

Byron McLean Rankin, Jr.

"Mack"

There have been very few things in life that truly made me sad. You guys all know that. I've probably given the impression that sadness is a wasted emotion. I think I came right out and said that once or twice.

The only thing that I can think of that really makes me feel sad is the idea of not living, because living was truly one of my favorite pastimes. Not just getting up in the morning and breathing in and out all day. Really living. So I guess even I have to admit there's some sadness to today.

However, another commonly-known truth about this badass (aka Yours Truly) is that I don't dwell on something I can't change, which trumps my previous point and effectively ends all sadness right here, right now. You all know another one of my favorite pastimes was celebrating with my friends. And I've had a life worthy of celebration, if I do say so myself (which, let's face it, I always do.) So let's get on with it.

All my life, from day one, I've had a guardian angel looking after me, otherwise known as a horseshoe up the derriere. Starting with a beautiful upbringing with lots of love and encouragement and support from both the Rankins and the Beans. A boy couldn't ask for a better family. I always felt that they truly believed I could achieve anything I wanted to.

After enduring my fair share of bullying and engaging in boyhood shenanigans, I enjoyed a terrific high school experience, which went well beyond arithmetic and taught me about loyalty, lifelong friendship, underage drinking, and even true love. Roger Chapman, Jim Beavers, and of course, my first love, Opal Cook, all came into my life around that time, God bless each of them.

Then, college changed everything I thought I knew about life. I came out of the University of Texas a different man than I went in. There was fun and games, and there was a serious side to learning, but the biggest lesson was realizing it's the people who matter most. That's when I really started to feel what true and honest friendship can do for a person. The rewards of those friendships have been limitless, and it's been my pleasure to contribute to the University of Texas so that future generations of young fools like me can have the same experience of walking through those big doors thinking they know it all and coming out four years later with humility and a new understanding of what life is really all about.

You already know how proud I am of the four years I spent in the United States Army, and how much I love this great country of ours. In Germany, I learned a lot about how politics work, and this was very beneficial to me later in life and in business. I've

lobbied hard to protect our industry, and I hope someone here has the balls to pick up where I left off and keep fighting the good fight.

After those four years in the service way back when, along came the best life change that can happen to a person: my only son, Richard. You were especially appreciated in these recent years, when a guy like me wants nothing more than to have the people he loves at his side. More than you'll ever know, I've enjoyed our time together: lunches at the club just talking about current events, or about golf, or anything at all.

Around the time Richard was born, everything seemed to happen all at once. Real life, I think they call it. A wife, a job, a child, and something no one saw coming: a cancer diagnosis. I won't dwell on that any more than anything else, because it never got the better of me. Every time it reared its ugly head, I was one step ahead of it, thanks to that aforementioned horseshoe that saw fit to place me in the care of the best doctors in the cancer business. I can't name everyone at M.D. Anderson, but I do want to thank everyone. Every person from the greeter at the door to the highest ranking surgeons, administrators, and researchers. That establishment is world-class, and I'm proud to have my name associated with it.

Partly because of M.D. Anderson and partly because there really is no rest for the wicked, I was always up to something. The oil business was a perfect fit for this badass, because you need a thick skin, and you need to know how to surround yourself with people who will make you look smart. Oops. I mean the right people. Jim Bob Moffett, you are that person. There has never been a moment throughout our partnership and friendship when I've questioned my choice in teaming up with you. We've taken on the world together, and look where it got us. There's no one I'd rather have shared those experiences with. God bless you.

I'd like to also give a nod to the late Ken McWilliams. I owe him a lot but mostly want to thank him for keeping us sane. He was older, wiser, and never let us lose our cool or get discouraged in those early years in business.

Speaking of business, boy have I run the gamut on that too. From rodeo band director, to AFL football scout, to independent oilman, to owning a losing baseball team. Real fun stuff. Probably the least likely of endeavors: owning banks, thanks to Gerald J. Ford, with whom I enjoyed more than just a banking partnership. Jerry, you and I did all my favorite things together: golfing, fishing, quail hunting, and good old-fashioned lady killing. When people asked me if I have any brothers, I tell them I

have three: Sam Rankin, Jim Bob Moffett, and Jerry Ford.

As for you Sam, thank you for letting me be a total son-of-a-bitch when we were little. You paid a price having me as a brother, because patience was not one of my best virtues, but you grew up a real man, and showed me what a son-of-a-gun I was. God bless you.

And God bless Golf, my longtime mistress and keeper of all my secrets! Golf was always a priority, and not just for the enjoyment of the game. Some of my most significant business deals were made out there on the golf course, which doubled as my al fresco office most of my adult life. It was one of the few things Ashley and I didn't share as a married couple. You have to have your separate things. She had tennis, horses, shopping, and exquisite home styling, and I had golf. Little did she know that I was on the golf course when I concocted another little business deal: hers and mine. After a frustrating few rounds that day, I tossed my club in the pond, told my golfing buddies to have a nice day, and off I went to fall madly in love.

Ashley and I merged perfectly. We enjoyed traveling, both by land and by sea. The "I Don't Recall" years were among the best years of my life. The list of our on board guests is extensive and the memories are all precious. I am especially impressed with those visitors who kept on coming back. Louise Moffett, Marcia and Bobby French, Anne and John Marion, Frank and Kathie Lee Gifford, and many others. It's just a shame I had to keep buying bigger and bigger boats just to make room for Marcia's luggage.

Marrying Ashley brought me a whole new entourage of fans and friends, and also an extended family in Ashton and Karen Smith, my stepson and step-daughter-in-law, both of whom have my profound gratitude for embracing my role in their lives and the lives of their two lovely children. Thank you Ashton for always dropping everything to attend to my technological frustrations, and thank you Karen for always keeping the children close and the cookies crisp.

Thank you Shirley Raines, for 33 years of devotion that went well beyond any job description. You took care of everything I needed, no questions asked, never complaining, and you did it with class and sincere devotion. Thank you mostly for always letting me have my own way or at least very expertly making me think I did.

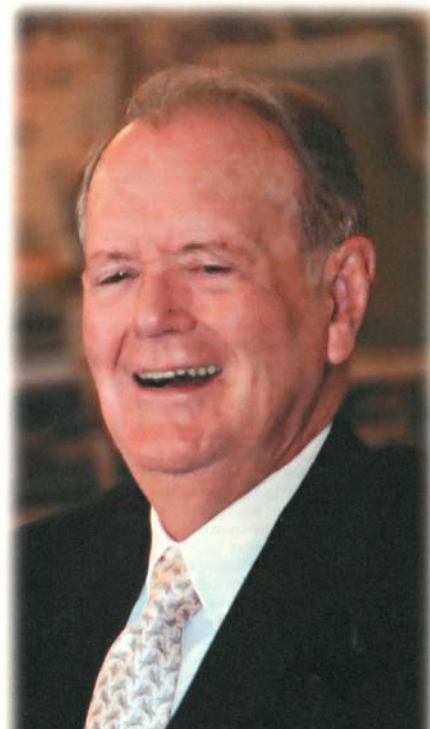
Now, to you Ashley, my beloved. You know I'm a very practical man and not one for sappy declarations, so I know you will understand the underlying message. Thank you for marrying me, taking care of me, respecting me, loving me, and

most importantly, letting me be me. Always know that you were loved, appreciated, and cherished.

I would never end a speech without offering a word of advice, so here it is. It's too late for most of you, so I'm speaking to the generation that has no excuse not to listen: Hailey, Hunter, Samantha, and Scott. If I can leave you only one lasting thought, let it be this: Whatever it is you dream of doing with your life, whatever that passion is, just do it. You have to try. And trying means doing. Don't wait for a better time, or better circumstances, just do it. The four of you have that proverbial horseshoe in the form of family who love you very much, and who would do anything they can to facilitate your dreams. Do something with that, so that when your life ends, you will feel how I feel, complete and proud of the life you lived. No regrets.

As a last word to everyone, I just want to say something one last time. I've said this to Rachel so many times, I'm pretty sure she thought my short-term memory was a goner. And I'll say it again now: It's the people. It's always been the people. The boats, the dinners & parties, the summers in Nantucket, the winters in the desert, the golfing and fishing and hunting, the trips, and even the business, none of it is worth a spec of dust without the people with whom I've shared it all.

This is it, our final celebration. More than anything else, let's celebrate the good fortune of having known one another and built memories we can cherish forever. God bless you all. -Mack



A tribute to Mack's character and love of life as written by his wife Ashley with assistance from Rachel Landry.