

## Eulogy for Mark Holtel

by Emily Holtel-Hoag, 6/4/25 and 6/8/25

### Cincinnati Introductory Remarks

Before I begin, I'd like to take a moment to thank Father King and the Guardian Angels community for welcoming us back. This parish is where my mom made her sacraments of initiation, where my parents were married, and where my mom's funeral was 7 years ago. My mom was one of 6 children so this community of faith has welcomed many Cappels during the important times in our lives. It is so close to the Cappels that if you walk out the back door and keep walking across the parking lot, you will walk to the home they grew up in on Brachman Avenue. My dad was is a Holtel by birth and proud of his upbringing in Oldenburg, Indiana with his 3 brothers and 4 sisters. So, my dad a Cappel not by birth but by love. He said more than once that he wished he was a progressive thinker back in 1969 because he would have taken the Cappel name and ditched the clunky Holtel name. His cremains will be buried on top of my grandfather's casket. He can't get more Cappel while still being a Holtel- or Hottle, or a Hotel- or a Huckle or however you want to pronounce it.

### Cleveland Introductory Remarks

I want to start by thanking you all for coming today. It means a great deal to my family and me. I debated about having this celebration thinking that the Mass on Thursday we had in Cincinnati was more than enough. But, my dad did live in Cleveland for over 9 years and that seems long enough to deserve a local remembrance.

And as I was preparing for this, I started to realize that I needed to have this to thank you for being a part of our lives these last 9 years. It wasn't always easy hanging with us during this time. We had some really rough patches and some of you heard about it A LOT. But, you showed up for us by sending a supportive text, liking and commenting on my overshares on Facebook, meeting me for lunch or coffee, reminding me to take care of myself, allowing me to have a flexible work schedule or be a little forgetful and not always being able to show up for you. You always greeted my dad with love and attention. You showed up on our front yard December 22, 2021 in the middle of Omnicron to sing happy birthday on my dad's 90<sup>th</sup>. You sang Christmas carols with him. You got to know him as a person who although elderly had something special about him and something left to give to you and others.

Most of you saw a less than 10% of my dad's life. There was a whole lot more that happened before that and whole lot more remarkable and loving things he did.

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If I attempted to use this eulogy as an opportunity to summarize the way my dad witnessed to his faith, or his many acts of service and works for justice, or simply how he loved others, we be here quite a while. So, I would like to share a few snapshots from the highlight reel of his life.

In the early 80s my dad decided that our parish should host a refugee family from Vietnam. My dad spoke at all the Masses explaining why we should do this and how people could get involved. I was so proud that my dad was the one up there speaking. (In Cleveland, I added more detail: In the early 80s my dad decided that our parish should host a refugee family from Vietnam. My dad spoke at all the Masses explaining why we should do this and how people could get involved. I was so proud that my dad was the one up there speaking. After the Vietnamese, when refugee status was available for people in Community countries, a Jana and Robert from Czechoslovakia lived with us. Then we made friends with Christina, Pawel and Derek who we called "the Polish people". Then there was Brenda from Mexico, Paul, Karina, Mario and Dina from Peru, Reina from somewhere in Latin America and the list goes on. )

When I was in high school, my parents became friends with Scotty and his mother. Scotty was severely disabled and blind. There was nothing he could do. We would babysit him sometimes. I remember my dad sitting there cradling Scotty, singing to him. He said there were so few things that Scotty could enjoy so he was going to give him the warmth of human touch.

We went through some of my dad's files recently and found a summary of his 30 years of work for the Hamilton County Department of Human Services. I like to think about my dad in his Sear sucker suits and business orthopedic black shoes, drinking too much coffee and confidently running his department that contracted with providers of various social services. Upon his retirement one of the awards he received from a service provider named him "The One and Only One Bureaucrat with a Heart".

I think about how in college, my dad embraced my new understanding of feminism and equality and how our language plays a role in our culture. He embraced it so much that his Yard Man lawnmower became a Yard Person Lawnmower with a quick piece of tape and Sharpie. However, he never taught me to cut the grass because he feared I would cut my foot off. I didn't mind that perhaps a hint of sexism excused me from that chore.

I think about the stories he told me when we talked every other day at 7:45am. About his adventures thanks to what seemed like the daily call of Margaret Singer, Director of the Hispanic Center, to help someone learn to drive, help someone get public assistance, get a car out of an impound lot, and much more.

I think about all the people my mom and dad visited. Weekly visits to Aunt Helen. My dad's grocery shopping trips for a parapalegic artist who was on a plant based diet well before the rest of the world caught on. My dad would dutifully buy her the 65 grapefruits she wanted, or the 6 leeks even though he didn't know what a leek was and so on. And the blind couple that just needed a little help every once in awhile. Or the brother of my mom's friend who was in a group home but liked to go out occasionally for Skyline chili. The list could go on.

Over the last few months, my dad and I had some long days usually for doctor appointments but sometimes at Costco for hearing aids. As I was leaving, he would say, "Oh, Honey, you took so much of your time today to help me." I reassured him saying, "You are worth it" over and over again.

And he was worth it because of what he did but also because of who we became because of him.

A young man from Peru became a UC Bearcat because my dad believed in him and co-signed for him to go to college. He is now a successful engineer, spouse and father of three and was our second reader.

A nephew was lost for years without any family having any contact. My dad would not give up searching and eventually found an address to write to. Once reunited by phone from California, Dave became his most faithful callers checking in at times every week.

A woman with a laugh to grab your attention and lift your spirits but unable to remember much more than the present moment, continued to be the love of his life, but more of a sweetheart as they spent time together every day in her room of the memory care facility.

Typical teenage boys self-absorbed and perhaps a wee bit lazy, became faithful grandsons worrying about keeping Grandpa safe during Covid and assisting him in the years where his body failed him.

Guatemalans in Mixco, Guatemala City, are not simply recipients of charitable works. They are lifelong friends that we wish could be with us today. I wear the blouse they made me to honor them and the important work that we ask you to support through memorial donations.

People without documents were not aliens, or rapists or murderers. They were mothers and fathers risking their own lives to bring their families out of poverty, to contribute to their new communities and country. People who we could relate to because we would do the same if in their situation.

A loving, faithful self-sacrificing son-in-law became a loving, faithful, self-sacrificing son-in-law. Even my dad couldn't improve on his NEAR perfect.

An only child who needed a little space and independence from her parents, became Daughter Bear taking on anyone who treated her dad unfairly, most often in the medical system. She didn't think she had the patience, energy, or temperament to care give but found herself giving her all and joining her heart to her dad's.

As we go forward from this gathering we may look for signs of my dad or ways to stay connected to him. But, my dad although full of emotion, had little interest for anything he considered overly sentimental. So, if you see a penny on the ground probably someone dropped it. If you see a shooting star, you see a shooting star. If you see a cardinal, it must be someone else.

However, if you find yourself visiting a lonely person in a nursing home, helping a newcomer, advocating for justice, or passionately and carefully doing your daily work, then you may feel the spirit of my dad encouraging you, affirming you and loving you and the least among us.