ONCE A FRIEND, ALWAYS A FRIEND

Once upon a time there were two good friends named John and Gary. John went to Wilmington High School and Gary went to a high school about thirty miles east of Wilmington called East High School.

John and Gary met when they were in tenth grade at a place called Woodland Campgrounds. Gary was a lifeguard and John was a camp store employee. Trying to smooth out his blond hair, which had been turned on end by the wind, Gary came into the camp store to ask for directions and John seeing Gary’s East High sweater, blushed from the top of his red hair to the tips of his bare toes. John quipped to Gary, “Oh, those East bums, we beat them in sports in high school.”

Gary replied, “Oh Yea, what was the score of last years basketball game?”

John snapped, “Well, I’ll make up for that loss by taking you on in one on one on the Woodland Campground basketball court.”

Of course, Gary won the one on one fifty to forty. It didn’t matter, though, Gary and John became best friends. After that, they did everything that they possibly could together.

Right after high school, it came time for college, and Gary and John chose the same one Indiana State University. They got a room together in a fraternity house called Sigma Chi. The fraternity participated in many social events and gave John and Gary a chance to keep on doing things together. They even went into similar majors. John went into elementary education and Gary went into physical education, because they both wanted to become teachers and some day hoped to coach against each other in basketball.

John and Gary had one big difference, however. John as a B student and Gary
was an A student. Gary would tease John, “Gee you would make a great teacher but your never going to get out of school.” John didn’t take this joking easily because his grades were just on the borderline. He worked well with kids but didn’t always work so well with the books. John had a 2.5 grade average going into his last quarter, while Gary had a 3.50. John needed a 2.67 to graduate, and he really wanted to graduate with his best friend Gary. They had always done everyhting important together. All John had to do was get a B on his Chemistry test and he would have his 2.67 to graduate. Well, Jon and Gary stayed up all night for three nights straight studying Chemistry so that John could get a B on his test and graduate with Gary.

Then the big day came. John was ready. John and Gary both thought that John would get “B”. STill, John was not real sure. He had to take a cheat sheet to class just to make sure he passed with a “B” or better. Hohn had never cheated on a test, but this was the big one. Luckily, with the help of the cheat sheet, he made an “A” on the test. He and his best buddy were going to graduate together!

Finally, graduation day came. John and Gary were sitting side by side on the theatre stage at ISU. John and Gary’s parents were sitting next to each other in the audience, all smiles. The ceremony began. Suddenly, the Dean of Education walked up behing John, peeped over his blond hair, and tapped him on the shoulder. The Dean took John to his office where John’s parents had been waiting by the Dean’s desk. Gary’s’s parents were there too. John knew right away that the only person that he had told about cheating on the chemistry test had told on him.

“Well, John,” said the dean, “Do you know why you are here and not up on stage graduating with the others?”
“Yes I do and when I see that creep that so called friend of mine I’m gonna kill him.”

John’s mother replied, “You’ll do no such thing.”

John said, “You want to bet?

“Well, John,” said Dean O’Connor. “After talking to your parents and Gary’s parents and reviewing your school records, and due to your past good conduct and high marks in field experience at Indiana State University, we’re going to give you one last chance to take your Chemistry test and graduate. One condition though, you will have to wait till next quarter to graduate.

John snapped, “Good I wouldn’t want to graduate with that two faced creep if you paid me.” That was the last straw. Gary’s dad got up and decked John and then grabbed his wife and stormed out of the Dean’s office. After John got up from the floor, John’s Dad decked him too.

The next quarter John graduated. Gary was back at Wilmington teaching at his old high school. When John got out of college he taught at his old high school, East High. John never made it “east” to visit Gary. The day came, though, when they met. John was coaching the East high school basket ball team. It was a warm December night, and each team had played all of the other schools in the conference and won. John couldn’t wait for the game. He’d been practicing his team real hard to beat Gary’s team. Gary just took it as another game.

Late in the game, the score was tied 90 to 90 with 2 seconds to go. Gary’s team had the ball. Gary called a time out so his team would get the ball at half court. As soon as Gary called time out John’s mom ran up to John.
“John, I promised Gary that I would never tell you this but I have to. It wasn’t your past good conduct, or what we said about you or your good field experience that got you a make up test. Gary got it for you. He wouldn’t tell Dean O’Conner you cheated until he was sure you would get a second chance. You see, John since you and Gary had been friends for 10 years, Gary wanted you to graduate “fair and square”. He didn’t want cheating on your conscious all your life.”

John was in tears. He immediately walked over to Gary and hugged him in front of the whole gym. Gary was overjoyed. The whole crowd knew that story and stood up and cheered. The players also knew the story and stood up and cheered. Heck, the referee’s even knew the story, and sat down and cheered. Gary’s team one 92-90, but John didn’t care. He’d gained something much more important: a friend he had always loved with all his heart.