

Who would have thought, that meeting and playing a game of football during the entrance exam day back in June 2000 would lead to 19 years of friendship and adventure?

Born in the Philippines in 1988 Andrei lived in Abu Dhabi and Cyprus before settling in his father's home town of Dundee.

In 2000 he attended the entrance examination for the High School of Dundee, where I met him for the first time. We bonded with our love of video games during the afternoon sports session, and once school started in August, we quickly became best friends.

At times during our school years it seemed that Andrei was always around, whether we were going to the cinema, or whether he was in my house (which he considered was his second home). We continued to explore our love of film, tv and gaming.

I was there for him when we tragically lost his father Ken in 2006. Although he very rarely showed emotion he was absolutely devastated, and I did everything in my power to support him while he attempted to move on.

Once school was over, we both headed to the University of Dundee, Andrei to study International Business, and myself Applied Computing. Andrei continued to work for Woodlands Hotel during this time, and I was expanding my computing business, which he was happy to help with whenever he had a spare moment.

By the end of the first year at university Andrei had decided that International Business was not for him and decided to drop out and work at Woodlands full time while he waited for inspiration to strike. I should mention that he always had an extremely laid-back attitude to life (in complete contrast to me) and he said that he would figure it out eventually. Summer 2007 also saw us undertake our first foreign holiday together – a short break to Dublin with Andy. This also included an amusing incident meeting Andy's now wife Becky at the airport when she came to see us off.

Andrei continued to engage in his hobbies of video gaming, watching tv & movies and reading voraciously. He also started to help me more with the business and started asking plenty of questions about varying programming and web design matters. He started to tinker with his own small projects, and then stunned me one afternoon by stating that he had decided that he wanted to go back to university to study computing, and had already researched that he could do an HNC and then on to an HND and then the BSc at Abertay in Web Design & Development. Speechless doesn't quite cover my face (his words) at all of this, but I was overjoyed and provided as much support as I could during his course. After he graduated, he continued to run and help me with projects, meanwhile looking for a job to provide a new challenge for him. This resulted in a job in Edinburgh, working for the now defunct Sugar Refinery, who specialised in making customisations to the SugarCRM suite. He enjoyed the new challenge, didn't enjoy the commute from Dundee, so eventually made Edinburgh his new home. A move to PODFather followed, where he was much happier, although that might have had something to do with the ice cream freezer and the snacks & drinks – this was Andrei after all!

Whilst all of this was going on, we continued to travel around Europe together, with trips to Rome, Florence, Venice, Naples, Paris, Verona, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Ouddorp amongst some of the places we found ourselves over the years.

We then decided to take things to another continent, and in 2017 embarked on an epic adventure to Florida, to take in 14 days of Disney World, Universal Studios, Legoland & Kennedy Space Center. It was an amazing time, but we both agreed that we were getting too old for running around like our hair is on fire for 10 days in a row, and that rest days were probably a thing that we needed now.

We returned to Florida this year, and although Craig and I could tell that something was wrong with Andrei (who by this stage had a nasty cough) he still managed to have a great time revisiting Disney and Kennedy Space Center.

Andrei was my best friend, we talked several times each day, and as often as possible he was through to visit me and Nero (and later Cato) or I was through in Edinburgh for a dinner out somewhere. We thought completely alike, scarily for some of our friends, and shared the same – let's call it warped – sense of humour. We introduced each other to many different music artists, comics, tv shows and movies as well as video games and board games. We were always laughing when we were together.

He was also always there for me in times of need, just as I was for him. My favourite example of this from recent times was in May 2018, when Nero was terminally ill and we had to make the decision that it was time. I had messaged Andrei to tell him, and his first response was "I'm coming through at the weekend". Despite the fact that he had been through several times over the previous few weeks to support me, and my mum and dad who considered him their second son (as I considered him like my brother) he was immediately back to try and support the complete mess that I was by that point.

This was reciprocated when I received a message on 28<sup>th</sup> May, which was along the lines of 'long story short, I'm in RIE for tests. This was a typical Andrei message, and also an understatement as it turned out. I was assured that there was nothing that he needed that day, but that the next day a phone charger would be a top priority. A bit of diary rearranging later, and I was through for the start of visiting the next day. By this point a few tests had been performed, and we knew that we were dealing with some very serious issues including a clot in his heart, and some kidney issues that required further investigation. Several visits and more tests followed, and at one point a plan was in place for dealing with it all. Andrei asked me if I was doing ok, and when I quipped that that was supposed to be my line he came back with the very typical reply of "I'm not worried about it, I have all of you to worry about it for me"

Our epic adventure ended one Sunday evening. I had visited him with Jane the afternoon before, as we were in Edinburgh for the Spice Girls concert. He was in some discomfort from a hematoma that had formed in his kidney (where they had taken a biopsy from) and the painkillers were not lasting long enough. They couldn't give him loads of different ones for varying reasons, and he was a tad miffed that he was having to ask for them every hour. However, he had still been in reasonable spirits.

They had still been unhappy with his kidney stats, and so had put him on dialysis during Sunday. I had spoken with him briefly via messenger on Sunday morning, and ascertained that the pain was still there and that they planned to put him on the dialysis that day. I was out at archery that day and had just slumped on the sofa after walking Cato when I got a call from his sister Tegan. The news was bad, very bad. During the dialysis he had suddenly gone in to

cardiac arrest. They had managed to get him back and figured out that the hematoma in his kidney was to blame. They took him in for emergency surgery to remove that kidney. Tegan was trying to make sense of it all and wondering if she should come back from Canada. I told her to book the flight.

I then had the unenviable task of informing the group of friends that things had taken a sudden turn. I had just finished the phone calls when Tegan called me with an update. The damage was severe, and not helped by the fact that he had been on blood thinners for several days by this point. There was too much blood escaping, and he had another cardiac arrest on the table. He was gone.

The news hit me like a hammer to the head. Somehow, I managed to re-start the process of phoning everyone again, this time to attempt to break the worst news possible. Then I had to break the news to my parents, who had not even had the first update yet. I don't remember much of the next few days, as my mind went in to a sort of low power existence to try and process what was going on. I managed to function enough to ask the office manager at dad's firm to cancel my appointments for the week and try to support the rest of the friends as much as I was capable of.

The funeral, from my point of view anyway was brutal. I had said in the time running up to it that it was likely that I would fall to bits at the funeral, and I was right. Tegan had tried to keep it as uplifting as possible but considering what we were dealing with it was always going to be rough. I so much wanted to be able to stand up there and share some of this with everyone, and recall some of the wonderful adventures that we had (or he had without me, but always told me about. PHP Scotland 2018 being the one that springs to mind). But I knew I wouldn't be able to even stand there, never mind speak. Andrei was the strong one in these situations.

I now need to consider my life minus by best friend. He was the Stan to my Ollie, the Groot to my Rocket. I feel like half of me is missing currently and no doubt will for some considerable time.

A recent poem by reddit user [a\\_poem\\_for\\_your\\_sprog](#) both summed it up perfectly and set me off in to a flood of tears and so I will end with it:

I think of you often -  
the years you define.  
My history's yours,  
and your memory's mine.  
My equal,  
my other -  
my brother,  
my friend.  
I loved you.  
I hate that it came to an end.