

Ray Crothers (1942 –2008)

Picture of Ray at Mile 3
of the 2007 Manchester Road Race
(courtesy of John Spaulding)



The Irish non-denominational Pastor introduced the Memorial Service as a “Celebration” rather than a funeral. The service included several of Ray’s favorite songs, Celine Dion’s “Because You Loved Me”, Barbra Streisand’s “The Way We Were”, the theme song from *Dirty Dancing* “(I’ve Had) the Time of My Life”, and finally the Beatles’ “In My Life.” (for some of the lyrics see next page)

Remembrances were shared by Robin, Ray’s wife of 25 years; Johnny Kelley, his Fitch High School Cross Country Coach, Jim Keefe, a Central Connecticut State University teammate, and Amby Burfoot, a member of Ray & Jim’s CCAA running club, fellow Mystic, CT runner.

Robin shared her memories of their first years together, as well as their last few weeks. She praised the Connecticut Hospice for their caring and compassionate service, and acknowledged that Ray was “an exceptional partner.”

Johnny Kelley remembered how Ray took care of him when his wife, Mary, passed away in 2003, and how he collected funds to help support Johnny after her passing. He noted that Ray had mailed him a check in December of 2007 with a note – “I’m sorry this is the last payment. The fund has finally run out.”

Jim Keefe added a touching tribute that helped show Ray the runner and supportive friend. He noted that when a mentor or peer was inducted into a Hall of Fame, Ray would encourage him to come along for a road trip to the ceremony to show their support ... driving as far as Missouri ... even if the peer had run for a rival school. His most memorable story, however, was starting with Ray at the back of the pack in a Cross Country meet at Providence, and working their way through the crowd together, and finishing holding hands ... even though you weren’t supposed to do that.

Amby Burfoot reminisced about how Ray made “a skinny little kid from Connecticut” like him feel like he was good enough to compete with the big boys from the BAA, Milrose & New York Athletic Associations, when they traveled hundreds of miles around the Northeast on weekends to compete in road races. He also looked forward to seeing Ray at the Manchester Road Race every Thanksgiving. Both having long-standing streaks, their tradition was to walk to the Start Line together.

The memorial card read, “
I know you think I’ve left you, my voice you no longer hear ...
but close your eyes and see my face, and you’ll always have me near.
I’ll always see your smile, and share your happy days.
I’ll be there when you need me to help in secret ways.
Remember when you feel sad and alone I’m standing there by you.
For in your heart, I’ll always live, no matter the years go by ...
I’m here for you – no matter what. My kind of love can’t die.

So let us smile when we think of Ray, and know that he will always live in the hearts and minds of the runners of Connecticut.

To read more Tributes please see: http://www.letsrun.com/forum/flat_read.php?thread=2378782

You gave me wings and made me fly
You touched my hand I could touch the sky
I lost my faith, you gave it back to me
You said no star was out of reach
You stood by me and I stood tall
I had your love I had it all
I'm grateful for each day you gave me
Maybe I don't know that much
But I know this much is true
I was blessed because I was loved by you

You were my strength when I was weak
You were my voice when I couldn't speak
You were my eyes when I couldn't see
You saw the best there was in me
Lifted me up when I couldn't reach
You gave me faith 'cause you believed
I'm everything I am
Because you loved me

Mem'ries,
Light the corners of my mind
Misty water-colored memories
Of the way we were
Scattered pictures,
Of the smiles we left behind
Smiles we gave to one another
For the way we were
Can it be that it was all so simple then?
Or has time re-written every line?
If we had the chance to do it all again
Tell me, would we? Could we?
Mem'ries, may be beautiful and yet
What's too painful to remember
We simply choose to forget
So it's the laughter
We will remember
Whenever we remember...
The way we were...
The way we were...

I've had the time of my life
No I never felt this way before
Yes I swear it's the truth
And I owe it all to you

'Cause I've had the time of my life
And I've searched though every open door
Till I found the truth
And I owe it all to you...

There are places I'll remember
All my life, though some have changed
Some forever, not for better
Some have gone and some remain
All this places have their moments
With lovers and friends I still can recall
Some are dead and some are living
In my life, I've loved them all

Though I know I'll never lose affection
For people and things that went before
I know I'll often stop and think about them
In my life, I love you more



**Picture of Ray talking to Frank Shorter
at the 2007 Manchester Road Race Expo**
(courtesy of John Spaulding)