

DEDICATION OF BRENDAN GRANT MEMORIAL FIELD

221 CONCORD AVE., BELMONT, MA
24 JUNE 2007

REMARKS BY CASEY GRANT

I. REMARKS FROM CASEY GRANT

Welcome and good afternoon. (On behalf of all who work so hard supporting The Brendan Grant Foundation, I want to thank you for joining us here today.)

How did we get from there, to here? How did we get from that perfect blue sky evening on the 27th of June 2001, to this “here and now” moment in time?

In the weeks and months that followed Brendan’s departure from us, the idea arose from among Brendan’s teammates, and especially those who were out on this field with him on June 27th 2001, to name this ball field in his honor. About 2½ months later, on the 24th of September 2001, we held a ceremony and the field was officially named. As many of you recall, it was just days after the turbulent events of 9-11. At that ceremony the Boston Red Sox provided a generous donation of \$50,000. Here we are almost six years later looking back, with upwards of ‘one million dollars’ worth of improvements as a result. From that early significant contribution, and many, many others since then, we have nobly proved the virtue of their generosity.

So, “how did we get from there, to here”? Within the confines of this brief ceremony, today we’re here to salute the incredible effort of the countless individuals and organizations that contributed to this noble venture.

It is of course virtually impossible for me to ever adequately thank everyone that has assisted in this magnificent effort. You can start by taking a look, after we’re done today, at the two bronze plaques and the memorial wall. There are, indeed, so many people to thank. The contributions occur continually, even today, both on and off this field. Behind the curtain there is incredible machine of volunteerism.

First, please allow me to reflect for a moment on all that goes on beyond this field itself. Since *The Brendan Grant Foundation* was created in August of 2001 we have had 62 events, with a twofold focus either to raise funds or as tributes. I want to quickly summarize all this activity, as it clearly illustrates the immense volunteer effort whose hard work you are witnessing here today.

In our almost six years of existence, the Foundation has had the following fund-raisers: 7 golf tournaments, 6 road races, 4 ski & snowboard races, and a Reunion Concert with the legendary Great Pretenders, with another Great Pretenders benefit scheduled for December 7th of this year.

These funds have helped rebuild this field, as well as fund the other initiatives of the Foundation, which most importantly, include annual college scholarships awarded to-date to 10 graduating seniors of Belmont High School. As tributes, we’ve had 6 annual wrestling tournaments, a special exhibit at the New England Sports Museum, the naming of the baseball locker room at American International

College where Brendan played college ball, an annual sportsmanship award at the national Senior Babe Ruth World Series, and a variety of other tribute events. And, of course, this field has been the host site since 2005 for our annual high school varsity baseball tournament on Memorial Day weekend, and prior to that we hosted two college baseball games played on this field between American International College and Merrimack College.

When I tell you that we've been busy, it is an understatement. Each one of these events requires lots of volunteers doing lots of things. Just last Sunday, for example, across the field we hosted the sixth annual "Brendan's Home Run" 5K race & walk, with close to one thousand participants. The volunteers required to run that one event alone number close to 100. Think about all the people who work behind the curtain to make all this happen, and all the positive energy that is symbolized by this baseball field.

Of course, aside from our behind-the-scenes support infrastructure, the actual work done to this field itself is as equally noteworthy. As I already mentioned we estimate that upwards of *one million dollars* of improvements have been done to this field, and $\frac{3}{4}$ of this have been in-kind donations.

It is extremely gratifying to note that this donation to the Town of Belmont has involved no capital outlay from the town or cost to the taxpayers. This has been an amazing example of a successful public-private partnership. We enjoy an excellent working relationship with every one of the departments of town government that we've had contact with, and together we've been able to make sure that any work that we did was top quality and of lasting value. As a good example of our attention to detail, note that our improvements to this facility are fully ADA compliant, and now allow access to the physically challenged.

The measure of contributions have been both great and small, but all equally profound. At one end of the spectrum, as a symbolic example of the very large in-kind donations, is David Welch with The Welch Corporation who installed the primary drainage for the field. Over a period of several months his crew and a small fleet of heavy equipment dug out the non-porous clay of this entire field, and replaced it with a new state-of-the-art drainage system. You may recall how we would often wait 3 or 4 days after a heavy rain before the puddles would finally clear, but not so any more. The overhaul of this field has been vast and sweeping.

At the other end of the spectrum, symbolizing the small yet still profound support, in July of 2002 I received a donation of several hundred dollars from a 10 year old young man by the name of J.P. Saidnaway. He asked that instead of presents at his 10 year old birthday party that his guests instead bring donations for The Brendan Grant Foundation. I ask you, what motivates a young person to this uncharacteristic level of generosity? To my utter amazement, since then several other young people have made similar generous donations in this fashion. I'm left in awe by the goodness that I have witnessed and continue to see in people's hearts.

To me, it is especially poignant that today we have with us the young people of this community and beyond. This is ultimately your field. Please take care of it.

As I look out at the crowd I see so many people who have given so much, and on behalf of The Brendan Grant Foundation, please accept my most profound thanks. Whether you are one of the many who continue to help us with our various events, or you provide monetary or in-kind support, or if you are one of the small army of volunteers that has worked out here on this field with a rake or a shovel in the blistering sun or by pushing a wheelbarrow through mud in 35 degree F rain, to all of you I say thank you.

I want to close by pointing out that aside from a couple names that I've mentioned for sake of symbolism, I've avoided attempting to list all who have had a role in this effort as you are way too many. I wouldn't know where to begin or end.

So from the Board of Trustees of The Brendan Grant Foundation, to the inner circle of extremely dedicated volunteers who have worked side-by-side with me to make this field a reality, to each of you who have played a supporting role large or small, I extend my most sincere gratitude. Thanks...

II. PRESENTATION TO BELMONT HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Brendan had an engraved bat with his name on it, which in those early tumultuous days after his passing, became a symbol of strength for all of us. That bat could often be found at the various events in those first weeks as we were trying to understand our identity and engage a better vision of our ultimate direction.

Today I have a replica of that bat. It has Brendan's signature burned into the barrel, and it's a specialized creation from the Louisville Slugger factory in Louisville Kentucky.

Much like the proverbial "passing of the key to the city" so to we want to symbolically "pass the bat" to signify our hand-off of this initiative. Therefore, as President of the Brendan Grant Foundation, I hereby turn this bat over to you, (Jim Davis), and the Belmont School system and Town of Belmont, to symbolize the formal dedication of our significant volunteer effort to improve this baseball facility to make it worthy of the distinct honor it now holds.

(pass the bat...)

III. PERSONAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

More than half a dozen years ago, I used to regularly come down to this field with Brendan and I would pitch to him, hundreds of pitches at a time, and he would methodically swat majestic shots. Unfortunately, there was no outfield fence then. We loved that activity, and it is one that I truly miss.

With blissful purpose I recall watching (my son) Brendan play baseball on this field, and all seemed proper with the world. Hardly could I ever imagine that I would be standing on this same field, years later, speaking to all of you as I am now.

Yet here I am, and here you are. This is our reality. Welcome to your life; there is no turning back. The game of baseball, like the game of life, has many lessons. Today's lesson is this: Life is fragile... life is fleeting... life is precious.

To all of you who knew my son, Brendan Grant, you're able to tell others, like I can, how he was a vibrant young man with a tremendous devotion to this game of baseball. Brendan had a deep contentment with life that was passionately heartfelt. He radiated his smiling disposition with the same strength as his striking physical presence and his ability to readily deliver the long ball.

On Brendan's behalf, my family and I, and all of Brendan's many friends and teammates, are deeply appreciative for this tribute. It is an honor that, based on his absolute commitment to this marvelous sport, is all together fitting and entirely appropriate.

But in a higher sense, this is an honor that transcends my, or anyone else's, limited ability to add or detract. The collective spirit that's embodied here, in this field, this '*living tribute*', makes a statement that we can touch only with our hearts.

The ultimate lesson here should be clear to all. We will all face challenges in this world; it is a prerequisite for being a mortal. Some of these challenges will test you in ways you cannot begin to imagine.

But the secret to life, which is symbolized so vividly by this refurbished baseball field, is that you must persevere. We have, collectively, proven that good things can come from things that seem otherwise. We have taken a negative and made it a positive. We have turned a "bad" into a "good". We were face down in the mud, but we got up. Do not underestimate the good that we have accomplished here. Do not be blind to the intangibles beyond the physical improvements to this ballpark. The outcome of this effort, is... '*profound*'.

Someone told me once that the "Field of Dreams" is in Iowa, --- Iowa. But, I can tell you, if you want to see the "Field of Dreams" you don't have to go to Iowa.

In a few minutes when the umpire yells "Play Ball!", take a deep breath, and allow your dreams to come forth out upon this field. Join, in spirit, the talented young men out here today, who indeed, are playing out their dreams.

Enjoy ... and God bless...