

For Whitney

Dad's Eulogy · As delivered at her Celebration of Life

Woodside, CA — Saturday, June 27, 2026

Hi, I'm Mark, Whitney's dad. Thank you all for being here, in person and online.

I've had a tsunami of thoughts and emotions this past weekend. And one thought keeps coming, keeping me centered: *I'm so blessed to have you in my life*. We are so blessed to have you in our lives.

Twenty-two years on this earth, and forevermore in our hearts. I cherish every moment we had together. Every one.

Some of you knew Whitney as the girl who made you laugh. Some of you knew the fearless one in the pool, the kind friend, the entertainer. Some of you knew the driven one, who gave everything she had, all the way; she never did a single thing halfway in her life. And all of you felt the tender one, the loving one.

I knew all of those Whitneys. But the one I want to start with today is Whitney, my adventure buddy.



Let's start from the beginning. Whitney was climbing before she could walk. Literally. I put her in a chest harness, put her on a climbing wall, and of course she climbed straight up the wall.

When she was little, Jen and I baby-proofed the house, because she wanted to get into *everything*. Every cabinet, every outlet, every lamp, the corner of every table. And we put one of those baby gates across the bottom of the stairs.

One evening, we were sitting in the living room, and all of a sudden we realized the house had gone quiet. Where was Whitney? She was gone. We jumped up and went tearing through the house, looking for her and calling her name. And then we looked up.

She hadn't gone *through* the gate. She'd gone *over* it. She'd climbed the entire outside of the staircase railing, hand over hand, all the way to the second floor. And there she was. Our baby, perched at the very top on the outer railing, looking down at us with a giant grin on her face. Like she'd just accomplished something. Like she'd found her own way up.

Hold on to that grin, because I saw it again twenty-two years later.

Two weeks ago, Whitney and I summited Mount Whitney together. One of her life goals. Twenty-two miles. Seven thousand vertical feet. Before we went, I gave her a choice. We could break up the hike, camp partway, take two or three days, and summit on the second morning, the way most people do. Or we could do it in a single push: one day, which meant getting up at 2:30 in the morning.

And in true Whitney style, she chose the single push. Of course she did. Up at 2:30, hiking into the dark, all the way to the top, where she signed the guest book, thanking them for naming the mountain after her. We finally got back to the car just at sunset, at 8:30 p.m. There was never really any question.

On the way up, there's an infamous stretch of that trail called the 99 Switchbacks. Ninety-nine of them, zig-zagging up the mountain, because that's how you gain that much elevation. But not for Whitney. Whitney looked at the switchbacks, and she

just decided to march straight up through the boulders. Straight up. Why take 99 turns when you can go directly up there?

On the way down, we found a shortcut. She called it Chutes and Ladders. Instead of the switchbacks again, we glissaded, which is a fancy word for sliding down the mountain on your backside, using our hiking poles to brake. The two of us, sliding down Mount Whitney, laughing.

At the top, 14,500 feet, the highest point in the lower 48 states, she turned around and she gave me that grin. The same grin from the top of the stairs. The one that says: *I found my own way up here. Dad, did you see it?*

I saw you, Whitney. I always saw you. I will always see
you.

That was my girl. My adventure buddy. Up for anything. Always pushing herself. To be the best, to be the first, to win at everything she did.

And it wasn't just that mountain. A couple of summers ago, she came and did an internship with me, learning AI. And at the same time, she took an online calculus course she needed so she could complete a double major in Business Analytics and Marketing at the University of Miami. When she got back to school that fall, she told me Miami had just created a new AI and Business Technology program, a minor, and she was going to add that, on top of her two majors. She graduated magna cum laude in four years. Of course she did it all at once. First in, all the way through, at the front of something brand new. That was Whitney. Always straight up through the boulders.



Whitney was also a writer, and she left us her words. I want you to hear her own voice for a moment. She wrote this poem when she was a senior in high school. It's called "Hello."

*"Hello, welcome to Earth," says an emotionless voice,
echoing from the speaker, hidden in an unknown place.
"Learn from your mistakes. Look around and make a choice.
Live the way you always have, or reach beyond the stars."
"Oh, shit — I'm not going to Mars."*

That was Whitney to her core. A big, cosmic question about how to live, and a joke, to help make us smile. I read this for the first time this past week, and understood her at a whole new level. It helped put her life and death into perspective. Whitney is beyond the stars now, where she always reached.

But her death was preventable. Her poem says it: *"Learn from your mistakes."* And that's exactly what I'm begging all of us to do now. I'm sharing her words with you because I hope that we can learn together.



Whitney died from alcohol.

I need to tell you what actually happened, plainly, because she'd want the truth, and because the truth might protect someone in this room.

The night she died, her boyfriend Aiden called me. He did the right thing. He picked up the phone and told me she'd been drinking, that she was upset. She was clearly drunk, but she calmed down a bit after talking. And I told him, and I told her, to let her sleep it off.

Sleep it off. God, I wish I could take back those words.

Here's what I didn't understand that night, and what I need every one of you to know: your body keeps absorbing alcohol after you lie down, after you fall asleep.

Passing out is not safety. Someone who seems fine, who's just resting, who's sleeping peacefully, can stop breathing. If a friend has had too much, do not leave them to sleep it off. Stay with them. If something feels wrong, call for help. Call anyone. Call me.

And I want you to know, you will never, ever be wrong
for making that call.

I have to be honest about one more thing, because this is the part that might save a life. This was not the first time. My daughter had a problem with alcohol. It's not a weakness, it's not a character flaw. It's a disease that hides behind the person who looks like she has everything handled. Whitney lit up every room she walked into, and she was fighting this the whole time. Both were true. And in the end, it took her life.

So if you see this in yourself, if drinking has its hooks in you, even a little, even in a way no one else has noticed, you're not weak. You're not alone. There's help, and it works. Reach for it. Reach for me. I will help you. And if you see it in someone you love, do not look away, and do not wait for a better moment. There isn't one. Say something. Get them help. It's the bravest, most loving thing you will ever do.

I couldn't bear to have alcohol here today, and I hope you understand why.

Now, the most important thing I have to say. If you were close to Whitney, and you've lain awake even once, wondering whether you could have done something, hear me. That weight is not yours to carry. Nothing we say or do can bring her back. And while she's gone, I will not let the people she loved spend their lives blaming themselves for the way she left. She wouldn't stand for it. You know she wouldn't. The only thing she'd ever ask you to carry is her love. So set the rest down, right here, right now, and carry her love instead.

If one good thing can come from losing Whitney, let it be that someone in this room makes a different choice, or finds the help they need, and lives. That's my whole sermon. I feel Whitney right now, rolling her eyes at me, so I'll get back to her.



Before the medals, before the summit, and the summit after that. Before the double major, and the minor, and the calculus you taught yourself just to carry more. Before magna cum laude, before the first class ever to walk that stage. Before any of it, you were already the whole of you.

You did not need the height to be tall. You did not need the prize to be the prize. You never needed one single thing added to you, poured into you, or proven, to be exactly, entirely, completely enough.

You were the brightest one in every room, with nothing in your hand but your own life.

So hear this, wherever you are now. Hear this truth:

You are enough. You are perfect.
Nothing to add, nothing to fix, nothing missing.
Just you. Always. Already. Forever. Perfect.

And now let me get back to telling you about the Whitney I got to be the father of.

She noticed people. She noticed *you*. She could tell, from clear across a crowded room, when something was wrong with you. And here's the part that made her rare: she'd actually do something about it. She'd come find you. She made whoever she was with feel like they mattered the most in the world.

That's the first thing, the truest thing, I'll always remember about my daughter. Not the summits, the degree, the medals. The way she made people feel loved.



In the days since we lost her, I went looking, searching for her spirit everywhere, and I read about what her name actually means. I want to share it, because it gives me comfort.

Jen and I named her Whitney because we thought it was a beautiful name, and she wore it perfectly. I learned this week that the name Whitney comes from Old English, and it means "*from the white island*." And her name carries a few ideas inside it.

The *white* is light. Purity, clarity, a clean slate, the presence of light. And that was her. She walked into a room and the room got brighter.

The *island* is a sanctuary. A safe haven, a place of peace, a refuge from the chaos. And if you ever needed somewhere to land, you already know that's exactly what Whitney was. She was the safe place. She noticed when you were going under, and she became your island.

And underneath, the name is tied to an old river in England: *water*. Emotion, intuition, the things that run deep. Our water polo player, our surfer, our girl who loved the ocean and the lakes and the pools.

There's one more, and this is the one that got me. They say her name carries the energy of a soul that craves freedom and adventure. A soul whose whole path in this life is to live it fully, to keep transforming, and to find what's true by going out into the world and experiencing all of it.

When I read that, I thought: *this is my daughter*. White: a sanctuary for the people she loved. Water: a soul built for freedom, for adventure, for going out into the wide world to find what's true. Her name was the whole map of her, written before she ever took a step. And it tells me exactly what to do now.



We had so much left to do. We'd already started planning the next summit. We were going to climb Kilimanjaro together, the roof of Africa. She wanted to go to Israel. Well, to be fair, that one she was going to do without me. There is so much more we hadn't even planned yet. Summits we hadn't reached, oceans we hadn't swum, a whole life of adventure still ahead.

We don't get to do those now. And I would be lying if I said it didn't break my heart, in a way I don't have words for.

Here's what I've decided. I'm going to take you with me anyway, kiddo. I'm going to carry you, to the mountains, to the water, to the far corners of this world you loved so much. Every summit we never reached, the adventures we missed: I'm going to go on them still, and you'll be there with me, for every single one.

You're now my adventure spirit. It doesn't end. Not
ever.

And I ask all of you: take her on your adventures, too.



I want to share one more thing. Something I've come to learn on my own spiritual journey, that became far more real for me this week than ever before.

I believe that we exist in this life for just an instant, in the eternity of time. A flash. We tell ourselves we have all the time in the world, but the truth is that every one of us is here for what amounts to just a moment. Whitney's moment was shorter than it ever should have been. Far shorter. But it was no less complete for being short.

Because in her one short moment, Whitney did the most important thing a human being can do, and she did it more fully than almost anyone I've ever known. She loved people. Every single one of you is here because, at some point, Whitney made you feel loved.



And because I believe love is the only thing that lasts, I want to tell you what we're doing to keep Whitney's love alive in the world.

Whitney found so much of herself at the University of Miami, in her friends, her professors, and in something almost no other school does: it trusts its students with AI.

To be clear: AI was not Whitney's identity, and it wasn't her calling. It was a tool, and she used it like a superpower. Not a crutch, not a shortcut. It didn't make her who she was. It magnified who she already was. After her AI internship with me, she told me school had never been easier. A double major, a minor, and never once after that less than a high A.

The summer before her senior year, she did an internship at Royal Caribbean. They told her she was producing work like someone who'd been there for ten years. Again, thanks to her AI skills. They offered her a full-time job. She said yes; she was going to start there next month.

I teach people to use AI for a living, because I believe it's an incredible, fast way for all of us to prosper. I know what these tools can do, and I got to witness how they empowered Whitney, how they showed her how capable she really was. Miami is one of the few schools brave enough to trust its students with AI, instead of teaching them to fear it. Whitney came alive there because of it.

So in her name, our family is creating the **Whitney Allen AI Scholarship Program** at the University of Miami Herbert Business School. We're creating it to last forever. Not a one-time gift that gets spent and is gone, but a permanent endowment: invested, paying out a scholarship every single year. Which means our gifts won't get used up. It's a gift of caring, for a student, and then another, and then another. Every year, for as long as that university stands, there will be a Whitney Allen Scholar. Someone who gets a boost. Someone who gets love, because of her.

Another little Whitney story. When she was very small, she was in Girl Scouts, going around the neighborhood selling Girl Scout cookies. And when somebody didn't want a box, she would say, in her cutest face and cutest voice, *"Would you like to give a gift of caring?"* And I can tell you there was not a single house in the neighborhood that could turn her down.

So many of you have asked how you can do something for Whitney. This is one way. I welcome you all to join me in creating this fund. The details are on the back of the

program and online. What a gift of love. Thank you for that, truly.

I also want to be clear that the gift she'd care about most is the one I already asked you for: take care of each other. Make the brave choice. Take care of yourself. Be the island for somebody.



In closing, we are so blessed by the love Whitney gave us. That is what I've come to understand.

I used to believe a life was measured by what it built, what it won. I don't believe that anymore. I've learned it the hard way these last days, and I'd give anything not to have learned it. But here it is, the only thing I'm sure of now:

Everything fades. Everything. The medals tarnish. The summits forget our footprints. The buildings come down. The names wear off the stone. Only one thing outlives us. Only one thing refuses to end. **And it's love.**

My daughter had one short moment with us, and she spent the whole of it loving people: noticing them, crossing rooms for them, making each one feel held, feel chosen, feel enough. It poured out of her. And love like that does not die. It can't. It's the one thing that can't.

It did not end on June 21st. It's in this room right now. It's reverberating, across the world, to everyone online. Please take a moment to feel that love. Resonate with it. Amplify it. It will keep going, in every one of us, and in everyone we love after this. On and on, I believe, for all of eternity.

So we will not say she is gone.
We will say she got there first.

And she is, even now, still loving us forward, straight up through the boulders, still pulling the rest of us up behind her.

Thank you.

Whitney Allen — May 28, 2004 — June 21, 2026 — may her memory be a blessing.