

It's been many years since I've been to confession, but I have a confession to make to you all. Speaking before you today is the most difficult thing I have ever done. It is difficult because words cannot describe the devastation I feel by the loss of my father. It is difficult because I personally feel cheated out of time with him I feel I was owed. In my heart, I know this is selfish because God and nature have their own schedule, and our wishes and desires weren't considered when that schedule was developed. The loss of my father leaves an emptiness in me that I cannot express. Yet as heartbroken as I am, my grief is tempered by the fact that I know that he is better off where he is, as we all will be one day. So do not be afraid of death. What a caterpillar calls the end, the rest of the world calls a butterfly.

My grief is also tempered by knowing how incredibly fortunate I am to have had such a great man as my father. To be honest, the greatest difficulty I have today is trying to use the limited time I've been allotted to in any meaningful way celebrate the life of the greatest man I've ever met.

- So let us celebrate a profoundly committed husband, brother, father, grandfather, and uncle who worked tirelessly to provide his family with comfort and opportunities he himself could scarcely imagine as a child. In particular, let us celebrate a man whose day began and ended with the thought of and love for his wife.
- Let us celebrate a man of unmatched personal honor and integrity who could always be counted upon to do the right thing, because it was the right thing.
- Let us celebrate a devoted Christian who served Christ and practiced his faith everyday through his compassion, charity, and kindness. My father was a man who, like all of us, knew personal weakness and yet never held others' weaknesses and failings against them.
- Let us also celebrate my father's generosity. A check for dinner or drinks never sat for long on a table when Dave Ribar was present. Some of the best advice my father ever gave me was that there are two things in life you never want to be called: cheap and a liar.
- On that note, let us celebrate my father's terrific sense of humor and wit, and his willingness and ability to laugh at himself without hesitation. The loss of my father is especially painful because it was precisely in situations like this that he could always be counted on to lighten the mood with a funny comment or joke, usually an inappropriate one.
- Let us celebrate a son of immigrants who spent nearly all of his working life in the service and defense of a country he deeply loved.
- And finally, let us celebrate an outstanding and highly respected engineer who left his mark in the world. As a government contractor, I receive dozens of emails each day from Department of Defense clients. The signature of each of these emails contains a phone number that is part of something called the Defense Switched Network, a worldwide communication system that my father helped conceive and bring into existence.

At my father's retirement ceremony in 1997, he said something I had never heard before and that I try to take to heart every single day: Take your very work seriously, but never take yourself seriously. That honest sincerity, that openness, that approachability, that absolute lack of pretense or affectation was my father's defining quality. My Dad would willingly spend the same time, attention, and interest talking to his boss, a three-star Air Force General, as he would to the guy manning the hot dog cart outside his building. Or the random stranger on his beloved fishing pier in Nags Head, North Carolina. Or a 12-year old friend of mine on a frigid camping trip some thirty Februarys ago. My father had a tremendous influence on my friends and the friends of my brother and sisters because he was always approachable, always willing to listen, and because he took a genuine interest in their lives. He didn't talk to our friends as the often misguided teenagers they were. My father wasn't a wild extrovert by any stretch of the imagination. He was simply an incredibly kind and gentle soul who understood that each of us has value, each of us has something to say, and that each of us wants to be heard.

While working on this eulogy at my father's desk, I can across some novelty business cards that he had printed up that had this saying printed on the back:

I AM FULLY AWARE
MY YOUTH HAS BEEN SPENT
THAT MY GET UP AND GO
HAS GOT UP AND WENT
BUT I REALLY DON'T MIND
WHEN I THINK WITH A GRIN
OF ALL THE GREAT PLACES
MY GOT UP HAS BEEN

I couldn't possibly sum up my father's attitude on life any better than that.

So in closing, let us celebrate a wonderful, meaningful life full of accomplishment, adventure, and most importantly, love. My father wasn't a saint. He wasn't without the weaknesses and failings we each have. But no one who knew my father ever doubted for an instant how much he cared for the people around him and how much he loved life. So let us celebrate the life of this lion of a man. And in the words of Marcus Aurelius "Let men see, let them know a real man, who lived his life as it was meant to be lived."