

# Vantage Point

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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT A Fifty-year-old Woman's Eulogy



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**“Life is like bacon and eggs. The chicken is involved, but the Pig is committed. Be the Pig.”**

As my life has so rapidly flown by, I find myself this November, 2013, at the half-way mark, figuring if I make it past 100, those years are the overtime years. What hit me the other day while running was that at the 100 year mark, many of you may not be here to hear my eulogy, so I thought I'd give you my half-eulogy at 50. And no, it's not morbid - just reflection. (Don't you love how we can put whatever word we want in something weird and make it sound cool?)

Here's Michelle's Life from Michelle's eyes..... Get some chocolate and enjoy this story if you are at work, or if you're retired, grab a beer!!

Michelle was born into the most awesome family - her mom, Betty, was a full blood German and her dad, Rich, a full blood Swede, which gave her the perfect combination of Swerman. The morning she was brought home from the hospital - four days after she was born (November 22, 1963) was the day JFK was shot.



To welcome her home on that day were six siblings and a dog Peanut, which technically should have been called the neighbor's dog, as he never really slept or ate at the Blomberg's house because there wasn't room or food left over for a dog. Dick, Susan, Teresa, Mark, Dan and Dave now had a new little toy called Michelle. But Betty and Rich were not done. Two years later, Bruce came along, followed by Bryan a year after that. This 99% Lutheran town called Albert City, Iowa thought this one GIANT Catholic family with nine kids was something unusual. And then, seven years later, Betty got another bump in her belly. Michelle was ten years old when brother Bob (number 10) was born. Now, all the other 9 had a new toy. Michelle liked to put Bob in girl doll clothes and rocked him in her doll crib.

These 10 kids loved to play outside with the perfect amount of people for lots of games. There was never a time when you couldn't find someone to play sports with. All the kids rotated their chores each week - from setting the table to doing the laundry to making the powdered milk. They always played outside and only came in when the whistle blew - noon and supertime and you didn't want to miss that whistle, because food didn't wait. You were there or you didn't eat. Michelle didn't know why it was called "Spaghetti and Meatballs" because it was college before she even saw one single meatball. And when asked for her first time in a restaurant how she wanted her eggs, knowing only one way which was "however they land on my plate", Michelle said with confusion, "cooked".

Michelle learned to love pigs at her Aunt Alice's farm, where they had hundreds. She was not so much into the smell of pigs as she was into the cuteness of pigs. Well, and bacon and ham. Who doesn't love that?

Once when Michelle was about 15, she was finally going to beat Bruce (two years younger than her) in a one-on-one basketball game in the driveway - score was Michelle - 10, Bruce -9, and you had to win by 2. Michelle broke away with an unbelievable fake to the left and was floating through the air to softly put up a right handed lay up when a smash from behind and she skidded across the garage floor. Shaking her head to come back to life, she realized what had happened when Bruce

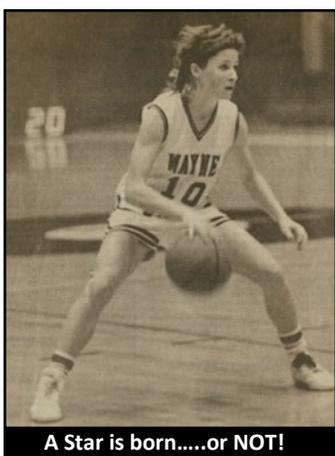
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said, "You OK?" "Yep" she said. Then Bruce added, "My foul. Your ball." She can't really remember who won - just that **winning means maybe losing skin** – a lesson she carried throughout life!

Michelle always loved running - ever since she was 10 years old and her brother Dicky came home from the Navy and was going out for a run. Michelle just wanted to be with her older brother so she learned to run with him. Then Mark came home from college and he was a runner, so she got to run with him. Her sisters were both the senior athletes of their classes so she had her idols to live up to. She didn't actually get that title, but she did get outstanding musician of her class as she played the trumpet and sang in three choirs. Her family taught her that hard work, coupled with teamwork was the way to win - in sports, in family and in life.

Michelle always wanted to be a math teacher, but her dad always wanted her to learn computers. After high school, Michelle went to Northwest Missouri State University on a small softball scholarship and majored in mathematics education (Michelle 1 - Dad 0). After one year, she decided to sit out a year and work to earn money and find a way to pay her own way to college. She also wanted to play college basketball, so in that year she sat out, she learned how to play 5-on-5 basketball as she had only EVER played 6-on-6 and weirdly, no one else played that way except GIRLS in Iowa. Who knew there was another way to play basketball? For sure, not Michelle.

The year she sat out, she lived in Springfield, Missouri and ran three miles to the "Y" every day, hooked up with a group of guys that played all the time, learned how to play 5 on 5 and then ran home. What? A game where she had to actually play defense. (If you'd like more on this story, google 6 on 6 Girls Iowa Basketball). She also worked at a car wash and earned enough money to go back to college. A year later, she decided to go to Wayne State in Nebraska because her cousin had told her they needed a point guard for the basketball team and it was called the Nebraska Teachers College, which intrigued her.



Michelle walked onto the basketball team at Wayne State, not knowing a single person, but soon the basketball coach saw potential in this 5'4" girl and offered her a full-ride to play. Now don't get too impressed, because the team was terrible. Her freshman year, they were 3-21 and Michelle, even though she had the spunk and excitement to play, still lacked the ability to NOT travel 8-10 times a game (again, check any story on Iowa basketball in the 80's where you got an extra half-step). Each summer, she worked at various jobs (road construction, walking beans, waitress, camp counselor) and continued to work hard at basketball, as at the end of her first 2 years, her coach had said they were going to look for a REAL point guard and took away her full-ride. This gave her the deeper desire, and when she went back each year, she beat out the newly recruited guards and got her full-ride back.

Then something happened before her Jr year...the three-pointer was invented. This was right in Michelle's wheelhouse because in Iowa, the "set" shot was the most popular shot and she could make them from very far out. Michelle once made a half-court shot to end a game in high school. She also missed the last second lay-up that could have sent her team to state her senior year. People seemed to remember the missed shot more than the made shot, but that's a story for another time. Her team at Wayne State, by her Sr. year, was 21-3 with Michelle getting her full-ride each year to captain the team.

With her Math teaching degree in hand, along with a computer science degree and coaching endorsement, Michelle got offered two jobs - a math teaching job in Pierce, Nebraska or a computer programmer job in the city of St. Paul, MN for a company called West Publishing and at the same time, an asst. basketball coach at Hamline College. When the woman called to offer Michelle the job at West Publishing, Michelle's only question was, "Do I need to wear panty hose?" The answer was yes! Michelle packed up....well nothing because that's basically what she had, and moved to this new city she had never been to in her life to be a computer programmer (Michelle 1 - Dad 1). For the next 5 years, she was a computer programming for West Publishing and it appeared her dad's hope for her to be in computers had won out.

Until 1993, her desire to teach took over and Michelle got her MN teaching license at St. Thomas Univ. Against her mother's wishes, Michelle took a job at the South St Paul Alternative School - something she, nor her mother, had ever heard of before. (Michelle 2 - Dad 1) At the end of each day, Michelle was very happy to be alive, which was the exact reason her mother was scared for her. Who thought **not** getting knifed would be a goal for each day?



Three years after that, Michelle's parents, Betty and Rich, decided they wanted to retire from their business called Be-Rich. From the ground up, they had built a computer software company for agriculture businesses when computers were brand new to the world. Michelle was always in amazement of how her parents did that with so many mouths to feed at home.

Michelle took a leave of absence from teaching and moved back to her home town where she learned from her parents how to run this business. (Michelle 2 - Dad

2) A year later, she moved the business back to Minnesota and a year after that, hand-in-hand with her Mom and Dad for support, met with another ag-software company from Rochester, MN to see about merging the two companies together. They put the companies together, and in 2001, Michelle became the CEO and President of the company called AgVantage, where she is honored each day to work with some of the smartest, most incredible people a person could wish for.

At fifty, she still goes non-stop with her many activities. She wanted to fit in with Minnesotans, so she learned to play hockey. She loves running and has run five marathons, each time swearing she will never do it again and somehow finding herself back training for more. One marathon, she ran with a broken leg (see more on this in Michelle's Blogs on the AgVantage website). She loves to golf, go fishing with her family and volunteers for many social needs.



In 2006, Michelle lost her mother. Many of Michelle's friends tried to help her understand what it feels like to lose someone so close, but until she experienced that loss herself, there were no words. Now, Michelle knows her mother is in heaven looking down and probably smirking because she is remembering Michelle's 40th birthday when all of her kids got up on stage and tried to "rap" a song for Michelle. Who knew there could be that much "white-ness" in a family that is trying to look cool? Betty and Rich created a fascinating family that continues to grow into a perfect reflection of how life should be lived.

Michelle's mother was the strength and courage that made Michelle who she is today. Coupled with the caring, loveableness of her dad (the man of her life), the love of her brothers and sisters and their spouses, surrounded by all of her nieces and nephews, plus all the friends that have poured into Michelle's life, Michelle can't feel anything but happy to be alive each and every day. The person she has become is because of them.

At her life's spectacular half-time party that was thrown for her in 2013, she paused a moment and looked out at the people and silently thanked God for all she has been blessed with. Michelle knows there are so many people in the world that do not have what she has and wants her "sea of peeps" - those whose lives she has been blessed to be a part of - to know that she cherishes them deeply.

From Michelle to you - thank you for being in her life!

***The Master of the art of living makes little distinction between her work and her play, her labor and her leisure, her mind and her body, her education and her recreation, her love and her religion. She hardly knows which is which. She simply pursues her vision of excellence in whatever she does, leaving others to decide whether she is working or playing. To her, she is always doing both.***

