

Eulogy for William F. Healey, Jr.

Remarks of WHH Rees for Bill Healey at the Cody-White Funeral Home in Milford, Ct, on March 15, 2013

I come to praise, as best I can, a famous man, my cousin, Bill Healey; famous not in the eyes of CNN or of Time Magazine, but in the eyes of his family and friends.

During our many lunches together over the past eight years, he never spoke of politics, or of stocks and bonds, or of income taxes, but only of his family and friends, mostly of his family, of his lovely wife, Marie, and of his distress of burdening her, as both were up several times each night by an errant gland that made him very cold and then very hot, and, when confined to the Willows Nursing Home, by her having to travel a great distance, racked with arthritic pain, to see him. She was a great help and inspiration to him, and he loved her dearly. He spoke with love and pride of all his children, his son, Bill, an accomplished accountant and stock investor; of his daughter, Kay, who helped deaf people at a school for the deaf; of his son, David, the Supervisor in the Superior Court Operations Department; of his daughter, Ann, a medical assistant at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center; and of his son, Patrick, an avid Boston Red Socks fan. When the thought of Ann crossed his mind, his buoyant smile expressed far better his appreciation for her care and consolation during his sickness than anything he said. He was very proud of his grandchildren, of Ann's three children, Joseph Jr., Meghan and Kevin, and Bill's son, Daniel, but especially of Meghan, who is now married and expecting his first great grandchild in September, God willing, the news of which thrilled him immensely. There was a lilt in his voice when he talked about the joy visiting Marie's daughter and his step-daughter, Dominique Mathieu, in Montreal. He spoke kindly of all his nieces and nephews and of his great sorrow for his disabled grand niece, Daniele Crawford, for his sick brother-in-law, David Curran, and more recently for his sister-in-law, Sonia, and his brother, Jim. And then there were the many friendships he formed at Hopkins, at Yale, at the UConn Law School and through his real estate activities. He kept up with many buddies near and far and told me much about them, many times. His basic goodness permeated his every comment. This happy man had no use for gossip or an unkind word, although he did wish Yale would field a better football team. Nor was there ever a complaint of his COPD, his heart problems, his deteriorating eyesight or his broken hip. About them he had a serene resignation as though they were the will of God.

Standards were high in the Healey household. His father was elected to Phi Beta Kappa at Yale and The Order of the Coif at the Yale Law School, both high scholastic honors, and was a very successful lawyer. Were Uncle Bill my father, I would have been a dentist. And his younger brother, Jim, was the Captain of the Yale Golf Team and the Connecticut Amateur Golf Champion twice. Bill told me once when he, Jim and brother John, also a very fine golfer and baseball player, were young men and playing golf together, on the fifth hole they invited him to go home. About that time I was a caddy and allowed to play golf on Mondays free. I bought three golf balls, took three swings and lost all three and a week's worth of tips. I decided then and there it was a rich man's sport, that one great golfer in the family was enough and never set foot on a golf course again. But not Bill Healey, oh no, not Bill! He practiced law and played golf with gusto, with a *joie de vivre* that was contagious. Not only that he was a fine tennis player and loved horse racing.

His kindness was on display, after his father had a crippling stroke: he installed an elevator in their home so his father could be moved more easily. And after his father died and the large homestead was too much for his mother to manage, he helped her move to a smaller home near his, so that he could look in on her each day, which he did for years until she too died. Aunt Helen was deeply grateful.

He had another wonderful quality: he was a gentleman. His neighbors recognized him as such; one said: "He made me feel special". That sentiment was commonly conveyed by the nurses at the Willows, where the consensus was "He is a doll", which surprised him as no one ever called him that. Once, when I was there, a nurse came in, sat herself on the foot of his bed and carried on a twenty minute conversation with him as though he were a long lost friend. He had a knack for bringing the best out of people. This true son of the old sod took delight in his Irish heritage with its Guinness stout and its "Danny Boy", sung by John McCormack and would be the proudly wearing the Green in two days, were he allowed to do so. He would be pleased to know the "Bells of Ireland" is written on a ribbon attached to flowers here. This gentle man, this humble man, this good friend was the model for me, as I had no older brother.

It is thus appropriate for us to consider a few lines of John Donne: "...when [the Church] buries a man, that action concerns me; all mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; ... [and] God's hand is in every translation..." And so dear son and brother, dear husband, father and step-father, dear grandfather and great grandfather, cousin and friend, as you are being translated "into a better language" may the dear Lord have mercy on your soul and may the angels guide you home to heavenly Jerusalem.