

Richard Michael Haughian A Personal Remembrance

by Robert Carrier

Part I

Those of you who know me, are aware that I'm not an experienced public speaker—and yet, Rick, knowing this, entrusted me with his eulogy. That measure of empowering belief in others was characteristic of the man I came to know, and love. Trust—or perhaps faith-- is a more apt word to describe what Rick felt was possible in a person when someone believed in them. That experience-- of being loved into being-- was at the heart of Rick's own life journey.

For a destiny that brings an adolescent of sixteen to choose a religious life with the Jesuits over the opportunity to play basketball at Notre Dame is unusual enough. But a vocation that calls the mature man to reach beyond the bounds of his religious order to live the fullness of his calling —while remaining true to the spirituality that drew him to the religious life—is indeed remarkable.

And it was my great good fortune that our respective paths intersected one Sunday afternoon, when Rick walked over to me, while we were attending a discussion group, and asked: "Robert, where do you live?" When I told him, he replied: "Why, we're practically neighbors; would you like to have coffee sometime? He was like that: open, unafraid to take the first step.

So, the following week, we met at a coffee shop in Old Ottawa South and we talked... and talked... and then, talked some more. And so began, what was to become, for me, the friendship of a lifetime.

But how do I render the depth and richness of the tapestry that was Rick's life? Perhaps, by turning to the beginning.

Part II

To appreciate Rick's way of being--what made him tick-- one needs to know that he was a man *in love*. He alluded, only once, discreetly, to the source of this love: an encounter, early in life, with an interior presence, which became the wellspring of his spirituality and his engagement with the world.

Those of you who knew Rick more personally, know that he was a deeply 'prayerful' man. He loved to sit, in the morning, in the front parlor of his home, as the light streamed into the room. There, he would be still—open to the presence within.

But far from being an escape from the world, Rick's daily 'practice of presence' was the condition of a more authentic engagement with it. If it is true that a mystic is someone who cannot stop walking, drawn by a deep remembrance of God's original caress, and impelled by the desire to be the face of God 'in the world', then Rick's life was emblematic of the mystical journey. 'Everything' that he did, 'Everyone' whom he loved, 'All' that he was, flowed from his intense desire to be with God in the world.

It was this uncommon marriage of an 'active love' of the world and a daily practice of 'interior communion' with the source of his desire that brought him to his final, perhaps finest, certainly most creative task, the founding of Ancoura.

Part III

For Rick envisioned Ancoura as more than a secure space for those rendered homeless by the chaos and stigma of mental illness. Rooted in the conviction that the most fundamental right of all is the right to become a person-the right to love- he saw Ancoura not as 'something' but as 'Someone', the human face of God in the world. Not an "*Organization*", but a "*Community of Friends*", held together by an unconditional commitment to the becoming of the '*other*', so that all might grow 'together', into the fullness of their humanity.

In this regard, Rick held no value more foundational than *respect for the other*, for without it, he once told me, Ancoura would become yet another top down institution, bereft of soul and devoid of meaning. It was Rick's greatest concern in the last year of his life, and his dying wish, that the spirit of love and comity that inspired Ancoura's founding, live on in each one of its members-- especially where relations of power were concerned-- so that they might meet together the challenges ahead in a spirit of unwavering respect for the other.

Part IV

If I've spoken at some length of Rick's spirituality and of his deep and compassionate engagement with the world, it is not to suggest that he was without fault, or his share of personal regrets. He was painfully aware of his shortcomings, which occasionally weighed heavily on him. He alluded to moments in his life when he felt he had not risen to the challenge of relationship. He told me once, poignantly, that he didn't know what to do with these painful memories.

But if he was keenly aware of the shadow side of the human soul, he never lost sight of our most precious gift: our fragile, yet irrepressible capacity to love --a love that he lived, not least, in relationship with family and friends.

Part V

His attachment to his children, Meagan and Robbie, and their children; his stepchildren, Jillian and Lindsay, and their children, was palpable. He loved to share stories of his

'little peoples' adventures and misadventures, which never failed to provoke appreciative laughter on his part. The same easy humor, mischievous at times, as well as a fondness for life's absurdities, was also evident in his relationships with friends. As when he showed up at our door one Sunday morning, decked out in undertaker's garb from a bygone era--prayer book in hand, beribboned top hat and all-- to drop off some material for my wife, Frances, who was preparing a eulogy, and announced, most reverently: "I've come for the dearly departed."

He told me once that he enjoyed nothing more than having an extended conversation with a friend, preferably with latte in hand or sipping a good single malt scotch. Anyone who experienced first hand his personal warmth, his kindness, his exceptional capacity for empathetic listening, knows the unforgettable quality of his presence in those moments.

And what shall I say of Diane- the love of his life- and the place she occupied in his heart? And how can I do justice to her unbounded devotion, especially during the long months of Rick's final illness? If Rick's relationship with the presence within was the foundation of his house, Diane was its fragrance- the person in whom his restless spirit found its soul, its rest... and its joy.

Conclusion

I said, at the beginning of my remembrance, that Rick was a man in love, that the very elan of his being was a movement toward the other. In this regard, there is an image of him that shall forever abide with me. It is of Rick making his way along Bank street to our favorite meeting place, his tall frame bent into the hill, as illness overtook him, and breath failed him; the strain on his face as he entered the coffee shop—and then, the warm smile of recognition when he saw me across the room.

He touched my heart as few people have—and I miss him terribly. Yet, as a person of faith, I know that the day will come, as the Irish are fond of saying, "when the memory of him will put a smile on my lips, before it brings a tear to my eye". But those of us who loved him also know that we are only just beginning to measure the 'enormity' of our loss.