

Annette Brainard's eulogy for Rick, September 14, 2012:

The beginning of the many years our families shared a unique friendship came about due to Ricky's arrival here in this country. One afternoon I got a telephone call from a frantic woman who started our conversation with, "how clean does my house have to be?" I knew immediately that an adoption worker was about to show up at her house and that we were kindred spirits. Soon after, our two families became one family, of choice. And so I watched him grow from a beautiful child to a loving father.

I remember so well the first time I met him. His eyes were a compelling shade of hazel with a hint of green. He was a wide-eyed little boy, curious about everything and yet at the same time shy and cautious about meeting these new people. One night Ricky and Deb fell asleep on one of our upstairs beds. When it was time for them to go home, Irwin went up to wake them and then came down the stairs carrying Rick with a sleepy Deb trailing behind. Roy was concerned and offered to help carry Rick; Irwin was quick to respond with a great deal of pride, "he's not heavy—he's my son."

I was Rick's third grade teacher. Today, I can see him running around on the playground, his hair flying, his jacket wide open, jumping off what was probably the worst jungle gym in the universe. It was at this time that I got to see a little of the man he would become. He loved, respected, and was proud of his parents, often quoting them to his classmates, especially during lunch. Many children of that age often say mean things about each other or tease one another, the victim coming to me to complain. So even though he was a bit of a cut-up, trying to find his place among his group, he never succumbed to the nasties in order to be accepted

as one of the crowd. Never did any child come to me to say that Ricky had been rude or nasty to them. Even at that young age, he gave us glimpses of the compassionate and caring man he would become.

It wasn't until a few years ago that Ricky shared with me how scared he was as a child when my son Glenn, my daughter Cyndy, Deb and Ricky would go into my basement to play. I was very surprised because he was one of the first ones to clomp down the stairs. He said, "It was a dark and scary place, and everyone would hide. In June of this year he shared with me some of his life in Texas. My heart was warmed by how self-sacrificing a father he had become. There is a Yiddish word for someone like Rick. It is "mensch", a decent, responsible person with admirable characteristics. He was truly a mensch. His passing has left a large hole in our lives.