

The Bells of Death

Just as it's hard for me to imagine any son who ever loved his mother more unconditionally than Justin did his, it's equally hard to imagine any mother who loved her children more than Margene did Justin and his brother. On February 13, 2010, five days before tragedy struck, Justin stopped by on his way to the airport to tell his mom that he'd take her out for a late Valentine's dinner when he returned from a business trip to Malaga, Spain. That was the last time he'd ever see her. Six days later, Jeff and I picked him up at the Atlanta airport. The three of us stood outside baggage claim for several minutes, our arms draped over each other's shoulders, our heads facing the floor, our eyes filled with tears. How could this be happening? The night before, Justin was asleep in his hotel room, unaware when he went to bed that the wee hours of the morning would bring the most devastating news a loving son could receive. At 4 a.m. Malaga time, I steeled myself for the most horrible message I've ever had to deliver. Awakened by the ringing of his phone, Justin received the call everyone dreads, the one that peals the bells of death. Nine months earlier he heard those bells for the first time when he learned of the suicide of his dear friend, Bryan Carey.

Justin and his beloved "Emma" in a picture taken the summer before she died.

