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A Eulogy for Ted

This collection of work is dedicated to the life of Ted Kennedy, who sadly died on 27th March 2001.

I have known Ted and Jill for almost ten years. We met through our shared interest, and love of fostering. In that time I have grown to know, respect and love them and their children. In writing some words to honour the life of Ted I did wonder that perhaps it should be a family member who remembered Ted. However when I reflected some more on this I began to think about Ted and his family and he, just as he has so often done, solved my dilemma and provided the answer. Put simply Ted's family cannot be defined or restrained within traditional family boundaries and I, like so many others, am part of that family. Brothers in foster care.

In remembering Ted's life we can take time to celebrate his rich legacy, the love he has shared with so many. As a carer in the broader sense Ted's influence was, is and will continue to be enormous. His work with the Cork Branch of the Irish Foster Care Association was often unseen and carried out quietly, efficiently and without fuss. On cold, wet winter evenings and early mornings when most of us would have been comfortably tucked up at home Ted was out 'shaking a box' to raise funds. On many of the more visible and enjoyable occasions he was absent from the 'limelight' despite the fact that he would have contributed enormously to the process. For example a group of our extended fostering family planned to present a workshop in the Netherlands; the planning for occasions such as this invariably took place around the large kitchen table where Ted supplied endless cups of tea, gems of wisdom and insights that would not be found in the textbook. He was very much 'the wind beneath our wings.'

As a father Ted was a homemaker and a carer. Ted and Jill reversed what most of us think of as the 'traditional' roles. Each day he looked after ten children, prepared their meals, their school lunches, their uniforms. He organised the daily household routine and in the process made it look just that 'routine.' The mere thought of it strikes a lesser mortal like me as a logistical nightmare. Ted, however, took to the task like the proverbial 'duck to water.' But what was most striking was his ease with, respect and love for each of his children as individuals. He nurtured not just their physical daily needs but their emotional and psychological needs as well. Together with Jill, he provided and environment that encouraged each of the children to grow, to blossom and to reach their full potential. His pride in their achievements was obvious. This commitment was given unstintingly to all of the children. Ted's door was never closed to a child or young person in need.

As a Christian Ted demonstration on a daily basis, his commitment to Christ through his love of his children and wife, as a husband, partner and lover Ted's love for Jill was evident to all who knows them. His support for Jill in her decision to return to College was always evident in his pride in her achievements in the academic world and indeed her contribution to foster care and child care knowledge.

Ted's legacy of Love will live forever in the lives of his children and their children. '"Do not stand at my grave and cry. I am not there. I did not die."

Frank Keating