

HE'S TRANSITIONED OVER

Following is a brief eulogy I gave at the funeral of my brother, Bob Farrell. He was a great guy, and he is now where great guys go.

Bob's childhood began just three years before mine, so my recollections will cover most of the time intended. In the beginning about all I can remember is playing with toy trucks in the bed and singing songs in the back yard. There was an awareness, though, that I had friends; there were sisters and there was a guy named Bud (that's what we called him in those days).

Somewhere toward the end of those toddler days the family moved to a different neighborhood - first on Campbell Ave and shortly after about a block away, to Leland Ave. 2535 Leland Ave. Emerging out from the fog of toddlerhood I was becoming more aware of the world around – and noticing how some of the things that were happening were making life complicated. One of those things was the way our Dad had to go out of town for work. When your place of work has no contract in the city where you live, you go where the work is. There was a stint in Wisconsin, another one in Knoxville (Tennessee), and another one in Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) – for months at a time. Another complication was underworld interference in labor unions. We've read about those things in more modern times. Well, in Chicago of the 1940s, it affected the building trades. Underworld figures were attending union meetings, trying to drive decisions in the wrong direction. Our Dad resisted those efforts. Learning Robert's Rules of Order, at one point he appealed the decision of the chair.

That was a dangerous thing to do. One night, parked outside the house at 2535 Leland with lights out, there was a car full of thugs waiting for our Dad to come home. What did Bob do? He went out the back door, down the alley, a few blocks further to where our Dad was – and told him about the danger. That prevented what otherwise would have been a disaster. Bob wasn't yet a teenager at that time, but he set in motion a trait that would carry forward through his entire life: he was a vital figure to have around when a rescue was needed.

A third factor that was complicating life was the landlord at 2535 Leland. He didn't like kids (at least other people's kids), and there were five of us. Eviction wasn't a legal option but, when he sold the place, the new owner had the legal right to force us to move away. Although our Dad earned enough to pay rent, there was a housing shortage in Chicago at that time. No place to be found. For a few months all seven of us (parents + 5 kids) lived with an aunt. Being only ten at the time, I was somewhat oblivious to the hardship (a hard-working Dad and a Mother doing everything possible to keep it all together, buckling under pressure from sources beyond control). To me at the time, the new neighborhood meant a different bunch of guys to play baseball and softball with. That's how almost all my free time was spent.

From my viewpoint during those years, it was a tremendous help to have an older brother. Seeing everything for the first time, I found this world to be a very confusing place. It was great to have a brother who would explain the things that were important at the time. Friends, jokes, songs. How to get along with girls. How to tease girls (to learn that, you start by teasing your sisters – and I'm afraid we did more than our share of that; to their everlasting credit, they didn't hold it against us). How to play softball or baseball in spring and summer, football in the autumn and winter. Wherever

there was a vacant lot, that was our diamond. For football in the autumn and winter all we needed was a street. The curbs on each side were the sidelines and, for goal lines, there were trees and lamp-posts. Bob was the gifted athlete. I was always a below-average athlete (still am and always will be), but I was always included in the games – because I was his brother.

Soon a place became available. We couldn't call it a house (a dwelling above a store front that was first a grocery store, then a saloon, then a laundromat). During a housing shortage you take it. We lived at 3601 N. Ashland. Another new bunch of guys for softball or baseball in the vacant lots and football in the streets (again from my limited perspective). We were there for three years before the family moved to Rockford Ill. By that time Bob was a high-school senior (yes, he played varsity baseball that year). No longer a child, and not much longer an adolescent – shortly after graduation, he became Marine Corporal Robert J. Farrell, battle-tested combat veteran. His modesty wouldn't let him talk about it much but, more than once, he was decorated for that.

During that time another life-long trait surfaced: courage and humor in the presence of adversity. That trait was obvious even to those who didn't know him for a long time, and hadn't seen him on many occasions. One of those persons is my wife, Cruz Maria. She really wanted to be here. Couldn't make it happen. She said, "he was a great man" – and she meant it. Another is my son, Mike. Although a computer science freshman (not a writer), on Friday he wanted to write something; this is what he came up with: "Your laughing spirit flows eternal from the skies."

During Bob's time in the Marine Corps, one writer who was becoming more famous was the old sportswriter, Damon Runyan. He wrote many things (one of his short stories became the basis for a successful Broadway musical, "Guys and Dolls") – but I want now to draw attention to one of his statements to the effect that

We'll all meet again some day in the "tavern at the end of the road"

I'd like all of us to take comfort from that thought because, for us at this time, it means that we aren't saying good-bye. We're saying good-night, Bob; we will meet again at the end of the road. In the meantime, we want to say thanks to you, for making us laugh so hard so often. Above all, we want to express our profound gratitude to God for leading you to the *HEAVEN* at the end of the road.