by Rick Reilly

got one. I have this friend, an Iowa Virginia Tech, and maybe I've story after what happened AYBE YOU could use a happy at

cause Cory had just died in a motorcycle wreck. son, Cory, for FACES IN THE CROWD. Said the kid set for a long time. Said he was finally doing it now beall kinds of golf records and he'd been meaning to write July he wrote to SI, nominating his 19-year-old truck driver named Mark Lemke.

got Mark on his cellphone as he was driving his tracwas from thinking of my own 19-year-old son or what, talking about losing his best pal. And I don't know if it but it's the only time I ever cried while I wrote. or trailer on an Ohio highway and how he wept while Well, I wrote a column (Aug. 21, 2006) about how I

for Cory and stuck it at the bottom of the column. And then we made up a FACES IN THE CROWD box

Anyway, a couple of months go by, and then Mark gets this call: "Mr. Lemke?" the voice says. "It's Tony Dungy."

sloppy joes and his favorite couch and maybe a frosty that a motorcycle drove a hole through. The most he for a few hours. So, naturally, he figures the call is a joke. root beer and a Vikings game to take his mind off Cory hopes for when he gets off the road is his wife Maud's Now, Lemke, 51, is just an ex-jock with a simple life

anything I can do to help you." ing to offer my condolences to you and see if there's "No, it is Tony Dungy," the voice says. "I'm just call-

win it all this year, the genie goes back in the bottle. Manning's, not to mention the millions of Colts fans'. They figure if their team doesn't ritical season in Dungy's life, not to mention Peyton The Colts were into the teeth of their schedule, the most Now, you've got to understand, this was in October.

self three days before Christmas in 2005. And Lemke knows this. So maybe Dungy, who's the same age as Lemke, is a guy who can relate. So they talk, and the coach tells Lemke to keep in touch. But Dungy has his own sorrow to swallow. His 18-year-old son, James, hanged him-

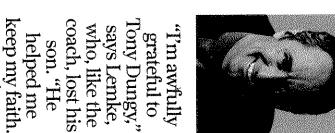
to get you through the days." him," Lemke tells him one day. "You're lucky. You've got so many people around you "The hardest thing for me is, I sit in that truck all day, and all I do is think about

"Yeah," Dungy says, "but it doesn't get you through the nights."

And pretty soon they've got this bond going. Dungy has a wife, five kids, the monster

TALK BACK If you have a comment for Rick Reilly, send it to reilly@siletters.com

keep my faith. coach, lost his He taught me Iony Dungy," who, like the says Lemke, "I'm awfully that he and helped me grateful to —we're not son. "He



about these good deeds, which only makes them better. Yet Dungy refuses to talk to the media

says. "He helped me keep my faith. He "I'm awfully grateful to him," Lemke After two weeks of hearing about how

every parent who's grieving right now that way is through each other. there is a way through the pain. And that Tony Dungy stands as a reminder to



at God for taking Cory. Dungy tells him They go deep sometimes. Lemke gets hot job, numerous charities he works with and their faith, "we'll see them again." that's normal, but he adds that if they keep him his cell number and returns every call. time to answer every Lemke e-mail, gives thousand things to do, yet he takes the

not playing well. apologizing for not replying to Lemke on my computer, especially if our defense is times I can go a few days without getting to you, he e-mails Lemke one day. Someright away. Sorry about not getting back Then it's the playoffs, and Dungy is

I ask you, who is that nice?

seat in Dolphin Stadium and watches his the Super Bowl and Dungy is inviting a They pray. The next day Lemke takes his at the team hotel. They hug. They visit. fore the game he meets Dungy in person new buddy win it all. his 18-wheel rig to Miami. The day beload that needs hauling to Florida and a to be his guest there. So Lemke finds a man he's never met, a Vikings fan, no less, load that has to come back, and he drives Next thing you know, the Colts are in

young kid in Indianapolis who lost his whose son committed suicide. There's the of strength. should be a puddle but is instead a river ting a hand up from a man who himself broken people all over are suddenly getmother and brother in a car wreck. Heartformer high school coach in Wisconsin Tony Dungy has befriended. There's the And this is only one stranger whom

taught me that he and I-we're not alone." how high he can rise? low man can sink, isn't it nice to know

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