

A Few Words About Tommy to His Friends and Fans

Tommy was my little brother. Well, at least until he was twelve, when he morphed into my younger brother. As such, I understood and accepted, from my earliest memory, my role to take care of him and to protect him. This role became even more evident at the respective ages of 8 and 5, when our parents separated for several years. This role then became a primary force in my life after the tragic death of our mother in 1977, when I was 21 and Tommy was 18. With that tragedy, I thought we were done with our fair share of tragedies. Then we lost Kathy in December 2015. And now we lose Tommy. It feels like being struck by lightning three times. To say I am struggling with it all, is the definition of an understatement.

With the news I received at approximately 8:15 EST Wednesday night, I could not escape the thought, as only a big brother or parent would think, that after 59 years, I must have somehow failed to fulfil my role as big brother/protector. Like I should have felt some disturbance in the force from 3,000 miles away and been there to save him. If only I could have recognized something. I could have told him not to go to sleep Tuesday night or to wake him up before whatever happened, happened. I was supposed to be the rock in the family. I was supposed to be able to save Tommy so all of you could count on his continued presence.

I can assure everyone, that he was not sick, did not have some hidden deadly illness or that Tuesday night was any different from any other night. He exchanged texts with my son, Hunter at 1:48am and was in the process of making a dish to bring to a Thanksgiving dinner Thursday night. There was no sign as far as I knew of any impending tragedy. I am as stunned and paralyzed with disbelief as everyone else. I can't eat. I can't sleep. I can't leave my house. I don't want to answer the phone or open my email. I have chest pains. Every time I see an article or tribute, I feel like I am dreaming. I just shout out loud that "this did not happen". To put it into Beatle terms, which Tommy would appreciate, it is "All Too Much" to process. My Christmas present to him sits unwrapped on a table in my living room. It is a DVD of the documentary about Mick Ronson. Tommy would have been so into that movie. I am just so ready for this Tom Sawyer/Eddie and the Cruisers stunt to be exposed so we can concede to Tommy that he punked us good.

As much as my background would like for this writing to be of novel or appellate brief quality, this essay is just my momentary attempt to bring some sense to everyone's crushing devastation and loss. My hope is that by sharing some of my immediate thoughts with you, I might offer some insight into the person Tommy was. (As tears instantly well with my use of the verb was.) I apologize in advance for the rambling stream of consciousness nature of this composition. I

know it lacks the structure of a proper written essay. For that I apologize to the journalists, lawyers and English majors reading this. My motivation is simply that my little brother deserves so much more than the cookie cutter timeline obituary being repeated by the publications or the tributes of 140 characters or less. (Except for the John Davis piece in the Washington Post which was beautiful.) Those of you who also agonize over this loss, deserve so much more as well. This is my dazed and confused attempt to reach out to all of you, his friends' and fans, to offer some additional insight into Tommy, my little brother and to maybe relate some stories that you may have never heard.

To say that music was the soundtrack of our lives sounds way too cliché, but it is true. With our collective photographic memories, we could tell you the time, place and circumstances of our first listen to any song. "Thank You Girl" on the long family drive to Florida, "White Lies", the first Grin song we ever heard live in Greenbelt, "What is and What Should Never Be" at the first Zep show because it is such an unforgettable title to a 10 and 13 year old. "Incident on 57th Street" the first live Springsteen song at DAR in 1974 with Suki on violin. "Rebel, Rebel" on our first visit to The Whiskey a Go-Go. The Lovin' Spoonful at Disneyland. The Get Your Ya-Ya's Out Stones at Madison Square Garden in 1969. The list goes on and on.

Music reminds us all of what was once good and memorable in our lives. We hear it with an idealistic filter that can transform us back to past times and to places and moments in our lives. To PLACES THAT ARE GONE. A song on the radio, the people you were with, the summer adventures, experiences and loves. These are the places that are gone. We all have them, and they are all different. There are but few events in our lifetime about which we vividly remember where we were and what we were doing at the very moment of the event. Most are negative such as 9/11 or JFK's assassination. (If you didn't, you will now.) If you add music to that concept, the memories become positive and the recall is usually one of fondness and of good times and thoughts. BASED ON HAPPY TIMES, not what I feel right now. This is the gift Tommy has left us. His soundtrack for the places and memories of our lives. Those memories are all around us. We don't even need to look for them. They will find us. Magically, as I printed this rambling mess out to try to proof read it, "Eight Days a Week", the Ron Howard Beatles movie popped up on the TV, right at the exact point where the Beatles played their first American concert in DC in February 1964. It was that very concert and the guilt we imposed upon our parents thereafter for not taking us, that liberalized the parental controls and started our life's concert and musical journey. We went to every concert we wanted to after that first denial.

These are some of my random places that are gone.

Somewhere there is a very nice couple who have the memories of Tommy playing at their wedding. His one and only wedding gig ever. He had declined the invitation to play at my wedding.

I have been listening to a recording Tommy made at the 1975 Led Zeppelin show at the Capital Center. To the chagrin of Mr. Peter Grant and all the other tour managers, we routinely smuggled our little Sony TC 119 cassette recorder into concerts. Listening to this show transports me right back in time as if I can now be the fly on the wall going back in time to that show. It is February. It is cold. It is at the very beginning of that 1975 tour, which is regarded as the band's highpoint. On the tape Tommy is heard singing along to the songs in perfect pitch even when the flu stricken Mr. Plant could not. The performance is interrupted intermittently by the high-pitched voice of my high school girlfriend, Annie and Tommy's protestations to her that she be quiet.

Last Christmas, I had many of the self-made bootleg recordings transferred to CD as a present for Tommy. With them, for sentimental reasons, I included a very used Sony TC 119 cassette recorder exactly like our original. I purchased it on eBay for \$25. I am told by Mike that Tommy was using that 50-year-old recorder to demo new songs he was writing in the very days just before he left us, just as he had done with our original recorder at the very beginning of his song writing days.

As the big brother, it was my role to share his interests, notwithstanding his disdain for many of mine. Tommy was never the sports fan and I have always been. In fact, he never missed a chance to deride me for being like the other Bob "Keene" brother, Mr. Pollard. "You're just like Pollard, you can't look away from any game, whatever it is." Mr. Pollard will be pleased to hear that Tommy was very much into this year's world series and was texting me during the games to get my thoughts on the games.

I thus accepted and cultivated his interests by becoming the chauffeur to all concerts, the driver and default roadie to all his gigs, leading eventually to a career as the default manager, tour manager, lawyer, financier and whatever else was needed. (But he never asked me to play drums.) I was three (3) years older and he literally started serious gigging at age twelve (12).

Our travails and stories of our concert going days are legendary. Check out Tommy's article for Magnet magazine about our first Led Zeppelin's show in 1969. The article is now preserved on Led Zeppelin's official website. There are dozens of these stories which were to be the subject of

a planned co-authored book and which I will now have to write alone someday. We were eager and resourceful. Two of the most ardent true blood rock fans you could ever imagine. Our collective “collected stuff” could literally be a rock n roll museum by itself. Somehow, we always figured a way to not only get to the shows, but in many cases to get backstage to meet our rock lords. It never occurred to us that we could be living that life for real just a few years later.

There was the parent drop off shows. The Bobby can finally drive shows. The we must spend the night shows, because the band was only touring in cities far away. The if we can't spend the night we will drive there and back, it is only 4 hours each way, shows. The shows without tickets where we had to befriend someone to get in and the pre-drinking age shows where we were not old enough to even get in. The Bobby has a press pass shows where he had to go for work and where we didn't need to worry about getting in or getting backstage. This behavior continued through these most recent years as we travelled to and from over 50 post 1999 Springsteen, Stones, Aerosmith and Cheap Trick shows in cities across the country. Somehow, some way, we always managed to find a way to make it work.

Here are a couple of the little-known concert adventure stories.

For Tommy's 14th birthday I drove Tommy and two of his friends to a concert at the Bowie Ice Rink. At the time, this was somewhere in the middle of nowhere between Washington and Baltimore. The bill was headlined by a heavy metal prog band from England called the Groundhogs. The opening band was the Razz with Ted Nicely. A band Tommy would join just years later. The intermediate act was a Long Island power rock trio called Dust, featuring Marc Bell, later to become Marky Ramone and a bassist named Kenny Aronson. As Dust roared into its opening song, it was apparent that Kenny's bass amp had malfunctioned, and he could not be heard at his cue after the opening guitar riff. While Kenny frantically searched his cord, amp and bass to correct whatever the problem was, his bandmates just continued playing without him. It was an embarrassing scene that only obnoxious know it all fans like us could make fun of. For years after that, when any sonic malfunction occurred in Tommy's band, visions of poor Kenny's equipment failure and his vain attempts to fix the problem were mocked, imitated and laughed at.

Fast forward to 1980 and Tommy gets an audition in New York for a singer named Suzanne Fellini's touring band. Tommy walks into the audition room full of snooty pro New York musicians, knowing none of them. However, he quickly recognizes that the bushy haired bass player, fiddling with his amp in the corner, is none other than the same Kenny Aronson of Dust. He had just finished playing with Derringer and Tommy and I had seen Derringer at the Bayou in Georgetown. Without saying a word Tommy rips off the exact Van Halenesque guitar opening from “Loose Goose”, the very opening song Dust had blundered years before, inviting Kenny to join in at the very moment his amp had failed in that 1972 show. Tommy could hear a tune once

and still be able to play it years later for the very first time. That's how gifted he was. Ask any musician who has shared the stage with Tommy and they will tell you what an acute awareness and command he had on stage. Astonished by the challenge, Kenny takes the cue from this new kid auditioning and rips into the song in the original loud power trio bass line. Everyone in the room is going WTF? How are these guys playing that without ever seeing each other before. They hadn't even been introduced to each other. Both Kenny and Tommy got the gig. Tommy left the University of Maryland in his last year and toured the US and Europe for months with Suzanne Fellini. Thereafter, Kenny and Tommy were in a short-lived New York power pop band called Pieces together and Kenny played some of the bass on *Strange Alliance*, Tommy's first solo record. He most recently played bass for the New York Dolls and the Yardbirds.

In 1971, having read about the legendary Irish guitarist Rory Gallagher, we set out to see his first solo show at a bar in downtown DC, on a school night, no less. I had called the club in the afternoon and asked whether we could get in, being under 18 years old. With the assurance of the nice man who answered the phone at 4:30 in the afternoon, we convinced our parents that all was well and set off in the car. I was just 16 and Tommy was 14. As we tried to enter "My Mother's Place", we were stopped for ID's by a rude man who apparently had not spoken with that nice man I spoke to earlier in the afternoon. As we walked away denied and dejected, only Tommy could find that perfect hypothesis of what had transpired. "When you called with your pre-puberty high voice, that nice man thought you were speaking for under aged girls who they would surely allow entry to without ID." Never willing to concede defeat, I insisted we wait a few minutes, as if an act of nature would somehow address the issue and allow us access. As we stood there in the freezing cold, Tommy implored me to leave. When all hope seemed to be gone, a frigid figure with flowing long hair appeared in a blue navy pea coat. (Rick, the memory is genetic.) It was Rory Gallagher himself. Excited as the under aged girls might have been, we approached the guitar god just to say hi and to be recognized as fans of his on the other side of the pond. After the "we are your biggest fan" pleasantries, Rory asked why we were outside in the freezing cold. We related the woes of our under aged status and he said that we should stay right there, and he would see what he could do. He was gone for what seemed like a long time. Tommy again insisted we leave, but I held out with some idealistic thought that something really cool might happen. Soon thereafter, Rory's brother/manager came out and proclaimed that we could see the show on two conditions. Oh my god, what had we gotten ourselves into? First, he said we had to stay in the band's dressing room until the show started. Okay, no problem with that. Second, he sternly apprised us that when Rory and the band came on stage, we had to sit on the side of the stage with the band for the entire show. Well that doesn't sound too tough now does it? "You better not have to go to the bathroom again", Tommy joked to me. (Read the Led Zep story for context.) So, there we were in Rory Gallagher's dressing room, with his band and a who's who of the DC music scene (i.e. the Barry Richards crew), there to see Rory on his first US tour. And we were with the band. We hung out in the dressing room absorbing everything we could understand from the brutal Irish accents and used every penny we had for the pay phone to call our friends to brag about where we were. If you watch Rory's 1973 Irish Tour video, it was that band and those songs. When the show started there were two folding chairs set off to the

side of the stage for Tommy and me. After that show, any time Rory came to town we were on the guest list and even made it backstage at the Baltimore Civic Center when Rory later opened for Deep Purple. This was the very same backstage where the scenes from Led Zep's "Song Remains the Same" was filmed. (Tommy would later use that dressing room when he opened for The Stray Cats.) Although Tommy didn't start to play guitar for years later, you could see the huge influence that night had on Tommy's guitar sound. That raw rough dirty Fender signature guitar tone of his, came from Rory Gallagher that night, on those two wonderful conditions. His affection for his fans and his willingness to interact with them was also undoubtedly informed by that night with Rory.

After Kathy's passing, I haven't wanted to leave my now empty nest cocoon very often. It takes a Nats game, a Tommy show or a Springsteen show to get me out into the public domain. Early last year a friend persuaded me to go out with him to see Clem Burke's band, the Split Squad. I was reticent to say the least. It was a cold weeknight at this tiny and typical rock bar in the Petworth neighborhood of DC. There were maybe 20-25 people there and there was no admission or cover charge. The band was great. Rockin' out in a 70's hard rock style right in my 60's wheelhouse. During the show I noticed two adolescent kids in the back, looking very out of place and gawking in awe at Clem and his band. They were so trying not to be noticed for fear they might be asked to leave this party of adults 30 to 40 years or more their senior. They looked like high school brothers. They were recording the show on their phones. I turned to Jeff and pointed at them. "Looks like Bobby and Tommy are here tonight", I said. He looked very confused. He didn't get the joke until I explained my thought.

Of all his accomplishments, playing just one song on August 25th, 2004, was Tommy's unstated and most cherished childhood dream come true. That one song meant more to him than any TV show, concert, record review or accolade of any other kind. That night he took the stage next to his childhood role model, Nils Lofgren. Those four minutes playing with Nils meant so much more to him than all his 15 minutes of fame combined and meant more to him than anyone will ever know.

As two kids from Nils' own North Bethesda Junior High School, (the very school upon which the Wonder Years TV show was based), we were two of Grin's biggest fans. We saw literally every show we could. We recorded them on our portable bootleg cassette machine, filmed them on our Super 8 color movie camera, travelled to New York City to see them twice (both times playing with Black Oak Arkansas?) and continued to see Nils when he went solo for years beyond Grin. This does not even count the 75 times we have seen Nils play with Mr. Springsteen. In those early years, seeing Nils, as a 7th grader through high school, was the "I could do this" inspirational moment that ignited the spark and drove Tommy forward with music. So, jumping on that stage as a peer to Nils, trading vocals and guitar parts with Nils, in a song he had heard Grin play everywhere from the Alexandria Roller Rink to the Academy of

Music in New York and everywhere in between, was the proudest inner moment of his career. It was like being accepted as a rookie on a team with a veteran superstar teammate destined for the Hall of Fame.

Always the perfectionist, and never shy to point out any stage deficiencies, his first comment off the stage that night was that he would have sounded so much better if that “Skunk guy” hadn’t pulled rank and switched amplifiers at the last moment for his pedal steel set up. He commandeered Tommy’s meticulously set up rehearsal amp and left him a cleaner lower watt reject for Tommy to use. Frantically doing his best Kenny Aronson imitation, Tommy quickly adapted to tune and crank up that “shitty sounding country amp” that the Skunk Baxter of the Doobie Brothers and Steely Dan had left for him. It wasn’t noticed by anyone except Tommy. Tommy was great and fully intoxicated with the pride he personally felt pulling off that song next to Nils. I remember approaching Nils after the show and thanking him as only a big brother could. He was very gracious, as we tend to be growing up here in Bethesda, but I am sure he thought to himself, why is this guy thanking me? He didn’t even play tonight. A very special big brother thanks to Ronnie Newmeyer for making that special moment happen for Tommy.

From the earliest of his shows, on stage is where Tommy was most comfortable and most content. He was at home there. It always came natural and easy to him. No matter how crummy the dumpy club was or how small the crowd was or how tired and sick he might have been, he was always the same on stage. Very serious but in his own world and doing his own thing, his way. He never phoned in a show or gave anything less than everything he had. It didn’t matter if there were only 3 people in Baltimore on a cold rainy Tuesday night or a sold-out show at the Fillmore in San Francisco with Green Day’s Billie Joe watching from the wings. His drive, passion and command were always there.

I can remember the sold-out show with Paul Westerberg at the 9:30 in 1996. After a rousing version of “I Will Dare”, Paul looked over at Tommy with this WTF look and announced to the audience that after all the years, “Tommy was the only one who ever played that song the right way”. He was that good.

I once called him a “gamer” and he had no clue what I meant and even thought it might be an insult. I then had to explain the sports term to him as the description of an athlete who no matter how hurt or tired he was or how poorly he practiced or how slow he appeared to be against the other players, showed up for the biggest plays in the biggest games and always delivered at the most clutch times. An athlete you could always count on to be there for his team. Tommy liked that and began to use that term a lot.

To anyone like myself who ever wished you could just play a song melody on the guitar like Tommy, let alone to compose that melody, let me dissuade you of any notion that it can be done with a certain expert level of commitment, practice and study. You are either born with the gift to do it or you never will do it. Tommy was born with a gift that can neither be bought nor learned. From his earliest moments, he was born to steal the spotlight. The story has been told of a 2 and half year old who once asked his mother if she could now take the new baby back to the hospital because he was suddenly standing in this 2-and-a-half-year old's spotlight.

After my mother's tragic passing in 1977, I gladly assumed and tried my best to act in the stead of our departed mother. That is, I was to encourage, challenge, praise and drive Tommy to what only a mother could want for her child. There was no criticism, no scolding no self-pity. Only positive reinforcement and the challenge to him to be as good as she thought he could be with his musical gift. As if it was yesterday, I can remember after our mother's funeral, Tommy sitting at the family piano in the next room and playing for the first time as if he was possessed. He played with a tone of sadness and soul that few musicians can and which Tommy had not displayed to this point in time. He played with that passion and soul as if the tragedy had at once transformed his latent talent through some supernatural fission process into the very same gamer passion he played with through this last tour with Matthew Sweet. It was a lightbulb moment for the older brother in the next room. The emotion you can feel from his songs, lyrics and guitar was Tommy's signature.

Carlos Santana was asked once what makes a great guitar player. His response was that there were hundreds of thousands of guitarists that could fundamentally play the same song competently and they would all sound the same. But there were maybe just less than a hundred guitarists who you could identify immediately just by sound, because they had their own unique guitar tone and played with a unique aura that could evoke sadness, gloom, or any other emotion. Tommy was one of those guitarists. That guitar tone and the bittersweet melancholy themes described by all the critics, that are so associated with Tommy, were born on that day on my mother's piano. The quote I coined to recognize such greatness after a Springsteen song called "You're Missing" brought me to my knees thinking about Kathy, goes as follows "Any musician can touch a listener's ear or touch a listener physically, making them sing a long, shout, tap their toes or to dance like a fool. But only the truly great musicians can reach out and touch your heart and soul to make you cry." Tommy undeniably was that great, as he touched the hearts and souls of so many people with an emotional sound totally his.

It is amazing how fate, genetics and life seem to sort out, balance and direct our individual paths in life. Tommy and I were very different, but inextricably connected by our genetics. Tommy and my wife Kathy shared the same view of life and the world. Kathy and Tommy were two peas in a pod. She was more like him than me. In fact, our marriage may have never occurred without an intervention by Tommy. When Tommy got the Fellini gig he needed a place to live

in New York. I knew one person who might be able to help. Kathy and I had dated a couple of times but after she graduated from the University of Maryland she moved back to New York. I called, not for a date, but to ask if she could put my brother up while he was in New York. Tommy lived with Kathy through his time with Pieces at 65th Street and 1st Avenue. It was this reconnection that kept us in touch going forward and eventually led to a very long courtship and eventually our marriage and family. When I wrote her eulogy, I attributed the Sinatra song “My Way” to how she led her life, but suggested that she would have insisted that the song be sung by her favorite singer, Elvis Costello. I could now just as easily use that same metaphor to describe Tommy. By the way, the first dance song at our wedding was Baby Face, Kathy’s favorite TK song.

They were both as tough as nails. I dare say that I have never met two more stubborn “do it my way” people. She was the sister Tommy never had and he was the brother she never had. Both maintained a walled off emotional defense system and a drive to accomplish their goals, if I can quote Mr. Pollard, with a “surgical focus”. You could not get either to show their emotions and they both rarely shed a tear. And they could hold a grudge with the best of them. After Kathy passed, Tommy asked me if there was anything he could do? Never wanting to burden my little brother and for probably the first time, I did ask him to do something for me. I asked him to help look after Hunter through this tragedy because he had experienced the same loss at the same age. And he did! He loved Jason, Hunter and Kathy and was more of a family man than he would ever admit to himself. The first time he ever played with Hunter was the party Kathy called his Bar Mitzvah. It was not a religious ceremony, it was just a party. She had asked me if Tommy would come and play with Hunter in front of his friends. Thinking there was no way in hell that Tommy would ever do it and not wanting to be on the receiving end of his response, I told Kathy that she had to spring the question on Tommy. Without ever offering even a signature snide remark, Tommy was there playing Places That Are Gone to a group of 13-year-old kids with Hunter on drums.

Brad Quinn once made the observation that life was “black and white to you Keene’s”. There was good and bad and right and wrong, with no gray area ever in between. You were to be polite and respectful and never greedy. Brad was spot on with that observation. I can remember being told by a record company person in the Geffen era that we were just too nice to make it the music business. At which we both shrugged and thought maybe that is true. But we knew no other way. In our world, being respectful and trusting an employer that was investing hundreds of thousands of dollars should be the right way. We weren’t going to be greedy by making demands like Tommy was already a star the way all the other Geffen artists acted. A member of a female Geffen band is written to have stood on Tom Cutout’s desk and pissed all over it, in protest for not getting what they wanted. The band eventually got everything they wanted. We weren’t going to act that way. Tommy did it his way. He lived his life his way. It was on his terms or on no terms at all. He disliked the commerce of music and was always embarrassed at the notion of getting paid by his fans for what he did. It was show art to Tommy, not show business. He didn’t

turn away the money, but he did not solicit it either. It just wasn't the intent and purpose for why he did what he did.

There was, however, but one regret Tommy had in his career which he would never admit to anyone, even himself. That was his decision to part ways with Seth at the behest of the Geffen record company. Tommy loved Seth and Seth loved Tommy. I think it took a few years for Tommy to come to terms with the fact that there is no amount of fame or fortune that can supplant the kind of loyalty and devotion between friends that are in effect family. Tommy was seduced by the siren call of the major label which soon thereafter would show its true colors of not giving a shit about the person. Seth was an unknown to Geffen, so they never even gave him a chance. I tried to put my foot down and insist that he reverse course but like Ulysses, Tommy was already too close to the shore and the bullshit and false promises filled his head. I know he looked back on that disappointed with himself that he had allowed Geffen to unduly influence his career decision. For Geffen there was the Animal House type defense in his mind of "You fucked up. You trusted us."

Back to this genetic thing. The musical genes from my mother's side of the family apparently skipped right over me and my oldest son, but found their way into Hunter. There is just a different rhythm to life in their heads. I have heard the theory that siblings and offspring are somehow musically connected by these genetic markers. Brothers, sisters and families can harmonize vocally at a level that others can never attain regardless of the practice time. Think of the Everly Brothers, the Beiges, the Beach Boys or the Cowsills. Hunter and Tommy were likewise connected musically. It was inherent in their genes. I remember Tommy calling me when Hunter was 15 and asking me if I would bring Hunter to SXSW to play drums for some shows with Brad and Steve. My immediate parental reaction was a resounding "no way". First, I was not going to take Hunter out of 10th grade for a week and expose my still innocent child to the rock n roll world on such a big stage and big scale. Even the slightest failing might impair and scar Hunter for years to come. Second, he would be on stage with the stage General himself and I did not want to be in the middle of a scolding of how he might screw up an arrangement or miss a cue. After I explained my reasoning to Tommy, he simply replied that Hunter needed to find out if he could cut it someday, so why not now. I said because he was only 15. Tommy jumped right in to say that he did it at age 12 and that he had no doubt Hunter could shine given the opportunity. He just genetically knew that all would be well. As the band left the stage from that first SXSW show, I could not look anybody in the eye because the tears of pride and joy were streaming down my face seeing Hunter playing those songs with Tommy. I thought about our mother maybe watching from above. As I rushed to the bathroom to hide my tears I quickly caught a glance at Hunter's emotionally stonewalled mother as she rushed into the bathroom with the same tearful reaction of pride as me. Tommy's only statement to me after the show was a matter of fact braggadocio "I told you he could do it". Somehow, he just knew.

After the most recent Japan tour, Hunter confessed to me that Tommy would invariably blame Brad for Hunter's mistakes in the set. Sorry Brad, but that must be the genetics at work.

In all these years we never talked about his lyrics. I never asked, and he never volunteered an explanation. We didn't need to. I just seemed to understand them. If I didn't understand them, I was too afraid to ask. The "bar that's only painted green" is the Greene Turtle in Ocean City Maryland. Our parents were standing in front of the Greene Turtle when a drunk driver, fleeing the police without lights picked them off the sidewalk, killing our mother. It was a Saturday. Thankfully, my father survived and still lives in our childhood home at 94 years of age with a Saint named Dorothy.

My last text exchange with Tommy was when I sent him a photo of a 1974 black and white advertisement by a hair salon called Volumetrics in New York and featuring photos of David Johanson and other decadent looking models. His single word response, my last ever communication with him, was "Great!". Volumetrics was where "Bobby got a new haircut" in the song Black and White New York.

There are so many more stories and memories to share, people to acknowledge and thank, but that may have to wait for another day. As soon as I finish this, I need to assume another role by default for Tommy. A role that I could never ever have imagined in my worst nightmare. I now must go to LA to bring Tommy home to Maryland to be laid to rest next to his inspirational muse, our dear departed mother. And yes, she really did look like Marilyn Monroe.

For all you know
They'll never let you know
Just before your life is over
The Story Ends

Somehow, he just knew, because he was that good.

Tommy loved all of you wherever you might be reading this and whenever your paths may have crossed during Tommy's journey.

My personal special thanks to all of you who over all these years helped provide the opportunity for a big brother to be so proud of his little brother (with no exclusions intended). Michael Lundsgard, Matty, Seth, Ted, Billy, Doug, Joey, Brad, John, Rob, Steve Gerlach, Walt, Leach, Steve Carr, Brother Bob Pollard, Paul Westerberg, the Goo-Goo Dolls, the Gin Blossoms, the Replacements, the Crush, Rick, Paul, Jeffrey, RIP Jay Bennett, Girard, Matt, Bob M., Kevin, Steve Judge, Ed M., Matthew, Ivan, Abaad, Bill, Ronnie, Nils, Mike, Tom, Vince, Ani, John, Josh Grier, Peter and Jennifer, Joanna, Shirley, Tom, Theresa, all of the clubs and promoters who ever booked Tommy ... and every-one else.