

Transcription of the Celebration of Life of LeRoy B. Wilson
December 10, 2005, 10:30 AM
First Parish Church (Unitarian Universalist)
Portland, Maine

Note: The following is a transcript of the service held in celebration of the life of LeRoy B. Wilson. A stenographer was engaged to record the service both for posterity and to allow hearing-impaired to read the words spoken in Roy's honor and participate in the service in real time. In situations where the stenographer could not hear or could not understand the words of the speaker, rather than interrupting the speaker in this environment, the stenographer strived to convey the message of what was said.)

(Church bell ringing outside)

Rev. William Leggett:

We welcome you to our historic meeting house today. The home church of LeRoy B. Wilson and his wife, Margaret White Wilson. And we want to give a special greeting to the family. I know some of the family drove through the storm yesterday afternoon to get here and I hope everyone is safe after, what was it, 12 hours from New York City? So we are glad everyone is here safely.

We are gathered today to remember and celebrate the life of Roy Wilson. Roy died last Tuesday, December 6th. And in doing so today, gathering together, we affirm the human life is sacred. It is sacred in its being born, it's sacred in its living and sacred also in its dying. Both the sorrow and the joy of life weave a tapestry of our individual lives as death once again gathers us into our blessed meeting house today.

We gather this morning for several things. We gather to bid Roy farewell, this wonderful man we knew and loved. We gather also to search for life's deepest meanings. We gather to seek comfort and healing that we can offer each other and we gather to say yes to life's greatest expression: Love. Love. Love believes all things, love endures all things, hopes for all things. Love never ends even at death. And though we gather this morning as family and friends, we also feel the embrace of the ageless human community. In this spirit we join our individual feelings and thoughts and well as the faiths that sustain us separately into a harmony of remembrance and affirmation. We celebrate this morning Roy's living and we shall also grieve Roy's dying. Because we know the truth is, as William Blake said, is joy and woe woven finely together.

So we gather here this morning for each other. It is good. It is right. It is fitting we come together because human life is sacred, sacred in its being born, in its living and in its dying.

At this time we are going to light our chalice flame. Two of the grandchildren are going to come forward and do that at this time.

Carol Dooley (spoken while Scott Ritter lights the chalice):

We light this chalice in honor of a soul that will always blaze.

Rev. William Leggett:

Thank you, Carol and Scott. I invite you now to stand as you are willing and able. Our gathering hymn is *Here We Are Gathered*.

(music) (*Here We Have Gathered* being sung)

Rev. William Leggett:

Let us be seated.

Eleanor Merrill (on behalf of First Parish Church):

I'm very honored to be asked to participate in a celebration of the life of such a fine man. You don't have to hunt for good things to say. They are all right there.

I would like to speak first about the memorial garden. Roy was the guiding spirit of that and it was dear to his heart. And he not only was generous but he also worked very hard. If you ever worked with Roy on cleanups or planting or anything, you know that he would arrive with a bunch of rakes, a bunch of trash bags and coffee and doughnuts for the workers. He loved it and it showed. Everything in the garden shows that.

Roy and I got along very well but we had one argument one time. Roy is very fond of a plant called dusty miller!

(Laughter)

And I do not like dusty miller! So, we would always have little jokes. You don't fight with Roy, you just have little jokes about it. And one day he gave me a call on the telephone and he said, Eleanor, I want you to know that Margaret and I went to the beautiful gardens at Sissinghurst and they absolutely abound with dusty miller!

(Laughter)

So, that was the end of that! Roy would ask me sometimes if I would write something for the annual report about the garden. And he

would very modestly say: “You don’t have to say anything about me.” How could you write an annual report about the garden and not say something about Roy? So I thought this week of one of the times that I wrote one of those reports, and at the end it says thanks and appreciation to Roy Wilson, gardener extraordinaire. And I would like to say he was much more than a gardener extraordinaire. If you belong to the library group in Falmouth you know that. If you were a neighbor at Madokawando you know that. If you were a member of his family you know that. And if you worked with him at the First Parish church you know that.

There is an old cliché about being a pillar of the church but he actually was. He was involved in everything that we ever did around here. Even making some funny looking pudding at the fish chowder luncheons! But he cared. And if you worked with him on a committee, you came away with such respect for his wisdom, for the fact that he listened to other people, for his fundamental fairness, and you also came away with the fact he had some vision for the future. That right up until his death he was planning forward-looking things for this church, which he loved. If you worked with him in any capacity at all, you came away with having acquired a fine friend. And that was a bonus.

Now today, as we say farewell to Roy, we have to say that he is more than a gardener extraordinaire. I would like to say a loving farewell to Roy Wilson, human being extraordinaire. Thank you!

Holly Winger (on behalf of Falmouth Memorial Library):

Well, I'm Holly Winger speaking on behalf of the Falmouth Memorial Library, and that's a very difficult act to follow but I will try.

Our institution is forever indebted to Margaret and Roy for their steadfast dedication to our library. We thank you, Margaret, for sharing Roy with us. He was our patriarch and we feel compelled to expand on the obituary in the paper yesterday that mentioned Roy was active with various committees and projects with this church and the library. Roy was not just active with committees and projects; he was the brains behind every project. He created committees where there were none. He was the catalyst for a great movement in Falmouth that enriched our community by expanding our library. Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "That which dominates our imaginations and thoughts will determine our lives and our character." Roy was a dominant force in our library's evolution, if not the dominant force.

Let me preface my comments about Roy by setting the stage for how libraries speak to us. Frank Rich wrote an article in *the New York Times* about the New York public library on its 100th anniversary:

"The library remains not only an institution that works but one that upholds a faith that a great city may deliver services to all citizens. Today's politicians may wish for return of civil society. A library may be as close as we get to a wish come true."

Frank went on to say:

“At its best, a library is a model of municipal, intellectual and social service to a community, a shrine to culture high and low. And, long before fashionable, an example of private and public financial partnership.”

Roy understood this and wanted no less for Falmouth.

I would also like to cite an article from August 1997 *better homes and gardens* on raising a reader:

“A child must enjoy books. The tales they tell, ideas ignited, to spend hours reading. The hours translate directly to school success, as reading for leisure is a best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary, et cetera.”

I mention these because a joy being involved with the library is that it is truly cross-generational. All ages get to play and work and read together. The library is how many of us met Roy and got to see up close his impact on all Falmouth lives.

We opened our library October 14, 1995 and began with a flag raising by Bill, listened to the national anthem, and did a ribbon cutting with the town representative. Our co-chairs for the capital campaign, Susan and Roy, who was introduced as our patriarch, President of the library, the man who commissioned the expansion study, hired an architect, engaged a fund raising consultant, and as the man with the vision, commitment, and endurance to see the project through to completion.

The paper described the facility this way: “Visitors will find little to remind them of the house that once housed the collection. The effect is of brightness, cheer, a comfortable atmosphere where visitors, even those in wheelchairs and strollers, can explore ideas within, contained within the walls.”

We had automated our collection, access to the internet, joined our campaign with one honoring John Russell. We had a kitchen. Real restrooms! Diaper stations in both the ladies’ and men’s room! Without Roy’s leadership, it could not have happened.

If you go forward a few years to December 3, 1998, the headline in the paper read: “Falmouth’s love of books evident in the library!” Our circulation doubled. Do you think Roy knew what he was up to? The article reflected back with the director that before the expansion folks were afraid we would lose our friendly feeling. What we did is change from a lending library to one that offers much more. The much more that Lynn referred to was all Roy’s vision. What a wonderful vision it turned out to be. He insisted we have a main biography section in the new facility because we have a great collection. He was so committed to it that the main reading room was underwritten by Margaret and Roy. We had new internet policies, new security system with post-it notes as to the code to get in if we had to! We had the ice storm of the century. Nothing slowed Roy down. When Helen passed away we got our first outside bench dedicated in her honor. No detail escaped his attention. I have a note where Roy confirmed: “Holly, the seat will be 17 inches high! Benches of this sort are between 17 and 18 inches high! Roy.”

Had we or perhaps had I really challenged him on the height of the bench, what were we thinking!

(Laughter)

The friends meanwhile found a great fund-raising vehicle, no pun intended, the antique car show. Roy brought his mother's original linen duster coat to the first show for one of us to wear. The honor fell to me.

(Pause)

It was just (voice breaking) -- be patient. It was just one more footprint on my heart, all of our hearts.

Of particular importance to Roy was creation of an advisory board of trustees. He wanted to preserve history, advocacy, and future commitment of all trustees with the newest project. I must have thought when he first raised this one I received the most authoritativeness: "You can and will do this because it must be done!" Coming from Roy, those were pretty stern words!

He leaned on Margaret and got the charter from her alumnus, Skidmore College, their charter. So we used their language for our advisory board charter. Invitations were purchased. Chocolates, tablecloth, crystal, silver came out. Margaret brought a punch bowl for use in one more event. The present met the past. New friendships were formed, more tethers created, tying us even tighter before to his lovely library. He even had us send out complimentary cards for strawberry shortcake at the car show.

He was a class act! He set a high bar. We all aimed high to help his dreams become reality. Did you know he got up early? Whenever

the phone rang before 7:00 am, we knew it was Roy! My husband would laugh and call upstairs to me: “Your boyfriend is on the phone!” (Laughter)

Sometimes the calls were about the art. Did you know our new library had an art gallery too? It meant an art committee and art acquisition policy. New exhibits once a month. Publicity, too, for each new show. Looking back through notes I saw a few simple items on the art committee: “Holly. You may not know it, but you have inherited a somewhat ad hoc, self-appointed art committee. Here are the notes on the last meeting. Hope the board does not have many problems with arrangement, Roy.”

What board will resist someone who uses “herewith”? Especially when they are not a lawyer?

I saw a note I wrote to myself: “Write an article about art for the newsletter.” It makes me grin today. What did I know about art? Was there nothing we would not do for this guy?

(Laughter)

Dwight Eisenhower said: “Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.” Roy mastered leadership a long time ago, long before I met him. As much as he loved the library we realized that Roy’s work had only just begun. The true passion was using the library to set an example of creating beautiful surroundings, showing our community what was possible in design and implementation. Some plantings were chosen specifically for color. He brought in fresh flowers for the circulation

desk. He had mums in the fall every year. He did not just want the day-to-day to be beautiful. He made it beautiful. His garden and landscaping efforts here at First Parish served as an example for us. We met him one day here at noon so he could show us what was possible. Roy gave us a personal tour of your garden, which was a real eye-opening experience. What you have here is like a touch of Paris in downtown Portland.

Roy knew what he could accomplish in Falmouth given a chance. His first outside space for us was the patio along Lunt Road, beautiful trees, hedges, a sundial. Next came a children's garden. These are dedicated to Margaret's parents. This was a particular accomplishment. Now Roy was building new walls. We had Anderson Landscaping in to build a raised patio. Many of our children are immortalized there. Last, a shade garden with quiet spaces to read and for contemplation. Roy would often drop us lines as he worked on gardens: "I have commissioned a design for the patio gates. I think the committee should approve the design."

(Laughter)

"Okay?"

(Laughter)

We all knew this was wink-wink. This man, Roy, would be approving the design!

With all the outside space, next we knew, we needed outside lighting. It included granite columns, beautiful illuminations of selected outside spaces! When we protested for lack of funding, I seem to

remember him mumbling something about public safety! So he worked until we got the money from the town. He was shameless in his quest for his visions, rightly so!

Cicero said “it’s the character of a brave, resolute man not to be ruffled by adversity and not to desert a post”. Roy was the only board member from expansion times to have participated in the past fall’s library cleanup day. He was out there trimming trees, SHRUBS, always on a prowl to make it better. He would not desert his post.

The Falmouth historical society shared our space. There’s a grandfather clock in the roof server conference room. Roy is the one who knows how to get it fixed. When it needs repair, he makes sure it happens.

The Japanese have a proverb: “When the character of a man is not clear to you look at his friends”. Not all Roy’s friends are here. This has been a tough year for the library. We lost Carl, Anne, Dot. But Roy’s efforts in Falmouth didn’t go unrecognized. Falmouth named him Citizen of the Year. We were not surprised. We always knew he was special. Margaret knew too. She has always been there by his side, steadfast in support of her husband and all of his visions. His own experiences as a father to Anne and Jane had to have been rewarding because he enjoyed all of our kids and their accomplishments (voice breaking). He crafted very welcoming spaces for all Falmouth children.

So in closing, circling back to the premise I started with, today people are looking for civility in community. They want to live the good life. We say look at Roy’s life. Our response in Falmouth to the

passing of Roy is to say thank you God for sharing him with all of us. We don't think we can live a better life than the life lived by Roy Wilson.

(Musical interlude: *Finlandia* played by Charles Grindle, First Parish Music Director)

Rev. William Leggett:

Let us go deep within for a time of meditation and centering and in the spirit of prayer.

Oh God of many names, may the faiths and philosophies that sustain us separately meld into the unity of the most human and the unity of the universal, where differences dissolve in the awe-inspiring yet wonderful harmony of the moment. Oh spirit, before the wonder of living and dying, we are humbled. In the midst of our sorrow and grief we feel a river of sacredness. Out of our memories and unending affections flows a Thanksgiving. In our gathered concerns and compassion, healing begins. Margaret and Jane, their families, grandchildren, Molly, John, William, all the family, we hold you close to our hearts at this time. May the gifts of courage and wisdom and Thanksgiving come to each of you and also to us and swell among us today and in the days to come. May we find courage to face Roy's death, wisdom to speak openly and honestly about our loss, and great Thanksgiving, thanksgiving for his life.

These prayers and the unspoken prayers of our hearts we pray in the name of all the helpers of humankind. AMEN, blessed be, and SHALOM.

(Pause)

James Dooley (grandson):

I'll be reading a letter from Bill Wilson, my grandfather's brother.

"When I think about days as young people in Des Moines, there is a flood of memories, not humorous or dramatic but indicative of our life loves. Like Roy's penchant for elephants. He had a small collection of porcelain ones. One day in a store he saw a large, 10-12 inches high, black one which he wanted very much. He took a good deal of his money saved up from our one dollar a week lunch money to buy this.

Most people do not think of Roy as a singer. I'm kind of with them now. But in our high school days, we were members of the church choir. Our director had ideas and staged a performance of Gilbert & Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore*. We were gallant members of that crew for awhile.

I had been sensitive to cold to the point of painfulness. One of the Iowa winter days, when the temperature was probably in the teens, after a mile walk to the middle school, I was hurting, so I started to cry before the bell rang to go in. Roy assured me we would go in soon and fended off remarks from other kids. He was a big brother to me in the best sense of that phrase. Things will not be the same without him.

Jane Ritter (daughter):

I'm Jane Ritter, Roy and Margie's daughter. If there was anyone that deserved an all around good guy award it would be dad. In ways he was like so many of his generation. His family, especially mom, and Anne and I, and his grandchildren, the extended family and friends and the community, were everything to him. He believed in education and hard work. We heard a little about that. And he was proud of his service in World War II and in Korea. He was like the sit-com dads we grew up watching on T.V., but dad was the real thing.

Dad loved his country and community deeply. Back in Evanston, his Navy uniform was kept carefully folded in a trunk in the basement. He let us take it out every once in awhile. We would try on the dress hat with its shiny brim and gold emblem. He would show us how to shine and buff the shoes until they sparkled. He would lament he could no longer fit into the jacket and pants. I wish now I had asked him more about his Navy years. Only recently did I hear details, extraordinary details, of what he saw along the rivers in China and how he shopped at the port cities for wonderful gifts he sent back to mom.

His work for the church and the library are extensions of this ethic of service. And dad could build anything. He poured concrete into coffee cans when I was little to make me a set of bar bells!

(Laughter)

He built a go-cart. We put a cloth on its top. It looked like Fred Flintstone's car! He built a playhouse for us in the woods in the backyard and another clubhouse in a little corner closet in the basement.

He and two friends built a sailboat in our basement and garage. And one thing he loved in the house in Evanston was a butler's bell that was under the rug under the dining table, and we would ring it after dinner, as if there might be a butler that would come and clear the dishes! He sort of liked that idea.

Twenty-seven years ago, he and mom, a talented architect, and Laurice Morrill rebuilt the Madokawando house. Of the thousands of details in such a project, there was one of which he was especially proud. The shape of the deck around the side of the house required the benches to meet at an odd, complex angle. Dad measured the angle and he cut the boards and he made them fit. He could do things like that.

Dad also believed in education. To him, good schools taught Latin. They required students to memorize great poetry and prose. He thought schools these days were backsliding a bit. He believed great schools had unheated sleeping porches, like at Cornell, that built character. He couldn't help correcting his children's and sometimes grandchildren's grammar. Even as we all sort of approached adulthood, he was still trying.

He was devoted to the Falmouth memorial library and kept his mind sharp by reading mysteries and working crossword puzzles.

In recent years few things have made him prouder than to see his grandchildren do well in school and go on to great colleges and academies. But beyond all else, dad was devoted to mom. Many of you know that they met over 60 years ago at trinity house in Brooklyn, New York. It's part of the family lore that when dad asked mom to marry

him, she said “I will think about it”!

(Laughter)

Now even after 59 years of marriage, with medical problems for both of them, the loss of hearing, the addition of dentures, they wake up in the morning and dad would tell mom how beautiful she was. She would laugh, wave him away, he would ask anyone around, “ain’t she something”? She is, and he was too.

Sarah Dooley (grand-daughter):

As we were driving here from Illinois, our mom asked us to come up with some memory of grandpa, so I kind of thought. And thought, because I was always a little scared of him as a kid, well, that’s not quite appropriate! So I finally came up with one that really illustrates his sense of humor.

One winter when we were staying with them, grandpa introduced us to the A&E Mystery series. There is an element of comedy in it. A particular episode he showed us was about an antique Dutch silver cow creamer, a cream pitcher shaped like a cow. A day or so later, my family and I were out shopping in Portland and we came upon a basic white ceramic cow creamer and we decided this would be a wonderful gag gift! So we purchased it, brought it home, put it on the dinner table that night without having shown grandpa or grandma yet. Grandpa comes to the table, looks down, exclaims, “a cow creamer!” Without missing a beat: “But it is not antique Dutch!”

(Laughter)

I remember once when my brother James, my mom, and I were visiting, Harry Potter 3 had just come into the theaters. My brother and I wanted to see it again. So mom suggested we take grandpa with us. When it was over, grandpa said “I didn’t understand one thing that happened in that, but it was fantastic!”
(Laughter)

Scott & Matthew Ritter (grandsons):

Hi. I’m Scott Ritter. And this is my brother, Matthew Ritter. Our beloved grandfather, LeRoy Wilson, taught my brother and me things which will live in our hearts and minds forever. Always the first person up, he made sure everyone around him was full of vim, vigor, and vitality. Our blurry minds could not understand why anyone would need so many “Vs” so early in the morning.

We also didn’t understand why we had to wait until after breakfast and chores before opening Christmas presents, but I guess he knew something there as well.

He stood out to me as a quiet man. However, he was a quiet man who could always get his point across, whether he was commanding the living room, reading *the New York Times*, watching grandchildren blow leaves in the drive, carving a Turkey at the table, or programming the computer to say “I’ll be back,” (in an Arnold Schwarzenegger accent) when you shut it down!
(Laughter)

He stood out in our hearts as a kind and always lively man. But most importantly, he was a wonderful grandfather, a man who not only watched us grow up but grew up with us.

He led us out on invasions of the couch to find money that had fallen under the pillows, he watched our preadolescent antics, cheered on the Sea Dogs with us, and most importantly, attended showings of videos we made in the backyard.

So for my grandfather, wherever he is, I hope he watches over us as we live on in the world around us. The house, the grove, the library, the ball fields, the dock, and the early morning runs for the newspaper, baseball cards, and whoopee pies, will never be the same. But we know at the same time that he is here within all of us, reminding us each and every morning at precisely 6:30 a.m. to “up and at em’, smell the coffee, find our vim, vigor, and vitality” because we all have great days ahead of us.

(Pause)

(Musical interlude: *Bach Prelude #1 from the Well-Tempered Clavichord* played by Sarah Dooley, granddaughter)

Bud Sawyer (on behalf of Roy’s neighbors):

Roy and Margaret were, are, and will be, the spirit of Madokawando landing. Certainly, they have been the recorders of the history of the landing whenever there was something going on, a time capsule, a tree going down, or a dock floating away. Margaret was there with her camera! Roy was there with his hammer! The history and

archives of the landing are all at 26 Madokawando landing. The care given to the walkways and lawns and flowers. I remember Margaret and Jan talking about “what kind of posey is that?” I haven’t the faintest idea of what they were talking about, but I know they enjoyed each other.

As you have already learned, he found time for other church and civic activities. As a member of Tom Brokaw’s greatest generation, Roy had respect for the flag of the United States of America. He understood the flag etiquette that is lacking in so many places today. He shared that information with the children of the landing. Sarah Weigel, Miss Poole among them. As a matter of fact, it was Sarah’s idea to fly the flag at half-staff, which she proceeded to do. Roy’s involving of young people in such an awareness ensures the same respect and understanding of the flag will continue into the next generation.

Roy, thank you for your service to our nation. Roy, thank you for your service to the landing. So, to Roy Wilson, Naval officer, Patriot, guardian of the flag that flies over the landing, a final and appropriate salute.

(presentation of the landing flag to Margaret)

Rev. William Leggett:

Margaret and the family wanted me to express to you who have been near them the last week or so and helped in so many ways, they have many, many thank you’s for those who have been so close and helpful during this time. They also would like to invite all of you to stay

after the service and join them for conversation and refreshments in our parish house. And the food is almost ready. We only have about ten minutes, but they would like to know if any of you would like to say briefly, or several of you, any words on Roy's behalf? Feel free to come forward now and speak into the microphone, please.

Betsy Greenlaw (Niece of Herbert Holmes, church member and friend of Roy's):

My uncle Herbert Holmes could not be here today. He has been ill. And he and Roy were very, very good friends. It's almost ironic because Roy was there every step of the way for my uncle's illness. That Roy had passed was, you know, you just get so caught up in what you do every day you forget life can throw some ironic twists.

I don't know if my aunt has even told my uncle, because we don't know, because they were so close, if that would be more damaging right now for my uncle, because they were just that close. So I just wanted to say how sorry we are, and my uncle, if he could be here, would just – he would probably have a lot of great stories to tell, I know. Thank you.

Ben White (nephew):

I'm Uncle Roy and Aunt Margaret's nephew. I had the honor of enjoying Thanksgiving with the Wilsons and I thought it was kind of telling of what his character was like and how he felt a couple weeks ago when he and my aunt were sitting at the dining table, clearing the dishes. Aunt Margie is not hearing as well as she used to. He goes, you know, if you want to get back at her, just talk into her left ear!

My sister was saying earlier today, she called me on the cell phone on the way up here, and she said “I heard Uncle Roy say something to dad and I thought it was kind of funny. Dad suggested he take Turkey out to the table and Uncle Roy goes ‘is that an order?’”

(Laughter)

And I think one other thing I remember about uncle Roy, not really about him but is sort of, I don’t know, kind of strange, but my father went to China to get on board his ship in World War II and he arrives at his ship. It’s named the Lee Ray Wilson, which is similar to LeRoy Wilson. That was kind of unusual for a brother-in-law to arrive at a ship with a name so similar.

My only other memory, well, many other memories of Uncle Roy, go to Yarmouth Island with his porkpie hat on. He had a great deal of love for his little dog named Scrappy. I guess he taught Scrappy how to do everything. I kept hearing about stories about Scrappy doing one trick or another. But he was a great man, and he went down fast.

Vicky Swerdlow (friend & neighbor):

I’m Vicky, and I had both the privilege and joy of knowing Roy through the landing and through the library. I could tell you lots of stories, but the one that will stay closest to me was the morning he called. It was at an ungodly early hour! He said “you have to go to the window, get the children up, go to the window. There is an eagle, a pair of eagles in the trees. You have to see them”. I got the children up, we went and saw the eagles and it was thanks to Roy.

Bill Getchell (First Parish Church member):

Life is a progression of benchmarks. And Margot and I came to First Parish church not knowing too many people. We had some old family friends that we knew, but we met Roy and rather enjoyed him. And one day he asked us if we would like to muster up in the memorial garden to help plant some bulbs for the next spring. And Margot and I said, sure, we would love to. What do we need to bring? He said just show up. Well, he did say bulbs.

(Laughter)

And we fortunately had just invested in a cordless power drill with two backup batteries, and somehow an auger to put on it. So I packed that in the car, didn't say anything, we showed up at the Memorial Garden on a Saturday morning. As Eleanor said, he came prepared. He had about three bushels of tulip bulbs and was ready to go! I said, "well, Roy, this is wonderful. Where do you want them?" "Oh", he said, I will show you". I said, "well, let me step into the car, get a couple of things". So I pulled out the two batteries and the power drill, the augur, he and Margot and I went around. We drilled holes like crazy all over that garden. He was right behind us, dropping bulbs in as fast as he could. About an hour and a half, we had them all in.

And another event later on, he asked me if I would become a trustee of the memorial garden. And I said, "what will you do Roy?" "Oh", he said, "I have been doing this for years." And now after hearing from the library and Eleanor Merrill, I didn't have a clue what I was following into! But he was a wonderful teacher and I did ask him and

the others asked him if he would maintain his status as our head and chief gardener, which he agreed to do. So every time the memorial garden group has gotten together to make decisions, we have always included Roy to help us out and give us that little bit of guidance and vision that he seems to always have had.

And not too long ago, maybe a year or so ago, Margot and I sit over here in pew 108, in the history of the church some of the pews were owned by early citizens of the city of Portland, and that is no longer the case but pews are still numbered. One Sunday we came in, Roy was sitting on the opposite side of the aisle. I looked over, I said, Roy, what are you doing there? He said this is where I sit. Why don't you come over and join us? So Margot and I acquired a pewmate, another benchmark in life.

And somebody made a comment about his ability to sing. He was okay. I just close my left ear! But Margot and I felt quite honored and privileged to have gained a pewmate, a friend, and a wonderful person. And if nothing else, it has been an honor and privilege for us to have known, affectionately I called him, Fred. He used to like that! That was the neighbor of Dennis the menace, Fred Wilson!

Martha White Burns (niece):

I wasn't intending, I had not planned to say anything today. I haven't given thought, excuse me (voice breaking). But as I sit here listening to all the wonderful things I did and didn't know, outside the family, I'm realizing that uncle Roy and my aunt will always be a part of my life. I'm almost there, excuse me.

And what has struck me is that from when we were growing up there always be something for us, even though they lived far away, they never forgot us. As time went on and my siblings and I grew up and I found myself as a young parent traveling across the country and stopping always in Evanston to visit uncle Roy and aunt Margie, and then as more years went by and they moved back east and my children grew and we shared, I have to say that Asher and Julie, as they grew up, you know, other people might not remember their birthdays, but they had said to me over the years, Aunt Margie always did. And there are many, many things I think of. The twinkle in Uncle Roy's eye, the times we shared from Easters to baseball games and what was going on with all his grandchildren who we knew through them. What strikes me is he has always been a part of my life. And there will be a big hole. But I just think about the twinkle and the humor and the little comments other people have mentioned that he shared with me. I just always knew that they were there. And he is just a very, very special man. Thank you.

Bill Dill (First Parish Church member, past Board Chair):

I am one of those that came into First Parish long after Roy and Eleanor and at one point a few years ago found myself as chair of the governing board, which many of us newcomers knew really was not the board because there's a second board which Eleanor & Roy, are members of, which is the Trustees of First Parish. And many of the people who come in, I confess to having had that suspicion early on, feel we have a governing board, but really the big decisions are made by trustees who have the responsibility for this wonderful building and its historical preservation and manage an endowment for that. And now and then there's tension back and forth about what one needs.

I got to know Roy intimately in this period because there was pressure from within the congregation, which I think some could feel this morning struggling up the steps, to make this place more handicap accessible, which we still have things to do on, and to think about facilities for religious education and other things, inter-generational. And the thing that I will remember most about Roy, I hope other people appreciate, is that in addition to being one of the most fervent preservationists to keep this building as a real treasure for the Portland community, he was also, up to his last days, perhaps the most far-reaching and youngest member of the church in seeing where we could go. I went back and told the people pressing for handicap access the fellow who has thought most about this over the years and pushed us to explore most ways of doing it is Roy Wilson. And there are a set of plans floating around which are still being looked at, we hope we can

implement, that are results of a study he came to us and got the governing board to support, to look ahead. So this is the kind of marvelous person that we all learned to value, somebody who has a strong foot in the traditions of the past but is always looking ahead.

Rev. William Leggett:

I would like you to please stand as you are willing and able for our benediction and then for our closing hymn, *The Navy Hymn*, printed in the order of service.

(music) (*The Navy Hymn* being sung)

It is done. We have bid farewell to Roy. And in accordance with Roy's wishes and the family's wishes, his final resting place will be the family plot at Pine Grove in Falmouth. Roy is now entered into the peace of eternal rest. He still lives on earth and in the hearts of those who cherish his memory. May the beauty of his life abide among us as a loving and living benediction. May the spirit of peace send peace to those who mourn and comfort us. May understanding go with us this morning. May we live together in charity and compassion and joy.

And in this spirit, let us individually and together go forth to live and to love.

(Postlude)