



In Memoriam
Matthew Ross Wanetik
20 June 1988 – 03 October 2008

Dr. D'Amico, Associate Professor of International Relations and Matt's academic advisor, provided the following comments at Matt's memorial service in Hendricks Chapel on 21 November, 2008:

Hello, most of the students call me “Dr. D.” I work with all the International Relations majors here at Syracuse. I also teach the “Introduction to International Relations” course and am faculty advisor for the International Relations Learning Community, and it was there that I met Matt Wanetik in August 2006, his first semester here at Syracuse, and I have been his academic advisor ever since then. He would bound into my office, full of energy and enthusiasm, with a broad grin and a “Hey Dr. D! How’s it going?” The last time we talked, Matt was in my office selecting his courses for his study abroad in Strasbourg, and he was so eager to go, I think he could have flown to France on his own power. I am so very glad he had the opportunity for that experience.

In our International Relations Learning Community, we say that “The World is Our Textbook,” and Matt enjoyed exploring that world in and beyond our classroom – as in our Fall retreat to Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, where we toured the Canadian Parliament and had a mission briefing at the US embassy on US-Canadian relations and careers in foreign service. I can just picture Matt as a diplomat – his extroverted personality and wonderful sense of humor made him a very “people” person. I think Matt could talk you into anything and talk himself out of just about anything as well.

If the students in our International Relations Learning Community learned that “the world is our textbook,” Matt also taught us all a lesson: “the world is our playground.” Even at his young age – just on the cusp of adulthood -- Matt had already learned life’s most important lesson: at the end of the day, it’s not our grade point average or the length of our resumé or the list of our professional accomplishments that matter. What matters most in life is the quality of our human relationships. Matt knew this, and he lived it every day: he put people first – his friends and his family knew they could count on him to have time, to make time for them if they needed him, whether it was to listen to a problem or to help with some personal crisis or to instigate some new adventure. Matt was ready to listen, to help, to do, to go, to play.

At Matt’s funeral service, his Uncle Rick told us a story about Matt’s experience as an intern at a concert venue. The story ended with Matt in charge, wearing a headset and carrying a clipboard like an old pro. And as Uncle Rick spoke, I began to picture Matt arriving in heaven. He passed through the gates and, being Matt, began introducing himself all around, telling a joke here, an anecdote there, and making friends along the way. I imagined that he would make his way into the inner sanctum, and then, eventually, with more jokes and stories, he would end up right next to the “Big Guy” himself. And I wondered, “What would Matt ask for?” And the answer came as I watched Game 1, then Game 2, then the pennant and then, miraculously, the World Series – surely he had asked for what few dreamed was possible, for his beloved Phillies to win and keep on winning. I don’t think I ever prayed for an outcome to a sporting event before, but I did then, and I knew that at that moment, Matt was watching and celebrating with us all.

Finally, I just want to say that as a parent myself, I know that a parent’s greatest fear is that our child will be taken from us. I also know that for a parent who has lost a child, our greatest fear is that our child will be forgotten, that the memories will fade. We have compiled a “Book of Remembrance” for Matt’s family, and today we pledge that Matt will never be forgotten by our Syracuse community. We will think of him whenever we travel, whenever we explore, whenever we see his beloved Orange take the basketball court or his beloved Phillies take the field – and most of all, we will remember Matt whenever we laugh.

“Dr. D”

Francine D’Amico, PhD

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