

Good Morning,

Thank-you Pastor Kev Evitts of the Community Congregational Church of Billerica for leading this service today.

I was named Michael Arthur (and we learned it MCelhiney on the west coast although our east coast relatives pronounce it mcELhiney, and they are probably more correct).

Thank-you all for being here today. I know that many others wanted to be here but couldn't, and that's OK. We can go back into our communities and families and share this day with our loved ones. As my 14 year old son Patrick Russell wrote for (and I promised to read) today,

"I wish I could be here on this day,

But as a teen, I hardly get my way"

"Never forget this person because he is an important piece in history"

I would also like to extend our personal thanks to the Brian J. Higgins, Sr., Family for all of their love and care of my Dad the past 12 years. ALL of you were family to him and shared so much.

Dad loved all of you very much and even if you might not of heard the words from him, his feelings came through "loud & clear".

My Dad called me his "Number One Son", because I was his 1st born son. I have occasionally reminded my two younger brothers Brian Hurley & David Winslow of that fact; at least until they grew up bigger and taller than me...and now, I don't remind them too much of that and we get along just great, ... and I can be here today.

I know that Dad had some good friends and I've gotten to meet a few of you through the years, at places like the Elks Club. But Dad's "Number One Friend" the past 12 years has been Brian J. Higgins, Sr. Brian has gone "above & beyond the call" and has been there every day, in every way ... and most recently at his side when no one else could be.

You know Brian, I think you two must have been destined to meet and *I KNOW OF ALL THE KIND THINGS HE HAS SAID OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY – LOUD & CLEAR*. It goes without saying, but here it comes again – THANK-YOU SO MUCH, BRIAN.

I've been visiting New England and Dad the past 20+ years, as my dear wife Diane is from Dover New Hampshire. Every 3 or 4 years, we have come to visit Diane's great family and Dad, showing off our little ones:

Crystal Aura – now 20

and

Patrick Russell – now 14

Through those visits we got to know our east coast family a little more, including Dad's parents (my grandparents) Arthur & Aura and Dad's brother Kenneth. To meet two of Dad's sisters – Marian & Jean (and their husbands Leo & Don) here has been a real *Joy to my Heart*. All the stories we've heard – past & present – are shared on the west coast

...

and they are all here in spirit today.

As my kids got a little older, we started taking day trips with Dad to various places he knew here in New England... - ... western Massachusetts, Savoy where his CCC Camp (Civilian Conservation Corps) was located, ... North Adams, New Hampshire, Maine & many other places.

My son Patrick wrote: ""Mac" was a dearing person in my life that was always thoughtful. We had some very fun times together in the short visits I had. I wish that I could have spent more time with him... I will never forget "Stelios", his favorite restaurant. If you asked him where to eat, he would say Stelios. He was quite a traveler. He took us to some cool places. ... "

"To Grandpa Thank you for the fun times we spent together and whenever I think of you, the bucket seats will be thought of too. Love you forever, Patrick."

I know that he loved to take driving trips with his travelling buddy David French also, and thank-you David for taking so many pictures of the places you visited with Dad – The stories I've heard ...

Dad collected souvenirs such as pins, refrigerator magnets, coffee mugs, etc. which also helps tell the stories of his travels. Like Patrick said, "*HE TOOK US TO SOME COOL PLACES*"

My youngest sister Margie – Margaret Francis – and I were here for 10 days earlier this month and we saw Dad at the hospital every day. Margie wanted so much to be here. As you know, Dad had been in & out of hospitals the past 4-5 years and he knew that his long-term illnesses were getting the best of him.

Although we talked about a lot of things through the years, we had never talked about some things ... until earlier this month ... and we talked a lot. He told me about today, "Well Michael, I really haven't given it much thought" ... I know he was busy thinking about a lot of things ... past, present & future ... but not today.

My next older sister Mari – Marilyn Jean – is also here today and she has helped me understand so much through my life. She always stayed in touch with Dad through the years. The photo over here is one of baby Mari and Dad probably taken in Washington State.

My oldest sister Kathy – Kathryn Ann and my next youngest sister Sue – Jenny Sue are the creative artistic ones in the family. Sue got the photos and displays of Dad's medals and pins together for today, don't they look great? As you all know, Dad always wore a hat and usually it had a pin or two on it. These two hats were his recent 2 favorites ...

For people he liked, he let you know it "loud & clear." I told him at the hospital ... "Love You Dad ..." And he barked back "Michael, you know I Love You!" ... and with his eyes ... and sometimes loud words once again, we communicated.

We'll all miss you Dad, as we still miss our Julie Mae.

In some of Dad's stuff, I found that through the years, my Mom – Dorothy Mae (who gives us all such inspiration) had stayed in touch with Dad and Dad loved Mom so much ... and they both spoke so highly of each other to all the kids through the years...

And They have some great kids, my brothers & sisters And He was so proud of them.

And we will all carry on and gain strength from Him.

Thank-you all for your Love, Kindness & Support ... We love you too.

Michael A. McElhiney