

Chelsea Durante

There was no reason for me to take the time to research Ronnie in order to write this paper; for, I had known Ronnie my whole life. But I read it anyway because I wanted to see what another student's perspective would be. I shed a tear after reading the biography that my uncle, Ronald Gill Sr., wrote, and I realized what a shame it was that none of these applicants, nor any other stranger for that matter, had the pleasure of having Ronnie in their lives.

Our families were close. We all spent a lot of time together; holidays were my favorite. I looked most forward to Thanksgiving where we would go over their house for a huge feast. I was always so excited to see my cousins, Ronnie and Jonathan. I looked up to Ronnie as my "cool" older cousin. As soon as I swung open the front door to enter their house, I greeted my aunt, uncle, Jonathan, and Ronnie with a huge hug, a kiss on the cheek, followed by a smile that gleamed from ear to ear.

Every time I saw Ronnie I could not help but to smile. That was the effect that he had on people: always happy and never afraid to show it. Ever time I saw him I was greeted, "Seltsaaaaa!!!" This was the name that our Great Grandfather, "Gramps," had called me by because he could not understand how to pronounce "Chelsea." Apparently Ronnie got a kick out of it. But I did not mind being teased. It made me feel special that I had a nickname, and it makes me feel like I am still connected to him to this day.

Ronnie had such an impact on my life as well as the lives of many others. He was such a blessing to his friends and family. When I think about him I still cannot believe that he passed away. However, he is not truly gone. My uncle, Ron, works to hard to keep him alive and in everyone's life as much as possible by raising money and having this scholarship program. I feel as though I am giving back to Ronnie what he gave to me by participating as a member on the board of his scholarship committee.

Thinking back, Ronnie taught me to always live life to the fullest. Do everything as if it's the last chance you will ever have to do it. The last two years have passed, and many things have happened in my life that I now realize why this way of thinking is so important. We truly never know what the future will bring. This is why I try to grasp every opportunity that is given to me, and never take anything for granted.

I will never forget the memories I shared with my cousin Ronnie and how I wish I could make more. But Ronnie will always be alive in all who knew him, and his famous smile continues to beam from the lips of his beautiful daughter Grace, who is already following in her father's footsteps.