

Eulogy for Mary Jane Feltes  
February 24, 2009  
Delivered by David Feltes at his mother's funeral Mass  
St. Francis High School

Wow, I can tell you, Mom would have really loved this!

Good Morning, my name is Dave Feltes, Mom's oldest son, and welcome to St. Francis. Upon her death, my mother left us a note, and with it she had four final wishes:

1. To have her funeral mass here in the slant dome at St. Francis;
2. During that mass, to read a quote she had selected;
3. After that mass, to have her ashes spread in the woods around the campus;
4. And before the mass, to have 5 lab rats dressed in little Green Bay Packers uniforms released into the slant dome

So..... here's the quote:

"Life should **NOT** be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, chocolate in one hand, martini in the other, totally worn out and screaming, ~ ~ **"WOO HOO what a ride!"**

End quote

Oh, and the one about the lab rats, she was just kidding.

On behalf of my father, brother and sister, I would like to thank the faculty and students of St. Francis for fulfilling Mom's final wishes, and for all the effort that has gone into making this a truly special event. And to those of you who have travelled near and far to pay your respects, we are humbled and honored to have you here with her today. For these are the people she loved, and this is the house she loved them in-

Last night, Mom's little "funeral home get-together" turned into the mother of all wakes, a 2-hour queue snaking out into the parking lot. Over the course of 7 hours, we met hundreds of her students, current and alums; we hugged her friends and family, and cried on the shoulders of our friends. For us, it brought into perspective how many lives my mom, "Mrs. Feltes", truly touched, but also the extent of her legacy. Over the past few days, we have received emails and calls from 5 continents, and the hundreds of Facebook tributes have inspired us and kept us going through these difficult days.

The story of my mom's life is a tale of two families; the love she had for the Feltes family, and her passion for and service to St. Francis High School and all of her students.

For my mom, as most of you know, was a truly special person. A wife, a mom, a teacher, a colleague, a friend, a humanitarian, an ecologist, a Packer fan; But "Mrs. Feltes" was a St Francis Spartan to her core;

For my Dad, "Mar" was first a "hottie" college sweetheart, then a dutiful military wife, living in 2 countries and 9 different states in just 14 years, and finally, she was his rock and pillar, caring for him even during dark periods of disease and anguish. My folks were married 42 years, and for anyone who knew them both, it was a complicated but endearing love story. She also loved the extended Feltes family, and as "First In-law" on the farm, she made Dad's brothers and sister her own, and became the "Fun Aunt Mary" to over 30+ nieces and nephews.

For her three kids, each and every day we stand upon our mother's shoulders; we respect the sacrifice it took to raise 3 kids on a Catholic high school salary, not only putting us all through college, but instilling in us Christian values, as well as giving us a true "joie de vivre", a sparkle, a passion for life, and respect for the weakest in this world;

For her students here today, you know how my mom was uniquely suited to be a high school teacher; she balanced between the academia of biology and anatomy, and the outright zany boundaries of fun methods of teaching. She would often devote the whole class to special intentions, or use a current event or story to teach a lesson. Lots of her students yesterday said they wouldn't spend the hour talking about what was on the syllabus, but they went away feeling they had learned something about life.

I always knew she was a great mom, and a darn good teacher, but this past few days we have heard many of mom's former students tell how they were inspired to go into teaching, or science, or acting, or nursing, because of who she was and how she taught. She was a hero to them, and I have never been more proud or impressed. Thank you for those stories; And Mom, you were right, they are an amazing group of kids.

We used to joke with her, and ask when she was going to retire. She told us, "The day you find your perfect job is that last day of work you do".

For the faculty, Mom loved you guys, from the new first year teachers she took under her wing, to lunch time discussions where she bragged about us kids, to playing practical jokes on fellow teachers. Last night I heard she put a dead cat on a colleague's desk, I think because he was Bears fan. Your friendship and support made Mom most comfortable in her skin when she here at St. Francis.

And to her best friend of all..... Mrs. Kolasinski. While different as peas and carrots, you two were real partners in crime. I heard some called you guys "Smokey and the Bandit." KolaSue, you were always there for mom, through

heart attacks, cancer and the many, many game nights and New Years Parties. She will always be considered part of our family.

As a humanitarian, it is only fitting that Mom would work at a place called St. Francis. For just as St. Francis of Assisi was patron saint of animals, Mom fancied herself a part-time veterinarian/zoo keeper/animal adopter/ and Dr. Doolittle disciple. She could anthropomorphize any of God's creatures, no matter how ugly. Disney really should have hired her! The hundreds of pets that crossed my childhood threshold, from countless rats, to her dogs, to cats, raccoons, squirrels, parrots (God, I hated that parrot!), iguanas, chickens; Mom loved her animals, sometimes more than her kids—

And as an ecologist, she founded Evergreen, and blended her teaching with her love of gardening and this campus.

To close, I believe that there is much, too much darkness in this life,  
But, as it says in the prayer of St. Francis "where there is darkness, only light";  
Well, I believe my mom's soul was a lighthouse in that darkness;  
    a beacon of love for her family;  
    a beacon of knowledge and Christian example for her students, and  
    a beacon of laughter for her friends.

For her legacy, and to maintain this tale of two families, the Feltes' are going to remain vibrant members of St. Francis family.

We urge you to help continue to maintain the tradition of Catholic education, and to help us build the new science wing my mother wanted so much.

Thank you again for celebrating with us today, and may God bless my mother's soul.