



## Friendships Forged Across Time

I've been writing this book for years now, this book about the special people in the sandbox, the people who shaped my life through both the mountains and the valleys. And if I'm honest, it is often the valleys that reveal who people truly are. Success introduces you to many people, but pain reveals your real friends. When I think about my closest and most enduring friendships, one name rises immediately to the surface: Tim Olson.

Tim is my best friend in Washington State. More than that, he became my closest companion during what I would call the dark night of the soul, a season where accumulated trauma, grief, exhaustion, and emotional collapse nearly swallowed me whole. But before I get there, you have to understand the history, because friendships like this are not built overnight.

Tim and I met many years ago, and over time our lives became deeply intertwined. Our families intertwined. Our daughters at one point were best friends themselves. There were countless memories, conversations, dinners, gatherings, and moments where our lives simply folded naturally into each other over time, the way meaningful friendships tend to do when there is genuine affection and trust underneath them.

And then life hit Tim with profound pain. There was a season when he endured a devastating betrayal in his marriage, a heartbreak that would have shattered many men or turned them permanently bitter. I

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had the privilege of walking beside him through at least part of that valley, and what I witnessed was remarkable. I watched a man suffer honestly without surrendering to cynicism. A lot of people survive pain physically while emotionally becoming hardened, resentful, distrustful, or permanently angry at the world. But Tim somehow walked through that fire and retained both his faith and his heart. He grieved deeply, wrestled honestly, and yet slowly emerged not destroyed, but refined.

## **Tim and Anne**

And then something beautiful happened that none of us fully saw coming. Love found him again.

Anne had already been part of the larger story for years. Our families had long been intertwined. Anne's son Matt and my son Greg were best friends for a season themselves. There were already years of connection and shared history quietly sitting beneath the surface long before anything romantic ever emerged between Tim and Anne.

Then Tim and Anne began coming to a Bible study that Leah and I hosted at our home. At first, it was simply the four of us gathering together week by week. But over time, Leah and I found ourselves watching something unfold right in front of us. We watched them slowly fall in love, and honestly, I did not see that one coming. Yet once it started happening, it somehow made perfect sense.

Anne is an extraordinary woman. Bright, emotionally alive, deeply caring, and full of fire. She's a spitfire in the best possible sense of the word. Tim, by contrast, carries a grounding steadiness about him. He's calming, thoughtful, measured, and deeply stable. And somehow together they balance each other beautifully. They complement one another rather than compete with one another.

Watching them build a life together has been profoundly meaningful to me because both of them carried pain into that relationship, yet neither chose to wallow in it or become defined by it. Instead, they chose life. They chose hope. They chose love despite knowing firsthand how painful life can become. That takes courage, particularly later in life when people know exactly how much heartbreak can cost them.

## **The Kind of Man Tim Is**

Tim is, in many ways, the quintessential optimist. Now that does not mean he is naïve. Far from it. Tim sees the brokenness in the world clearly. He gets frustrated with the insanity of culture just like I do. We are both conservatives. We both get our feathers ruffled by the direction of the world at times. But Tim somehow maintains balance. He maintains grounding.

He is deeply Christian and deeply committed to God, but not in a performative, flaky, or self-righteous way. He knows how to laugh. He knows how to enjoy life. He knows how to have fun while still remaining deeply anchored spiritually. And our friendship has always been rooted in mutual respect.

Tim is also a remarkably accomplished man. He retired as an Air Force colonel in the reserves after an extraordinary military career. I was fortunate enough to watch him pin on the rank of colonel, and I remember feeling incredibly proud of him. There is just something about that eagle insignia. It carries

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weight, dignity, and honor, and Tim earned it.

He also had a highly successful executive career with Weyerhaeuser, which only further reflects the multidimensional nature of who he is. Military officer. Executive. Man of faith. Husband. Father. Friend. But honestly, none of those titles are the things that matter most to me. What matters most is this: when my life fell apart, Tim showed up.

### **When My Life Fell Apart**

There was a period in my life where accumulated trauma, grief, exhaustion, and depression became so overwhelming that I honestly do not know how I made it through. I was not fun to be around. I was emotionally exhausted, drowning in pain, and probably appeared hopeless much of the time. The weight of years of accumulated trauma had finally caught up with me, and there are seasons where a person's internal world becomes so dark that merely surviving the next day feels exhausting.

And during that season, Tim kept showing up.

He spent time with me when I imagine it probably took an enormous emotional toll on him as well. When I spiraled into crisis, I could call him. He would pray with me, encourage me, steady me, and simply remain present. He could not solve it. No one could solve it except God and me ultimately walking through it together. But Tim became a lifeline, and that matters more than people realize.

Some people love you when you are successful, energetic, productive, funny, and easy to be around. Very few people know how to sit beside someone drowning emotionally without eventually backing away. Tim never backed away.

That is one of the reasons I respect him so deeply. He embodies something our culture profoundly misunderstands. He is both deeply masculine and deeply tenderhearted, and those things are not opposites.

### **A Warrior With a Tender Heart**

Tim deployed to Afghanistan. He faced danger. He served his country honorably. He endured stress, uncertainty, and the realities that come with military service, and he did his duty courageously. Yet somehow, he never lost his heart in the process.

He is a wonderful father, a deeply loving husband, a faithful friend, and a thoughtful Christian man. He carries strength without becoming domineering and conviction without becoming harsh. To me, that is what real masculinity actually looks like in the eyes of God. Not performative toughness. Not emotional shutdown. Not arrogance. Strength with humility. Courage with tenderness. Conviction with love.

That combination is incredibly rare.

We do not talk as much as we once did because life has taken us in different directions. Leah and I now live in Arizona, and I honestly miss the hell out of him sometimes. But friendships like this do not

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disappear with distance. Whenever we reconnect, whether through conversation, visits, or simply picking up the phone, it feels as though no time has passed at all. Those are the friendships that endure. The forever friendships.

And although on this earth we may not spend as much time together as we once did, Tim Olson will always hold one of the deepest places in my heart. I truly believe that.

And someday, by the grace of God, I look forward to laughing with him again in heaven, free from sorrow, free from grief, free from trauma, free from exhaustion, simply standing together in the joy of our Master.

Thank you, Tim, for walking through the fire with me. Thank you for being my best friend in Washington State. Honestly, no man could ask for more.