

MAXI PÖLL
A eulogy

At Easter time last year, in Styria, at the home of his dear grandparents, Maxi totally surprised me — with one of the most heartfelt pleasures I have experienced — when he asked me to be his Firmungspate.

I responded, jokingly, by saying that *surely* he could do better than choose someone whom he, by the age of 13 or 14, could *already* look down on — a man who barely knows how to hold a golf club let alone swing it properly, and speaks pathetic German.

But, thank goodness he *didn't* reconsider. And, the wonderful confirmation ceremony in June at Thersianum, and the celebration dinner at the Pöll's home that followed, somehow also confirmed and formalized a very special friendship that had been forged over the period of many years.

Maxi led an extraordinary life, made possible by Ulli and Stephan, whose parenting skills, I think it is fair to say, we all admire *enormously*. In addition to abundant love, they exposed him, from the beginning, to the wider world — Stephan taking him along on business trips to Tokyo and Hong Kong, and Ulli to medical conferences, most recently one in Paris. There was the family's around-the-world Christmas excursion two years ago, summers split between language camp in Switzerland and at the gorgeous sea coast in Greece with the Kutelas family.... and, of course, frequent golf and skiing — his real passions.

The great thing about Maxi, however, was that he *recognized* he had been born into an exceptional family, and that he was being given extraordinary opportunities. He appreciated them, and took advantage of them — to the fullest. The result was a young man wise beyond his years, with a wonderful intellectual curiosity, yet modest, kind, and thoughtful. And, he was, as you all know, always a gentleman.

Maxi was also usually the one looking out for the younger kids — his brothers, *for sure*, but *others*, as well. Indeed, admiring Maxi was a key reason for our young son Barclay's interest in beginning at Thersianum next year. And when Barclay completed his interview with Frau Director Hauschka last November, there was big Maxi, waiting in the hall, just around the corner, having just finished a physics exam, with words of support. Indeed, he was determined to steer Barclay toward a certain teacher for whom he had particular fondness and respect.

On a ski lift in Italy last year — on beautiful bright sunny day like today — Maxi told me that he thought when he finished school he would likely choose to go into the family business with his father. Although nothing could be better than that — with Stephan and Ulli's consent — I tried to give him at least a small taste of a different profession, that of diplomacy at United Nations. One particular day he came to my office at the UNO City to observe a heated diplomatic battle regarding an issue he had been following in the news, concerning whether Iran is building nuclear weapons. He accompanied me into the chamber, put on a set of translation headphones and listened to the ministers and ambassadors debate, first listening in English, and then in his equally competent French (he even sampled a little Arabic, Russian and Chinese). And, just outside the chamber, at the crowded press conference that followed, there stood Maxi, squeezed in among the mob of reporters for CNN, BBC and the others. We had a great day together and thereafter, at his suggestion, we began talking about bringing his school class out for a visit.

One more recent evening, just shortly before Christmas, he invited me over to the house to see an examination paper he had written for his English class. It was his analysis, in beautiful English, of the American presidential campaign that had just taken place. He had critiqued and contrasted the debating styles and effectiveness of the candidates, and discussed the arcane US election process — which most Americans don't even understand... but Maxi clearly did. I couldn't have agreed more with his teacher who had written on the paper that he was 'delighted' with the exceptional work. Indeed, as I told Maxi, both George Bush and John Kerry themselves would have benefited from his keen perspective.

But the point here, of course, is that Maxi, in his fifteen years, led a life of no regret. He did it *all* so *very* well: He excelled in school, he excelled in sports, and, most importantly, he excelled as a *person*. In life he consistently set an example for others, and he leaves only the highest of standards for us all.

And *surely* he is confident that he leaves behind an exceptional and strong family — as capable as any I know of now finding the difficult way forward.

David B. Waller

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