

**Funeral of Ray Fricken**  
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Imagine a man with a Ph.D. in Elementary Particle Physics coaching 11- and 12-year olds in football and baseball for 15 years – and not considering it beneath his dignity but instead enjoying every minute of it.

Imagine a man who worked at the Atomic Energy Commission at the highest level of scientific research sitting with an 8<sup>th</sup>- or 9<sup>th</sup>-grade boy tutoring him in Algebra One. And asking for no compensation except the joy of helping a student learn.

But of course we don't have to *imagine* such a man, for we have all had the privilege of knowing Ray Fricken.

Burnt out from years of fighting the political appointees who oversaw scientific research projects, Ray retired in 1993 after Congress cancelled the Superconducting Super Collider project he had worked on for years and on which \$2.5 billion had been spent.

He always intended to move back home to New Orleans someday, but his mother's stroke accelerated his plans. Enjoying a handsome retirement income from the Federal government and not one to tolerate idleness, Ray wanted to stay active. "I was looking for something productive," he explained, "but I wasn't interested in full-time employment."

Recalling his education by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart at St. Aloysius High School, Ray volunteered in the Instructional Lab at Brother Martin in the fall of '93. It didn't take long for the faculty to utilize his talents in many other ways as well.

Let's use our imaginations again. Imagine a proud physics teacher of long standing who poured his heart and mind into his classes and shepherded his students like a hen does her chicks. Now imagine that teacher asking someone else to help him develop an Advanced Placement Physics course. Again, we don't have to *imagine* such a teacher because we knew Brother Maurus. It's perhaps the highest tribute I can pay to Ray that Maurus respected him so much that he even let his St. Aloysius '55 classmate take over the class for certain topics.

It was a little over two years ago that I stood in this very spot giving the eulogy for Maurus with Ray in attendance. The two of them are probably up there analyzing how they could have taught a certain physics lesson better! I'm reminded of one of the sayings of Yogi Berra. "If you don't go to other people's funerals, they won't come to yours."

Ray also assisted Nancy Autin and Barbara Stott in teaching Advanced Placement Calculus. After Maurus's retirement, he worked with Mary Picou on Physics AP. "I've been able to do what I enjoy," he said, "teaching physics and math without being burdened with all the nuisances that go along with being a teacher."

Ray not only enriched the education of Brother Martin students for 23 years, he also made significant financial donations to the school. The Brother Martin Board of Directors recognized his role in making the school better by awarding him the Founders Medal in 2001.

Now imagine another Ph.D. on the faculty who crossed paths too infrequently with Ray over the years. Imagine what the two Ph.D.'s talked about when they had the chance. Teaching mathematics or science a new way?

Using computers to enhance instruction? No, they talked about the major league baseball pennant races or the current sport of their alma mater, LSU. Ray analyzed the LSU offense with as much skill as he analyzed the interaction of atomic particles at Fermi Lab.

Ray greeted everyone with a smile even when declining health slowed him down. He was unfailingly gracious and even-tempered. Even faculty members who did not know him that well have commented on his kindness. Oh, he might at times have expressed frustration with students who didn't make the effort to succeed. Who hasn't? But I never saw him angry - except maybe at Les Miles for his clock mismanagement.

"No man stands so tall as when he stoops to hold a child." Those words of Danny Thomas certainly applied to Ray. It takes great patience to tutor students. It also takes great love, and Ray possessed those two virtues in abundance.

We cannot replace Ray Fricken. But we can try, each in our own way, to express our love for students the way he expressed his.