

Larry Monks—The Best Friend A Person Could Ever Have

(Eulogy written by Michael Allan, delivered by Jessica Allan)

To our family Larry was known as Lar and Uncle Lar.

I first met Larry when I was in 6th grade. We were playing a pick-up game of football in a neighborhood about equidistant between the houses where he and I grew up in Natick, Massachusetts. One of the kids who played with us that day was Fred Willis who later went on to play and star for the Cincinnati Bengals of the National Football League. Larry was not very good at playing football, but that didn't stop him from trying, and even wanting to play with people who had far greater skills than he had. Every time that he messed up that day, he would pick himself up and try to do better the next time, sometimes succeeding and sometimes not, but always working hard at trying, and never letting his lack of ability keep him from trying to excel. I didn't know it at the time, but I learned a lot about Larry that day.

I also learned that day that I sort have already knew Larry because he was an alter boy at St. Patrick's church in Natick which was also my church. I had seen him almost every Sunday, but didn't know who he was until that day. I suppose that's where his deep religious beliefs were formed at least in part. Larry may not have gone to mass every single week, but he was one of the best Catholics I knew. He was a very kind, loving, generous, caring man with a great sense of humor. You'll hear more about how he demonstrated each of these virtues as I take you for a walk down memory lane with my best friend.

We didn't really become friends until we went to Xavier High School in Concord, Massachusetts three years later. I think that's when Larry became Lar. At Xavier, we didn't allow anyone to have a name more than one syllable long.

I would say that Lar spent more time studying than any of the other kids I knew. At the time I thought this was because he was misplaced in the honors section with all the brainy kids. Lar didn't come across as brainy, so I guessed that he had to study much harder to keep up with the brainy kids. It was many years later that I realized I was wrong.

Lar studied so long and hard because he actually liked to do it! He had a thirst for knowledge that was just unquenchable, and hard work was just a natural way of life for him. I didn't fully appreciate this until I watched him over the years obtain his bachelors degree from his beloved Boston College, multiple pilot licenses, his flight instructor's license, his Law Degree, his license to practice law in Massachusetts, his Masters in Electrical Engineering, and his license to practice law in California. And except for the degree from BC, he did all of this while working full-time in professional high-pressure jobs that would leave most humans too drained to do much more than go home and watch

TV after work. But Lar's energy level was incredible when there was something that interested him that he could study about.

I also learned later that he was the sole surviving son of a father who died of war connected injuries when Lar was very young, so Lar became the man of the house very early in life. Shouldering responsibility and working hard became part of his value system earlier than for most of us. Lar never really got to know his father, but he sure was proud of that war veteran, and he wanted him to be proud of Lar as he watched his son grow up from heaven.

Not only did Lar grow up emotionally faster than the rest of us, he looked physically much older than he was. I remember in college, he was the only one in our group who didn't need a fake ID to buy beer. One of his favorite stories was when he was 19 years old, he was doing a beer run to the liquor store, and he was in line behind a woman who was asked for her ID. It turned out that the woman was 25 years old. The salesman looked at Lar and said, "Man, we'll never see those days again huh buddy".

And that was when Lar had hair!

And if there are any college students listening to this story, let me assure you that while Lar did have a beer or two in his college days, he drank responsibly. He was one the kids in our group who made sure that the person driving could get us home safely. If the driver were drinking too much, Lar would assert himself and insist on having the keys turned over to someone else. Again, he was more mature and wise than most people his age.

Lar didn't spend all his free time studying. He was a doer and dreamer too. When we were in High School, my older brother, John, had dreams of becoming the next Elvis Presley. However, once he heard Lar sing, and soon he realized that his own singing voice paled compared to Lar's. So John thought the next best thing would be to manage the next Elvis, and he was convinced that Lar had the talent to become the next Elvis. John worked with Lar to help him perfect the singing of his favorite song at the time, Venus In Blue Jeans. After Lar had the song down pat, John to all of our surprise, got him an audition at Ace Records, the only major record label in Boston.

Lar sung that song like he had never done before, and the talent scout at Ace records was impressed enough that he asked Lar to sing another song, but this time he wanted to hear a fast song. Unfortunately, John and Lar didn't anticipate this, and he hadn't rehearsed a fast song. But Lar didn't let that stop him, and he began to belt out, "Shake it up baby, shake it up baby, twist and shout, twist and shout, come on come on baby, move it on out, move it in out." He stopped at that point and the talent scout again was impressed enough that he asked him to continue. Lar confessed that those were the only words from the song that he knew. At the time we just thought of this as a funny incident in the life of a teenager, but it was also one where Lar showed his great courage and strong belief that to achieve anything in life, you first have to try.

Lar discovered during trips he took to visit other friends during college that he really loved flying. After graduating from BC, Lar wanted more than anything to join the Air Force and become a pilot. To his extreme disappointment, he also discovered at that time that he no longer had the 20-20 vision that the Air Force required of pilot candidates. As

was very typical of Lar, he turned this disappointment into an opportunity, and decided to obtain his private pilot license. His love of flying turned into a passion for flying. He obtained increasingly more advanced pilot certifications, and eventually became a flight instructor. He was a regular attendee at the annual air show held in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and of course he would fly himself out there. And as I alluded to earlier, he earned all those certifications while working in a fairly intense job as an R&D Manager in the telecommunications department at Wang Laboratories.

He later decided to combine his love of flying and the law, by becoming a lawyer for the FAA. He had to accept a much lower salary than he could have made in private business, but to be more involved with aviation was more important than money to him.

I got married in my sophomore year of college, and we had 3 children pretty quickly thereafter. That was when Lar got his other name, Uncle Lar. Lar was then a young, happy go lucky bachelor, and most people in his position would have better things to do than to spend time playing with three pre-school kids. But Lar would come over to our house frequently and do just that. My kids loved him so much that they would beg him to sleep over every time he visited, and often times he obliged them on this.

In my job, I had to travel a lot, oftentimes internationally for weeks at a time. Whenever I did this, Lar would without fail stop by the house to see if my wife and kids were okay, and if there was anything that he could do for them. He became my wife, Lesa's best friend too during those years, as he became the person she could count on most when she needed a helping hand. And his sleepovers at my house continued even when I wasn't there. Lesa and I used to joke that the gossipy school crossing guard must have really enjoyed the times when my car was gone, and this other man would emerge from my house early in the morning.

Lar loved all our kids, and they all loved him, but he made no secret that our middle child, Jonathan was his favorite. I think Jonathan reminded Lar of himself. He always had his nose in a book, and he was a kid that was naturally a hard worker. Jonathan went on to become a lawyer himself, and I have no doubt that Uncle Lar was the one who first inspired him to point his own career in that direction.

When Jonathan died accidentally at age 27, I think Lar was almost as crushed as we were, but he was right there to offer comfort to me in that most difficult time of my life, just as he was there every other time that I needed him.

Lar was a math genius, and I don't think I could have graduated from Xavier if not for Lar's help in getting me through trigonometry, and when my kids were having trouble with math when they were in high school, Lar was right there to tutor them, even though he himself was studying for the Massachusetts Law Boards at the time. Lar was never too busy to help a friend in need.

There was one thing that Lar was a slow learner and somewhat insecure about and that was his relationships with women. Lesa and I spent many hours at various times over the years listening to Lar talk about his girl friend of the time or the hoped to be girl friend he was working on. Lar wanted to be married, and we would analyze each potential

candidate with him and express our views. Invariably, Lesa and I would conclude that the one we discussed at the time was not good enough for our best friend.

However, there was one female friend of Lar's that we met in our early 20's who we really liked. She was girl named Barbara Cook who worked at John Hancock Life Insurance, which was also the first employer of Lar, Barbara and I right out of college. Lesa and I both saw the first time that we met Barb how she looked and talked to Lar. She saw his inner self like none of the others, and it was obvious to us that she was head over heels crazy about Lar. Each time he would break up with a girl friend, we would ask, "why don't you go out with Barb?" and he would respond, "oh, Barbara doesn't think about me that way, I'm just her friend."

As I said, Lar was a slow learner in his study of women, but Lesa and I were just thrilled when some 15 years later when he took Barb as his bride. We won't dare to take full credit for this match-making, but we felt good knowing that we knew this was the match made in heaven for Lar, and we prodded him toward it during those many years when Lar and Barb were "just friends". And that's not to say they were not good friends, as I have heard Barb say many times over the years that Lar was not only my best friend, but he was also hers.

Lar was taken long before his time, but he managed to squeeze more into his 55 years than many who live into their 80s and 90s. I was very privileged to be able to be part of Lar's life, to know him, to enjoy him, to learn so much from him and to be loved by him.

God bless you Lar!