

EULOGY
FOR
JAY DEVEROUX. KYNERD
April 27, 2004

Monday night, a little more than 24 hours after Jay's death, I was lying with my 4 year old, Charlie, as he wiggled himself to sleep. Of course, Charlie knew nothing of the situation with Jay. My 15 year old son John cracked the door. "Dad", he said "Mr. Kynerd is on the phone", speaking of Kevin. Charlie popped his head up. "Jay Kynerd", he whispered, "I love Jay Kynerd and I want just to see him." "Yes", I thought, "That's how I feel exactly. I love Jay Kynerd and I just want to see him."

Jay Kynerd was my business partner and my best friend. I grieve at the thought of life without Jay, and yet I am thankful for the privilege of knowing him at the deepest of levels for almost 10 years.

I know that this eulogy about Jay is important. One person told me that it was probably one of the most important things I've ever done. Gee, that helped. In a sense, though, I've been given both the privilege and responsibility of summarizing the essence of Jay's life for his friends and his family in just a few short minutes. And what I don't want to do is just recite platitudes that cause notes to be passed to the effect of "Who's he talking about?" I want to really talk about Jay.

You know, Jay and I actually talked about our eulogies on several occasions in the past few years. In his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Steven Covey has his reader imagine that he walks into his own funeral and listens, as each of his business partner, his best friend, and his spouse begin to talk to the assembled guests about him. Unlike most eulogies, though, this one contains the truth. "What", asks Covey, "if the truth were told, would be said about you? What do you *want* to be said about you?" We should live life, he writes, *with the end in mind*; this should be the compass for how we actually live life. Jay desperately wanted to live that way, to live *on purpose*, to make a difference in the lives of other people.

When Jay's office was organized for his family yesterday, one of his friends at our company found a notecard on which Jay had been thinking through this issue of life purpose on October 30 of last year. He wrote this on the notecard: "Living on purpose is the path to peace." And then he quoted an Old Testament verse, Isaiah 26:3: "You, Lord, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in You." He then wrote a question for meditation: "What would my family and friends say is the driving force of my life? What do I want it to be?" And at the bottom of the card was the prayer he wrote: "God, change my heart; show me my purpose."

What was Jay's purpose? The notecard doesn't say. I've talked to so many of you in the past few days. And if you, if any of you, could have heard all that I've heard, and could

have known him as I have, you could answer that question yourself, you could tell Jay the driving force of his life.

Was Jay's purpose, his driving force in life, acquiring cool toys or clothes, was it to have cool experiences? Yes, Jay did like nice stuff. Let's get that out of the way. I worried, as I know did you, Mary Jo, that he would wrap his BMW motorcycle around a tree. (And I don't think you even *knew* about the paces he put that bike through on the Barber track.) And he loved, how he loved, to fish – I don't mean a Zebco 202 on the Cahaba, either, but the real stuff – Wyoming, Montana, flyfishing, the sport of kings. Let's don't forget golf – he was, after all, on the Board of Shoal Creek. There were, also, the flying lessons – that didn't help on his insurance application, by the way. Jay's stereo and television components were strong, very strong. And his threads? Let's just say I wish I was a 36 short. And I must tell you this: In Jay's office...was a brochure.....and an application.....forfennnccciing..... lessons. Yes, I said fencing lessons. He must have seen a movie. Pirates of the Carribean?

And so that this Eulogy doesn't give a false sense of Jay, let's get a few other things on the table. He could not get up early. End of story. He wore his hair too long in the front. He did not balance his checkbook. And, he waited till the last minute...on lots of stuff. I will concede all of those.

Now, let me tell you some things that you have told me, and what I already knew about Jay: *Jay's purpose in life was to love people*. In one way or another, each of you who knew that I was to offer this Eulogy, and many who didn't know but just wanted to talk about Jay, said that very thing, often in those words. Jay lived to love people.

You know, guys don't think much about who their "best friend" is. Friends are more functional than relational for us. I did not realize, until this week, that Jay was my best friend. But I will tell you this: If I asked for a show of hands from all of those here today who would say "Jay Kynerd was one of my best friends", there would be, at least, 50 to 60 hands go up. Even as I wrote this paragraph, I was interrupted by one who said this: "I've only known Jay about a year, but he was one of my best friends." You see, I've found that Jay had lots of different circles of friends – he cared about all of them, he did things for all of them, he hoped and dreamed for all of them, he prayed for all of them, they all thought, you all thought, that *he* was one of *their* best friends. The truth is thi:, for all of you who would raise your hands, for every single one of you – he was.

Let me give just a few examples of Jay's love for people, his impact on people. I'll start with me. How do I do it, though? As another of our business partners said when we were discussing this Eulogy yesterday, "*You won't have time to tell all about him. With Jay, you'll have to prioritize the goodness.*" So I've just listed a few of the words I could use to describe Jay. To me, Jay was unselfish, honest, giving, encouraging, insightful, bright, and visionary, just for starters. What a rare privilege to have such a partner, such a friend.

Let me look at those points in Jay's life a little closer:

Unselfish: Jay wanted to deflect credit for everything, anything, to others at every opportunity. He did not want the most, the biggest of anything, when it was between him and his friends and partners. He pushed it to others. For no good reason except for his unselfishness, anything he did with me was retold as if I was the hero, not him.

Honest: When in a tough, long range decision process, I always knew what Jay would say: “Dave, just *do the next, right, thing*. God will honor your faithfulness.” This was his counsel, every time, on every decision. This was Jay’s compass for life. Not “What’s best for me?” Not “Noone will know.” No justifications. Just this: “Do the next, right, thing” I will never, ever, forget those words of life from Jay.

Giving: Jay loved to give away money to people he believed in, and he was so happy to be able to do so significantly over the last few years. Many of you here know of Jay’s generous heart personally. Jay was, 100%, a giver in life, not a taker.

Encouraging: As one friend said: “I always felt better about myself after talking to Jay.” Wow. So did I. How many of you have received a note from Jay that encouraged you, that helped you along the way? I know I did. It will really be hard to move on, for me, without Jay’s encouragement. He was, along with my wife, my head cheerleader. Thank you, Jay.

Insightful: Jay knew people. He had remarkable depth and wisdom for his age, especially not having the battle scars from raising a family. Jay’s insights rarely led to negative opinions, but they did lead to hopes for people. He knew people and relationships, and he hoped so deeply that people would do the right thing in their lives. He knew it would be best for them. He invested time in people to try to persuade them. He wanted to spiritually impact them for their own benefit. He hoped for them. And what he hoped for, all of you need to know, he prayed for. There are many of you here today who Jay consistently prayed for. And you didn’t know it. You might not have even seen him in a while, but he prayed for you, about specific things in your life.

I may be the only person here who knew about many of you he hoped and prayed for – both friends and family. As I’ve thought about what I could do to honor Jay, to remember him in a way that honors his driving force, his purpose, I’ve committed to contact each person I knew Jay was concerned for, had hopes for, was praying for, and share with each of you Jay’s heart for you. That’s the least I can do, as much as Jay did for me. So when I call, that’s what it’s about. Please take my call. I started yesterday and it’s not that painful, I promise. But it does give a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the heart of a wonderful man.

Bright: I have never seen anyone – in law school, practice, or business – who could, under intense pressure, process material at the last minute, connect the dots, and be an expert an hour later. Not just *act like* an expert, but *be* an expert. He would know the material, what it meant, why it was there, how to get there from here. He was a genius at it. A frequent question around our office was often: “Where’d he learn that stuff?” But he’d know it, really know it.

When Jay died, he was with his friend Matthew Dent, in Matthew’s boat on Lake Martin. Innocently, Jen, Matthew’s wife, told me Sunday night, a few hours after Jay’s death, that when they met Jay Sunday afternoon to go to the lake, he had a thick book with him, and said he had a huge meeting early this week and needed to figure out what to say. If you knew the opportunity and the topic, you would conclude that he simply couldn’t do it, that nobody could prepare for that meeting with that little time. Smart people spend careers mastering this topic. The funny part is, though, that despite the meeting, the complexity of the material, the necessity that he be good and that he be right in the meeting, the fact that our competition is the national expert in this field, and the short time that Jay had to prepare for the topic, *Jay still got in the boat*. This was “just Jay”. And, had I known, I wouldn’t have worried; I would have been glad that he at least had the book the day *before* the meeting. Was he irresponsible, though? Never. Beyond any doubt in my mind, Jay would have been an expert for our meeting. Not *acted like* an expert, but *been* an expert. Jay was very, very bright.

Visionary: Jay saw the future, what our company could be, and wanted to move there fast. I never disagreed with his desired direction, only his speed. Sometimes I felt like that big cartoon bulldog of 30 years ago, with the younger, smaller, but otherwise identical bulldog pleading, cajoling, encouraging, begging “Come on Spike, let’s go this way, Hurry up Spike, before it’s too late. Come on Spike, you’re the greatest, Spike. Me and you, Spike, we’re gonna go a long way. Hurry up, Spike.” Slowly, Spike responds, and yes, though there may be an unexpected dog catcher or an 18 wheeler around the corner, it’s ultimately the right direction. Yes, he was a visionary; I’m still not sure what it means for our office expansion reception area to have a “plasma screen with streaming IPO info 24/7”, but we’ll still do it, because I’m sure if Jay had to have it, it’s a good “future” kind of thing.

Of course, with a life purpose of loving people, Jay loved his family first and foremost. And he loved them deeply and passionately. You didn’t have to call Jay one of your “best friends” to know how proud he was of his family, how he wanted to honor his family, how he loved his family.

Byrle, Jay’s respect for you knew no earthly bounds. It cannot be adequately described. How many times ... in any week...would I hear a reference to “my Dad”? His love and respect for you was the earthly light of his life. I mean this:

words are simply inadequate to articulate it. The sacrifices you made, the lessons you taught, the shortcuts you did not take, the unselfishness that characterizes your whole life – none of it, none of it, went unnoticed, unappreciated, or unemulated. He did not live for your love and approval – he knew he had both. But he did live to be just like you.

Mary Jo, how Jay did love “my Mom”. He would have died for you many times over. I’ve always believed that Jay remained single because he could never find one like “my Mom.” You were the epitome of a woman, a wife, a companion. (And you must have cooked a mean chicken finger plate.) Everyone in our office knew weeks ago exactly what Jay had picked out for you for Mother’s Day. He was so excited to be able to bless you with something nice. Jay was the child of your womb, and he had your heart.

Kevin, you were his best friend, his mentor. No matter how many times you beat him up (and would then give it to him double if he told your Dad), or what grotesque names you called him growing up, he so admired, respected and loved you. “Kev’s got a little of a tough exterior, but he has a heart like putty,” Jay would say. You guys shared so much: The early years family car- a Vega for 5. (I recall it earning a somewhat profane name to the two of you.) The expectations of growing up as the Supt’s son. Baseball. “Where’s Dad? At the school.” The trips to Mississippi. For years, Kevin, you were an icon to Jay because , in marrying Meredith, you achieved the ultimate prize: in Jay’s words, “a babe, even after kids.” But, when you got the plane, you moved to the stuff of legends. You meant everything to Jay.

Allison, how Jay wanted the best of everything for you. I know that Jay was so easy to talk to for you, and he treasured his sweet relationship with you. He always affirmed how much David loved you, and honored him for that. How Jay did love his sister. You were always on the very front of his mind and heart. In Kynerd kid fashion, you guys were direct with your opinions to each other, but he wanted only a great life for you and would have given *his* to give it to you.

Each of you, and Mariel, little Jay, Ky, must treasure in your heart that *never* did a son, a brother, or an uncle love his family more, or want to honor and help them more than did Jay.

And so, that’s a little of what I knew about Jay. He loved and wanted the best in life for so many of you, of us. He was the most unique, special person who I’ve ever known. These days, some would summarize with the dramatic understatement “Yeah, that Jay was a really good guy.” But I want to share one more thought with you. And this is the thought that, if I didn’t express it, would be *dishonoring* to Jay. And above all, I want to honor Jay.

I do not know why Jay died. We now know physiologically, but we may never know cosmically. Why would the life of a person like Jay be cut short so

dramatically? Just don't know. But I do know why Jay would have been *willing* to give his life at age 34. It would be for all of us to be here, for me to express this point. Please follow me as I try to say exactly what I *know* he would want me to say.

You see, Jay would not say that he was unselfish, he would say that he was deeply self-centered, like all of us. He would not say that he was honest, but that he was often drawn to do the wrong thing. He would describe himself as envious, not giving. And he would say he was too critical, not encouraging. Jay knew full well that he was, to the core, full of ugliness. And Jay knew that God was in every sense perfectly perfect. Jay knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that, today, he would not be in Heaven if left up to what *kind of guy* he was. Many times, Jay told me that he wasn't "a really good guy", but he had joy and confidence that there is a "really good God". A God so good, Byrle, Mary Jo, that he would have *His own* Son, a Son with whom He created the world and all else of reality, take the form of a lowly human being, live perfectly, and become the substitute, the sacrifice, for Jay's ugliness and sin, for mine, for the ugliness and sin of any who place their faith in the Son for peace with God.

Jay had complete confidence that the peace he had with God through His Son, Jesus, ensured eternal life for him. And he knew that the peace that he had with God would bear fruit in this life as well. So Jay's very life, the life we honor in this moment, was the *fruit* of his peace with God his Creator, not the *cause* of his peace with God. He wants you to know this. If Jay's life purpose was to love people, then he was a lot better than 99% of humanity. No doubt. But he knew and would tell you that before a perfectly perfect and holy God, grading on the curve doesn't count. Jay is not in Heaven today because he was such a "really good guy, because he loved and helped people. He would tell you, if he could speak now, that he is there because He trusted the sacrifice of Christ on his behalf. What we see and honor is that it bore fruit, great fruit, in his life. You see, this is what the Passion was all about. Not about whether the Jewish people or the Romans killed Jesus, not about artistic license, not about the perfect margin of violence. But about God's bridging the chasm between our ugliness and His perfectness through the sacrifice of His son.

And, finally, Jay would beg me to tell many of you this: Don't put it off. Jesus Christ was not a good prophet, a selfless teacher. He claimed to be the Son of God, the perfect sacrifice for our sin, our ugliness and selfishness. He was either who He claimed to be, or a nut. We all think we can wait to deal with questions like this, "till I'm about to die." But, we don't know when that will be, do we? 34 years old, picture of health, massive heart attack. I am thankful, oh how Jay is thankful, that he didn't wait.

Does God exist? Was Jesus who He claimed? Was He resurrected from the dead to prove His claims? We do lots of meaningless things in life, lots of them. Wouldn't we all do well to come to grips with this stuff now? Jay would

desperately want his death to be a call to each of those he loved to sober up, to look at what's really important, look at our own purpose in life.

And why wait? Jay lived to love people for one reason: he had peace with God through his faith in Jesus, and that relationship bore visible, very visible, fruit in his life. A life that was a gift to all of us who called him "friend". Jay was a trophy of God's grace. He would have wanted to live no other way. Why delay, wait, procrastinate, leave this memorial for Jay back into the rush of cell phones and ipods and plasma screens, and forget why your friend, Jay Kynerd, would have wanted you here, and why he lived as he did.

Now, right now, he would never want to come back. Jay now knows by his own sight what we who trust in Christ hope for by faith. Oh, could we see through his eyes now, what glory we would see.

Jay, it's hard, really hard for us. We are having a hard time coming to grips that, in this life, we'll not see you again. Our hearts long to see you again, oh to see you dashing in the office, late, rounding the sidewalk at a 45 degree angle, hair flying, phone glued to the ear, to yet again cram for an important meeting. 913-5588. "You've reached Jay Kynerd." I'll never forget it.

You finished strong, Jay. You finished faithful. You looked to other examples but, in the end, were the greatest example to all of us. You loved us, and we loved you. We praise God for your life, and, through Christ, we look forward longingly and lovingly to seeing you again.