

Remembering Frank

Sunrise

Anna Bellafante

I see you in the sunrise
The clouds of pink and peach
I see you in the birds
Red ones in the yard
I see you in some pizza
Shared between friends
I see you in a campus
One with a gold dome
I see you in a song
Music I know you'd like

I see you in the night sky
Within the shiny lights
I see you in a smile
In a handshake
In a hug
I know it's been a while
But we still feel your love
You brought us all together
And now here we are
Better because we knew you
I'll see you in the stars

Thank You

Mark Bellafante

On behalf of the entire Bellafante Family, I wanted to thank each and every one of you for all of the unbounded kindness, love, compassion, and support you have provided to my brother Frank, Francesco, Frankie, Balls Bellafante over the many years. Most people in this world are only fortunate enough to have one family that holds them dear and picks them up when they are down--Frank was so blessed to have multiple such families.

As a father myself and a son, I have experienced the unconditional love that lives fully within our family. I have been so humbled to see this same unconditional love exhibited by Frank's extended families. It is a powerful force that goes above and beyond simple friendship.

We loved him, and we never gave up on him.

During the last couple weeks of his life on an almost daily basis, Frank consistently ended our conversations with "thank you," "thank you, Mark." In fact his very last words to me were, "thank you." I know he would want me to extend this sense of gratitude to each of you.

He was fully aware and was sincerely grateful for those that watched out for him and helped him with his struggles and celebrated with him his joys. He was a passionate person in all things that he did.

As we struggle with losing him, we should cherish our fond memories of him and the many good times that we shared together throughout his life. As my sister Nancy so aptly put it: "Frank collected so many memories, adventures, friendships, joy, and love enough for many lifetimes."

We can certainly mourn his death, but I am certain he would want us to go forward celebrating his life.

My Friend

Joseph Guariglia

Hi. It's Frenoli here. A friend of Francesco's from Notre Dame. I'm fortunate to get a few minutes to talk today about my friend.

I first wanted to reflect on the person himself. The man of many names – Francesco, Frank, Frankie Balls, Balls. Balls was genuinely a kind soul. I know that he had his moments, especially during his episodes, which many of us have been on the receiving end of, but he was truly a good person. He cared and took the time to prove that; for him, it was not just words. His actions – his desire to listen and talk through things – showed he cared.

He was passionate. When he loved something, my goodness, he LOVED it. Whether it was as simple as a piece of pizza or as important as his family and the Family, his passion ran deep. He was obsessed about those things that were important to him and he showed it every day.

He was funny. He loved to laugh and was just as good about laughing at himself as he was laughing at others or the situation. The best part of the wild situations he got himself into was his ability to tell the story and laugh about it. It was as if you were there. I can't tell you the number of times I would laugh until I cried when he told of his adventures.

He lived life to the fullest. He spent the time with those he loved. He took that adventure when the opportunity arose. And he put his heart and soul into his goals.

Be the Good

Mia Bellafante

When we were younger, Uncle Frank gave me, Anna, and Maeve these plaques that said "Believe there is good in the world, be the good". And while it may be a little cheesy, I think about that almost everyday, and I really think that Frank did too.

The thing I remember most about talking to and being with Uncle Frank was how passionate he was about the things, people, and places he cared about. He loved everything so fully and feeling that kind of love when it's directed at you is like nothing else in the world. I want to love the way he did, without reservations or hesitation, to just throw myself into the people and things I care about, so that I can really be that good that exists in the world.

I think of Frank all the time; when I eat gnocchi (even though it's never as good as his), when I'm looking at a beautiful sunset, when I see an amazing shot of photography, and when I watch Notre Dame football. When we were little we always used to joke that we saw him in the stands at the games when we would watch from home, and it makes me really sad that we won't ever get to stand there together.

But that's also what I love about being here at Notre Dame; I like to know that he was at this school, he walked around these lakes, sat in these classrooms, and rejoiced in this stadium. It makes me feel connected to him everyday and reminds me of what he inspires me to do, to love despite the risks.

Einstein

Kristin Bellafante

Many of you know Frank had a deep affinity for Albert Einstein, and I'm reminded of Frank in these words:

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world. Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery each day."

Uncle Frank

Maeve Bellafante

When I think of my uncle, the first thing I think of is fun. When I was little and wanted someone to go on adventures with, I could always count on Frank. Whether it was camping in the woods, playing games outside, or playing the drums, he was always ready to join.

When I was growing up Frank would come up frequently to see me and my sisters and always found a way to make us smile when he was there. I remember him asking me to walk on his back a lot whenever he came to visit which I always thought was pretty silly. There was one time Frank accidentally locked himself out of his car when we were in Lancaster and gave us the famous quote "horses don't need keys". We also can't forget his creation of the frankercise which basically just consisted of waving your arms around like a chicken and moving side to side.

My uncle was definitely a very funny guy, but he was also very kind, generous, and loving. I miss my uncle so much and still love him so much, and know that he's watching over me today.

Horses Don't Need Keys

Mark Bellafante

Everyone who knew Frank, appreciates that he had a great sense of humor and loved to laugh with his great big belly laugh.

On one occasion some time ago, Frank's immediate family rented a house for the weekend out in Lancaster, PA to celebrate our mother's 70th birthday. We spent the entire weekend seeing the sites, preparing and sharing meals, and playing games together.

As usual, Frank led his 3 nieces in his patented Frank-bo exercises; he had the girls step on his back to massage it, and was constantly demonstrating his uncanny ability to spin pillows and other objects on his finger at high speed.

Everyone had a wonderful time.

When it came time for us to depart, not surprisingly, we all shared a meal at a local pizza joint. After the meal was over, we all went to our separate cars.

At this time, Frank owned his beloved rust colored 280-ZX. He was so proud of that car, despite the fact that he barely fit in it. In fact some stranger passing by our rental house saw the car and asked Frank if he could take a photo of it. Frank proceeded to detail the history of the vehicle for the next 20 minutes and assisted with a full photoshoot.

Unfortunately, as those who knew him, Frank had a tendency to lose things--including keys. So while we were waiting for a locksmith to help unlock the Z, so he could drive home, Frank was dancing around our minivan goofily trying to entertain his nieces.

At one point, he spotted an Amish carriage pulled by a horse that was passing by. Not missing a beat, he walked up to the minivan window and proclaimed to the girls: "You see that, horses don't need keys!" Everyone cracked up with laughter for the next 10 minutes. To this day, whenever we see an Amish carriage, we remember Frank's witty and insightful observation--"Horses don't need keys."

Favorite Balls Stories

Joseph Guariglia

His gift was his storytelling. His goal was telling HIS story. It will be our job now to keep his story alive. So, I wanted to share a few stories of our time together. I know we each have our own memories, but these were some of my favorites.

Balls loved the Irish and loved our home football games! How we all were able to relate to one another at tailgates was the fact that we were all drunk. Well, I was lucky enough to have mono for a couple of home games and was stone cold sober for those tailgates. One of those games I ended up taking care of Balls. He was unusually drunk for that game. After "carrying" him around from the tailgate to the ACC to the stadium, he ended up getting thrown out. Needless to say, he tried to charm the security guard to get back in and, when that failed, turned to screaming "my parents pay \$15,000 a year for me to go to these games!". That didn't work either...haha...but we did get to spend quality time together watching the game from the dorm.

Balls found our first NYC apartment! One night he came back to Hoboken and was all wound up over this huge apartment he found in Manhattan. The second we all saw it, we knew this was the one. It was enormous and we took advantage of that fact. We created a "Real World" apartment, with an entire living area, pool table area (that doubled for a dancing stage during parties), 4 semi-private bedrooms and one shower (proper priorities for our early 20's). We would have parties where we would literally hand out flyers at work and random people would just walk in from the street. It was wild...and a blast! Memories for a lifetime. Oh, and Milla Jovovich lived in our building (if you hadn't heard...haha)!

Vegetarian Balls ate Texas steak...and loved it! During his first cross-country road trip to LA, Balls stopped by my first place in Texas. We had an awesome time catching up and talking about our goals for the future based on where we were in life. Anyway, he was a vegetarian then...hmmmm. To welcome him to the Lone Star State, I had a couple of ND folks over for drinks and dinner; I cooked steak that night and grilled lots of vegetables for him. As the rest of us were biting into our steaks, I guess Balls decided he wasn't really a vegetarian anymore, so grabbed his fork and knife and devoured one himself. Between that and his love for meat-topped pizza, Vegetarian Balls didn't have a chance!

Nothing can replace our quality time hanging out in NYC. Balls would visit me in NYC often; he always loved the City. We spent numerous nights just sitting on the couch, having a few cocktails and talking for hours. He never wanted anything fancy, so a red and white tablecloth Italian/pizza place down the block was our go-to. We would eat like, well, animals...ugh. But it was SO GOOD! We did this one last time in the Fall of 2020. It was our best one.

Anyway, I miss my friend. I know we all do. I'm sure he is showering the best of him on those he is with now. And they are loving him as much as we do.

Epitaph

Kristin Bellafante

When I die
Give what's left of me away

And if you need to cry
Cry for your brother
Walking the street beside you

And when you need me
Put your arms around anyone
And give them
What you need to give to me

I want to leave you something
Something better than words
Or sounds
Look for me
In the people I've known
Or loved

And if you cannot give me away
At least let me live on in your eyes
And not on your mind

You can love me most
By letting hands touch hands
By letting bodies touch bodies

Love doesn't die
People do
So, when all that is left is love
Give me away

- Merrit Malloy