

EULOGY for VALERIE CAPPELAERE DELANY 5-18-13 ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

My name is Daria and I have known and loved the Cappelaere family for 17 years. It is not only a privilege, but a true honor to be here today to celebrate Valerie's life.

Valerie was such an impressive person, it seemed difficult to me to express myself in a way that would justly describe who she was to all of us.

So, in addition to using my own thoughts and experiences, I thought it best to reach out to others who knew OUR Valerie well...her sisters, Sean, her grandmother, her HS guidance counselor, her best friend Erin.

Allison wrote:

- Valerie was my friend and mentor
 - She was the rock of our family
 - Hard headed, feisty and fearless
 - The most stylish with the best and most expensive taste.
 - She was funny... maybe couldn't take a joke... yet totally not afraid to make a fool of herself
 - A loving wife to Sean
 - Selective with her friends and who she chose to surround herself with
 - Val always needed a challenge and chose the hardest route
 - She used personal mottos... like "ADAPT and OVERCOME"
-

Valerie was a talented singer..... Always singing, even as a toddler!

In middle school, Val had a solo role in "The Wizard of Oz" - a standing ovation resulted. In High School, Val was a member of the Glee Club and, at the Naval Academy, a member of coveted specialty group, the "Stowaways." At her High school graduation, accompanied by only a piano, Val sang solo ... Another standing ovation and not a dry eye in the stadium.

Val sang at Caroline's wedding... And with all her heart, she sang in the hardest of situations: ... At her nephew, PJ's, funeral. As her grandmother said: "Val's beautiful voice is now resounding from Heaven."

Valerie had some rebellious teenage years..... Hey? Kids who are brilliant tend to become a bit rebellious... ..But eventually, Valerie became the "MOST REFORMED."

JENN MCKIGHT, VALERIE'S GUIDANCE COUNSELOR AT CENTINNEAL HIGH SCHOOL, WROTE:

Over the years Valerie demonstrated her academic ability... exceptional in Advanced Placement classes. She was gifted in math and science. Val had shared with me that her grandfather served as an officer and a pilot in the AIR FORCE. Her admiration and reverence for her grandfather and his service to our country was genuine and in my experience very rare.

Val KNEW where she was going and built a solid foundation for a degree in engineering and possessed the academic ability required for success at the Naval Academy.

Valerie was also a fierce competitor on the soccer and lacrosse fields. She had a great head for the strategy of the game and demonstrated natural leadership with her team-mates.

Perhaps the quality I admired most about Valerie was her INTEGRITY. Although outstanding in so many areas, Valerie was also a down-to-earth, typical teenager.

Quite often in high school teenagers make mistakes and often these life lessons are just as valuable as the academic lessons learned in the classroom. Valerie did not escape high school without experiencing one such life lesson. When confronted with the situation Valerie owned up to her mistake, accepted her consequence, and then she came to see me because she was driven to influence other students to avoid similar mistakes.

She put together a plan then created a new club: “Students Against Destructive Decisions.” When Val made a mistake she would go ABOVE AND BEYOND to make it right. I have been an educator for 15 years and this is truly a rare quality.”

Thank you, Jenn.

As a hospital administrator, I had the opportunity to have all 3 Cappelaere girls spend their summers with me for their High School community service hours. I placed Caroline on my Geriatric Rehab unit, Valerie on my Stroke Unit and Allison on my Brain Injury Unit.

As you can imagine, they were exposed to situations that they had never seen before. It was a growth opportunity for them. But Valerie turned her experience into a growth opportunity for the patients and staff.

The patients on Stroke were quite impaired and the average age of was 79. After spending just her first few days with the Speech Therapists, Val introduced the idea of getting the patients on the internet as part of their medical treatment plan. Keep in mind ... this was 2003... these patients had never heard of the internet. Val decided this would help retrain cognition and motor skills.

Next thing I know, these patients are on a laptop, searching the web as part of their therapy session. Val is sitting next to them... ..showing them what to click... what to read. She was just 16 years old....The physicians thought she was amazing.

CAROLINE WROTE:

“Val treated me better than I deserve. I put her through hell growing up. I was a mean and bossy older sister and it wasn't until I moved to college that I really started to appreciate her for the beautiful and amazing person she was.... My biggest regret is that I don't think I told her enough... how much I really loved her....how proud of her I am!

Val will probably always be the most impressive person that I have ever met... She never ceased to amaze me with her many talents.

Not only did she pursue her dream of becoming a jet pilot but she also learned to quilt, hunt, train for triathlons, and design/build her dream home while doing it. She never stopped and there wasn't anything she couldn't do if she put her mind to it!

Val was always my strength and support growing up. Being the older sister, that probably should have been my role.... but I was always scared and Val was always brave.

Val was the strongest shoulder I had to lean on when PJ passed away. Valerie said ‘Don't be so upset. PJ wouldn't want you to be. You know he's smiling down on you from heaven’ ...and I'm comforted because I know she's up there too.”

Her best friend at the Academy, Erin wrote:

To put it simply, she was the best friend I could have ever asked for.... I miss her every single day.

She was the first upperclassman to approach me. Throughout my freshman year at the Academy, Val was my rock.

And I remember the day she started dating Sean... she gave me yet another reason to look up to her. From day one, they had the greatest relationship and it will forever be the relationship I will strive to find in my own life.

She inspired me to be a pilot; she taught me how to be a better friend. She taught me to NEVER settle and to be fearless in everything that I did... to “ADAPT and OVERCOME.” Val IS my best friend. She always will be.

Then there was Sean:

When she met Sean... she knew... .. ABSOLUTELY the Love of her Life!

When they first met, I whispered to Val, “He’s the one... Go get him!” She responds, without missing a beat, “I’m planning on it!”

It was the wedding of all weddings! Married for just one year, Sean said about their relationship:

“Valerie was the love of my life... the only one I fully confided in... the one I could be around ALL the time. From hunting and hiking... to wine tasting and fine dining, she was the one I could do anything with. Simply put, she was my BEST friend.

Valerie worked hard at everything she did, including trying to be the best wife I could EVER DREAM OF or HOPE FOR... and in that area, she excelled again and again. Although known for being incredibly beautiful, smart, athletic, fun, and outgoing, it was her unyielding compassion and excitement for life that I fell in love with MOST. I will forever love her in my heart.”

CAROLINE’S HUSBAND, PETER WROTE:

In Honor

The question is never IF the storm is going to come.
The question is... when is the storm going to come?
In all probability, this storm will come when you least expect it.
And it will be something that you couldn't have possibly imagined or prepared for.

CLOSING:

I think we can agree Valerie Cappelaere Delaney was a treasure. She was gifted with uncommon determination, strength, and grit. But underneath that strength and determination is what truly set Valerie apart. She had an incredibly big heart and strong faith. In her quest to achieve her goals she didn't climb over or push others down to rise above. Rather... she instinctively saw the importance of helping others and bringing them along WITH her.

“Valerie”- A name of French origin, means “Brave, Strong and Fearless” What a perfect choice!!

As her friends and family, we are experiencing the storm of emotions attached to such a great loss. Disbelief, shock, intense grief, and sorrow... Hopefully, we will find some way to have the strength and support to get through this LONG PROCESS OF HEALING. And when the time is right, and we are able, we will remember the example that Valerie set and allow it to inspire us to be a LITTLE stronger, a LITTLE more determined, and A LOT kinder to everyone.

We have to acknowledge..... Grief is a profound experience. It comes upon us unexpectedly and grabs us from behind. The loss blows a hole in our side that may never really heal. BUT REMEMBER, Valerie left us doing WHAT SHE LOVED TO DO. So, we must TRY to heal. And we are so fortunate to have the best advice from Valerie HERSELF, who is saying to all of us today: “ADAPT and OVERCOME.”

THANK YOU FOR THAT ADVICE, VALERIE..... WE LOVE YOU

