

Arthur E. Kelly Funeral ~ November 26, 2011 ~ A homily preached by The Rev'd Erl G. Purnell at Old St. Andrew's Church, Bloomfield, CT

Ecclesiastes 3.1-8; Psalm 23 (KJV); Matthew 5.1-9

A true gentleman. But, gentleman is only one of many special words that characterized Art Kelly. In fact, special is another. But also, thoughtful and kind, dapper, generous, cheerful, handsome, careful, consistent, loyal and devoted, and of course, faithful.

My understanding is that Art held every possible volunteer position in the Episcopal Church, except choir member and Altar Guild. Church mattered. Worship mattered. Art was a believer who lived his faith unabashedly. And that's a model worth emulating.

He was also a successful businessman, entrepreneur and father. A beloved grandfather!

Art was blessed with a full and wonderful 90 years, 61 with his beautiful Bette. Though it's hard to think there will be no new events with Art to remember, the ones logged with each of us will endure. In a word, Art's unforgettable. His life was the whole magilla. We'll tell the stories, laugh, and sometimes cry in times to come. I have two brief tales.

Art called one day and invited me to his house. In his usual puckish way—he really could be kind of puckish—Art said he had a gift for the church. He showed me an extraordinary watercolor rendition of Old St. Andrew's painted by his friend Rudy Ravasio. I thanked him but quickly added that the church already had too many portraits of itself. I suggested that he keep it for himself and Bette.

Well, little did I know, Art liked the painting so much that he'd had Rudy paint a second "original," so there'd be one for 18 Beverly Drive and one for Old St. Andrew's library. I was embarrassed and incredibly grateful. The original "original" now hangs in the church's library and is commented on by all who see it. All of which is to say, this vignette is vintage Art.

Art was a pilot and so am I. We often talked flying and this summer, after I got back from flying a 1941 J3 Piper Cub around the mid-west for five days, he was green with envy and he told me this story.

Sometime back in the 1940s, Art was asked by a guy named André, a wealthy French émigré whose daughter, Jocelyn, was in boarding school, to fly him there for parents' weekend. So, Art puts André in the front seat, throws the prop on the yellow Piper J3 Cub, climbs in and takes off. They

fly to the boarding school in rural Maryland and circle overhead as Art assesses the landing situation. The whole school is gathered outside watching as Art cuts the power and slips the craft down and onto the athletic field right in front of the school. The Headmistress comes out, hands on her hips, and says, “What’s the meaning of this?” To which Art replies, “Well it’s parents’ weekend and I’ve brought a parent to see his daughter.”

Art loved the Cub and perhaps we can all imagine that he’s there in the cockpit again, reciting ...

*HIGH FLIGHT*

OH! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth  
 And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings.  
 Sunward I’ve climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth  
 Of sun-split clouds,—and done a hundred things  
 You have not dreamed of—wheeled and soared and swung  
 High in the sunlit silence. Hov’ring there,  
 I’ve chased the wind along, and flung  
 My eager craft through footless halls of air.  
 Up, up, the long delirious burning blue  
 I’ve topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,  
 Where never lark, nor even eagle flew—  
 And, while with silent, lifting mind I’ve trod  
 The high untresspassed sanctity of space,  
 Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

*John Gillespie Magee, Jr.*

(Sometime boyfriend of my mother, Margaret A. Gould)

Art Kelly, you’ve been a treasure. May you always have a tailwind. Blessings, Peace, and Godspeed. Godspeed.

*Amen.*

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