

Comic Giraldo's death leaves a void

By Howie Nave

I first got the message from New York comic Joe Starr on his Facebook page this past Monday that comedian Greg Giraldo was in the hospital after an accidental overdose at a New Jersey hotel Saturday.

On Tuesday, I heard that Greg was breathing on his own and sent him a text and a Facebook message joking that if he wanted to cancel his gig in Jersey there was probably an easier way to get out of it.

By Wednesday he was dead.



Greg Giraldo
and Howie Nave

I was at home sleeping when Nancy called to tell me that Greg had passed away. I'm still stunned.

Barely a month ago comedian Robert Schimmel passed away at the age of 60 from injuries sustained in a car accident.

Greg was 44.

The comedy circle is a very small one so word spread very quickly. I posted on FB that this sort of thing isn't supposed to happen until one is in their 70s when friends close to you

are expected to pass. Not now and not at age 44.

I wasn't as close to Schimmel as I was to Greg, mainly because Greg at the time I first met him was still doing clubs while Schimmel was doing theaters. I knew Schimmel, but was introduced to him through other comedians.

I knew of Greg when I first started doing stand-up in the late '90s but didn't get to work with him until I moved up to Tahoe in 2001 when The Improv first opened at Harrah's. Greg was booked shortly after and came up here four times. When he started doing those roasts on Comedy Central his career really started to take off. And then this year when he was a judge on NBC's "Last Comic Standing" he was introduced to a whole new audience.

But comedian Jon Stewart said it best when he said Greg was one of those guys you looked forward to hanging out with at the comedy club. You knew you were going to have a fun week when Greg was booked with you. And that was so true because it was offstage where Greg really cracked me up.

But he did more – helping to perfect my craft by giving me pointers and some tag lines for my jokes to give them more of a punch. The coolest thing however was that he said if I gave him a tape, he would get it over to Conan (O'Brien) to get on his show (back when he was on NBC pre-Tonight Show). He was truly one of the good guys.

Greg liked to gamble and one week did so much that when he returned home to New York City he called and asked me to please tell Harrah's to quit sending him free room reservations because his wife would wonder why he was getting these free offers. I told him that Harrah's had installed a miniature slot machine over at Harvey's Arcade just for his kids so they too could start gambling.

I have so many memories of Greg, but mainly that he was always a great guy to just hang with and that when he was booked up

here I knew it was going to be a fun week. Today I played clips from some of my favorite Greg Giraldo bits on the radio and all I kept thinking to myself was I wonder what nuggets of genius the world will never get to hear now because he's gone.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.