



A Life Rich in Friendship

I've been blessed with many good friends over the course of my life. I've also been blessed with true best friends. My longest-term best friend is Mohammed, who lives in Switzerland. Another lifelong friend, even before Mohammed, is Chris Wright. But now, here in Arizona, I've gained a new best friend: Pat Akana.

Pat is an extraordinary man, a man of many layers. A retired detective sergeant who spent years protecting others, walking toward danger while most people instinctively walk away from it. He lived a life of responsibility, discipline, and courage, and somehow emerged from it not hardened, but grounded. There is something deeply settled about Pat. You can feel it almost immediately. He is comfortable in his own skin and at peace with the life he has lived, satisfied not in an arrogant sense, but in the quiet confidence of a man who knows he showed up honorably. He carries himself with the kind of steadiness that only comes from living through difficult things without losing your center.



And he did not walk that road alone. Pat is married to a beautiful woman named Liz, and Pat and I often joke that we both "married up," which of course means our wives married down.

Wink wink.

What amazes me is how naturally our friendship formed despite such different backgrounds. Me, a touchy-feely psychologist, perhaps at times a crusty and cranky old psychologist. Pat, a lifelong law enforcement officer, a detective sergeant forged through years of trauma exposure, investigations, discipline, and responsibility.

On paper, we probably should not make sense together, and yet somehow the friendship feels entirely natural. And that, I think, is because authentic friendship is not built merely on similarity. Sometimes it is built on shared values, shared honesty, shared depth, and a mutual respect that quietly forms over time.

Two Very Different Men

In many ways, we are wired almost opposite from one another. My mind can feel nonlinear, emotional, and scattered across ten ideas at once, while Pat's mind is methodical, ordered, careful, and deeply structured. He studies before acting, observes before speaking, and organizes before reacting. Nothing about him feels impulsive or sloppy because his mind naturally seeks order, clarity, and precision.

And strangely enough, those differences create balance rather than friction. I think Pat helps steady me. He slows things down. He helps me organize thoughts and make sense of things that sometimes feel emotionally tangled in my own head. At the same time, I think he enjoys my spontaneity and emotional openness because it is probably very different from the highly ordered environments he spent decades navigating in law enforcement.

Some friendships are built because people are similar. Others are built because they complement one another. Ours feels like the latter. We sharpen different parts of each other, and somewhere in that process a genuine brotherhood formed. There is something deeply comforting about having a friend who brings order without trying to control you, who steadies you without diminishing who you are. Pat has a remarkable way of doing that.

Riding with Pat

Pat also rides motorcycles, which became another deep point of connection between us. He rides a beast of a machine, a BMW K1600, a massive six-cylinder motorcycle that outweighs my BMW R1250 RS by hundreds of pounds. And let me tell you something: Pat uses every one of those six cylinders.

Riding with him is humbling. I'm a good rider. I really am. But I cannot keep up with this guy. He rides like a cop. Law enforcement riders approach corners differently. There's no hesitation, no visible panic, no uncertainty. They enter turns with this calm confidence and astonishing precision.

And somehow Pat throws that giant motorcycle through corners with unbelievable ease. Watching him ride is like watching somebody completely at peace with the machine

underneath him. There is no wasted movement, no overcorrection, no visible anxiety. Just smoothness, confidence, and control. It is masterful to watch.

I've noticed something else too. Pat rides the way he lives: confidently, calmly, and deliberately. No wasted motion. No unnecessary drama. Just quiet control. He doesn't seem driven by ego or the need to impress people. He simply knows what he's doing, and that kind of riding tells you something about a man.

The Depth Beneath the Strength

But as much as I admire his riding, what I admire most is his depth. Pat is a man of God. Despite seeing atrocities, violence, and things no human being should ever have to witness, he somehow kept his heart intact. He did not become cynical. He did not become bitter. He continually points conversations toward Christ and toward a larger, eternal perspective on life.

That says something profound about a man. A lot of people can remain kind when life has treated them gently. It is much harder to remain tenderhearted after decades of seeing humanity at its worst. Yet somehow Pat has done exactly that. He has managed to carry strength without becoming harsh, conviction without becoming arrogant, and wisdom without becoming self-righteous.

When my brother died, Pat was one of the very first people who showed up. Not with clichés or shallow reassurance. Not with trite spiritual answers or attempts to explain away pain. He simply came and sat in it with me. That is one of the hallmarks of Pat: presence.

He is willing to enter difficult places without trying to immediately fix them or escape them. He understands that sometimes the greatest gift you can give another human being is simply your willingness to remain beside them in suffering. There is a maturity in that which cannot be taught in books. In today's world, that kind of presence is rare. Most people rush to fill silence because silence makes them uncomfortable. Pat doesn't do that. He knows how to remain present, and that presence carries tremendous weight.

The Mind of an Investigator

Ironically, Pat is also very much a fixer. This man has an attention to detail that would put most people with OCD to shame. I remember getting the grand tour of his beautiful home and opening a closet to discover every pen perfectly lined up, every pair of shoes squared away, every shirt and pair of pants meticulously organized by color and category.

I laughed and told him, "Pat, this is unbelievable. You've got massive OCD." But kidding aside, it reflected something deeper about how his mind works.

Pat thinks in order. He categorizes. He studies. He notices details others miss. Nothing feels rushed about him because he pays attention before he acts. You can almost see the investigator's mind still constantly operating beneath the surface, and you can immediately understand why he became such an effective detective and investigator.

The Strength of Ordered Men
-Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.

His mind is trained to notice patterns, inconsistencies, small details, subtle clues. He doesn't jump to conclusions. He studies first. Processes first. Thinks first. In a world increasingly driven by impulsive reactions and shallow thinking, Pat remains deeply observant and deliberate. That kind of carefulness is becoming increasingly rare in our culture.

A Man Who Quietly Solves Problems

I saw this firsthand when my clutch reservoir started leaking after repeated incompetent work by GoAZ Motorcycles in Prescott. They had the bike back multiple times after servicing the brake lines, and somehow the issue only became worse.

Pat quietly sat down at the little table in my man cave and began studying the reservoir. No drama. No rushing. No ego. Just observation. Eventually he noticed subtle indications that the gasket had likely been seated incorrectly. He cleaned everything meticulously, resealed it properly, and fixed the entire issue.

That's Pat. A careful observer. A deep thinker. A quiet fixer. The kind of man who studies before speaking and listens before reacting. The kind of man who doesn't need everybody to know how capable he is because competence speaks for itself.

And honestly, that may be one of the things I admire most about him. There's no performance in Pat. No showmanship. No need to dominate a room. He simply brings steadiness, competence, and integrity wherever he goes. He carries authority naturally because it is rooted in character rather than image, and that kind of quiet competence creates trust almost immediately.

The Gift of Ordered Friendship

And somehow, this highly ordered, disciplined man puts up with someone like me, whose mind often feels anything but orderly. Truthfully, Pat helps bring order into my life. He listens deeply to what I write. He responds thoughtfully. He gives honest feedback. He even endorsed one of my books, which meant a great deal to me personally.

But beyond all of that, he also knows how to laugh hard and enjoy life fully. That balance matters. Strength without warmth becomes cold. Order without heart becomes rigid. Discipline without joy becomes lifeless.

But Pat somehow carries all of it together: strength and gentleness, precision and warmth, seriousness and humor, discipline and grace. That combination is rare.

The older I get, the more I realize how profoundly important these kinds of friendships really are. Life strips away superficiality over time. What remains are the people who consistently show up, who lean into difficult conversations, who remain steady when life becomes painful, and who genuinely care about your soul.

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Pat is one of those people.

A Brother Beside Me

I am profoundly grateful for this friendship. Proud to call Pat Akana my brother and my newest best friend. A man who walks beside me, leans into hard conversations, and somehow still carries warmth after all he has seen in life.

And perhaps most remarkably of all, after decades of witnessing humanity at its worst, he somehow still kept his heart.

That may be the greatest compliment I could ever give another man.