

Eulogy for Ralph Rizzo

February 15, 1920 – May 7, 2010

He was a quiet man, someone who did his very best to listen, even if he couldn't always hear. He was someone who commanded your attention when he spoke. He was a self-made man, someone who liked having an active mind and busy hands, and he inspired us all with his work ethic. He was a patient teacher. He was an excellent dancer. He knew how to mix a drink. He knew how to grow a good tomato. He knew how to have a good time.

He liked to fish, and to golf, and to play cards, and to feel the sun on his face. He was always eager to offer anyone his help. He was generous, with his money, with his hands, and with his heart; it is safe to say that just about everyone here has benefited from his altruism. He gave his family not just everything they needed, but MORE than they needed. He liked to wrap his gifts, especially the expensive ones, in newsprint, empty peanut butter jars, and old cereal boxes. He hid dollar bills under our dinner plates, and waited, gleefully, for us to find them. He liked to surprise us. He liked a good joke, even if it was at his own expense. He

liked to peel and eat grapefruit while watching TV. He liked to eat steamers dipped in butter, particularly those he dug up himself on Cedar Beach, when it was legal, and sometimes when it wasn't.

He was resourceful, and he could fix anything. He loved music, and he could play any musical instrument you put in front of him. He had an extraordinary mind for numbers. He had an extraordinary heart, which was strong enough to love all of us for over ninety years. He lived through the Great Depression. He was a cancer survivor. He had a beautiful, wavy head of hair, which turned white later in life, perfectly matching the white slip-on shoes he liked to wear.

He had a difficult childhood. He was a cocky teenager, until he met a woman who set him straight, for the most part. He was married to that woman, to Louise, for over sixty-nine years, and he showed her he loved her every day of their life together. He liked to be his own boss. When he couldn't find the right tool to solve a problem, he made his own. He loved his *calamari calabresi*. He loved taking us out to breakfast. He loved puzzles. He loved raisins, even if they reminded some of us of *chitamales*. He hated when seagulls did their business on the roof of his house. He

disliked air conditioning. He seemed happiest in the summertime, with his family around him.

He smelled like a combination of garlic and olive oil and WD40 and the ocean. But mostly garlic. Always garlic.

Like the scent of it, of garlic sautéing in our family's kitchen, he was strong and comforting and welcoming and enduring. He continues to endure in all our memories of him, in all the things he was to all of us who knew him, respected him, and adored him as our brother, our husband, our father, our uncle, our grandfather, our great-grandfather, our neighbor, our friend. Our Papa. Our Ralph.

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