

Dads Eulogy:

First of all I want to thank everyone for the tremendous outpouring of love and support both in celebration of Dad and his amazing life, as well as in support of our loss and grief over losing someone that has always been larger than life.

Winston Churchill said "I am ready to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is prepared for the great ordeal of meeting me is another matter." Well there is no question that meeting Dad is often a great ordeal. Without question, Grandma, Grandpa, Uncle Fritz and Uncle Dave are welcoming dad, and heaven has just gotten a little louder and a more full of laughter.

To this day, when I am on board a boat sailing at night, and I am not on deck I find it nearly impossible to sleep. My mind races with a thousand things that could go wrong that only I could prevent. It is rare that I find myself in a crew where those on deck have my full and complete confidence. Growing up, I never felt better or slept more soundly when my Dad was at the helm. He has always had my complete trust, confidence and love. Sailing through a storm, driving through a blizzard, advising me with a major life decision. His was the hand that I wanted on the tiller.

Growing up, having Dad as Dad was like winning the lottery of Dads. Boisterous, Welcoming, Warm, Larger than life, Deep heart felt laughter. These were the words used to describe dad by almost anyone he met. He was larger than life.

He talked to anyone anywhere about almost anything. I remember watching a guy throwing garbage away at the yacht club and he walked up and talked to him about the garbage. Of course he did not pronounce it garbage but GarBage.... Dad always had a way of making everyone feel immediately welcome while still being an intimidating figure. He always blamed the Jesuits or Jebbies of helping him be conversant on all things while master of none. At any gathering he was easy to find. Usually in the center of the action, and all you had to do was follow the laughter.

He was often compared to other people you would admire. People would compare him to Norman Schwarzkopf or Boe Shembecker. I am sure that those gentlemen were flattered by the comparison. Almost everyone who met him would remember him, ask about him and talk about him to others. I always wondered why I didn't feel the same way about other peoples fathers. It was because Dad was a special.

He was not a softy. Far from it. He was a strict believer in the concept of work hard play hard. Unlike most who say it, he really meant it. If we screwed up, we knew it. A soft voiced admonition from Dad was worse than any yelling. When he did yell the door bell rang. He was not our friend he was our father. When he called a family meeting, we lined up in the front hall in order. When he whistled, which was of course loud, we came running. Some times he would whistle and when we came to find out what was wrong he told us he was just testing....

He created life markers. Consistent beacons that define childhood. Big breakfasts playing guess whats in the eggs on Sundays. Early morning wake ups blasting the Michigan fight song. Sailing, sailing sailing. The north Chanel, the mackinac experience.

Family gatherings. Big Christmas parties, loaded Egg Nog. etc... These large and consistent experiences helped each of us kids build our identity in what it meant to be one of the Joe Wenzlers.

He Taught Lessons Above all he believed in excellence at what you set out to do. He always set the bar high and was never surprised at your success. So it is no surprise that he took the role of father seriously. He was consistent in imparting wisdom and life lessons. These lessons have defined each of us in our own way, and have been a major factor in influencing my own behavior and life choices.

- **Rules allow us to know how to interpret the actions of others...** Then exploit. Dad went safely through life knowing that most people would not throw a lit M200 into someones boat, purposefully bump your car from behind at the stop sign, Spray a hose through your window, stick their fingers in the peanut butter, lick the top of ketchup bottles and then ask if you want some. These rules did not exist for Dad. Always the last car to pull in during a traffic jam. In practice this means that he imparted a certain flexibility to life that has kept me from seeking a safe path. Dad showed us that our options are limitless and only require more imagination.
- **Water off a ducks back.** Arguably the most important life lesson for me. Dad had a talent for paying close attention to the positive in a situation, while taking the negative in stride. If you tried to insult him you would always be unsuccessful. If anything he would find it amusing. This simple phrase showed how in his view of the world, the key was to focus on the positive, make the most of what you can with what you have, and importantly shrug off the negative. For him, he shrugged off the greatest challenges, an unexpected career change, a visit from the IRS, the need for a new heart, the myriad of challenges of his children, as if these were expected obstacles. He was not a glass is half full person, he was a glass is mostly full person. What a wonderful gift to see the world through that prism.
- **Important decisions always require courage. Don't let fear of the unknown impact your life.** When I got into the Coast Guard Academy I didn't want to go. Scared the hell out of me. I explained all of my options and why I wanted to go where I did. Dad told me it was my decision, but he also said it sounded like I was making my decision based on fear. Fear of speaking, fear of being in a play, fear of trying out for the team, whatever it was dad pointed out this simple observation. It changed the way I approached all major decisions and was always the right call. He was fearless and without any self perception.
- **He never aimed to impress.** He was never trying. He simply impressed as a natural by product of his natural countenance.
- **He set an expectation of big things.** Dad always thought big and taught us to do the same. He made it clear that he felt we would be wasting our potential if we did not think big. He was always talking about horsepower, and pointing out the things that we experienced were pretty cool. Then he always mentioned that they cost money. You like this huh? How do you propose to position yourself to have these things in your life.
- **He made us stand on our own two feet.** No hand outs. No free rides. Two sports, a job, extra curricular activities. No TV, get outside, this is my roof, not a democracy. In short, he was what a Dad is supposed to be
- **A corny sense of humor is a sign of high intellect:** This was a firm belief. Any opportunity to twist a word a phrase or a name. We all had nicknames. In my case I barely knew what my name was. Turkey Breath, Dirt Bag or DB, Bagwana, Algebramini, Etc... Breakfast was Breakust. Pain in your knee was kneemonia, How bees you. I bees good. Couldn't just be Jose, had to be Hose B. Juan in a million, etc...
- **He taught us songs.** Music, irreverence and harmony. Dad and I harmonized. We always sang when it was just the two of us driving somewhere. Dear Antoinette, Hava Nagela which became Harvy and Shiela. Countless others. I can't wait to pass this on to my kids as it has enriched my life completely.

I have spent the last several days coming to terms to the realization that my Dad is gone. Without question, we were blessed with the ability to have an appropriate send off. Dad made the decision to embrace his fate, and take the time he needed to have a proper good bye. He was in control to the end. That is a type of courage that I hope is instilled in me and is something that I feel deserves the deepest respect. We spent our last days with Dad surrounded by loved ones and family, the music and laughter that was always apparent when he was around, and thankfully we were able to take him out for one last sail with his brothers, sons and crew. In short, we were given the perfect opportunity to not leave things unsaid, and to be explicit and clear about how we felt about each other. I felt full and buoyed by this experience. And then he passed. It is much harder than I anticipated to feel the tremendous loss of his presence, council and strength. I hear him in my voice, I feel him in my mind, I feel him in my heart. He is always present. It is just going to take me some time to get used to this new, more subtle way of communicating. I love you Dad. I miss you. And I can't wait until our next conversation. As always I am sure you will give great advice and help to guide my hand. I will be blessed if I manage to pack the same amount of life into the years given to me.