

# Eulogy of Thomas Mathew

September 14, 2024

## Introduction

Good morning. My name is Bill Hurst and **Thomas Mathew** was my Father-in-Law. I am **honored** to speak with you all today on behalf of our family. Today is truly heartbreaking as many of us have not yet recovered in the 2 years of grief from losing Daddy's dear wife Thresiamma. Thomas and Thresiamma were "**Daddy**" and "**Mummy**" to Simi, Lisa and me.

Thank you so much for attending this ceremony celebrating the life of this wonderful **man, husband, father, grandfather, coworker and trusted friend** to so many.

I've known Daddy for nearly 30 years. And one thing has always been quite clear: **Everybody who really knew this man liked, loved and/or respected him**. This alone would be an amazing legacy for any of us. But on greater reflection, one may remember **his quality as a good person**. This is something many of us may think of ourselves, but **Daddy truly lived that life, in so many little ways, every day**.

## Traits

Why did so many of us admire, respect and love him?

**Without question, Family and Friends were always Daddy's highest priority**

- Daddy and Mummy created a strong core family, and strengthened their greater family around them. Theirs was a love-match that lasted 51

years until the passing of Mummy, whom he deeply missed, as do we all.

- They raised their 2 daughters, Simi and Lisa in an environment of **Catholic values, stability and love**. Both matured into successful adults with unique gifts and **common foundational beliefs in family, friendships and kindness**. This has always been evident in their girls' **absolute devotion to Mummy and Daddy's care, well-being and quality of life**.
- I was fortunate to join their family when Simi and I married. Daddy and Mummy both stepped beyond the cultural challenges and adopted me as a son. I have never underestimated the difficulties this may have posed for them at the time, and I am still truly grateful.
- And, of course, later came their grandson Hayden, who made them so proud and brought them so much joy.
- *Simi, Lisa, Hayden: Daddy and Mummy, Appa and Nana loved you all so much!*
- Daddy thrived seeing family and friends!
  - Impromptu visits were always welcome at Westbury.
  - He was in his element at family parties, large or small, regardless of occasion, including up to Anissa & Joe's wedding just this past July
  - Daddy enjoyed playing **cards with friends**, whether it be a **game of 28 during a visit** or **trips with friends and family to Atlantic City to play blackjack** (Mummy preferred the slots.)

- Sadly, I believe Daddy suffered the greatest hardship during quarantine due to the loss of so many of the social connections on which he flourished.

### **Daddy and Mummy exemplified a Generous Spirit**

- They were sponsored by friends when they immigrated to the US in 1975 and they **paid that gift forward faithfully** to so many of the people here and beyond who benefited from their support, advice and a place to live in their home.
  - Their apartment in Flushing and then later, their home in Westbury was often **very full of family and friends sharing great food, fun, and love.**
  - Throughout their time raising their daughters, and beyond, also continued to **provide very generous support to both their families India.**
  - And as I am sure most of you know, **people could ask Daddy for help and he would always be willing to lend a hand**

### **What were some of Daddy's favorite things...**

- From his youth and trips as a contractor with the Indian military, **Daddy developed a love of travel.**
  - Of course, there were the big trips home to Kerala to see family and friends or visit Simi and Lisa, wherever they were living for school or work

- Throughout his girl's youth and later in life, there were **the car trips for site seeing or visiting friends and family across the US.**
- And if you visited from outside New York, Daddy would be your tour guide to the **Statue of Liberty or the Empire State Building, Niagara Falls or some other interesting place.** Of course Costco was added to this list by the time I arrived
- Both Daddy and Mummy were **proud of their gardening.** And they were good at it!
  - And, to their great joy, Hayden had so much fun helping them harvest vegetables
- Interestingly, **Daddy was fascinated** by building, constructing or putting things together and, if he could, He would always try to help others' with their home projects
  - In recent years, this ranged from “how-to” videos on YouTube to helping me assemble a kamado smoker to assembling dumbbell stand for Hayden and **later, when he was less mobile, to sit and watch and keep me company**
- Daddy Loved the foods and drinks **that he liked**
  - These included his **particularly well-done rice**, meen curry and all of Mummy's cooking
  - To drink, if asked, he would likely say he liked Black Label, which he drank only very infrequently, but **his true love was chaya**, which he preferred with 2 teaspoons of sugar, **but only if you told him you put in ½ tsp**

- And he loved watching any sport, but particularly the Giants, Yankees and Knicks with Simi and Lisa. He and Mummy especially loved hosting Superbowl watch parties – he would let all stay **even when some of the cousins would root for the ‘wrong’ teams.**

### **Stern and serious (except when he wasn’t)**

- As a father, **Daddy had a lot of advice for Simi, Lisa and me:** Best travel routes and traffic patterns, drinking enough water (or too much sugar or salt), how to take care of things and, **of course, how to save.**
  - In the late 1990s, It was during one of his “You cannot save a dollar if you cannot save a penny from a dime” lecture that I noticed **Simi and Lisa had been using me as a target audience for Daddy while they usually slinked away upstairs to the kitchen with Mummy ...** where they would all laugh at both of us
- His baseline mood may have been serious, but he smiled at small jokes frequently and **when he laughed, he laughed well**
  - You could **never catch him smiling in a planned photo** (unless he didn’t know you were taking it). So many of his really **good photo smiles are from when he was distracted talking with friends and family or playing with his girls or Hayden**
- His stern demeanor was sometimes amusing, particularly considering **how we all change with time.** I’ve been told Daddy could be fairly naughty during his childhood There are stories including his **swimming across a river** (so he wouldn’t be caught) to smoke cigars with his friends

- Inevitably, he would get caught. Once getting in trouble for being late because he was **too tired to swim back and had to go the long way...**

### **Lastly, there was the way he demonstrated love**

- I grew up in a family who said “I love you” often. But this was not the type of language Daddy used. Oh, he clearly loved his family and friends, but he communicated his feelings primarily by action or affectionate nicknames. Some examples:
  - Always **filling up our gas tank** and discussing routes before our return to Illinois, long trips, short trips, or any trip
  - **Airport drop-offs and pick-ups at any time of day or night**
  - Daily trips bringing family to/from work and school until they were comfortably established and settled in the US
  - **Always preparing the raw fish and meat for cooking, knowing how much Mummy disliked those jobs** and how different guests liked their portions
  - **And always calling to make sure loved ones safely arrived** at their destinations when traveling or ensuring they were unharmed if there was even the smallest storm in their vicinity
  - **Plus so many more!**
- These actions were not obligations to Daddy, but acts that energized and gave him great joy throughout his life.
- But he was capable of change. It was in the last few years, when Daddy **was physically** unable to take action to help us as he would like, he

adapted and started saying “I love you” back when we gave him an umma goodnight.

### **Conclusion**

And so, in closing: **Thomas Mathew - Kunjuchayan - Kunju - Uncle - Daddy - Appa** we would like to thank you for **enriching** all of our lives. We know you are **at peace now and happy together again with Mummy** and will continue to watch over us **in our times of need and our celebrations**.

We hope to make you proud **by following your best examples in life**. And we will continue to miss you until we embrace you both in joy together again with God. **We love you.**