

October 23, 2009

Remarks of Joseph E. Tierney, III

I thank you on behalf of my sisters, our children and grandchildren. We will cherish this recognition. I took a brief look at the list of prior recipients: Michael Conley, Cedric Dempsey, Donna de Varona, Tommy Thompson, Bud Selig, Bob Harlan, Henry Aaron, Bart Starr and Al McGuire. It's pretty fast company.

Not bad for a young couple who got married in 1941 having as their sole assets loving families and degrees from Marquette University. We have known them as loving and generous parents and grandparents. They were vital persons, formed by their faith, loyal to their roots, and driven to fulfill their obligations and engage with the many interesting persons around them.

They loved sports of all kinds. My mother read the sports page of the newspaper every day throughout her whole life and followed the Brewers and both Marquette High's and Marquette University's teams. Her personal experience was limited (by bad knees) to golf and, in her youth, the somewhat harsher environment of the Turnverein, where instructions were given in German by very serious instructors who dealt rigorously with the recalcitrant.

My father loved squash (he and I played on Friday nights when I was in law school; I can still remember those bulls-eye bruises you got from being hit by the old form of squash ball), golf (we played together on Summer nights in his later years), skiing (my parents and my sisters trekked out to Vail in the winter – Kay and I joined them in later years), baseball (he taught me to score – I still don't go to a game without doing so), football (he and I attended the Ice Bowl), and hockey (he and my mother used to go to minor league hockey games at the Wilson Park arena).

He understood something about sports that I came to understand only later. While we all tend to focus on individual talent and drive, he saw that team sports are intensely social. In team sports in particular, on-field performance depends on social factors, leadership, relationships and trust among teammates, and willingness to pursue a common goal. He thought participation in team sports teaches tolerance and social skills. This is why he regarded the progress of women's team sports as so important.

My father's professional involvement was, of course, in hockey and in managing the development of the Bradley Center. In these projects, his purpose was, of course, to carry out the wishes of his client, Jane Bradley Pettit, whom my parents revered. His success in these projects was largely a product of his skills as a lawyer (both social and technical) and his penetrating understanding of teambuilding and leadership.

But one of his greatest contributions was in the encouragement he gave to the law school's sports law institute. He loved the law school; his father had graduated from one of its very first classes and his time there had been good for him. He encouraged me to go there also. Nonetheless, it would have been easy for him to ignore these proposals. But he had confidence in the people who were pushing the sports law institute forward (Marty Greenberg and Charlie

Mentkowski), and he saw the need to develop the framework of sports law, from league structure to facility development and management.

My father died in 1999, from there my mom picked up the ball, making contributions to scholarships for students in the program and encouraging its participants to the extent she was able. She died this last March.

To be masters of the game, it is important to identify the game. For both of them, the game was life. They were, indeed, masters of that game.