

Farewell, my friend

BY MARY JO MARTIN
Editorial director



In the fall of 1998, my then-colleague Molly Frank-Stewart told me we'd been invited to visit a client in Pennsylvania. This wasn't an ordinary client meeting. It was the Leones of Bonney Forge. And it was football season. Molly and I flew in on Friday afternoon and were brought to a huge cookout at Rick's home. There we got to meet Rick, his sisters Liz and Sue and brother-in-law Chuck, along with a lot of their friends. The next day they all took us to

Penn State to watch the Nittany Lions take on my Iowa Hawkeyes. It was an incredible fall day at Happy Valley, as we tailgated and tossed a football around before and after the game. We capped off the weekend with a festive dinner for the whole group at a local Italian restaurant. There was much laughter. And wine.

It was a weekend none of us ever forgot. And in those few days, Rick, his entire family and the Bonney Forge team became so much more than clients. They became my lifelong friends.

In the ensuing years, I've always looked so forward to seeing Rick and his great smile at industry events. We'd carve out some time to hang out and catch up. And just like that first weekend, there was always plenty of laughter.

We had just recently talked about getting together this month when I venture to Houston for the PVF Roundtable meeting. So it was unimaginable when I got an urgent email on April 17 from Rick's trusted colleague Sandy asking me to call her immediately. It was one of those messages that give you the feeling in the pit of your stomach that something is wrong. I dialed her right



away, and could hear the anguish in her voice. It was Rick. He had died very suddenly while in Atlanta.

My heart just dropped and my mind was racing. How could that bigger-than-life personality be gone? Memories came flooding back of so many wonderful times. And then a lot of regret for letting the busy-ness of life keep me from doing a better job of keeping in touch in between meetings and conventions. I always just assumed there would be a next time, but now there isn't.

A few days ago, Cate Brown and I ventured to Delafield, Wis., to pay our respects at the services and burial for Rick at St. John's Northwestern Military Academy. Rick had graduated from the Academy in 1975, and it was a special place that he loved and cherished. It was such a touching tribute to a life well lived. There were, of course, tears. But, as always, there was laughter.

It was evident to everyone who knew Rick what an incredibly talented and tenacious man he was. An outstanding athlete in high school and college — who was nicknamed "The Bulldog" — his life was changed forever in a tragic diving accident in 1979 that left him paralyzed. But instead of letting his wheelchair set limitations on his life, Rick relentlessly pushed the boundaries to excel in skiing, swimming, scuba diving, wheelchair basketball, hunting and many other hobbies. He traveled the world, always up for new adventures. He was a talented businessman, holding senior positions at Bonney Forge over the last 27 years — most recently as executive vice president

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Leone

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of sales and marketing. He lived each day with gusto and an amazing attitude. And above all, he absolutely cherished his family.

But I learned so much more about Rick listening to tributes during the service from a number of people who knew him best. He provided scholarships for students to attend St. John's, two of whom are graduating this year



and have already signed letters of intent with major universities.

He also bought countless wheelchairs for others less fortunate. In 2009, Rick was honored when St. John's dedicated the Rick Leone Stadium, complete with permanent bleachers and a press box. Also that year, he received the "Honored Old Boy" award from the Old Boys Alumni Association of St. John's. Ac-

ording to the school, "This award was given in recognition of overcoming a life-changing event to 'Be Somebody,' as demonstrated by his



outstanding personal contributions and accomplishments in international business, philanthropy and as a spokesperson for all physically challenged individuals with the message, "Don't Ever Give Up!"

Erma Bombeck once famously said "When I stand before God at the end of my life I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and that I could say "I used everything you gave me." Rick surely did live his life to the fullest every day, used his God-given gifts well, and touched lives of thousands of



people around the world.

And he taught us lessons until the very end. His sudden death much too young is a poignant reminder to never waste a day, never put off pursuing your happiness, never take it for granted that you'll have another opportunity to tell someone how much they mean to you, and never let the hand that you've been dealt keep you from attaining your dreams.



On behalf of everyone at TMB Publishing, our sincere condolences go out to the Leone Family, the entire Bonney Forge organization, and all those who had the privilege of knowing Rick. Farewell, my friend. ■

High Flight

By John Gillespie Magee Jr.

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;

Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth of sun-split clouds — and done a hundred things you have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and swung high in the sunlit silence.

Hov'ring there I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung my eager craft through footless halls of air.

Up, up the long delirious, burning blue, I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace where never lark, or even eagle flew

And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod the high untresspassed sanctity of space, put out my hand and touched the face of God.