

## **Robert L. Fisher Eulogy – May 9, 2025 at St Luke Church, Fairfax, VT**

Delivered by Lauri Fisher

Jane and the family would first like to thank you all for taking the time today from your life; days you walked away from that were most certainly full with work, appointments, family commitments, charitable and public service tasks, only to come and pay tribute to Bob.

He would be humbled to see you all here.

Our family is most grateful for the outpouring from our friends and the community since our kind Bobby Fisher left us behind for his higher service in heaven.

To Jayme Love (for those of you that may not know, Jayme is Bob's niece, a nurse professional and a sweetheart who helped Jane with continual love and medical support in his final days), from the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU for being the kindest, sweetest and most loving caretaker to your Uncle Bob. The compassion and love you gave to him, and the support you gave to your Aunt Jane, was nothing but professionally top shelf and humanely nothing less than amazing. Thank you.

Finally, to Janie, Bob's partner of nearly six decades, the boys thank you for providing him with amazing care as he prepared to leave us. It goes without saying that your love of Bob as your spouse was faithful in service and always unwavering.

You were a solid teammate, both in life's victories and despite life's obstacles.

You were the person who held his hand when he lost his only daughter to an unfair disease at her very young age. Bob's heart was forever broken when he lost Lani and we have faith that they are together, without pain and in peace, at this very moment.

You were a soldier who stood proudly next to him as we first learned that his mind was fading and not certain to return.

We know Bob wanted to, but could not, be the same hard-working partner as he had been for the family, for so many years and it frustrated him.

As the light in Bob's mind started to fade and people and places he thought so fondly of disappeared in his tales, so too exited his physical abilities.

He was gradually unable to cut and stack the yearly wood, drive his beloved tractor or even shovel off the winter's snow from the deck.

Throughout all of Bobby Fisher's slow fade, you maintained your resiliency and kept life in motion for him.

If Bob could send a thank you note from heaven, it would undoubtedly be loaded with gratefulness that he was comfortable, loved and constantly reminded he was safe. We all should desire to have such a beautiful ending when we depart this earth.

Now, a little about our Bobby Fisher.

Mr. Fish was a notable character in life's script. Whether you knew him as a young Marine serving our country, a manager at IBM, or as a devoted member of his Church, or while he engaged in his years of public service with the Fairfax Rescue Squad, or even if you knew him just as a corny joke teller on the stool at the foot of the check-out counter at Berardinelli's....You would likely agree that he was humble, engaging, interested, curious and, well, a perpetual jokester.

Bob was very proud of his large family – 13 siblings in total.

Pope St. Francis once said: "In a world often marked by selfishness, a large family is a school of solidarity and sharing; and this attitude is to the benefit of society as a whole".

Bob's pedigree in the large Fisher Family certainly rang true to the Pope's statement – he lived his life as a benefit to our community, a selfless man with needs that were only as necessary, not in excess.

Bob's stories on sharing in a family of 16 often came out at the dinner table. We would sit down for a family dinner and Bob, without fail, would start loading his plate with the comfort food Janie had crafted for the meal - often acting as though he hadn't eaten in weeks.

One meal, after I had courage to joke with Bobby Fisher at his own dinner table about his insatiable attack of the potatoes and gravy, I said "whoa Mr. Fish, slow down and leave some for the rest of us!". Bob continued to stack his plate and didn't even look up at me before he quipped "I was raised in a family of 14. You had to be fast or you might not get to eat!"

Then he did the famous Bob giggle and slapped a wad of mashed potatoes on my plate.

I never have forgotten that humorous lesson and often pondered it over the years. Bob was a hard worker, grateful for what he had, didn't seek more than he needed for his family and was really mostly happy if he could just get to the potatoes first.

Bob was a worker at a young age to help support his family after his Father has passed at a young age. He had a classic tale about meeting Jane before they truly understood it was a statistically rare chance meeting that would later return to him as perhaps, fate.

When Bob was 15, not old enough to legally drive, he delivered potatoes for the Ralph Bushey Company out of Burlington with a clunky truck.

Bob would load the truck, drive the sacks of potatoes to Lamoille County to a General Store. The store had a large weighted door on top of the staircase to the cellar where the potatoes were unloaded and stored. Bob's tale was that there were often two little children sitting on top of that cellar door eating their penny candy they had just purchased inside. Bob would be frustrated with the children who refused to move from the door unless he paid them some "transaction fee" – presumably so they could go get more penny candy. Bob would get the kids to scatter off so he could finish his potato offload...but admitted it cost a nickel or two.

Two decades later, Jane took a job at IBM and met her new manager – a now young adult Bobby Fisher, only 10 years her superior.

As they grew their relationship and swapped tales about their upbringing, the dots suddenly connected...the two little kids holding the cellar door hostage were none other than Jane and her brother Poly.

They had remembered each other.

The paths of life had brought them back together after all of those years.

Bob believed in service to his community – and was a long-time volunteer for Fairfax Rescue, often insisting that he was the driver of the ambulance to transport folks in town who were having medical emergencies. He made people feel safe and cared for – something the universe repaid him for many years later.

He also drove a wrecker for Fairfax salvage logging hundreds of miles all over Vermont. He loved cars and driving...asking (insisting, really) for daily rides from Jane as late as two weeks prior to his passing. He loved to drive far enough to see the sights, but not so far that he wouldn't return to the home he built with his own hands each night.

He volunteered for his Church, he would cut the ham, mow the lawns, help build the new rectory and renovate after flooding or simply just deliver his two youngest boys to the Church for their altar service.

He wanted good for people, both in life and in his faith. He really just enjoyed it most when people laughed.

I am convinced Bob was the inventor of what we now call “Dad Jokes”. A silly pun or play on words was his strength. No matter how annoyed we might get at his goofy banter, (particularly when his wit seemed to surface in the most inappropriate moments), we often still use Bob’s quips today.

“Bob – what did you do today?

“Nothing, and I got it all done!”

“Bob – do you need anything?”

“One Million One Dollar Bills.”

When you called out to Bob to ask a question or answer one of his and he replied “you lost your what?”, you knew he didn’t hear you so you had to ask again.

Bob loved the game of pool. He played it nearly weekly with his close pal, Donald Pigeon. He often asked his youngest grandson Aidan to play when Aidan was barely tall enough to hold a stick; asked the boys when they would stop by to visit to hit around few...even Bob Jr., wasn’t immune on his trips from the west coast to visit...even letting us girls play on occasion (Lani was a noteworthy pool opponent and one of the few that he couldn’t always beat!)... he just enjoyed the spirit of the game even if “the table” won the round.

It is important to remember that, in pool, such as in life, it’s all about the angles. Bob was the master of finding the best angle to put the balls in the pockets of the pool table...or the best angle to pivot people when they were off track or stressed out. The best angle he needed to provide for his family or support a Church building project. The best angle to convince Janie to let him grill steak on his deck on a Sunday afternoon although he already had red meat that week, or to convince her they needed to drive to Troy or Derby for breakfast.

He was one of the least greedy pool sharks I have ever met.

When I passed the bar exam, Bob attended my swearing in at the Supreme Court. Two days following the ceremony, I was at my desk at the Burlington firm for whom I worked at that time when I got a call that Bob and Jane were in the lobby. When I went out to find out the occasion for the visit, Jane handed me a finely engraved name plate Lauri A. Fisher, Attorney at Law. Bob was antsy, he too had a package in his hand and wanted me to open it on the spot. Inside was this clock and pen set, also engraved with my newly minted title. Bob then said to me “it is important that you have a clock on your desk, time is how you make your money now. It is equally important that you have a nice pen so that you can sign your employees pay checks so that they share in your success and can meet their needs, too.”

If you know nothing about Bob, you still know that advice was consistent with his desire to encourage kindness and selflessness. He never wanted anything more.

Whenever you walked into Bob’s and Janie’s home, he would greet you at the door, adorned with those infamous suspenders that held in his neatly-tucked and button down shirt. His comfy brown slippers clicking on the wood floors as he approached – then you would hear “hello hello!”.

As Bob’s activity started to slow, “Hello Hello” became implied, not spoken. He eventually stopped meeting us at the door, but would turn his head from his worn recliner and just wave. He continued to wave and welcome us into his living room at his bedside in this manner until 48 hours before he peacefully ventured from our presence and off to greater places.

Bob, Bobby Fisher, Mr. Fish, Mr. Fisher, Dad, Grandpa,...you made us laugh every moment you could and we will forever be grateful how you improved our world for 90 full years.

In closing, Bob wasn’t much for sad goodbyes. I looked long and hard to find words that I believe would capture how I Bobby Fisher would want this to go; how he would want us to walk from this Church with more laughing and love in our

hearts than sadness. When I didn't think I could find the right one...my younger dog walked by and, in her usual request for attention, hit my hand that was on my computer mouse with her nose, triggering an internet browser scattering of poems in my search query...and after I laughed at her ability to rescue me from discouraged thought...before me on the computer screen was a poem, by **Mosiah Lyman Hitchcock** called **When I am gone....**

When I come to the end of my journey  
And I travel my last weary mile  
Just forget if you can, that I ever frowned  
And remember only the smile

Forget unkind words I have spoken  
Remember some good I have done  
Forget that I ever had heartache  
And remember I've had loads of fun

Forget that I've stumbled and blundered  
And sometimes fell by the way  
Remember I have fought some hard battles  
And won, ere the close of the day

Then forget to grieve for my going  
I would not have you sad for a day  
But in summer just gather some flowers  
And remember the place where I lay

And come in the shade of evening  
When the sun paints the sky in the west  
Stand for a few moments beside me  
And remember only my best

Thank you all again for loving our Bobby Fisher. Lauri