

## It's So Hard To Say Goodbye....

Written by Mike Kelly

Wednesday, 13 November 2013 09:17

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It certainly is. It's something I've always regretted, and I've never been good at it my entire life. But I was forced to say goodbye on Monday. A great man and a dear friend passed away early Monday morning. Carter Lentz, a great coach, and a great person, who befriended many people

during his lifetime, including me, passed away early Monday morning. As disappointing as it was to hear the news, I knew it was coming. Everytime I asked how Coach Lentz was doing, the news wasn't encouraging.

I know in my heart he's in a good place, and I'll always remember him with that big smile of his. He befriended me from the first day I met him. I owe that man a lot, and I'll never forget the friendship we had.

I can still remember when his wife, Lydia passed away. He called me and broke down on the phone. I could feel his pain. I got to share a lot with him in the short time I got to know him. And he's had a huge influence on me.

I hope I can be half the man he was. It's so hard for me to write this. I won't be attending the visitation or the funeral. I can't bear to see him that way. I want to remember him the way he lived, full of life with that huge smile of his.

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I could write a book about the man. Believe me, there's so much to say, but not enough space to write about it. Coach Lentz was just a great guy. Just ask any of his former players. As a matter of fact, ask anybody that knew him. He was just special.

I've been really blessed in my life. God has seen to that. And I'm thankful He brought Coach Lentz into my life. I only knew him for a fraction of his life, but I'm proud to say, I learned a lot and I earn his friendship and respect.

I still remember our first encounter. It was Friday, December 6, 1996, my very first broadcast with Watauga High School. We were in Moravian Falls, and the Pioneers opened the basketball season that year against Wilkes Central. Omer Tomlinson, the general manager at AM 1450, WATA at the time, and the man, who introduced me to Coach Lentz (thank you, Omer), did the girl's game that night.

I did the boy's game, and Coach Lentz and I hit it off right away. We really worked well together. He had the ability to reach out to others, and the ability to make them feel at home. He's the true definition of "Southern Hospitality: if there ever was one.

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He was also a man, who spoke his mind, and never shied away from the truth. That's what I really admired about him over the years. He just told it like it was.

And it's thanks to him that I was accepted in the High Country. Trust me, Coach Lentz played a huge role in that transision. He really opened the door for me. Thank you Coach Lentz. I love you, my man.

They say it's not how a man lives, but the legacy he leaves behind that counts. Well, if that's the case, then Coach Lentz will live forever in this community.

But it doesn't ease the pain. It's so hard to say goodbye. Here's hoping our paths will cross again in a much better place. God Bless, my friend.

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**Photo Courtesy: Carter Lentz, PHOTO SUBMITTED**