

Reflections on Paul Ruwoldt

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As Natalie's father, I am honored to be speaking on her behalf at this celebration of Paul's life. First, however, I would like to say a few words on behalf of Natalie's Mom, Rene, her brother Grant, her cousin, Andy, myself and the rest of Paul's extended family in Louisiana.

Paul won Rene over pretty quickly with his good looks and of course that accent! He clinched the deal with a motorcycle ride and after that he could do no wrong in her eyes. Grant was around more often than the rest of us and he was always so impressed and excited by the fact that there was finally a guy who challenged Natalie in multiple aspects of her life – intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and athletically.

The Louisiana crew was very impressed that Paul could more than hold his own in the annual beach beer-drinking, golfing, wine-tasting and world philosophizing activities. It felt as though he had always been a part of Natalie's extended family and that group is with us today in spirit. They are also looking forward to celebrating Paul's life and comforting Natalie in their own way this spring. A way that will undoubtedly involve boiled crawfish, gumbo and a few beers.

I always enjoyed Paul's company a great deal but he won me over when he got me and Grant together back in the summer and asked our permission to marry Natalie. As a 41 year old man he didn't have to ask us to do anything! But, being ever the gentleman and traditionalist, he did. My response to him was that no father feels that there is anyone good enough to marry his daughter. But what I had always wanted and expected for Natalie (and Grant for that matter) was someone

1. To reciprocate her love, respect and trust
2. To strive to keep happiness in her life
3. To contribute to her safety and security

I told him that in the relatively brief time they had been together he had demonstrated that to me and all of us and we were thrilled to add him to our family. Though he never got to be our son-in-law, brother-in-law, cousin-in-law, etc....that was just a matter of semantics. He was, and always will be, part of the Schafer family.

Grant was fortunate enough to spend time with Paul during his last few days in the hospital in Pittsburgh. Here, Paul taught him the power of touch. How, when all had been said about love, life, careers, Natalie, etc., the connection of holding a loved one can be more powerful than the

human language has the capacity to explain. Paul has left a lasting impact on Grant as a friend, mentor, role model and brother that he always wished he had. That deeply-felt impact extends to the rest of our family, as well.

Curt Schafer