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Patrick Kennedy

Eulogy for Edward M. "Ted" Kennedy, Sr.



Delivered 29 August 2009, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Basilica, Boston, Massachusetts

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President and Mrs. Obama, distinguished guests, friends of my father, all of you:

While a nation has lost a great senator, my brothers and sisters and I have lost a loving father. When I was a kid, I couldn't breathe. Growing up, I suffered from chronic and crippling asthma attacks, and the medications I had to give to me were very difficult, and gave me a throbbing headache, every night that I had to use my bronchosol nebulizer.

Now, obviously, I wish that I did not have to suffer those attacks and endure those headaches; nor did I like having to grow up having a special non-allergenic, non-smoking room reserved for me whenever we went on family vacations.

But as I now realize years later, while asthma may have posed a challenge to my physical health, it propped up my emotional and mental health because it kept my father by my bedside. My dad was always sure to be within reach of me. And the side effects of the medication meant that he was always holding a cold wet towel on my forehead until I fell asleep again from my headache.

As far as the special effort that was made to ensure that I had a proper room to sleep in while we were on vacations as a family, this usually meant that I got the nicest room, and it also ensured that dad was my roommate. I couldn't have seen it at the time, but having asthma was like hitting the jackpot for a child who craved his father's love and attention. When his light shined on me alone, there was no better feeling in all of the world.



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When dad was away, I often didn't know when he would return. And as a young boy, I didn't know why he wasn't around at Christmas time when Santa came to the house. And I really wondered why Santa had the same two moles on his face that my dad had, and in the same place as my dad. Even after I figured out that that was my dad, and the costume finally came off, he still remained to me a magical figure.

As a little kid, I didn't look like much of a sailor, but my dad thought otherwise. You see, in sailing there are rules as well, much like government -- tireless, mundane rules that will surely make you sea sick. The rule was four people on a boat to race -- just four. But my dad, of course, dug around until he found a rule around the rule. Sound familiar to you [who] served with him in the Senate? Kids under 12 he found out, especially scrawny little redheads like me, could tag along.

My dad found that rule that meshed with his mission. He refused to leave me behind. He did that for all of those around the world who needed a special voice as well. When we raced in foul weather, there was lots of salt water and lots of salty language. Those experiences not only broadened my vocabulary, sure, but they also built my self-confidence.

I saw a lot of his political philosophy in those sail boat races. One thing I noticed was that on the boat, as in this country, there was a role for everybody, a place for everybody to contribute. Second, in the race, as in life, it didn't matter how strong the forces against you were so long as you kept driving forward. There was nothing to lose. Maybe you'd even come out a winner.

My dad was never bowed. He never gave up; and there was no quit in dad. And looking out in this audience, and looking out at the tremendous number of people who align themselves along the roadways, coming up from the Cape throughout Boston when we went around, who waited in line for hours to see his casket as they came through the JFK Library, there's no doubt in my mind that my dad came out a winner.

I want to thank all of you for the amazing tribute that you've given my father in the last several days. And I want to say just as proud as I was to be a crew on his sailboat, I am forever grateful for the opportunity to have worked with him in the United States Congress as his colleague.

I admit I used to hang onto his t-shirt and his coat sleeve on the Capitol when I was just a little boy. So, when I got a chance to serve with him on Capitol Hill, all I needed to do was set my compass to the principles of his life.

My father and I were the primary sponsors of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act which was signed into law last year.



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This bill represented not only a legal victory for 54 million Americans with mental illness who are being denied equal health insurance, but as one of those 54 million Americans, I felt he was also fighting for me to help ease the burden of stigma and shame that accompanies treatment.

I will really miss working with dad. I will miss my dad's wonderful sense of self-deprecating humor. When the far right made dad their poster child for their attack ads, he used to say, "We Kennedys sure bring out the best in people." And when he first got elected, and my cousin Joe was a member of Congress, and I came to Congress, dad finally celebrated saying, "Finally after all these years when someone says 'Who does that damn Kennedy think he is?' -- there's only a one in three chance they're talking about me."

Most Americans will remember dad as a good and decent hard-charging senator. But to Teddy, Curran, Caroline, Kara and I, we will always remember him as a loving and devoted father. And in the 1980 campaign, my dad often quoted Robert Frost at the conclusion of every stump speech to indicate that he had to go onto another political event. He would paraphrase the line from the *Road Less Traveled*: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, and I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep and miles to go before I sleep."

Well, dad, you've kept that promise both literally and figuratively to be your *brother's keeper*. Now, it's time for you to rest in peace. May your spirit live forever in our hearts, and as you challenged us so many times before, may your dream for a better, more just America never die.

I love you, dad, and you will always live in my heart forever.