



Philip J. Rappa

March 11, 1953 - September 18, 2011

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At 12:20 AM, Sunday, September 18, 2011, Saint Augustine lost one of its extraordinary human beings: Philip J. Rappa. Although New York born Philip has long considered St. Augustine home. He leaves behind his beloved wife of 32-years, Norma Sherry, and his 90-year old mother, Josephine. Philip attended Flagler College in the first co-ed class of 1972. His experience at Flagler remained fondly imprinted in his heart throughout his life. At the tutelage of famed actor and teacher, Richard Boone, Philip went on to study at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City. His memory will live on in his vast accomplishments and his considerable compassion. Professionally as a writer/producer/director, he achieved much, notably: an Emmy-nominated nationally televised documentary for NBC, "Our Largest Minority: The Disabled," 8 Gubernatorial awards for his lectures on the effects of drinking and driving, a Telly Award, and a United Nations Award. Philip lived a life of unparalleled passion and exceptional love who filled every moment of every day to the fullest. He was the first paraplegic victim of a drunk driver to address young people across the New York, New Jersey, Connecticut tri-state area on the effects of drinking while driving and the importance of personal responsibility. Prior to his paralysis he earned great praise for his acting performances. But one of his proudest moments in the theatre was his direction of his lifetime favorite play, *Inherit the Wind* for Jean Rahner's A

Classic Theatre Company starring his college professor, mentor, and dear friend, Tom Rahner, whom he admired immeasurably. But what made Philip stand out among men was his passion for life, his masterful wit, his generosity in everything, his sincerity in friendship, his giving heart, his desire to leave the world a better place, his longing to inspire change, his earnest thirst for learning, his quest to leave behind a mark (a sign that he was here and that his life was meaningful); his incredible ability to touch everyone who even barely knew him, and his complete and absolute love for his Norma. Their love is and always will be a love story. He lived his life unassuming, genteel, without boasting nor prideful. If one was lucky to know him, even for a moment, they were lucky indeed. Sadly, as much as Philip achieved in his short 58-years he left so much undone, unfinished. He aspired to achieve so much more, but not for himself: for the love of his life and always with thoughts of those who are most needy. Two years ago Philip was diagnosed with metastatic colon cancer and given just six-months to live. He never felt self-pity or expressed anger, but he did say many times over that his great regret would be leaving his love. He never feared dying and he only sought second opinions to appease his devoted and suffering Norma. If he struggled at all he did so in the confines of his own heart. Philip outlived the doctor's edict. Cancer didn't kill him. He died from uncontrolled, exasperatingly high blood pressure. It would escalate without warning, without symptoms most frequently in the peaceful sleep of night. It crept in and destroyed his beautiful brain. Slowly over several weeks the pressure burst one, then another blood vessel spilling blood into the crevices of his brain destroying first his heretofore remarkably excellent verbal skills, then his ability to recall and remember, and later when another such assault on his brain took place, it destroyed what was left. It took away all feeling in his paralyzed legs robbing him of any sensation; it immobilized his left arm, it garbled his words making them unintelligible and it eradicated his ability to control his body in every conceivable way. It was a demoralizing, sad demise of a perfect human specimen. It is not often in life that one is graced with knowing a truly special

and unique individual. Philip was a giant among men, a man to be admired, adored, and remembered for eternity. For all who knew him - for however short or long - we were lucky indeed. He leaves a void that will not easily be filled. He will be missed more than mere words can express. Join Philip's family and friends in a memorial service and celebration of his life on Sunday, September 25 at the Flagler Auditorium at 2 p.m.. Please don't wear black, instead come bright and festive and share your "Philip story". Flowers are respectfully declined. Donations to education and/or food for the less fortunate in Philip's honor would be gratefully appreciated. St. Johns Family Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.