

**A PROMISE KEPT—  
BY ATTORNEY KELLY S. O'REILLY**

There are seminal moments in a person's life where an act, a feeling, an experience is crystallized and kept special to that person for a lifetime. These moments, these red letter days come like a chill down the back of one's spine and with the clarity of a fresh breeze.

I have had many such moments in my life whether it was the day I married my wife and look at her from across the altar, to the birth of my children and the realization that I am a new daddy. I have also had experiences that are not family related where I shall never forget the feelings of the moment such as when the shuttle Challenger exploded or when the twin towers were attacked. I can tell you where I was and what I felt when these special moments happened.

And so it is with the practice of immigration. I have had many occasions and experiences as an immigration lawyer that will stay with me for a lifetime. In my efforts to help our clients reach their dream of life in the U.S. I have been blessed with moments. This last week I blessed again. Let me explain.

A few years ago I wrote about a client of mine who when he initially hired me to handle his and his families immigration issues was in good health and in good spirits. Over time as we became closer and progressed on their applications it became apparent that he was experiencing health issues and that I should inquire.

I was told that he had a form of cancer that was very aggressive and that the outlook did not look good. Each time we met and discussed their case his health would come up and we all feigned hope and tried to keep his spirit up by speaking of how far medicine and the treatment of cancer had come but it soon became evident that he was losing the battle.

Each time we would visit he was a little bit worse for the wear. From walking perfectly, to a slight limp to a cane and finally a wheelchair the cancer took its toll. Each time he brought his happy nature and upbeat mood with him despite all those around him saddened by this rapid change.

As months went by I finally received a phone call from his wife that he had been hospitalized and that it did not look good. I drove to the hospital in Los Angeles to see my friend and to check in on him. When I entered the room I realized that our fears had been realized and that he in fact did not have much longer with us.

We spoke of things in general and then the moment that I shall not forget came. He turned to me and asked if we could pray together and once the prayer was over he had me lean down so he could ask me something.

My friend asked, "Promise me you will take care of my family, you will take care of their immigration problems." In the moment I of course said that I would. We hugged and I left the hospital. The feelings of that moment stayed with me through the night. I struggled with how I would keep that promise.

I promised that I would take care of his family in part to make him feel better at the moment but I also wanted to make it happen to in fact take care of his family.

Not long after that visit my friend passed away.

This week his family won their case in court using a defense called cancellation of removal.

The promise was kept.

I know my friend is happy,