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Richard “Dick” Dennis, Sr.: A life well-lived - by Bill Pastuszek

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Richard “Dick” Dennis

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Dick Dennis passed away recently, having lived more than 90 years as an active and avid Bostonian. He lived a life of service to his family, his faith, and to the real estate appraisal profession. Dick was a huge influence in my own life. I was privileged to have known him, been mentored by him, and to have called him friend.

Dick was deeply influential in the Boston real estate and real estate appraisal community. He was active and held leadership positions in the old Society of Real Estate Appraisers, the Appraisal Institute, the Massachusetts Board of Real Estate Appraisers, and served on the city of Boston’s Zoning Board of Appeals, serving as chair for 16 years. His firm, Casey & Dennis, founded by his grandfather in 1895, had offices overlooking Boston’s Granary Burying Ground.

Among his many gifts, Dick was a superb and inspiring teacher. Anyone who ever learned with him remembers his easy twinkly style, his quick wit, and the extraordinary breadth of his knowledge and experience that he was able to pass on to his students. Many generations of real estate appraisers were trained by Dick, and by those whom he trained. Dick’s appraisal family tree flourishes with its wide branches among us.

Dick’s father died when Dick was young, and his uncle, Richard Casey, was credited as being a superb surrogate father to him and his older brother George. Dick’s mother later married the widowed James Michael Curley, famously four-time mayor of Boston, governor of Massachusetts and two-term congressman. He and his brother and mother moved into the Curley house on the Jamaicaaway, where Dick was thrust into the center of Boston politics and friendships. He loyally

treasured and nurtured those friendships throughout his life.

But most of all, Dick treasured his family and his faith. Dick and his truly beloved wife Clare (who died in 2018) had six children and one grandson. Dick's obituary notes that his children "pledge to continue to share his loving legacy."

I met Dick early in my appraisal career and looked at him as an important mentor. I remember being impressed at an appraisal group meeting by his stirring call to reach high professionally as an appraiser, and the importance of involvement in professional appraisal groups. At the time, I took his words to heart and, together with similar advice from my father, also an appraiser, moved ahead in the appraising profession. In many ways, thanks to Dick, I became an appraisal instructor, took on leadership roles with appraisal groups, and earned appraisal designations that have bolstered my professional career.

Dick impressed many of us and pushed us to take on difficult assignments, to be persistent, to be professional, and practice with "distinction." As time went on, his words made more and more sense, and likewise impressed yet another generation of appraisers who came up after mine.

When Dick referred work to me, I always took it as a great honor and did the very best I could. He talked me into becoming involved in difficult court cases, and I emerged from those cases better for the experience. I had the pleasure of having Dick in one of my classes, along with Gail Burns: it was a great feeling to be told by him that I did well.

Dick loved to talk about life and friends, and I treasure the many hours we spent together doing just that—often around a piano after an appraisal organization meeting. He always strove to live a good life, well. From my viewpoint, and from that of my closest appraisal peers, Dick gave us a close look at a life well-lived and well-shared. In that, he will always remain a teacher and friend to so many of us. May his memory be as a blessing.

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