

William H. Cole III  
Memorial Mass  
December 7, 2009

I would first like to start by thanking each and every one of you for being here today for a man who touched so many lives. My mother, my wife, my children and I appreciate your prayers, your kind words, and your friendship these past few weeks. Now I know that this is a Catholic Church, but it's perfectly fine to laugh at the stories -- it's even okay to clap. Please don't cry, though, because I really need to find a way to get through this.

On behalf of my father, I'd like to first say that he would be very pleased with the turnout here. Were he standing before all of you right now, I'm sure he'd be asking for a donation to some charity or to a political campaign. He was always quite the fundraiser.

As most of you know, the last few years have been tough for him and for our family. Bill Cole was a proud man and watching him suffer -- even though he chose to do most of it privately -- was painful for all of us.

He hid his various ailments very well and most here probably don't realize that he was first diagnosed with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia in 1998. It should come as absolutely no surprise that he far outlived even the most optimistic expectations and he did so with his own flair. I'm not sure that there were many nurses at Mercy Hospital that didn't know my father by name. Not because he seemed to spend five days a week there, but because he took time to say hello to just about every person he encountered while there. His own medical issues mattered little to him -- he was more concerned about the people around him, particularly the other patients. He was always a people person, right up to the end.

Pop, as my kids called him, was clearly the most selfless person I've ever known. I was raised Catholic, but neither of my parents were. I don't have enough time today to explain that one, but needless to say when both my mother and I started going regularly to Church, my father converted.

When I decided I wanted to wrestle in high school, my father learned the sport. I don't think he missed a single one of my baseball games until I was playing in college -- and only then, after he had a car accident returning home in the middle of the night after we played a game in New York. I remember as a teenager looking out the back of the team bus on the way to places like

Youngstown, Ohio, or Valdosta, Georgia and seeing his car behind us. In college, I remember pulling up to the field in Rhode Island and seeing my father sitting in the bleachers. I'm not sure even mom knew he made that trip.

He was so many things to so many people. Bill Cole was a friend, a mentor, a boss, a brother, a father, a grandfather, and, most importantly, a loving, caring husband.

How many people here did he call "Kiddo"? It wasn't because he didn't know your name, he most certainly did. It was because he thought "Kiddo" was more personal than even your name. He was funny that way -- he wanted to put people at ease and spent the majority of his life doing just that.

He had a fantastic career at the First National Bank of Maryland with some neat jobs before and after his 30 year banking career. He had quite a few "kiddo's" throughout his life and truly loved to work with young people. I can't tell you how many people have told me over the years that my father got them on their way to a fantastic career of their own.

One note I found over the weekend on the Sun website summarizes the general "Bill Cole as boss" experience:

**My thoughts are with Bill's family. As one of the "Nifty 50" instore bankers hired by Bill and who began working for him 15 years ago today, I credit him with where I am today in my professional career. Bill was the person that said yes and found a way to get the job done. For those that worked as part of the team, you will remember how he would coin unique phrases to the projects he was charged with such as the "Nifty 50 and Pig in the Python." Bill's positive attitude and can-do spirit has been passed on to the many who worked with him. – Brad Garfinkel**

While he was so incredibly proud of his work -- and his work ethic -- he was always proudest of his wife and son. And then later, his daughter. He never called her his daughter-in-law. Michelle was his daughter the moment she entered our family.

I truly cannot tell you how great a husband he was to my mother. We don't have enough time, and I don't quite have the superlatives to describe his role as Jeanette Lockhart Cole's spouse.

It's funny when I think back over the last several years because it is clear to me that his greatest sense of accomplishment was his final career move: grandparent.

Pop picked "his girls" up from school every day for several years, fed them dinner, did their homework *wrong*, and provided them generations full of stories . . . some even true.

My daughter Chelsea still believes that Pop had a pet elephant and if anybody challenges that fact you can meet her in the parking lot after this service. My oldest daughter, Caitlin, loved those stories too particularly when pop would tell tall tales about his dog Spot. And then Will came along and used to drag Pop to the garage where they would sit in Pop's car and pretend to be driving to far and exotic places . . . like to bingo. Will loves to tell the story about how he got his name:

**"Jesus picked me out for mommy and daddy and then my Poppy named me William H. Cole V."**

Poppy absolutely did name him. Michelle called Dad and said "Pop, we're going to have a son and we want you to name him." Pop thought for about it one half of second and said "What's wrong with the fifth?" We should have known . . . he wasn't creative with my name, so he certainly wasn't going to be creative with my son's.

Perhaps the funniest was his constant insistence that he could handle the kids on his own. He was right -- they were always well protected in his care, even if he sent them home as babies with their diapers on backwards.

People know how close I was to my father, but our relationship was never built on words. He left the big conversations to me and my mother. For Dad and I, we didn't have to talk. We communicated in short statements and relied on eye contact to tell the real story. He loved me unconditionally and just being in the same space together was more powerful than any words could ever be. We attended more than 75 Ravens games together and some games we never said anything until we were walking home. Again, we didn't need to.

Some of you here today were there with us at the Super Bowl in Tampa in January, 2001. A few days before that Superbowl, Dad was admitted to Mercy with pneumonia. He had infection all over his face and was in miserable shape .

. . but he wasn't going to miss the Superbowl. He convinced the doctor that his health would wait until Monday, and on Thursday night he checked out of the hospital. We were in Tampa on Friday and let me just tell you that we partied like Rock Stars. He was sick as a dog, but he wasn't going to miss this opportunity for the world. Toward the end of the game, we were invited to return to the team hotel to celebrate. I looked at my father and thought there was no way. He said he could hang and that it would be fun. The rest is a bit fuzzy, but I do seem to recall that he got to touch the Super Bowl trophy, congratulated most of the team, and then piled into the back of a cab at 3AM.

It's probably not surprising that as I became an adult, our network of friends became interchangeable. My friends were his friends and his friends were my friends. It was not uncommon for us to schedule lunch and both invite the same people to join us. And speaking of lunches, he rarely went a day without scheduling somebody -- or many people -- for lunch. I used to joke that it was his own economic stimulus plan for the south Baltimore restaurant economy, but they were more than that: he loved being around people, and he loved being around his friends. Those lunches and the people who joined him gave him one more reason to fight the disease that was tearing him apart.

In the end, Bill left nothing to chance. He has scripted the next 10 years of my mother's life in tabbed binders. You think I'm kidding? Two days before Thanksgiving he had me filling out Calendar Year 2010 flex plan reimbursements for mom and putting them in envelopes -- addressed and with stamps. We often joked in his final days that he should have put his plan together in a book entitled **Dying for Dummies**. The icing on the cake was an email my mother, my wife and I received about three weeks ago entitled: "Planning for my passing."

He was one tough cookie and we saw that time and time again. He used to say that he felt pain differently and would cite his ability to have cavities filled without Novocaine as proof. I never really believed him, but I can tell you over the last few weeks I know it was true.

This past summer, he agreed to do radiation in an attempt to stop the growth of the cancer in his face. Every day, he drove himself to Mercy to be strapped down with a mask and "zapped" as he called it. He never complained once and yet we knew he was suffering terribly. He even continued his lunches -- always being the first to reach for the tab -- despite the fact that he really couldn't eat. He kept sending and telling his awful jokes, and he kept marching forward in his

remarkable life journey.

After his last radiation treatment, he sent an email to many of you in this room:

**Group,**

**Completed treatment #37 today, 7 more than the original plan. This was the last shot of radiation. "Thankfully, I'm here to say that". Now I will wait for 6 weeks to let the process unfold and keep attacking. I will admit that this was a tough couple of months.**

**Again, thank you all for the support!!!**

**One problem that surfaced is that I have a tendency to set off the microwave, lights and increase the voltage on the oven. I can point my finger at any unit and set it off. So, rather than let this go to waste, I got my trusty gin bottle, mix and ice and have been pointing my finger at the blender all afternoon.**

**With love, Bill**

That sense of humor lasted right up until his last waking moments last week. For example, he refused to give my mother his ATM code but he would whisper it to my 4-year old son every time he walked by and then laugh hysterically. He also told every person that came to visit him the story of Will at the Anointing of the Sick Mass at the House.

Will ran about throughout the mass, held in the living room of the house on Fort Avenue. He was most interested in trying to blow out the candles than what was going on, but at some point right around communion, we all started crying. Here's how will reported the scene to his babysitter later that day: "A priest came to Poppy's house today. He gave everybody something to eat that made them all cry."

After the service today, please join us for lunch on Pop at the Baltimore Museum of Industry on Key Highway. He has reached for the tab one last time.

I have very big shoes to fill and I know it. He was a protective and devoted husband, an amazing father, and a spectacular grandfather. He was the consummate friend who would literally spend his last dollar helping a complete stranger. He was a statesman without ever running for office and a person with

unparalleled people skills. I told him the night before he died that instead of him being proud of our family, we were proud of him. I also told him that I would spend the rest of my life trying my best to live up to the very high standards he set for anybody else named William H. Cole.