

John Ball's Introduction to the Service

Watching those images of Cole, it's clear that he really had it, didn't he? Cole really had the gift for life, the gift for living. He did not simply play the game – he was in the game, and the game was in him. The diamonds in his ears were nothing compared to the diamonds in his eyes, sparkling with energy. And as for heart, I ask you: how did someone of modest height have a heart so big?

We will learn at least part of the answer today as students and teachers, friends and team mates, share stories, pictures, and music. We gather to remember Cole, yes, but we also gather to celebrate him, to celebrate the life he richly lived.

I welcome all of you who join us today. Our warmest welcome goes to Tom and Nan Ballay, Cole's loving parents. If you want to know where Cole got his gift for life, where he got his uncommon courage, where he got his hopeful spirit, all you have to do is spend a little time with his parents. You will see Cole in them, and it will break your heart a little.

Family meant the world to Cole, so we feel fortunate to have his family and family friends here with us. Mr. and Mrs. Ballay, thank you for sharing your son with us. He will always be part of our family – and so will you.

When I consider a young man and how he lives, I have but one question. I call it the Huck Finn question, and it's this: if you were traveling on a big, lazy river, how much time would you like to spend with this young man? Cole would be the perfect partner for a long raft ride. He loved adventure, he was good company, and he was a straight-shooter. Let's spend a little while today traveling with him. And if a tear comes to your eye, well, it's just the river.

My memories of Cole start with the Admission Committee meeting when we were considering his application to GA. The Committee's job is to distinguish among the many applicants by asking, "What would he bring to the school." Now we have come full circle; what did Cole bring to GA?

Cole made us laugh. His humor was not subtle -- it came at you with the speed of a well-hit soccer ball; it was often loud and sometimes bawdy, but it was never cruel. Cole made us laugh -- a lot -- but not at the expense of others.

Cole made us sigh. Occasionally -- no, we're being honest here, *so, frequently* Cole made us sigh in exasperation: when he was late to school for the thirteenth time, or when he just couldn't resist once more telling the referee what he thought of a call. But also, Cole made us sigh in wonder, at a perfectly executed pass or a beautifully turned phrase in an essay or wonderfully moving poem.

Cole made us cheer. Not only for the goal that often won the game by also for other victories won against the odds. We cheered for the B - *finally!* - on the Spanish test, for his acknowledging when he needed help and asking for it, for his courage to stay with a task even when he was exhausted, for admitting to his limitations and then not letting them limit him.

And finally -- of course -- Cole made us cry, a lot in the past few days. "Great love requires great risk" and our love for Cole made us vulnerable. As hard as it has been at times, this, too, is a gift. "Without a hurt, the heart is hollow." Cole made us recognize and embrace our humanity. We have come together in our grief in ways that never happened before; we have smiled in the halls at people whose names we did not know; we have spoken to people we at best nodded to in the past; we have hugged -- and been hugged by -- people whom we saw as little more than strangers two weeks ago. We have admitted the frailty of Life and the importance of cherishing and making the most of every moment. We shouldn't forget this lesson; we should resist going back to "how we were before". Let's call this epiphany "Cole's gift" -- and it is what he brought to GA.

AliceMary Honeycutt

Cole Ballay Memorial Speech

By: Matthew H. Rominger

Cole,

Needless to say, it has been a struggle getting along without you here...You were an impressive student, incredible athlete, fierce competitor, loving son, and a tremendous captain to your teammates...And now, going forward, (difficult as that may seem) you will serve as an inspiration to me and more importantly, the GA community, forever...

Though it may not be commonplace for coaches to reveal how much they admire their student-athletes, Cole embodied everything that I envision and hope to instill within all my players:

**Courage
Passion
Leadership
Respect
And Kindness**

I, along with you, will forever remember and admire Cole's performances on the field...but above that, his character off the field...Character is what defines us as people and is most certainly what people will remember us by when we are gone...

The one thing that will always stay with me about Cole is that HE ALWAYS TOOK THE TIME...

Whether it meant putting in extra hours to prepare for a difficult assignment or exam, or simply going out of his way to see how I was doing, Cole Always took the time...

I think Cole would agree with me in what I ask of you all now...

TAKE THE TIME

Take the time to get to know your friends better than you already do...

Take the time to get to know those who are not your friends...

Take the time to get to know your teachers, your coaches, and above all YOUR FAMILIES...

Take the time to celebrate and embrace all that the GA community provides us with...

Attend your classmates' performances, musical and theatrical...

Cheer on and support the GA athletic teams at every level...

Attend dances, art shows, and club functions...

Take the time now because tomorrow is promised to no one...

Keep Cole in your hearts and Take the Time to do these things, not because I ask, because Cole would want you to...

I love you Cole...

Cole

Cole began my class after a difficult freshman year in math and he was a little unsure of his abilities. Over the course of the year Cole found himself as a student and transformed into a confident leader in the classroom. Something that stands out in my mind from teaching Coles is his interesting response to getting a quiz or test back. He would be really anxious when the class began knowing he was going to find out his results. When the test was less than favorable, which was not very often, Cole would always sigh, "Uhh, I knew that one" on many of the problems he missed. When the test returned was good, Cole would throw both arms in the air and exclaim "What! What!, Ballay!" It always struck me as a bit humorous to think about what someone who did not know Cole might think hearing a kid exclaim "Ballet!" in excitement over a test returned.

No matter what the outcome Cole was always lively, passionate, and ready to make his presence felt. Will Bellamy would constantly sing songs from musicals during tests and quizzes. Cole would be trying to concentrate and would slowly get more frustrated. Finally, Cole would be too frustrated to hold it in anymore and he would ask Will to "Shutttt Upppp!" Cole would then give me this coy grin that suggested, "Do you see what I put up with Mr. McDaniel." Cole always managed to be friendly enough in his rebukes to keep a positive rapport with everyone, even the students that occasionally drove him nuts.

Class competitions brought out the best in Cole and he was always ready to show what he knew during a class game. I can recollect a scenario with Cole, Anna Washburn, and Dan Grabfelder in a team together for a class competition. A problem was placed on the board and the race to win candy began. Anna probably came up with a game plan and was starting to set up a way for the team to work through the problem together. Dan was still a little dazed that a question had been asked and was trying to figure out if he was going to work on it or just sit this round out.

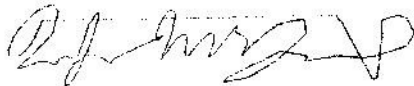
Cole had no patience for game plans and was not going to wait till Dan was on board to get going. He snatched a piece of paper away from Dan and took off on his own. With lightning precision he bee lined for the answer until "I dreamed a dream of years gone by." Will Bellamy started warming up the pipes. Apparently, Stef Li and Will had run out of juicy gossip and decided to try the problem out to stave off boredom. Will in his deep concentration had begun to sing. "Shuttt Uppp Will!" Cole sighed right before he mustered the strength to refocus his thoughts and block out this distraction. Finally, Cole had the answer and jumped to his feet, arms raised in victory "What, What, Ballay!"

Working as a teacher, students are constantly passing through your hands. You get four years at the most and then each student moves on to the next adventure in life, but all the special students you have continue to visit you. They visit you when a new student conjures a memory of them or a conversation at the lunch table reminds you of something they did. I know when the soccer team punches in a late goal to win a game next year, I will see 12 players on the field celebrating. Whenever Will walks by me in the hall belting out a song, Cole will be looking at with me a wry

smile that suggests "Mr. McDaniel, I am doing the best I can to bite my tongue, but if he keeps singing I am going to go crazy."

The next time I have the pleasure of working with a student at just the right time in their development when everything is coming together for them and they take off as a math student and a person. I know Cole will visit me and remind that it sure is fun to see a kid find themselves before your eyes. When Cole visits me it will not be sad for me at all, it will be a joy to reflect on the time I shared with a great kid experiencing a dynamic time in his life. While he slipped through my hands like so many others, I know Cole will still come and visit me often.

With Deepest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. J. McDaniel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "R" and "J".

R. J. McDaniel
Teacher of Mathematics
Germantown Academy

Anyone who met Cole knew that he was funny, hard working, optimistic, energetic, enthusiastic, and proud of who he was and what he believed in. But some of us were lucky enough to also know another side of Cole. He was also thoughtful, deep, and extremely loving.

A few weeks ago a group of us were sitting in the cafeteria during a free period and randomly Cole says, "I think the whole world has religion all wrong." We all just stared at him, waiting for where he was going with this sudden pronouncement. "At the end of the day, the little stuff doesn't matter, some people like going to church, or synagogue, or whatever, and some people find God in other ways," he continued, "People get so caught up about the little stuff, but God's not going to keep you out of heaven for one little detail; what really matters is what kind of person you are. If you have a good heart, if you mean well, if you care about the people around you, then that's what matters. If you're a good person, you'll be happy in the end." We all kind of laughed a bit, no one disagreed (unlike with most of Cole's statements that usually turned into big debates), but we were all kind of surprised because, who else but Cole would try to redefine the world's view of religion when the rest of us were just trying to have a bagel and finish up so

Cole was one of the most amazing people I've ever met and he had such a loving heart. He was the kind of person that would always have your back no matter what and would always be there when you needed him. The thing he hated more than anything was to see the people he loved upset, and he would do everything in his power to protect and love his friends and above all, his family.

He has touched all of our lives, and we are truly blessed to have gotten the chance to know such a wonderful person. He gave us all so much, and he will *never* be forgotten.

Cole was so much more than a great athlete, a hard working student, and a funny kid. He was a caring friend, a loving son, and an amazing person with an amazing heart.

Cole was truly an angel, and now he has his wings.

Paige Boetefuer '09

COLE

In recent days we have seen many of these wonderful pictures of Cole playing soccer. As his advisor, I have had the opportunity to communicate with all of his teachers here at GA. In a way, I have been able to see him perform off the field as well. I have a different picture than this (soccer) in mind when I think about Cole.

I see a young man with a book open, still, and focused. While not as well known, this was not an unusual posture for him. Along with the exuberant personality and athletic prowess, there is the serious student. I want to share with you the opportunity that I had as his advisor and read portions of comments made by some of his teachers.

One teacher wrote:

"Cole has had some ups and downs in this course during the semester, but has never lost his interest, enthusiasm or desire to learn and improve."... "In class, Cole is focused, interested, and always plays a role in the discussions."

Another teacher wrote:

"He showed his creative flair by submitting, for his paper on that novel, an actual diary, complete with handwritten entries, as his first-person account for a secondary character's point of view. No student has ever gone to such lengths to create the appearance of authenticity for that assignment, and the care that he had taken in completing it was evident in the writing as well."

Another teacher commented:

"Over the course of the semester Cole generally invested 100% effort into his work." This same teacher later remarked that in their 20 + years at GA, "I have never had a harder working student."

As a teacher and a coach it is most rewarding to see a student-athlete truly "get it", as Cole clearly did.

To see the lessons learned and character developed in one arena carried over to another is what every teacher and coach hopes for.

Cole understood that the very same things (the hard work, commitment and perseverance) that led him to success on the field would eventually lead to success in the classroom. For those of us who worked and played with him, he set the bar very high for dedication and enthusiasm.

As a student he has "turned the tables" on us to become the teacher.

He directs us towards being fully engaged in all our endeavors and to always strive for our best effort.

He reminds us that life is precious and our limited time together is one of God's greatest gifts.

He urges us not to forget how much we care for each other.

Thanks.

Paul Henry

I knew of Cole from track and because of his many accomplishments as a soccer player before I had him in A.P. U.S. History this year. I really liked teaching him. He had to work hard, but never lost his enthusiasm, interest, or desire to learn and achieve. That class met first period the day after the accident and the other students and I simply didn't know how to react, so mostly we sat in silence, remembering him. When his classmates did talk, it was to comment on his fine qualities or to reminisce about something funny he had said in class, such as his enthusiastic participation in our favorite class activity--busting on Schelke. We also remembered his excitement about certain topics, such as when we recently began studying World War II; he clearly knew a lot about this era of history. It hasn't been the same for us without him.

That same day, I headed out for a quick run at lunchtime to clear my head. I turned my iPod on "shuffle" and, ironically, the first song that played was one by Jonatha Brooke called "Inconsolable." Who knew that iPods have hearts? As much as that song seemed to summarize the mood of the school that day, when I was turned onto Sheaff Lane, another song came on that seemed to describe Cole to me. In the Broadway musical "Rent", there's a song called "Seasons of Love." In case you're not familiar with it, the basis for the song is the "Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes" that "measure a year" and asks "How do you measure--measure a year? In daylights, in sunsets, in midnights, in cups of coffee, in inches, in miles, in laughter, in strife?" The answer to how you best measure a year in the life, or "how... you measure the life of a woman or a man?" is to "measure in love". I think Cole's too-short life can be well measured in love: His love of his family. His love of his friends. His love of soccer. His love of G.A. His love of making those around him feel good. His love for life. He used each of those 525,600 minutes each year well. It's a tragedy for all of us that he won't be around to continue to share his love.

The night of his passing, I was trying to think of how I'd best remember Cole, and it was pretty easy to identify. The last day of school before Winter Break, he came into my room in the morning and generously offered me a gift, but more importantly, a hug and a smile as he wished me a good holiday. I'll take that memory with me forever.

Judy Krouse

Speech for Cole's Memorial

February 29, 2008

Cole and I were new here at the same time. I taught him for what were our first three semesters here. At first, I think we were both struggling a little bit. But Cole worked so hard and improved so much that eventually when I felt overwhelmed, I often thought of Cole, competing with time to get the necessary work done between the games and practices he loved so much more than his schoolwork, and I felt silly for feeling overwhelmed in the first place.

Late in his freshman year, Cole gave me this bookmark, perhaps in appreciation for spending extra time working with him, maybe for good-naturedly butting heads with him so often in class, or for scrutinizing his tiny perfect handwriting, I don't know, he didn't say. The bookmark has a quote on it by Edith Wharton, one of my favorite authors, though I don't recall ever telling Cole that. I also don't think I told him that when I was fifteen my mother had given me the exact same bookmark saying she knew I loved Wharton and thought that since I wanted to teach it was the perfect quote for me. Somehow Cole must have intuited that, which amazes me even now.

The quote is this: "There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."

Trite as such a sentiment may seem to many of us, I still hope that through that gift Cole was trying to tell me that I had helped him adjust here in some way. I know that he helped me. I know that his perseverance and energy inspired me often, and his perceptiveness and intuitiveness about people impressed me. I know I could stand up here for twenty minutes and tell you about any number of times when Cole shone in class, understanding something about *The Odyssey* or *Frankenstein* he hadn't before, his excitement at having grasped a complicated idea permeating throughout the class as he talked. I could share countless times when he supported his friends' ideas with good-natured jokes, bringing a lightheartedness to the room that I don't think any of us can imagine being without now. In fact, I could probably spend ten minutes alone telling stories about the smart-alecky comments he made whenever I caught him and Alli Torzolini in the hallway outside my classroom last spring as I said "do it on your time, Cole, not mine," while having to pull Alli in just after the bell. Then he would smirk and walk away, shaking his head as he walked, Louise Vuitton earrings sparkling all the way down the hall...

But as I only have a few more moments up here, I will end by saying that in all of those instances, his quick wit, excitement, and genuine good heart taught all of us who knew him something, inspired something in each of us, whether we knew it or not. Cole spread light in our lives in various ways, sparked something beautiful, and we'll miss him always.

Becky Brown

In Loving Memory
By Voltaire Escalona '10

Cole was a strong individual. He was always there for all of his friends and was a true leader. Whether it be on the soccer pitch or hanging out with friends he lead by example. I remember one time this season our GA team was warming up for practice and was doing the usual jog around the field when it was brought to my attention that someone was there to see me. I was extremely curious to see who this man was. It turns out it was one of my late fathers best friends who came to watch me play. I hadn't seen this man since my dad's funeral. After a brief conversation I was extremely flustered and was caught off guard. I sat down at the end of the bleachers with my head down, almost in tears. Cole was the first one to realize his teammate was hurting and came over to me and did not leave my side until I was ready to continue with practice. Then once we started playing again he continued to support me by being my partner and trying to get my mind off what had just happened saying "c mon V lets go, c mon lets play." This was the kind of person Cole was.

I met Cole through soccer, playing against him since we were little. Our friendship grew when Cole started going to GA. We talked about the usual soccer stuff like what tournaments we were playing at next and how "sick our GA team is gonna be next year." I got to know Cole even more during my freshman and sophomore years, not only because of the soccer team but also because I was in his Spanish class. Cole, Andrew Sih, and I sat next to each other and had so much fun in that class with Ms. Skoug. Ms. Skoug really knew how to teach and make Spanish fun and interesting, even though we didn't always show it. In this class Ms. Skoug would get frustrated with me, Cole, and Andrew for talking. Even though we weren't supposed to be talking, some of the most memorable conversations with Cole came from that class room. We talked about girls, soccer, and how much fun we were going to have this weekend! I will never forget those wacky conversations.

I was in Mr. McVeigh's office one day this week after school discussing past memories of loved ones and he told me to prepare for the "moments." At first, I had no idea what he was talking about and he could definitely tell, so he decided to explain by saying "your moments might come next fall when the team steps onto the field and Cole isn't at left midfield or the next soccer tournament when you guys would have gone away." He told me to be prepared and I said "Mr. McVeigh I know exactly what you are saying now, I have them all the time with my dad, but instead of crying and breaking down as expected one would, I simply smile with a tear of happiness in my eye and nod my head in satisfaction because that is what my dad would want me to do" and that is what Cole would want *us* to do. Cole never wanted anybody to be sad, in turn he was a ball of energy who always wanted to celebrate life and try new things. So when these "moments" come to you, whenever they may be, please try and smile, maybe nod your head with a tear of happiness, but most of all feel the love that Cole has for you in these moments and embrace that love. That is what will keep his spirit alive and keep us going. Before I step down I leave you with one more piece of advice from the piece *A Love That Transcends Sadness* by Willie Morris "The highest tribute to the dead is not grief but gratitude." Thank you.

I had the blessing of being in Cole's homeroom and House, the Truesdell House.

Coles was a one-of-a-kind, strong, passionate, well-loved, athletic, and altogether unforgettable person.

The Truesdell House has chosen to honor Cole by donating a bench. The Bench will have his name engraved and, with respect, will stay permanently at a place Cole loved, the Boy's Varsity soccer field. The bench will be firmly grounded—just like Cole's points of view. The bench will be a place for friends to gather—since Cole was always surrounded by people he loved.

And, the bench will be a place for fans to applaud the sport where Cole excelled; the sport Cole loved.

Allison Ladley '09
Truesdell House Representative

Cole Ballay '09 Memorial Service
February 29, 2008
Germantown Academy

Concluding Remarks

Siddhartha, toward the conclusion of Hermann Hesse's novel of the same name, suddenly, and irrevocably, loses his adolescent son, his only child, his namesake; loses him not to death, but to a world into which he, as parent, cannot follow.

Futilely trying to do so, Siddhartha pauses at the outer reaches of the city to think, to listen. Siddhartha, Hesse writes, "stood a long time at the garden gate. Siddhartha realized that...he could not help his son...In his heart he felt deeply his love...He felt it like a wound not so he could wallow in the pain of it but so it could become a flower, a shining blossom."

John Ball and I stood on the slope above the scene of Cole's accident. The clear blue light of ending day felt a mockery. A clean north wind blew without ceasing. I was shivering from cold and shock.

Eileen Baer, the officer in charge, approached. I leaned forward to listen.

"One of you needs to go back to school. The phone calls will start immediately. People will begin to show up."

"Should one of us go up to be with the Ballay family?"

"Yes," Officer Baer, responded, "that would be good."

"My wife is at school right now," John responded.

I turned to listen.

"As a hospice caregiver, she is a comfort in these situations. If it is all right, I will go up to the Ballay's and ask her to come with me."

Back at school, people did start to show up.

I listened to Security Director Steve Dolan's advice that an email be sent to our families right away, to have food and drink available the next day in the Student Center, to prepare for the media.

I listened to our Communications specialists Audrey Schnur and Carla Zigelboim's advice to delay sending that email until we had clearance from the police to release Cole's name.

I listened to Counseling Director Janet Maurer's advice that we gather as an Upper School in the morning to share the news, offer words of support, and explain how the day would be structured.

I listened to John Ball, returned now, visibly moved, volunteer to speak to the Upper School students and faculty the next day.

I listened to Stephen Swanger's phone invitation to meet with the soccer team before school.

On Wednesday morning, I listened to Patrick David fight through his own grief to console his team.

I listened to John Ball speak movingly and clearly to the Upper School; and, afterwards, I listened to the sobs and to the apologies for them from a teacher sitting alone in the Arts Center.

I listened to the hush of the Student Center; to the swish of colored markers penning notes on Cole's memorials.

I listened to Matt Schelke's recounting of how Cole would poke good-natured fun at him in American history; to the warm laughter Matt's story elicited in response from their first period classmates.

I listened to Mrs. Ballay tell me about reading Siddhartha to Cole as a young boy. "I wanted him to know," she said, "that he did not have to be rich or famous to be successful."

I listened on line to Lance Stewart and Zephaniah Shemaule, caught unawares on their walk over from the train, respond articulately, sensitively, to the Channel 6 reporter's questions.

I listened to Patrick David and Voltaire Escalona speak of their grief for Cole as they stood in my office and faced unflinching into rolling cameras.

On Thursday, I listened to the beautifully young, incredibly mature voice of Robin, Cole's cousin, calling from the Ballay household to coordinate events.

I listened that evening at the student-organized vigil as the early moments of pure silence gave way to an occasional murmur from the circle center, followed by cleansing laughter.

I listened to the 8 p.m. tolling from the Belfry, to cars passing, waiting in the dark. To Kaylyn Caracausa's respectful "OK" when informed it was time to disperse.

On Sunday night, I listened to the babble of voices rising from the stream of grievors flowing in and around the funeral home. These were like Hesse's "many voices in the river...all part of each other."

On Monday morning, I listened to Tom and Nan Ballay tell Cole's story, read Cole's memoir, as they caringly turned hard moments of emotion into a testament not just to Cole, but to their

courage, their optimism, their concern for others.

Sitting in my sunlit pew, I “was now all listener...empty...receptive.” Voices from the previous week joined with Tom’s and Nan’s and flowed through my memory. Now, now, I could hear clearly for the first time the rhythmic sounds of GA’s river, the pulsing stream of healing waters that had been coursing over and around me for days and nights.

Outside of his simple hut, Siddhartha, too, was listening in a “new way” to the “many voiced singing of the river” and hearing no longer just one voice, his son’s voice, Cole’s voice, but all voices, the “whole, the unity.”

And, “at this moment, Siddhartha ceased to struggle with fate, ceased to suffer...His face bloomed in harmony of the river of what is, with the current of life, full of compassion, full of empathic joy, surrendered to the flow.”

Siddhartha’s wound had blossomed. And so, too, will ours.

Please rise.

We stand now in memory of Cole Ballay of Truesdell House, Class of 2009. We have heard his voice among the voices of those speaking and singing this afternoon, and in our hearing comes knowing, knowing that Cole’s voice will always be 17, will always remind us of this time of passing, this time of caring. From Cole, we are reminded that within our communal river, within each other, the voices of healing are always flowing, always flowing, flowing by, flowing by, by and by and on and on.

**Written by James W. Connor, 1760
Delivered February 29, 2008**