



Richie G.
August 2011

Losing The Big Man

My childhood lost a big one. Actually, my childhood lost The Big Man. Clarence Clemons, the saxophonist for Bruce Springsteen, and key member of the E Street Band died June 18. Since Bruce was a hero for me growing up, I was pretty upset when Clarence died.

But it reminded me of a funny story. I had four tickets to see Springsteen perform at the Meadowlands. He was at the end of a long string of shows in New Jersey, and I had already seen him twice. I had bought a ton of tickets for these shows, so I could go with different sets of friends.

For this show, I was going with my friends Phil and Joe, and my sister was going to meet me at the concert. The night before the show, Joe and I got really drunk, but Joe got more drunk than I did. Joe slept in my basement that night and proceeded to throw up too many times to count. Though we were pretty young, Joe was down and out, and couldn't go to the concert.

Joe had two tickets in his pocket, and I had left two tickets for my sister in a bowl. So when Phil picked me up, I just took the two tickets from the bowl. We tailgated, had a decent time and the concert started, and my sister was nowhere to be found. Keep in mind, this was before the age of cell phones.

So the show is going on and I'm getting worried about my sister. Where the hell is she??? I'm miserable because I have no idea where she is, Phil was miserable...probably because of some girl and the show was kinda sucking because I had already seen Bruce twice in two weeks, and the E Street Band wasn't playing. This was the tour where Bruce decided to kick out the band and bring in a different one.

But all of a sudden, out of nowhere, comes a familiar face. Joe is running up the stairs! I'm all pumped because Phil was grumpy, and Joe was here. The obvious "duh" moment still didn't hit me.

I asked Joe, how he got in and how he knew where we were sitting, considering he didn't have the tickets. And then he said, "I have the tickets, how did you get in?" I thought he was crazy and told him I had the tickets. And then I realized...I stole my sisters tickets.

Joe told me he raced to the Meadowlands, twice ran around the arena and then decided to go in to see if I was there. Now I felt terrible. My sister must have been *pissed!*

I went to a pay phone, called her up, apologized, told her I would give her free tickets to the next show. Phil then decided he wanted to leave and it was just Joe and I.

The rest of the concert got better, Joe and I were having fun, my sister wasn't that mad, and Bruce was putting on a pretty good show.

The concert was near its conclusion, and they started to play 10th Avenue Freezeout. And all of a sudden Bruce said, "And the change was made up town and the Big Man joined the band...." And out walks Clarence Clemons, playing his sax. The crowd went nuts. It was the best song I never heard. We were all too busy screaming.

Now, 18 or so years later, Clarence is gone, way too early. Yeah, I'm sure some 21-year-old punk can play Jungleland, and Born to Run probably better than the 65-year-old real life Clarence, but it still sucks.

Listening to the E Street Band, will never be the same.