

Eulogy for Raymond Donald Battocchi, November 13, 2020

I am honored and consider it a privilege to have been asked by Minda to deliver Ray's eulogy today. There is a hole in my heart, and I know in each of yours. Hopefully, remembrances of what he meant to us will help provide some measure of comfort. Above all, let's remember Ray's admonition to Brian that he wanted us to celebrate his life and not mourn.

Having Ray as my older brother was the gift that kept on giving. He was always a legendary figure. Many times in my life teachers, coaches, lawyers and others would ask me if I was Ray's brother. I would proudly say yes, and they would invariably have something good and encouraging to say about his intelligence, athleticism, leadership skills, strength or fearlessness. This was one way he opened doors for me in elementary school, middle school, high school, prep school, college and professionally as an attorney. Being Ray's brother made me feel very special.

Ray was an extraordinary scholar and athlete and natural born leader; he had a storied record as a student and a distinguished career as a lawyer in serving the public and in private practice. He was president of his high school class; co-captain of his Amherst football team, earning all-New England honors; and recent president of his college class and its 55th Reunion chair. He received numerous honors at the prestigious University of Virginia Law School, including head of his moot court society and president of the McLean bar. This year, my Amherst class was preparing for our 50th Reunion. We had a committee of over 10 people working on the project and were on a Zoom call when a college administrator asked me if I was related to Ray. She was effusive in praising Ray for his organizational and leadership skills. He managed his last Reunion without a team to help him.

You could count on Ray to do what was right, even if it were hard or dangerous. He was a proponent of justice and, after law school, served as an election observer in Mississippi in 1968, not for the faint of heart in those days.

Ray practiced law at a very elevated level. Fresh out of law school, he was hired by the Department of Justice, where he was assigned to argue the Government's position in cases before the Courts of Appeal, only the Supreme Court is higher. My mother, father, and I would attend his arguments whenever we could. Appellate work is very different from most of the lawyer shows we see on television because the attorney arguing an appeal needed to have complete command of all of the testimony and evidence during the trial as well as knowledge and instant recall of dozens of cases that may somehow be influential in how an appeal will be decided. Ray excelled at this.

Ray was also a trial lawyer, an entirely different skill set, for the Department of Justice in cases where the Government was being sued. One such case was in 1976 in Alton, Illinois, which my parents traveled to watch. There was a letter in Ray's office from a lawyer in that case. He wrote that Ray's cross-examination was some of the finest and most telling he had ever seen. "You're a good lawyer Ray; but even more importantly, you're honorable. Those two qualities combined are rarely found. I can honestly say that I am proud to have participated in this trial with you and am proud to know you."

One of the family's happiest memories was seeing Ray argue a case in the Supreme Court of the United States, which he won! Imagine how fulfilled my folks were, our dad an immigrant and

our mother the daughter of an immigrant, seeing their son achieve such professional success and recognition at the highest level of his calling. But what was the case about? Corporations fighting over money? Some esoteric land dispute? No! Ray took the case without pay because he was a champion of free speech, liberty, and justice. The District of Columbia government had a law regulating protests near embassies, of which D.C. has more than a few. The law said that protesters could not carry controversial signs within 500 feet of a foreign embassy, and Ray's clients were denied permission to do so. The Supreme Court struck the law down as a violation of the First Amendment. I will always remember one sentence in Ray's written argument which I thought was insightful, clever, and entertaining. He said that due to the 500-foot rule, the closest a group could get to one embassy was in front of a McDonald's. Their sign, "Stop the Killing," could lead the public to believe they were either vegetarians or eccentric.

All of these accolades, honors, and accomplishments are nice but are not the measure of Ray as a person or what we the family think of when we remember him.

Ray was a dependable, compassionate, and loving son, nephew, brother, husband, uncle, stepfather, and grandfather. A man can give no more. Ray shouldered the responsibility of being a single parent with his customary single-mindedness and determination to do his best, all the while maintaining a very active law practice. But his devotion to Adam and Brian took precedence over his love for practicing law, so that at one point, he became a stay-at-home dad to spend more time with them.

When Ray built something, he built it to last. His attention to detail and workmanship was renowned and not always appreciated by his volunteer helpers. After he moved to Great Falls in 1976, he decided to build a barn. Not just a barn to accommodate the one or two horses he expected to have eventually, but a barn big enough for cars, tractors, potential living quarters, and also horses. Dick Shea was the neighbor who sold Ray the property. Dick and another neighbor or two joked about the lawyer (Ray) down the road who was going to build a barn. Ray, of course, had the last laugh, as he and various relatives completed a large and indestructible barn in 1977. I was amazed because Ray had never built anything like that before. After 43 years, the barn "that lawyer" built is still standing.

Other building projects were a two-level playhouse for the kids, which is still holding forth in the woods, and a doghouse, built with the same level of precision as a home for royalty, that was so heavy a tractor was needed to move it.

Ray grew up in a city, but his father's love of hunting and fishing turned Ray into an outdoorsman. He carried this over with Adam and Brian and looked forward for many summers to riding ATVs (or was it dirt bikes?) with them in the wilds of Tennessee.

Ray was tough; just ask anyone who played football with or against him. Senior year in college, he played the season with mononucleosis and lost 35 pounds. But he finished the season on the field. As tough as he was, he was also sentimental. He was a fixture at high school, college, and law school reunions, often in leadership roles. Ray was a proud graduate of UVA Law, and Julia remembers a generous financial contributor as well. Ditto Amherst and political campaigns.

When the children were still at home, we had Sunday supper together almost every week. Ray would prepare massive amounts of meat after carefully marinating the charcoal briquets in a

tsunami of lighter fluid, imparting precious notes of petroleum to whatever was being grilled. But the important part was being together as family and sharing experiences.

Our children recall Ray as being very generous with his time and giving them unique, fun experiences, such as tractor and horse rides, playing in the swimming pool, and Super Mario on his computer. Also something that was frowned upon in Arlington where we lived: target and skeet shooting. Keith recalled that even though he couldn't follow all of it, he loved hearing Ray entertain the crowd with tales of his court cases over dinner. Ray would regale us every week, and I might gently add that some of these soliloquies could be a tad tedious, even for lawyers. Yes, these were fond times to remember etched in our collective memories.

After a brief courtship of 11 years, Ray married Minda 14 years ago. One of my favorite photos is of them leaving the courthouse on a motorcycle. Although their wedding itself was just for immediate family, they subsequently hosted a celebration that brought together their friends and family. You could tell during the toasts that everyone was genuinely happy that you two had found each other!

Minda not only tolerated Ray's marathon motorcycle vacations but became his biking partner for years. Few others would have humored him for so long! Minda and Ray were a great partnership, a joy to observe. They designed a beautiful home, saw Adam and Brian establish their own families, and held an annual Christmas party that was eagerly awaited each year. Most importantly, they were there for each other. In the last three months, we know that Minda had the worry and exhaustion of dealing with Ray's illness and still managing to remain as positive as possible under the circumstances. Minda, you brought great joy, love, support, happiness, and stability to his life, and we are forever indebted. And Sandra you also provided professional care when Ray returned home from hospital stays.

Sarah and Sandra, you gave Ray the opportunity to expand his parenting skills, which he relished. Thank you for the love you gave him.

Our family tradition was to have Christmas dinner at Minda and Ray's house every year. Minda, with the help of Sarah and Sandra, always prepared many delicious courses. Ray only had one job—to cook the turkey. Every year he would fail to remove the bags of gizzards and other parts from inside the turkey before putting it in the oven, finding them only when it was time to carve. It was so predictable that our kids took bets on whether he would finally remember. One year in a preemptive strike, Scott went so far as to include in his holiday card a drawing of a turkey and plastic bag for the gizzards and a graphic demonstrating how to remove them. Sure enough, Ray did not. When I showed Ray Scott's card, he seemed surprised. The one year that the pouches had been removed, I was astonished and about to compliment Ray on that when I learned that Minda had prepared the turkey, so his record remains intact!

Ray adored Maggie and was really excited about the impending arrival of Kathleen.

When our beloved Aunt Lena was in need of care and a place to live, Ray took her and her live-in caregiver into his home for the remaining 2-plus years of her life. Adam and Brian treated her as a wise elder and she viewed them as the children she never had.

When my father was in the hospital during his last month, Ray, my mother, and I took turns being with him around the clock. Ray would take the night shift and did so for weeks. We came

full circle with Ray. Minda and Brian took turns, so he was never alone. I know that Adam would have happily done so as well but hospital rules for COVID prohibited him. When we were gathered around Ray in the ICU a week ago Wednesday, a nurse said to me, "We don't see this," referring to all the family members who were there for him.

I have never met another man who possessed Ray's unique talents, and I doubt that I ever will. Proud and confident, yet humble. He had a lot to be proud of but was down-to-earth and modest.

I want to close with the exact words Ray used in the eulogy he gave for our father in 1992:

Your body will not be with us anymore. But your spirit will continue to live, both in the many precious memories you leave behind and in what you have given to those of us who follow you.

Now it is time for us to carry on without you. It is time for us to try to do what you would have done, and would want us to do, on an occasion like this. It is time for us to look forward with hope and optimism, instead of backward with grief. The qualities you have passed on will help us try to do so.

We love you, Ray. Goodbye, and thank you.

Ron Battocchi