

# Jess

A rambling by Gilbert Head,  
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If you're lucky, someone like Jess will mosey into your life and drop anchor for a while. If you're very, very lucky, they may decide to stay on and make the neighborhood a much more interesting place to live. I've been very, very lucky....

You know the type, of course. Boundless energy, ever-ready smile, never walked into a room of strangers. Jess is the only person in my life I've ever described as "relentlessly cheerful" and meant it as a compliment.

She also lived to clean things up. What started as a need to impose order on her surroundings morphed into a career, as she became a nurse and helped folks neaten up aspects of their lives that they couldn't manage on their own.

Snickers bars. She loved them, or their approximate chocolate equivalent. And, having the metabolism of a hummingbird, they were never around long enough to haunt her, at least not as the relentlessly cheerful teenager she was when she first bounded into our lives back in the late 1980s. The joke was: "Want your [insert living space of choice here] cleaned? Toss in a Snickers, lock the door behind Jess and cultivate patience."

Opinionated? My, yes. The woman knew what she knew about most anything that came under discussion, and if she didn't know, she'd be right there in your face until she'd sorted things out to her satisfaction.

A lover of many things besides chocolate, especially Earth in her more natural forms, animals and kids. But, caught up in all of the above, Jess loved life, even when it was messy or harder than it ought to be.

Great philosophers say that the direction of the universe turns upon the smallest of things, like the beating wings of a butterfly a million miles away. Mine turned on a telephone call on July 9, when my friend Wayne called and told me that Jess and her two small children, Heather and Benjamin, were gone. Someone using my voice said "Excuse me?" and "I beg your pardon?" -- I guess formality was my first refuge of denial....

Though Jess and I had, in the last few years, experienced the sort of drift that folks do when their lives get busy in different directions, all I could think of was the laughing girl who blushed so furiously in the midst of not getting a dirty joke, or the young woman who so relentlessly badgered me down through the years about turning into an old stuffed shirt, or the tender mother and wife and friend whose eyes and spirit shone so fiercely in the company of those fortunate people whose lives she touched. Through the days that have followed, the usual recriminations inside about missed opportunities have folded in with small ambushes of sorrow and concern about what the future holds for those who loved Jess the most, especially her husband Jon. My surest companion has been anger, directed at God chiefly because there is no earthly repository for it.

And so I write this Ramble. I had never thought I would do so, but then, the world was such a very different place only 12 short days ago. I ramble because I'm not at all sure where I'm going, nor how I'll get there. I ramble in this forum because we can all stand to be reminded that every day is a gift, and that tomorrow is quite possibly too late to reach out to those you love.

That is Jess's final gift to me, her final lesson. I expect to be in school with it for the rest of my life.....

[ by Gilbert Head ]

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