

Grandpa's eulogy

On November 9, 2017 my grandfather was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer – where is not important. He died in the earliest hours on November 11, two days later.

This was the eulogy I read at his funeral

My grandfather, Roy, was a man of incredibly few words. He was masterful, through practice I'm sure, of using as few words as possible to infuse a conversation with humor or wisdom. His one-liners were sharp, witty, and rare.

There is simply too much to say about grandpa, Zayde, dad...Roy to condense it into as few words as he would like.

Roy was an outstanding man. He was a true patriarch, as he guided not through force but through examples and exploration. He rarely had a negative thing to say about situations, even when things were astoundingly tough. The only time I can ever remember him really complaining is when he would have Parmesan on his pasta when he ordered it without cheese. Even then he would usually just say "this isn't how I ordered it" and then offer to just scrape it off.

He had the power of contentment. The deep seated strength of enjoying things exactly as they were. Food was good enough to be "okay" and he would enjoy it for what it was and for the company he ate it with. In this world where we want more and better, he found quality of people more important than quality of things.

Grandpa also had an entrepreneurial spirit that has shaped much of our family. We remember his wife, my grandma, as an outgoing Realtor. We often forget the very reason the Barts ended up in Tucson is because Roy came out here to start his own printing company. He paired up with a number of people, many of them unscrupulous, and still managed to land on top while that industry was still strong. Even though these now-former associates stabbed him in the back or treated him poorly, he never said anything bad about them. It was always just a point of the story, without grudge.

A number of his grandchildren and his daughters have this spirit in them and have chased the entrepreneurial dream he instilled in our DNA. The desire to create something that helps others has never left our family.

He loved to be active. He was an avid golfer and always made sure my uncle Frank brought his clubs with him when he came to visit. The past decade they were the only two smokers in the family, and they shared a kinship which, quite frankly, I found comforting. Having someone to share your vice with is a wonderful thing.

Roy was comfortable with who he was. He was quiet and, no matter how much ribbing we gave him for being the polar opposite of my gregarious grandma, he just smiled about it. One time, [sister in law] Tara was driving to the Science Museum with Grandpa and her son Luca. Luca was being obnoxious as only an Arriola child can be and Tara, exasperated, said "Ugh, I'm sorry he's being so loud."

Grandpa said "Well, he doesn't get that from me..."

Another time, while having potted chicken (which Grandma called chicken cacchitore) we were sorting out who was getting which pieces. Grandma liked dark meat, so she got that. Mom asked what cut Grandpa wanted. "I'm a breast man," he replied.

He wasn't just always ready for a one liner, though. He was deeply passionate about his family and listened intensely. For instance, he helped my aunt Mindy pick out her wedding dress. When she tried on the dress they ended up buying, he simply said "That one. I like that one."

It would be easy to attribute that to simple aesthetics. That he just thought it looked the best. Knowing Grandpa, though, I would bet that he liked it because he saw Mindy react better to it. He heard the excitement in her voice as she went to try it on next and he saw it in her posture and face once it was on.

He enjoyed doing what he could. When [cousin] Tara would visit, he would make steak, potatoes, and schmaltz. Partially because it was one of his favorite dishes, partially because it was (and is?) Tara's favorite dish, and partially because it's one of the few complete meals he can make in its entirety, from start to finish. Granted, it's a delicious dish and having Tara visit is always a great reason to indulge. That's actually one tradition we still carry on to a degree. Tara comes? We eat.

Grandpa and Tara always had a special bond, maybe because she's the first grandchild. She would make fun of him for his difficulty in hearing the past few years and he enjoyed the twists in what he misheard. When he was sick, she said "I hear you had a lot of visitors." He only heard "I heard you had a

lot of sitters” and the confusion was palpable. He tried to piece together this seemingly bizarre statement and understand how sitters fit into the situation.

Grandpa also invented the world’s first child-proof drawer. He jury-rigged a rubber band over the candy drawer to keep the likes of Tara from raiding it. To this day I don’t know how he managed that one.

I mentioned earlier Roy’s distaste for cheese, even so much as to get plain breadsticks when we went to the family haunt, Mama Louisa’s. A little oil and a sprinkle of parmesan was just too much for him.

He used to be quite the curd enthusiast though. He told a story of how he used to love cheese so much he carried a chunk of it in his pocket and would snack on it. This happened daily for years until one day he got sick from it. I don’t know if this was before or after the FDA started requiring pasteurization of cheeses, though it’s a fun thought to consider. From that day on, though, Roy was vehemently against cheese. Not on spaghetti, not on meatballs, not on sandwiches. He even eschewed pizza. Pizza!

He was so devoted to his family, though, even when we got massive amounts of pizza from New York Pizza (best in town, don’t challenge me, I will fight with you on this), he would find something he liked just to be with us all. Invariably it was a meatball sub, no cheese.

Roy wasn’t religious but he still maintained some traditions. They didn’t serve meat and milk at home, so much so that he had soda bottles delivered instead of milk bottles. This was such an ingrained

tradition that when Mindy was served milk with meat at a friend's house, she was repulsed.

Grandpa was one of two people who joined me for my birthday lunch this year and I got to see his love of life firsthand. He intimated to me that he was ready to start dating again after being single for a few years. I told him he needed to get out and start playing the field, which he just shrugged to. I plied my brain, trying to think of a spry septuagenarian to set him up with, and just couldn't. I suggested he prowl the casino for a mate he had something in common with. Smoking and slots, that would always have been a good start for him.

Today we lay him to rest. In his eyes he would see this as no more fuss, no more bother, no more worries. Mama Lousia's and El Molinito will have fewer orders to modify. The casino will have one less patron.

Our family, though, lost a source of humor, of wisdom, and of joy. His sharpness, which he had literally up to his last day, will be missed. His ability to just be able to sit back, bask in the activities of family, and spread joy through his resulting smile will leave a hole in our family. His understanding of others and hesitance to speak poorly of people will stay with us. His love of family and enthusiasm to spend time with everyone he loved will never leave us.

Today we remember a quietly brilliant man who was strong in his simplicity. Goodbye, Grandpa.