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## In Life, Tomorrow is Never Guaranteed

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## In Life, Tomorrow is Never Guaranteed

By Fernando I. Rivera  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, June 13, 2018

May 2, 2018, started like many other days with my usual morning routine: eating breakfast, reading the newspaper, getting kids ready for school, listening to WUCF on the way to work.

This particular day I was working with the Coastal Connection team from the Department of Sociology studying the human dimensions of restoration in the Indian River Lagoon.

After a short lunch break, I was browsing through my Twitter feed and a headline captured my attention: "Puerto Rican Air National Guard plane crashes shortly after takeoff in Savannah, Georgia. All deceased."

I had to pause for a second because I knew my dear friend, José Rafael Román Rosado, was usually the pilot of the C-130 Hercules for the "PRANG," the Puerto Rico Air National Guard.

I quickly texted José, but there was no response. I went to our high school online group chat and the postings started coming up about the accident. Everyone was sending messages to José and trying to get any information available.

Before long the news hit: Román Rosado, 43, with 18 years of service, had passed away along with eight other members of the PRANG. The crew was flying the aging plane to Arizona for its retirement.

My heart sank.

I tried to keep my composure while continuing to work that day, but I couldn't. The news of José passing away hit me hard.

José, mayor of Manati, Puerto Rico, was always full of life and was such a kind, attentive and loyal friend. I started to recall all the things we shared together since our childhood

days and I couldn't help but cry and ask why? Why lose a friend, a brother so early in life?

Dealing with loss is never easy and confronting your mortality is even worse. As I get older I realize that death is an integral part of life, but dealing with loss never gets easier.

Since the sudden passing of my mother almost four years ago, I had not experienced such sorrow.

I checked the last communication I had with José during a recent visit to Puerto Rico. We had set up plans to get together but it didn't work out. My last message to him: "Will do it next time."

Jose's death reminded me that in life tomorrow is not guaranteed. It may sound cliché but you do not have to wait another day to tell important people in your life that you love them and that you care for them.

Do not neglect your time on earth as you never know when it is going to end.

While the death of my friend has forced me to deal with my mortality it has also given me the opportunity to reflect on how lucky I was to have a friend like him. There were so many firsts that I did with him: first sleepover as kids, first salsa concert, first university visit, first of many other things. There was never a dull moment with José and every interaction I had with him simply made life a little better. I am sure all of those who knew him shared this with him as well.

As things settle back in place and the journey of life continues, I am making sure to live my life to the fullest and enjoy the many gifts life has to offer. I will forever miss my friend and I am certain we will see each other in the next life.

May you rest in peace, José Rafael Román Rosado and the rest of the crew on board.

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*(Photo attached of José Rafael Román Rosado and Fernando I. Rivera on a high school graduation trip.)*

