I have received some very saddening news that my father, Walter Ben Kendall Junior, had passed away at the age of 77. I just want to take a moment to share with all of you what he meant to me as my father. Without the support system that he built within my family, I wouldn't be who I am today. When I was nine years old, my dad bought me my first guitar, which was an

acoustic Spanish guitar. He noticed I didn't take the gift lightly, because I would play it every day for the next year. When it got close to Christmas, I told him I really wanted to get an electric guitar and an amp. He told me that he was sorry but that it had been a really rough year and that he didn't have the money to be able to afford to get me the guitar and amp. "Maybe for your birthday," he said. On Christmas morning, that year, I walked out to the Christmas tree and there my new guitar and amp sat. I'll never forget his smile. I was so surprised! My father grew up in a very musical family and was very skilled at playing the jazz trumpet. I am very lucky to have been his son, because without his musical background, I would not be where I am today. Not only did I have the gift of music in my blood, but my father was so supportive of my decisions when it came to music. I was always encouraged with such a great father in my corner. Growing up, I played baseball from the ages of seven to eighteen. Not one year went by that he wasn't either my coach or my team's manager. He would always brag to his friends about how many hitters I struck out, or home runs that I hit and I always took away confidence from my father which helped me build character over the years. I will never forget my dad. He means the world to me, and I am going to miss him very much. I am thankful to carry on his love for music, sports and the importance of family to my own children. I know he is at peace. I love you dad!

Mark Kendall