

## CHARLIE, MY BROTHER

Gay, Charlie and Blyth, Tim and Alison, Deirdre and Alex, grandchildren, friends and admirers:

Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house, a creature was stirring – and it was not a mouse.

It was Big Guy, otherwise known as Charlie, my brother. He was rummaging for Clement Moore's classic poem to recite to his children and grandchildren, as our father had recited to us.

Each Christmas Eve Charlie cast his spell over an ever expanding clan, from Central America to central Ohio, from Foggy Bottom to the Big Apple, from the home of

the Star Spangled Banner to the shores of Nantucket. He embodied Mr. Claus. Ever kind. Ever merry. Ever generous.

Well, maybe not Santa's features: "his cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry."

Charlie and I shared much over eight decades, from side by side bouts of chicken pox in Manhattan to scrappy bouts of miniature golf near Foxhill Village.

Worshipping our parents and their values. Commuting to Stamford to the sounds of hi ho silver and the creaking door. Riding up to the pinnacle of the Eiffel Tower.

Clutching camels on the way to the pyramids. Sporting the Blue and White at three schools. Loving wives.

Loving children. Loving the Giants, then the Mets.

But I must confess that in our early years together, not all flowed smoothly.

Those who know me will assert, even testify, that I don't have a competitive bone in my body.

When he slipped me the Queen of Spades, I chucked the table. When he bought Park Place and built hotels, I chucked the board. When he occasionally, very occasionally, won a set off me, I jettisoned my racquet and hurled a volley of ancient sayings.

In exasperation he wrote to St. Nick. And I quote verbatim that infamous epistle:

*Dear Santa or shuld I say Father would you do me a*

*deed and give a gift to the Indians the gift will be Winston  
Lord and be shure and put a love tag on it.*

*Signed, Charlie.*

Charlie was known as Big Guy not for his height but  
for his core. He earned his nomenclature.

Big Picture: family first.

Big Tent: a rippling circle of stout friends.

Big Easy: his banter with waitresses, doormen and  
cabbies.

Big Leap Forward: a brave move at forty from  
business to education.

Big Rebound. The clan responded to two  
devastating tragedies with a personal journal, a pioneer

foundation, a park in the Bronx, a solicitous web site.

Big Little Horn. Charlie never blew his own horn. His biography is impressive. What counts, however, is not resume but resonance: The public spirit of his children and their progeny. The countless young women he nurtured.

Of course, Charlie did not wish to fade away. Surely there was anguish. But he never raged against the dying of the light. Instead, with poise and pluck and puns he grappled with puzzles, read and reread the Times and faked memory. And, as always, Gay was both his ballast and his harbor.

To all who cared, Charlie wordlessly conveyed his harmony.

To all who cared, he went gently into the night, cracking tired jokes, spouting Spanish, charming nurses, smiling farewell to his encircled kin.

And all who cared heard him exclaim ere he drove out of sight, "Happy memories to all -- ho ho ho -- I had a good life."