

Joe Fisher, *my lifelong Friend*

To Peg, Jay, Laurie & Kim:

Guess I wasn't emotionally up to sharing these thoughts today with those many, many friends of Joe's who filled the Church today and the long lines of his Wake.

I first knew Joe when we worked at Verret's grocery store. Joe started working at Verret's when it was on Church St. Then, Omer and Albert Verret built that 'new' store on Shelburne Rd. Joe and I were in high school then. Joe was big time, as far as I was concerned. He had a driver's license and delivered groceries in that pickup truck. I guess that is how Joe became acquainted with so many people. It was the start of a people-loving career. I envied Joe. Why? My job wasn't that of a sophisticated driver. No. My job was sorting bottles in the basement of that store. Bottles had a 2-cent return in those days.

At Cathedral High, Joe was a pioneer of sorts. He was a cheerleader along with Tommy Daley, Flit Patno, Rit McClintock and Don Hamlin. At a Catholic high school then, there were only boy cheerleaders. Joe was most active in Stunt Nite, taking an active role in developing the themes that each class used.

When our family moved to 30 Southcrest Drive, one of the factors was the Fisher family. The Keoghs and the Fishers established a warm friendship that would last for many years. After a brief time away, we moved backed to Southcrest.

Joe and I took up cross-country skiing. This was a sport, which would bind us for many-a-Saturday morning. Joe was just a fun guy to be with. I bought this fancy ski bib, used for that type of skiing. He would derisively look at my crotch and inquire, "You gotta orange in there?"

Again, fun. Since we would find many tourists on the ski slopes, we would manufacture this ploy: "Joe, have you seen any snow snakes yet?" Tourists would raise their eyebrows at the thought of 'snow-snakes.' Joe would respond: "I know they are bad this year, Bill, so I bought some snow-snake repellent."

Then there was the Stowe Derby, that long cross-country race. It started at the top of Mt. Mansfield and went to the Village of Stowe. Again, we had fun, especially when we fell into the deep snow or on a fast downhill. We laughed a lot, mostly at each other. That was Joe Fisher.

Don't know if you know this, Peg, but Jack Lancaster and I do. After our first Stowe Derby, we were all sweaty and tired. We needed a cold beer and a hot shower. Got the beer first and went to the Stowe grammar school for the shower. Stripped naked, we approached the open shower room to find some women finishing their shower. We didn't know what to do. Not much choice, was there. Joe said: "Let's go into the shower but cover our eyes." We did. But I noticed that he moved his hands slightly and was peeking... Joe was proud of winning first place in the over age 60

category in the Derby. He boasted about that, rightfully.

Every time I go skiing at Stowe, Joe's memories of the many good time, linger. I am confident that Laurie, Kim, Ed Wooster, Jack Lancaster and others remember those skiing trips.

Joe was so committed to the Folk Group. He worked hard at recruiting singers and keeping them in the Group. He had some challenges, too, when personalities got in the way. But he worked them out to the success they are now. Joe is proud of their performance at his funeral.

Trains, trains, trains. I thought Joe was crazy when he filled his basement with trains and tracks. (I think Peg thought he was crazy, too.) That became a passion, which he enjoyed. His love of trains prompted his becoming an excellent member of the Chittenden County Transportation Authority's Board of Directors. He did a super job in that role. And he was so proud of his Conductor's uniform. I'd like to see a railroad car named in his memory, for all he has done for trains and railroading. I'll mention that to Jim Fitzgerald.

Ed Wooster so ably talked about Joe's concern for others. There are stories upon stories about this. The most meaningful to me was when he built the ramp for my Mary Grace, when she had cancer. That ramp allowed her in her wheelchair to get out of the house.

Joe was truly a warm friend. We all will miss his presence in our lives. But aren't we all lucky to have him as part of our lives as Husband, Father, Grandfather and a truly, genuine Friend.

Bill Keogh 11-12-2001