

## Introduction

By: Casey Gauntt



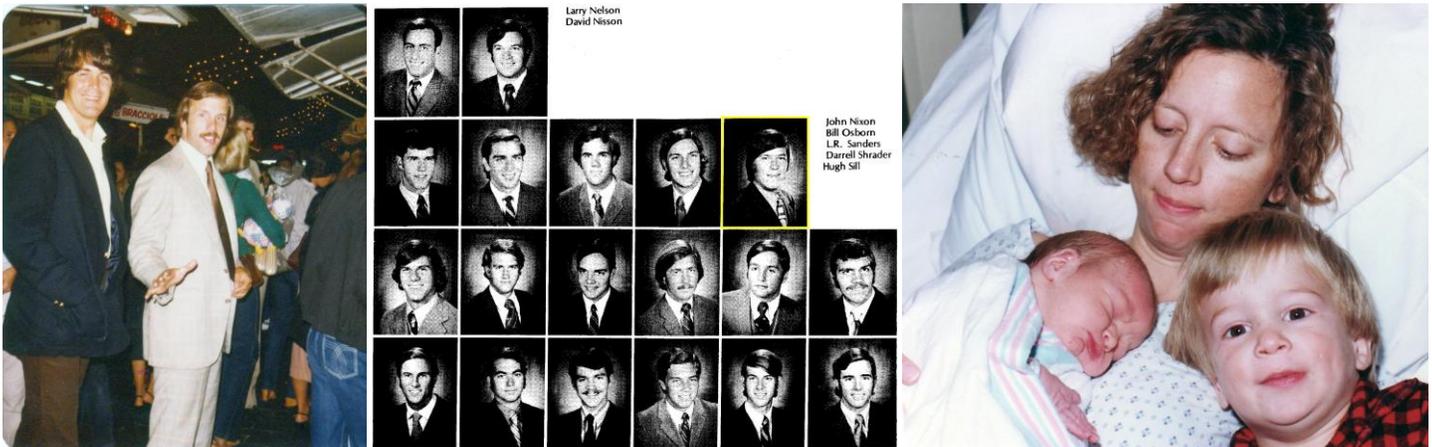
## [Unforgettable Nat 'King' Cole Cole & Natalie Cole](#)

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**NOTE:** Visit site to hear the music ☺

Hugh Sill and I reconnected in February of 2011 in a very powerful way. A mutual friend of ours, John Morehouse, facilitated the reunion. Hugh and I were pledge brothers at USC, picked pineapples one college summer in Maui with John, a football player from Cornell, and we all became very good friends. Hugh helped me a lot after my father took his life in 1970. We did some business together in our 20s but by 1980, for reasons that are no longer important, we fell completely out of touch.

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At some point in the early 1990s I had learned that one of Hugh's sons as a toddler had fallen into a swimming pool. He was pulled to safety before he drowned—but the brain damage was irreversible and he was severely and permanently handicapped. I didn't reach out to Hugh then nor when his son, George, passed away ten years later.

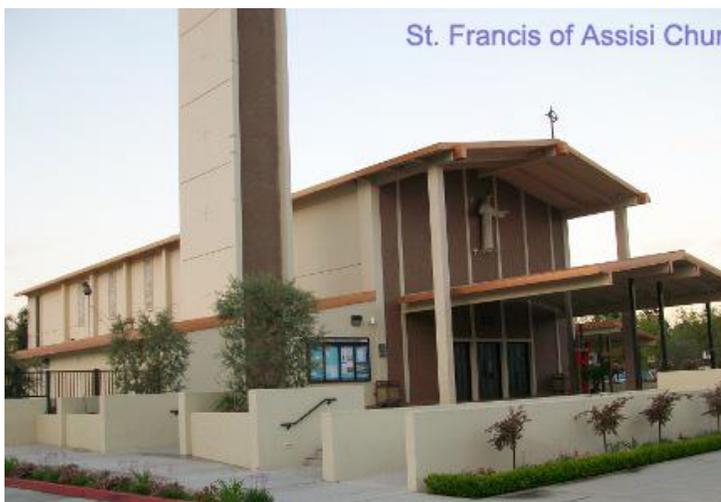


John contacted me a little over a year after Jimmy died—he said Hugh had told him about Jimmy's accident shortly after it happened. John is no stranger to loss—his younger brother died of cancer in 1972, and then a sister and both parents. John knew of this thing

Hugh and I had in common—and was compelled to do something about it. Needless to say Hugh and I had a lot of catching up to do—and say to one another. And we did. My correspondence with John and Hugh—notwithstanding our 30 year intermission—has been deep and very helpful and healing for me—and I believe for them, too. I've shared with Hugh and John many of the stories on Write Me Something Beautiful, and they have in turn shared theirs with me.

Last November, Hugh sent me something that profoundly moved me to the core—the words he had spoken to the hundreds assembled in [St. Francis of Assisi Church](#) in Bakersfield for the marriage his daughter, Nika—words that can only be forged by one who has suffered heartbreaking tragedy and loss, and an evolved soul who can see beyond and the beauty and love that surrounds us all.

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Hugh Sill wrote something beautiful and we are honored and humbled to share it with you. Thank you Hugh and you too, John, for bringing us back together.

This story is dedicated to the loving memory of George Sill and his beautiful, bountiful and everlasting spirit.

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**For Nika**

By: Hugh Sill

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### **TO MY DAUGHTER ON HER WEDDING DAY**

Thank you Monsignor Craig for this opportunity. I know for Nika and Jake it comes as a surprise my standing here, so I am sure they are a little nervous, but they need not worry as I have some experience at this. Six years before Nika was born, at a wedding in Australia, I spoke before a crowd similar to this today, and although I did suffer a complete black out during the speech, I was told by a few that it wasn't all that bad. So, I'm here to give it another try!

I want to thank all of you for being here today, in celebrating this marriage between Jake and Nika.



Just a few days ago the remarks that I had planned to give were completed. I had worked for months in trying to put together something that Nika and Jake would be proud of. I spent hours going over each sentence— every word—I wanted it to be perfect for this occasion.

I had planned to talk about the importance God has played in Jake’s and Nika’s lives. To tell you about Jake’s family and the role they have all played in Jake’s life. To mention my sons, how proud their mother and I are of them for many reasons, but never more so than the time Nika brought home Jake to meet her brothers, and the two of them telling Nika, “He’s the one.”

To Karil, and how important he has been to our family and to Nika’s growing up. How proud I am to see him standing as a groomsman for Jake next to my sons and daughter on this altar.

I wanted to tell you about the beautiful bond between Nika and her mother and just how fast Nika had to grow up watching two parents battle cancer and to witness everyday a brother she loved so much, whose life was slowly slipping away in front of her eyes.

That was my goal—that was the plan— but in my heart I kept coming back to what brought me to this pulpit. It is a story I want to share with all of you— one that I might never have the opportunity to do again. Because this is who my daughter is, and this is the woman that Jake has fallen in love with.

Jake, you never met Nika’s brother, George. He was an amazing young man who showed us all the meaning of courage. George didn’t have an easy life, but it is George, and his life, that for me, makes this day so special.



You see, over and over again, I kept thinking about Nika when she was very young, 6 or 7. She would arrive home from school, walk through the door and always go over to George, lie next to him and proceed to tell him how her day had gone. George would have this big smile on his face; it was really all he was capable of doing in showing his appreciation. She would always want to help her mother and Karil, George’s caregiver, in any way she could, but never did she forget to give George a hug and a kiss. Then as Nika grew older, she entered Garces Catholic School, and as I watched her she would still walk through the door, and George would already have the big smile on his face anticipating what he knew was to come. She would lie next to him and tell him how her day had gone—still wanting to help however she could—but most importantly never forgetting his hug and his kiss.

Nika stands here today, now all grown up, and she once again touched my heart. Last Wednesday night we returned home from having dinner with Jake's dad. Upon entering the house Nika, as has been her ritual throughout this wedding process, went to the mail. She took special interest in a small package. She said it had become lost, was tracked down in Hawaii, and how happy she was that it made it here in time for the wedding. I was intrigued as she opened it, and when she took out the small package I wasn't able to tell what it was. She informed me it was a locket. I asked if this is another wedding tradition—like something borrowed- something new? She told me "No Dad, it is so I can put a picture of George in it to carry with me on my wedding day."



Nika was never uncomfortable with her brother, but always proud to introduce him to her friends who came to love him as she always had.

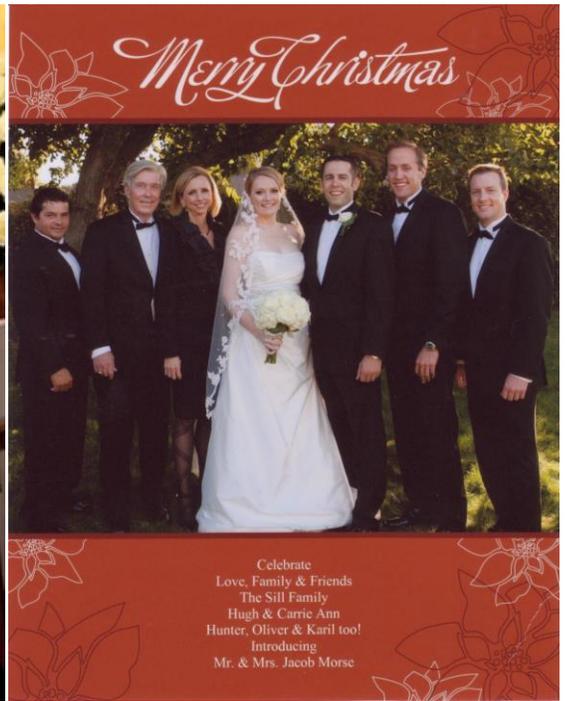
I mention this story not out of sorrow, as God gave us a beautiful and joyous son. In George's passing I always tried to find the importance in his life. God had to have a meaningful purpose. To me, and I hope to Nika and Jake too, they can see just how important George is to this moment here today. Jake, that beautiful young lady next to you who you fell in love with is the person she is today because of so many good people in her life, but also because of an unforeseen event that made Nika the person you now love so much.

George truly enriched our lives. In Nika, George brought out all the beautiful things in life that any father, mother, brother, sister, friend and yes, husband, would be proud of. I believe with all my heart that George is with us here today in Nika, through her love, her compassion and her caring.

Jake, I know you have seen this, it is why we all love Nika so much, and I believe why you fell in love with her. As her father, I know I am somewhat biased, but I feel that if ever there was a person on this earth to be the best wife and mother, it is Nika.



Jake, as Monsignor Craig reminded me as I was preparing these remarks, this sacrament is about two people. I have stood here for several minutes and spoke almost entirely about my daughter, and I hope you will allow me a small amount of leeway as a proud father, but I know I can speak for CarrieAnn when I say that since the day you came into Nika's life we have never seen her so happy. Knowing you will be the one to protect her, to comfort her and love her on whatever path life takes you both, we could not be more honored in knowing it will be you by her side.



What a beautiful feeling to look upon all of you on this wonderful occasion and feel such happiness. To my beautiful daughter Nika, who today I am able to say that your entire family—yes, your entire family—is here, wishing you and Jake all the happiness life brings you.

Thank you, Monsignor

