

H. Clifford Lee
A Life Well Spent: A Eulogy

Knowles Memorial Chapel, Rollins College
Winter Park, Florida
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By David A. Odahowski, President
Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation, Inc.

On behalf of Mary Gretchen Belloff, Chairman of the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation, Inc., and the entire Board of Directors, advisory committee members, and staff, both past and present, I want to express our deepest sympathy to the family of H. Clifford Lee for the loss of your beloved father and our dear friend, Cliff.

I also want to thank everyone present, friends and neighbors, religious leaders, business people, nonprofit and philanthropic colleagues, and elected officials, for taking time out of your busy day to honor the life and work of H. Clifford Lee. Cliff always said that if you get the right people in the room, you can do a lot of good for the community. Well Cliff, you got them right where you want them!

The day after Cliff Lee left this earth to be with his Heavenly Father, a reporter called with a befuddled concern. He wanted to write an article on H. Clifford Lee, but he could find very little about Cliff. I chuckled through my recent sorrow to tell him that I was not surprised, because the life and work of Cliff Lee was not about him; it was all about the beneficence of Edyth Bush and her foundation and over 2,100 grants to over 400 nonprofit organizations totaling over 82 million dollars across the State of Florida, but primarily here in Central Florida. You see, Cliff Lee was not the philanthropist; he was a fiduciary, a trustee, and a true servant leader.

H. Clifford Lee was a man of great integrity and high intelligence who believed in the impact that philanthropy could have in this community and across the state of Florida. I knew all this about H. Clifford Lee before I even met H. Clifford Lee. Twenty-five years ago, in the Bush Library at the Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul, I had the occasion to read the case of Lee v. Andersen. If it were not for the integrity of H. Clifford Lee and his legal partner and dear friend, the late David R. Roberts, the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation would not exist. You see, Mr. Archibald Granville Bush, Chairman and CEO of Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, better known as 3M, had instructed Cliff and Dave to “take care of Mrs. Bush” when he was gone, even if that meant challenging the former Governor of the State of Minnesota, Elmer L. Andersen and the political and economic establishment of St. Paul, Minnesota, over the fiduciary responsibility and accountability of the Bush philanthropies. Sixteen years ago, I met the Lee in Lee v. Andersen, a man of great integrity and high intelligence, and he became my mentor and my friend.

Cliff Lee believed that philanthropy was a calling and one must have a discerning heart to maximize the impact of philanthropy for the common good. His Judeo-Christian values guided his work and the work of the Foundation, finding inspiration in the dignity of the recipient and remembering to “love thy neighbor as thy self.” This did not, however, mean that sloppy thinking and lack of planning were tolerated by H. Clifford Lee, not from nonprofits and especially not from the staff of the Foundation. And for 40 years, his integrity, intelligence, and belief in maximizing philanthropy touched the spirits and imagination of people who sought to make a difference in the arts, education, human services, and health care. They affectionately referred to Cliff as the “Dean of Florida Philanthropy.”

For Cliff Lee, philanthropy was all about the future, not about the past. He believed that the future could be better. He believed in abundance not scarcity. He believed in the community’s aspirations for a new performing arts center; he believed in the promise of the Burnham Institute; and he believed in the specialized health care of a new Nemours Children’s Hospital here in Orlando. He believed in these projects, because philanthropy will be the margin of excellence that will bring them forth and our community will benefit.

Cliff Lee also believed that one person can still make a difference. In the face of his death, and with the permission of his daughters, Cliff Lee became the philanthropist, and made an unrestricted bequest to the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation. This was Cliff’s symbolic act demonstrating his admiration for the foundation’s namesake, Edyth Bush; the late Richard J. Conlee, who, in 2004, also left an unrestricted bequest to the Foundation; to his fellow board members, advisory committee members, and staff. It was Cliff’s desire that his testamentary gift might inspire other philanthropists to collaborate with the continuing tradition of the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation to maximize philanthropy for the common good.

Cliff was a quite gentleman who always shied away from the accolades. He loved Winter Park because it is a city of culture and heritage. Philanthropy and volunteerism has enhanced this city and the quality of life it affords its residents from Rollins College, to All Saints Episcopal Church, to the Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art, to the University Club of Winter Park, and back again to our outstanding Winter Park Public Library. The impact of philanthropy touches us daily. Cliff Lee left his impact on this city and I am pleased to share with you, that our Mayor, David Strong, by the power vested in him, has proclaimed, this day, August 31, 2006 H. Clifford Lee Day.

Cliff Lee, your life was a life well spent. Rest well and God bless you Cliff Lee.