was a man that lit up a room with his big personality. When Taryn explained what kind of person that Kalyn’s dad was she was constantly giggling and could not erase the smile from her face. She almost seemed excited to be talking about him. It was easy to see he was loved by many. Connor described Big Jim as “one of a kind.” He also described him as outgoing and as having something positive to say at all times. Kalyn and Jim were similar in many ways. Lilli Loper said they were “both funny and fun to be around.” Lilli also explained they had many similar features as well as them both being very tall. There was no denying that Kalyn was Jim’s daughter.

When I asked Kalyn my final question, “What do you miss most about your dad?” her answer was not surprising. Her response to my question was “probably his upbeat attitude. He tried to make every situation better.” The outstanding qualities that Jim Magee had in his life are seen in Kalyn as well. She can also light a room up with her smile just as her father could. Her laughter is contagious and she is a generally kind hearted person. Losing a father at a young age can be very detrimental to a person, but Kalyn has come out a stronger and more independent person because of it. She has not let this terrible experience change her life in a negative way, but has used everything her father has taught her to carry on his legacy. She takes the phrase “like father, like daughter” to a whole new level by taking all of Big Jim’s positive attributes and personality traits to live a life that would make him proud.