

October 1, 2003

Dear Friends,

Please forgive the lateness of my letter and its accompanying request, and please also forgive its electronic means of delivery if you are receiving this by e-mail. Though too tedious to go into here, the reasons are valid.

To begin, I would like to say that this is first and foremost a letter of love written on behalf of myself and my older brother, Will Downs.

In the 27 days following Will's "Time to hit the flip side" e-mail, I supported him in his final decision to say good-bye his own way. It was a beautiful gift to be with Will at that time, and it was possible only because of the generous support offered by both of our wonderful families of friends.

I believe Will's dying process was a rare experience for all of us. The experience changed me profoundly. It was initiated by his amazing letter, but it happened the way it did because of who he was in his soul, and because of who all of you are. No matter in what form it came, know your presence and help was felt and appreciated. The gratitude I feel towards each of you is overwhelming.

I hope that this letter in some way conveys my true thanks for your unfailing and enlightened support.

The second part of this letter is more difficult to write, so please bear with me.

During Will's illness, The Saurus Institute gave us a gift of \$2,000 to offset the expenses that his illness incurred. This emergency money gave me the breathing room I needed to navigate through Will's illness, his death, and the subsequent closing of his home. I promised Will at the time that I would treat the gift as a loan and repay the money. This summer, because of some major life transitions that have been a long time coming, I will be able to do that.

After Will died, Mike Polcyn, a friend of The Saurus and previous supporter of Will's work, heard of this generous gift and offered his own support to The Saurus in the form of a \$10,000 Challenge Grant to seed a "Will Downs Memorial Fund." This grant will give The Saurus Institute money for projects that Will himself would have loved to undertake.

I am earmarking my check for \$2,000 towards this fund, and my request is that you consider helping us match Mike Polcyn's \$10,000.00 donation. Any amount will be appreciated.

I also want to make clear that if any of you prefer to donate to another project Will loved in place of The Saurus, that would be wonderful, too. If you've already made a donation, or plan to donate elsewhere in Will's name, please let me know, as I would love to hear about it and thank you personally.

I know that Will would have cringed at the thought of me writing this letter, even though it's written in his honor. We didn't have much training in graciously asking for help. But the generosity of those connected with The Saurus Institute, and Will's love of paleontology and the geological sciences make it essentially an imperative for me to make this request.

So with great respect and gratitude, I ask each of you to consider making a donation in Will's name if you possibly can.

And once again I thank you for all of your gifts throughout Will's journey.

Sincerely,



Karen Downs  
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The Saurus Institute is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support investigations into the history of life.

Funds from The Saurus have been used for research and for academic grants to graduate students, both within the U.S. and in foreign countries. Grants have funded fieldwork, lab studies, research expenses, translations, presentation expenses, publication expenses and travel.

All donations to The Saurus Institute are tax-deductible.

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