

Daryl Pettit Eulogy – Saturday, November 5, 2011 (written and delivered by Sandra Slifer)

I'd like to begin with a quote from John Muir:

*“Let children walk with Nature, let them see the beautiful blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous inseparable unity, as taught in woods and meadows, plains and mountains and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life.”*

Daryl was my friend; he was a husband, father, son, and brother; he was a veteran of the Viet Nam War; he was a valued member of the League of Women Voters of St. Tammany Board; he had just been elected to the newly-reconstituted League of Women Voters of Louisiana board; and yes, he was the friend of everyone here.

As the President of a nonprofit organization, I'm always looking for that person who has that spark of interest in public policy and civic engagement, as many here can attest! After getting to know Daryl and Joanne, mostly at the League monthly brunches, but also at other events, I recognized that while Joanne was already heavily involved in creating a new organization for Democratic women on the Northshore, Daryl was open to committing his time and energy to the League's

nonpartisan work. We were delighted when he accepted our invitation to join the board.

Daryl lived the Principles upon which the League was founded in 1920: representative government; individual liberties; informed and active participation by citizens in government; transparency; education; efficient government; fairness and accountability.

Daryl mostly preferred to work behind-the-scenes. His background in information technology may have strengthened this tendency for him to work out of the spotlight: competent, engaged, doing whatever it takes to make things work better. He would come early to help with set-up and stay late to help clean up.

There were times when Daryl's humor, kindness, and good-nature helped turn unexpected events into occasions made more memorable. The League's involvement in the Covington Bastille Day Celebration was one of those events. We discovered after setting up a complementary wine bar and appetizers, we were not allowed to offer them to the general public. Fortunately, Daryl helped us switch gears and we quickly turned the front of the booth into an area strictly devoted to voter registration and education while the back of the booth was transformed into a welcome respite for our members and friends to come and

enjoy the nibbles and wine. It wasn't what we expected, but everyone had a good time and we were still able to register new voters and share election information.

Daryl had a quiet strength in his convictions. He brought these ideals to the table regarding every discussion or issue. However, he never allowed these convictions to get in the way of learning about new ideas and new ways to meet these goals. Daryl's curiosity and willingness to embrace change and to challenge the status quo was always present.

His attitude was: "Let's not lose sight of the goal. If there is a new and different way of achieving this goal, let's ask questions, test the assumptions, seek changes where warranted, but standing pat is not an option for our children's future may be at stake." In the words of Mignon McLaughlin, in *The Neurotic's Notebook*, *"The death of someone we know always reminds us that we are still alive - perhaps for some purpose which we ought to re-examine."*

Daryl volunteered to be the League Observer at the St. Tammany Parish School Board meetings. We pay most of our local taxes to the school board and most of our members acknowledged the importance of more citizen involvement in the goings-on of the school board and administration. Getting someone to attend the meetings was another story completely! The board meets up to three times per

month: 2 committee meetings and a regular board meeting. The meetings are on Thursday nights and conflict with other meetings for some of us. Daryl learned early on that the real work was mostly done in the committee meetings and that if he attended these two meetings, he could still generally attend the Drinking Liberally gatherings that he had begun.

Daryl and I had a lot of discussions about the school board meetings and education in general. He was very interested in the education reforms going on in New Orleans and other cities. For Daryl, it was about giving children the opportunity to succeed.

We are honored that Joanne has selected the League's Education Fund to be the recipient of any donations in Daryl's name. She has asked us to consider using the donations to establish a scholarship and the board will definitely keep Joanne's wishes in mind. It would certainly be a way to memorialize Daryl's time, energy, and interest in education.

As Joanne, Dana, Ms. Lucy, and all who knew Daryl, transition from this long goodbye, it's important for all of us to let you know that we are here for you and for each other. There are many stages of grief and sorrow and we need to recognize that we move through these stages sometimes in a blink of an eye and

some we remain in for much longer periods of time. In the end, let us celebrate the life that Daryl lived and the joy that he brought to this world.

In closing, I'll leave you with the words of Robert Fulghum, the famous author of All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten, who said,

*"I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge -- myth is more potent than history -- dreams are more powerful than facts -- hope always triumphs over experience -- laughter is the cure for grief -- love is stronger than death."*