

**Remarks of William J. Bowe
At the Memorial Lunch for His Brother
Richard Gwinn Bowe (1938-2019)**

The Cliff Dwellers
200 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL
Saturday, October 12, 2019

Welcome and Introduction

On behalf of Dick's children, Anson Bowe and Alexandra Bowe DeRosa, I'd like to welcome you all to The Cliff Dwellers and thank you for coming to join in our farewell to their father and my brother.

Alex and her husband James have travelled here from Toledo with their children Christopher and Charlotte.

Anson joins us from the Upper Mississippi River where he works as a pilot on a tugboat named, "The Captain Bowe." Not surprisingly, everyone calls him "Captain Bowe" and I'm impressed. In the Army, I was a lowly "Sergeant" and nobody called me "Sergeant Bowe." Most people called me, "Hey, you!"

Notwithstanding the distance Alex and Anson and some of you have travelled, this is a convenient and fitting place to gather. Over the years, Dick and I often shared lunch here with family and friends.

Today, family and friends of Dick's will again share a meal here and, in addition, again enjoy a wonderful view of Richard Bowe's favorite body of water, Lake Michigan.

The plan now is to proceed with lunch. After lunch, those of you so inclined will have a chance to recall memories of Dick you'd like to share with all of us.

Feel free to make more than one trip to the buffet table. You can start with the salad and cold appetizers and then go back for the main course. And, don't forget to leave room for dessert.

Dick, in his eating heyday, had a completely different approach to a buffet. He'd grab a plate, fill it with a bit of everything, including dessert, and then make repeated trips back for more. He knew it was time to stop eating only when it became hard for him to stand.

I'm not an expert in the human genome, but I believe Dick was afflicted with BED. For the ignorant amongst you, that's short for Buffet Eating Disorder. I also believe that Dick's BED was caused by a recessive gene in our Bowe Family's DNA. I say this with some confidence because the only person I know besides Dick who used to eat like him at a buffet was his only brother.

Anson, would you please offer prayers for your father before we begin lunch.

Buffet Lunch

Eulogy - Bill Bowe

Shared Birthdays Our parents always had a joint birthday party for Dick and me. They explained to us that we were born four years apart on June 22nd. When I turned 16, and needed a birth certificate to procure my driver's license, I was devastated to see I was actually born on June 23rd. It was a shock to realize that before then I'd been tricked into celebrating my birthday on Dick's birthday.

Years later, after I became a parent myself, I told myself that when my parents rolled my birthday into Dick's, they probably weren't intentionally favoring the older son over the younger, nor did they really plot to perpetrate a natal fraud on moi, a vulnerable, innocent child of tender years.

I came to believe Bill and Mary Bowe were at heart good people who had probably conducted a careful cost benefit analysis and were simply pursuing sensible economies of scale. After all, one large birthday cake costs less than two slightly smaller ones.

I arrived at this forgiving insight when I once sought to save money by telling Andy and Pat that I was going to buy them a large bag of Little Louie's French fries to share, not the usual two small bags. As I had been taught at their age, I explained that one large bag should be plenty for both of them, particularly, "...when children are starving in China!" In spite of the power of my logic, Andy flat out refused to share. Although I don't remember exactly what Pat said, it was probably something like,
"Pops, don't be mean, dude."

I abandoned my plan when they told me that if I carried out my threat, they would report me to Cathy.

Well, for my entire life Dick has remained four years older. Sadly, I finally have a chance to catch up.

Devotion to Family On a happier family note in Dick's case, I think first of his devotion to his twins, Alex and Anson.

He and their mother Ann Mather, who joins us today, maintained a good relationship over the years. This helped Dick have a continuing presence in their lives as they grew into their adulthood. And this was notwithstanding the distance between Chicago and Toledo and the fact that Dick didn't drive.

In recent years, as he dealt with bouts of rehabilitation from knee and heart surgeries, both of Dick's children were concerned, as I was, about his continued insistence on living alone. Of great help to him was Anson's and Stella Machado's ability to step in to help him deal with his medical, travel and other issues of the day as he carried on the independent life he desired.

Humor Dick was blessed with an extraordinary sense of humor and he always enjoyed making people laugh. For instance, he knew he would get a laugh out of me by telling me with an almost straight face that the worst day of his life was the day I was brought home from the hospital.

I sometimes didn't get the laugh when we were very young. One example brutally etched in my memory occurred when we were perhaps four and eight. At the time, we shared the same bedroom. After our parents turned out the lights, said goodnight and closed the door, Dick remained in his bed, and growled at me in the dark,

"I'm coming to get you now. I'm getting out of bed now. I'm crawling across the floor now. I'm going to fix your wagon now."

Instead of screaming as I did, I wish I'd been as mature as Pat is now and simply said to Dick,

"Bro, don't be mean, dude."

Well, that was all a long time ago and I'm not one to hold a grudge forever. I want you to know that last month, after only 73 years, I've decided to forgive him.

In later years, Dick grew to have at his command many different dialects, voices and impressions. They were all funny, accurate and impossible not to laugh at.

He carried this jovial bent throughout his entire life. When I recently talked to his wonderful caregiver at the end, Stella said that Dick and she were always laughing about something together. And this was notwithstanding the fact that at this point Dick was dealing with early stages of Alzheimer's disease.

Chicago Besides Dick's humor, I admired his love for Chicago, the city of his birth. I remember Dick as a teenager reading about the great architecture here and instructing me as to why we had the good fortune to live in such a wonderful city.

This devotion may help explain why Dick served as a dedicated employee of the City of Chicago for the greater part of his working life.

On the near West Side, close to where my father Bill, his brother Gus, and their sister Anna were born, there is a fountain at the triangular intersection of Division, Milwaukee and Ashland dedicated to author Nelson Algren. On it is inscribed a phrase from his prose poem *Chicago: City on the Make*. It reads,

“For the masses who do the city's labor also keep the city's heart.”

Dick in his labors as a City employee certainly helped “keep the city's heart.” He did this in his work for the betterment of race relations at the Commission on Human Relations, in his work dealing with police complaints for the Model Cities Program in Uptown, and in his work at the Board of Election Commissioners helping to conduct fair elections.

A different Chicago author, doing background research for a novel, once interviewed Dick in his Model Cities office in Uptown. The result in part was a fictional character named George Duffy. A passage in the novel about Duffy, if not the rest of Duffy's profile, surely describes Dick.

“... George knew Uptown like the back of his hand. Duffy roamed Uptown and made peace with problems...”

Sandy Bowe wrote me a nice note about Dick's political acumen and care for others. Sandy said:

“I respected Dick for his insight into city politics and his concern for the underprivileged.”

Dick was a committed political soldier ever since he started working for the City when Richard J. Daley's was mayor. His political enthusiasm and loyalty could never have been in doubt. For instance, I was astounded to learn that he had offered to resign his position with the Board of Election Commissioners when he found out I was going to run as an independent Democrat against a Daley-endorsed candidate for 43rd Democratic Ward Committeeman.

With his enthusiasm for the political arena, it's not surprising that he and his second wife Greta Edwards both enjoyed a deep immersion in neighborhood affairs during their time together.

Books Beyond his work for the City, Dick had a deep interest not just in Chicago and its history, but in the history of our times. Born in a pre-digital era, he satisfied these interests through a lifelong consumption of historical novels, histories and biographies.

When Anson and I recently went through the many books filling the bookcases in his apartment, I was struck by the sheer range and volume of his reading.

One result of Dick's reading is that no one ever got bored talking to him. Having consumed such an expansive array of facts over a lifetime, Dick was ready to rock and roll when the time called for it.

Walter Heffron touched on this when he recently emailed me to regret that health limitations prevented him from joining us. He recalled this conversation with Dick.

"I last talked with him at Kathy Bowe's memorial. In our discussion about family, I happened to mention my father's middle name was Salisbury, on which he expounded at length from his extensive knowledge."

And Ann Heffron observed in a note to me:

"Dick was such a unique individual or a 'character' as Grandma Lynch used to say. He was quite the raconteur, and his political stories were most informative, and sometimes very amusing."

On the other side of the coin, Tony Bowe made me laugh out loud when he wrote,

"I have many fond memories of fascinating conversations with him. He was ahead of his time: a conspiracy theorist before it became commonplace!"

The only two other family members I recall satisfying their intellectual curiosity by reading so extensively were my uncle Gus Bowe, my father's brother, and my uncle John Casey, my mother's brother-in-law and a cousin of my father's. God rest these two literate souls, as well as Dick's.

Reflecting on Dick's penchant for reading, permit me to offer a final prayer. Please bow your heads.

"Dear Lord, if you can see your way clear, issue Dick a library card. Also Lord, while I'm thinking of it, please waive his late return fees - in perpetuity. Amen."

Toast – Bill Bowe

Now, I'd like you to all join me by looking out at Dick's favorite body of water and raising a glass in his memory. Our mother's favorite toast celebrated HEW, the cabinet department created by President Eisenhower in 1953, boringly renamed in 1979 as the Department of Health and Human Services.

To our mother's favorite HEW toast I have added a suffix to recognize Dick's passing.

"To Richard Bowe: And to his Health, Education and Welfare in the great beyond."

Anson will now offer some thoughts about his dad, followed by his sister Alex, Stella Machado, and any of you who might wish to recall something of your own about Dick. Anson.