

SEAN PATRICK MCKENNA | MEMORIAL MESSAGE

TRANSCRIPT

Saturday, August 16, 2025
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Sean has impacted and influenced each of our lives in many different ways!

And although we each have our differences (and that's good!), today we actually share much more in common together than we may realize!

As Sean's closest family and friends all grieving his very sad and sudden passing, we all need each other in this difficult time. Because living life is hard enough! But dealing with death is even harder. And none of us were created to do any of this alone.

We all need connection with each other. We all need compassion for each other. And we all need closure for ourselves.

Further, we all need to love and respect each other's freedom to find closure in our own personal way. Some will read a beautiful poem – like Bella, Cameron, and Michelle. Others will share personal reflections like Zakk and my Mom. Many will sing a song or raise a toast for Sean next month.

But as Sean's only “blood brother”, I'd love to share with you – our family and friends – what I've called “My Life with Sean and Beyond”.

Sean was always passionately protective of me and he influenced many of my interests growing up! Now, we all know Sean was just a wee bit outspoken and a lot persuasive! That's why it's no surprise that his influence on me went far beyond just the Miami Dolphins and (then!) the Toronto Maple Leafs! Because it was Sean who also influenced me in music, and the very heart of his heartbeat (pun intended!) was hard rock music.

(Cover your ears, Mom!) Because when I was way underage, “Sean P” (the most popular muso in metro) not only snuck his baby brother into local hard rock clubs like The Crazy Horse in Dartmouth and The Misty Moon in Halifax...but he even somehow smuggled me into Smooth Herman's in Sydney, Cape Breton to babysit his sound and light board for his shows! And – WOW! – was my mind blown!

But it was actually because of Sean's “brotherhood with his bandmates” – who by day played games together in the band house, and by night played music together in the bar – that I decided: “that's what I want to do!” So, inspired by Sean, I'd soon start singing in my own band!

(And it was way back then I realized that: “You’re either ON Sean’s tour bus, or you’re UNDER it!” Right?)

But we all know that Sean loved listening to music! And the very first record of Sean’s I remember hearing (like a real record, a vinyl record, kids!) was called “Shout at the Devil” by Motley Crue.

And interestingly, the very last record of Sean’s I remember hearing sounded sort of similar, but lyrically was very different: it was called “To Hell with the Devil” by the band Stryper, a Christian heavy metal band.

“Christian heavy metal? Seriously, bro?” But when Sean told me that Robert Sweet from Stryper was his favorite drummer, I knew I had to give Stryper a listen! And when I did, I was hooked!

Though they were singing about strange stuff like: spiritual warfare, God’s love, and Jesus King of kings, literally every musician I knew and respected – Sean included! – appreciated Stryper’s skill and songwriting!

So, I listened to a lot of Stryper! In fact, (cover your ears again, Mom!) I can remember me and my mates stealing cars while listening to the Christian heavy metal band Stryper! “That’s messed up!” I know! I’m busted!

But soon, again sort of following in Sean’s footsteps, I decided to move our band to Toronto, the “promised land” of hard rock in Canada. But just as we were about to hit the road, I received a shocking phone call – much like the call from Mom about Sean on August 4th – Greg Sullivan, the older brother of my best friend Ken, died suddenly on a motorcycle at just 32 years of age.

I was devastated! Because Greg was one of the “good guys”, and now he was gone! But at Greg’s memorial, the Christian minister told a true story about an Olympic diver that forever changed my life. This diver had done everything and won everything. He was rich, famous, and had literally earned everything I wanted in life! Yet, he was plagued by a fear of death.

So, what he’d often do is slip out of bed at night (alone!) and climb the 10-metre-high diving board to dive into the pool, to try and suppress his fear! Well, one night as he again stood on the diving board (with his back to the pool and his arms held horizontally in a traditional diver’s stance), he noticed the moonlight cast a shadow of his own silhouette on the wall in front of him in the shape of a cross. Now, like Sean and me both, dude grew up going to church! But in that moment, the Easter message he’d heard his whole life somehow made sense! Jesus died in his place and all he had to do is repent and believe. And after he did that, he slept peacefully for the first time in his adult life.

And when he got up the next morning (a new man!), he was totally shocked! There was no water in the pool because the night before the groundskeeper had drained it all for cleaning! And as he looked up to the 10-meter diving board he stood on just a few hours ago, he realized that had God not graciously gotten his attention, he would've dove to his death.

And that true story really spoke to "my heart of hearts" for reasons I'll personally share with you as I personally shared with Sean...

Because Sean heard that Cory had a "come to Jesus moment" after Greg's funeral, and as you can imagine, he had lots to say about that!)

So, I said: "Sean, I know you think it's bonkers that your brother is now a born-again Christian!"

"Yup." (And many of you might say that too! And believe me, I get it!)

"But Sean, I totally know you're not into it, but I do love and respect you! So, without getting all "religious" and stuff, what do you think might be the number one reason I'd become a Christian?"

First answer? "You like the music." Again, no surprises there from Sean!

"Well, I like some church music, but much of it is fairly terrible! So that's definitely not the number one reason I'm a Christian."

"You want to be a better person."

"I think we all do! But many churchgoers are not better people, but worse! So that's not the number one reason either."

"You need hope."

"That's true! But that's not the number one."

"You need help."

"That's REALLY true! But that's still not the number one reason!"

"OK, so why are you a Christian"

"Because of what's next for us all."

I started by saying that we all actually share much more in common than we may each personally realize. And, really, that diver is a picture of every one of us! Because we all need forgiveness and freedom from fear...and only God can give us that.

And as I close, I just want to read a few encouraging words.

First, Psalm 40 from The Bible is what I call “my testimonial psalm”, and it says this:

I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the LORD
and put their trust in him.

And very recently when I re-read that psalm and got thinking about Sean and Stryper, I’m pretty sure the first Stryper song I heard was “Calling on You”, one of Sean’s favorites and liked by many rockers here as well.

Please listen to these lyrics in light of my story, Psalm 40, and all of us here today:

Inside of me, there is a lonely place
Sometimes I just don't know it's there
But when I'm all alone
That's when I have to face
The part of me that needs someone
To be by my side, that's when I call on

You, You make my life complete
You give me all I need
You help me through and through
I'm calling on You

I called on God, and He heard my cry. He forgave me, He lifted me up with hope in life, and He set me free from fear of death. And today, He can do the same for you.

I sincerely thank you for listening to my story of “My Life with Sean and Beyond” and I’d love to personally connect with any of you to listen to your story as well.

(PRAY)