

Sent out on a
tape

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR PHIL RUPPENTHAL

OCTOBER 7, 1984

LONG AGO, A WISE MAN DEFINED A FRIEND AS A SINGLE SOUL,
DWELLING IN TWO BODIES. CERTAINLY, I REGARDED MY FRIEND PHIL
RUPPENTHAL AS A SOULMATE. OUR PATHS MAY HAVE DIVERGED IN LATER
YEARS, AND GEOGRAPHY MAY HAVE IMPOSED ITS BARRIER. YET MEMORY
HAS A WAY OF MELTING THE DISTANCES, AND IN MY MEMORY, PHIL WAS
NEVER FAR AWAY.

ON THE CONTRARY, HE WAS NO FURTHER THAN THE TWO BLOCKS THAT
SEPARATED THE DOLE HOUSE FROM THE RUPPENTHAL HOUSE IN RUSSELL,
KANSAS - BLOCKS TRAVELED HEAVILY IN BOTH DIRECTIONS BY BOTH SMALL
BOYS WHO GREW UP TOGETHER. I CAN SEE PHIL NOW, ON THE MINATURE
GOLF COURSE HE COOKED UP IN HIS BACK YARD OR, CHARACTERISITICALLY,
HIS NOSE FOREVER BURIED IN A BOOK. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, HE READ
JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY. HE WAS THE FAR
SUPERIOR SCHOLAR -- I WAS THE LITTLE BETTER ATHLETE.

- 2 -

YET WHEN THE WAR INVADED OUR LIVES, SEPARATING US PHYSICALLY AND PERMANENTLY STUNTING THE ATHLETIC ASPIRATIONS OF THIS FAIR-TO-MIDDLING BASKETBALL PLAYER, IT WAS PHIL WHO LAUNCHED A HOMETOWN CAMPAIGN TO MAKE SURE I RECEIVED THE BEST MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE. IT WAS PHIL WHO WORKED THROUGH THE LOCAL VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS TO LOCATE AND THEN FINANCE A SERIES OF OPERATIONS WHICH REPAIRED MY BODY AND RENEWED MY PSYCHE. PERHAPS MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE ON EARTH, IT WAS PHIL WHO SALVED THE WOUNDS OF WAR AND MADE PEACETIME AN OPEN DOOR TO THE CAREER OF PUBLIC SERVICE THAT FOLLOWED.

IN ALL THE YEARS SINCE, TO WHATEVER DEGREE I MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PAY BACK AT LEAST A LITTLE OF WHAT RUSSELL GAVE TO ME, I'VE NEVER FORGOTTEN WHO GAVE THE MOST. AND ALTHOUGH WE, LIKE SO MANY OTHER YOUNG MEN, WERE DIVERTED FROM OUR PREWAR PATHS, IN MY OWN MIND I REMAINED NO MORE THAN TWO BLOCKS AWAY FROM THE BRIGHT KID WHO WAS A CHAMPION DEBATER AND PRACTICALLY A FULLTIME FRIEND.

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TO YOU, NAGEL, TO CHRIS AND LYLE, AND ALL OF PHIL'S MANY FRIENDS: I KNOW THAT AT SUCH A TIME AS THIS, WORDS ALONE MAY SEEM INADEQUATE TO EXPRESS EITHER OUR SENSE OF LOSS OR THE GRATITUDE WE FEEL FOR HAVING SHARED IN SUCH A LIFE. AND YET, I HOPE THAT IT MAY BE OF SOME COMFORT TO KNOW THAT OTHERS ARE REACHING OUT TO SHARE YOUR GRIEF AND SUPPORT YOU IN AN HOUR OF SORROW. ELIZABETH JOINS ME IN SENDING YOU ALL OUR LOVE, AND REMEMBERING YOU ALL IN OUR PRAYERS. FOR WE, TOO, HAVE LOST SOMEONE VERY SPECIAL - AND WE, TOO, MUST FIND REFUGE IN OUR MEMORIES. FORTUNATELY, THEY ARE VIVID AND ENDURING. THROUGH THEM, PHIL WILL ALWAYS BE WITH US - AND WE WITH HIM.

*on the miniature
golf course he
cooked up in his
back yard or,
characteristically,*

Long ago, a wise man defined a friend as a single soul, dwelling in two bodies. Certainly, I regarded my friend Phil Ruppenthal as a soulmate. Our paths may have diverged in later years, and geography may have imposed its barrier. Yet memory has a way of melting the distances, and in my memory, Phil was never far away.

On the contrary, he was no further than the two blocks that separated the Dole house from the Ruppenthal house in Russell, Kansas - blocks traveled heavily in both directions by both small boys who grew up together. I can see Phil now, his nose forever buried in a book. One way or another, he read just about everything in the public library. He was the scholar - I was the athlete.

Yet when the war invaded our lives, separating us physically and permanently stunting the athletic aspirations of this fair-to-middling basketball player, it was Phil who launched a hometown campaign to make sure I received the best medical treatment available. It was Phil who worked through the local VFW to locate and then finance a series of operations which repaired my body and renewed my psyche. Perhaps more than anyone else on earth, it was Phil who salved the wounds of war and made peacetime an open door to the career of public service that followed.

In all the years since, to whatever degree I may have been able to pay back at least a little of what Russell gave to me, I've never forgotten who gave the most. And although we, like so many other young men, were diverted from our prewar paths, in my own mind I remained no more than two blocks away from the bright kid who was a champion debater and practically a fulltime resident in the Dole house at *#1035 Maple* Street.

To you, Nagel, as to your children, and all of Phil's many friends: I know that at such a time as this, words alone may seem inadequate to express either our sense of loss or the gratitude we feel for having shared in such a life. And yet, I hope that it may be of some comfort to know that others are reaching out to share your grief and support you in an hour of sorrow. Elizabeth joins me in sending you all our love, and remembering you all in our prayers. *For we, too, have lost someone*

*very special - and we, too, must find refuge
in our memories. Fortunately, they are
vivid and enduring. Through them, Phil
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