

ROBERT RIZZO

Good Evening. It is an honor for me to be here tonight to pay tribute to a man that served as my professional mentor for the first 8 years of my career. On February 17, 2009, The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's family lost a special member, and the disability community lost a champion, with the sudden death of Paratransit Contract Operations Manager Robert P. Rizzo, Jr. From MBTA colleagues, his peers both across the Commonwealth, and the nation, and those in the disability community, as well as Gov. Deval Patrick and Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston, his life inspired an outpouring of praise for his professionalism and his compassion in his job performance. No one was better. One of the reasons he was so successful and customers so pleased with our services was the person at the head of the operations was that consummate professional and an outstanding, kind and wonderful man.

Tonight we honor Bob and for those of you in the room who didn't know him as we did I'll introduce you to him tonight. Bob Rizzo's career in transportation unexpectedly started impart due to federal Judge Garrity in 1974. Bob was reassigned from his quiet Civics and History classroom to the Boston Public School's Superintendent's Desegregation Implementation Team as a Transportation Supervisor as a result of the court ordered desegregation of the Boston Public Schools. He eventually became the Assistant Director of Boston's School Transportation, serving through 1987.

Bob left the school system and joined the T in 1987 as Supervisor of THE RIDE program. He was subsequently promoted to Assistant Manager in 1994 then to Manager of Paratransit Contract Operations in 2000.

As Manager of THE RIDE program, he and his staff of 17, work to ensure the delivery of quality, safe, reliable, accessible service. In FY00 the program provided a bit over 1M trips, that number grew annually and in Fiscal Year 09, THE RIDE had over 67,000 registered customers provided over 1.9M trips while improving ontime deliver from the low 90% range to over 99% within 30 minutes of a customer request.

Bob took seriously his charge and valued his relationship with the community he served. He fully understood that for many people transportation is a link to the outside world. It eliminates isolation and allows independence and the freedom of travel for many. Bob designed and implemented relevant policies and procedures to ensure that the Authority met or exceeded all federal, state and local laws and regulations governing accessible public transportation, principally the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

He is greatly missed by his family, his MBTA-OTA family and the Disability Community at large.