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“From our first meeting, it was clear there was something wonderfully different about Andrew Towne. His sincerity and compassion guild a world view that is extraordinary and he will literally, change mankind,” Mike Berg, Retired Physical Educator and Football Coach at Grand Forks Central.

Andrew Towne was looking at the first “B” he ever received in his lifetime, when he approached Mr. Berg to discuss the grade. Little did he know at the time that this was beginning of a treasured, lifelong friendship.

At 5’3” tall and weighing 220 pounds as a 9th grade student in Mr. Berg’s class, Andrew will be the first one to admit, “I had no hand-eye coordination, no athletic abilities; I had nothing that is needed in a gym.” The mention of a gym class was “mortifying” for Andrew. He added that most of his buddies were athletes but he says the only thing he did on any field was sing the National Anthem.

“Mr. Berg was firm, yet fair and he very much believed in me!” Towne said. Their mutual respect led them to many conversations that continue to this day. They reconnect every time Andrew is in Grand Forks.

As far as Andrew’s athleticism, he immediately made some changes. Andrew began his regimen by jogging, “a whole half a block!” he quipped. Soon, he jogged a mile, and continued until he completed a 15-mile trail run. This was the beginning of his self-proclaimed “addiction.” He grew addicted to pushing his physical limits. He also realized later in college that he didn’t like losing; he could handle the “pain and loved to face adversity.”

Andrew is the son of Gary Towne, UND Professor of Music and Fine Arts, and the late Rev. Page Towne, an Episcopal Priest. He attributes his love of the arts and music to his dad, and compassion and understanding of humanity to his mother, “She was always mentoring and counseling people.” Andrew, his parents, and his brother Jonathan lived on 5th and Cottonwood. Andrew has fond memories of riding bikes with buddies, swimming at Elks and exploring Central, Lincoln, and Riverside parks and woods. He also remembers the struggles associated with the flood of 1997 and the resiliency, hard work, and teamwork that resulted when families, neighbors and community worked together.

He mentioned other teachers whose lessons he valued. Mrs. Carol Dahlstrom, Enriched Senior English teacher, taught him a different way of looking at the world through literary readings and that there are no right answers, but only well-argued opinions. “You had to have an (educated) opinion in her class!” He was fascinated with his Pre-Calculus teacher, Mr. Roger Larson, whose passion for math and life-long learning inspired him in the same direction. Frau Beatrice Berg, his German teacher, suggested Andrew travel to Germany as an exchange student for his junior year. This was “an incredible experience” that helped shape many of his future interests.

Yale University was his choice for college, partly because they had large endowments that allowed Andrew to attend. Because of the scholarships offered, he enrolled in 2000. He really wanted to participate in an athletic team, but realized that the only two varsity teams which permitted “walk ons” (Students can try out without being recruited) were crew and fencing. After rigorous endurance training that he emphatically called “painful,” Andrew was a member of the Heavyweight Crew Team for one year, but switched to the Lightweight Crew for next three years. The latter team developed a “positive culture,” so important for team building. The Lightweight Team celebrated each other’s contributions

and strengths while continually setting higher goals for themselves. The teams' goals were ultimately achieved by winning a NCAA National Championship in Andrew's senior year.

"Youth for Understanding", or YFU, is a program that organizes students to travel to other countries during high school and college. The organization's literature states that the program "advances intercultural understanding, mutual respect, and social responsibility through educational exchanges for youth, families, and communities." Reminded of how incredible his Germany experience was, Andrew chose to take a year off from Yale to study abroad in Kenya. He applied for a government scholarship to fund his trip, and worked on national security. Andrew is fluent in German, Italian, and Swahili. "Kenya was wonderful," and on returning to US, he worked work for the Central Intelligence Agency. After graduation in 2005, he become a volunteer for YFU, as a Trustee, Chair of the External Affairs Committee. He has raised more than \$25,000 for the organization. Upon completion of his government obligation, he wanted to get into Foreign Policy, so he moved to Washington DC.

Seven Summits Towne became an avid mountain climber with the goal to reach the top of the Seven Summits, the highest peak on each of the seven continents. When I asked him why the goal of mountain climbing, he said, "Honestly, because of my fear of heights." Again he repeated, "I love to face adversity". He was climbing Mount Everest, in Nepal in April, 2015, as a fundraiser for YFU when an earthquake struck.

***Mt. Everest Earthquake** Andrew was eating lunch in his tent at the base camp of the mountain when he felt the earth start to sway. He hurried out of the tent to see the wall of snow descending to the North. Luckily, the brunt of the avalanche was 250 yards from their camp. It was the worst (27 deaths) disaster on Mt. Everest ever. Soon after the eruption, climbers learned that the hospital had been destroyed so they set up the tents to serve as a triage for the victims. Medical personnel came almost immediately. They would determine what care was needed and get the injured to the designated tent. Towne said he wasn't medically savvy, "but certainly I could carry medical supplies, sleeping bags, food and water, and carry out tasks that were needed to be done."

"I feel very fortunate to survive unharmed." After the base hospital was cleared of all the survivors, Towne and the remaining team descended the mountain only to witness the massive devastation to Nepal. Towne's altruism continued as he decided to delay his trip home to help rebuild homes in Nepal.

In May, 2015, Towne earned his Master of Business, Administration and Juris Doctor Degrees from the Wharton School and the University of Pennsylvania Law School, simultaneously. He will begin working in Minneapolis this fall for Boston Consulting Group.

After talking to Andrew, I feel this young man is just beginning to "make a difference" in this world.

**For an account of Andrew's adventure, visit this website: "The Road Home: Andrew Reflects on Everest Journey" yfuusa.org*