



Robert Nelson Patterson

October 12, 2014

Robert Nelson Patterson, 1921-2014

“I have had a great life; I have no regrets,” were among the last words of Robert (Bob) Patterson. A brief look at the span of his 93 years reinforces the strength of these statements.

Born Robert Nelson Patterson in Wilmington, Illinois in 1921 to Esther M. and James R. Patterson, Bob was raised by the family in Braidwood, Illinois. The Patterson family figured prominently in local history starting with the operation of the furniture, livery, and undertaking business in 1865, and continuing to this day with the 5th generation operating the R.W. Patterson Funeral Home in Braidwood. Bob attended Reed Custer High School and was an exemplary academic achiever as well as a starting guard on the school basketball team that in 1938 famously beat all district, regional, and sectional contenders to join the Sweet Sixteen and play for the State championship in Champaign, Illinois. The team was comprised of 10 boys from a class of only 45, and with total enrollment of only 96 pupils the school was the smallest in State history to enter the finals. Playing against schools many times larger, the Reed Custer Comets fought through to the championship game, finishing second in a close game with Dundee, one of the biggest schools in the State. The team was widely recognized for its discipline, commitment, and sportsmanship, as well as its skilled play.

Bob graduated high school in 1938 and went on to pursue a liberal arts education, graduating from Lake Forest College in 1942, which he attended

under a full athletic scholarship. He enlisted in the United States Coast Guard Reserve in 1943, and attended the officers training program at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. Completing training as an Ensign, Bob was assigned to the 83-foot Coast Guard Cutter 83396, with submarine chaser duties in the area of the British West Indies. He was transferred to LST (Landing Ship, Tank) duty in the Pacific Theater of Operations, participating in the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa before returning to Norfolk, Virginia in 1946, receiving his honorable discharge as a Lieutenant JG.

Returning to Braidwood, Bob took an accounting position at A.O. Smith Company in nearby Kankakee, Illinois. Here he met Verna (Toni) Castongia. Bob and Toni were married in 1948, and celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary this past January. A son Michael was born in 1949, followed by daughters Julie in 1952, and Mary Jan in 1955. Four years at various accounting positions with A.O. Smith was followed by a two-year stint at Standard Oil, and then in 1952 Bob found his career work with the David Bradley Company in Bradley, Illinois, which through a series of acquisitions became the Roper Corporation. Starting as an internal auditor, Bob worked his way through the ranks; assistant comptroller in 1954, comptroller in 1960, corporate controller in 1964, vice president in 1971; serving 7 years as the president of Roper Outdoor Products, the companies largest division, and ultimately becoming Chief Financial Officer for the corporation in 1978. While in Kankakee he also served on the boards of the Riverside Hospital and the YMCA.

Bob retired in 1983 when Roper Corporation was acquired by Whirlpool, and Bob and Toni soon relocated to Fountain Hills, Arizona. Bob, with wife Toni, was an active member of the Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church for 28 years, serving on the Board of Deacons and as a Church Elder. Often characterized by colleagues and coworkers as “down to earth” and “a regular guy,” Bob Patterson was a modest man of some significant accomplishment, a man of dry wit and abundant humor that enjoyed nothing so much as friendly

conversation, a Chicago Cubs win, and a good round of golf. But his greatest achievement was as a loving and nurturing—and often entertaining—husband, father, grandfather, and friend.

Bob died at the Sherman Home, Hospice of the Valley, Scottsdale Arizona on October 13, 2014, surrounded by his wife, surviving children, and grandchildren. Surviving are his wife Toni, son Michael (Victoria), daughter Julie (Doug), grandchildren, great grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews. Bob is preceded in death by parents James and Esther, sister Mary Favero, brother James, and daughter Mary Jan. A memorial service will be held at the Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church on Sunday November 30 at 2:00 PM.

In lieu of flowers, the family would be most appreciative of donations made to the Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church, or to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation: <http://www.bcrfcure.org/> in the name of Robert N. Patterson, who lost a daughter to breast cancer.

Tribute Wall

BS

“ *Mrs. Patterson, Mike and family. My deepest sympathy to you. Remembering Mike and I playing high school football, and seeing you & Mr Patterson along with my parents always in the stands cheering us on. Many years ago. My thoughts and prayers are with you.*

Benny Skeldon Marco Island, FL

Benny Skeldon - November 10, 2014 at 01:17 PM

TL

“ *I was sorry to hear about Bob's passing. I have many memories of him at the Homestead. He was such a good friend to my father. I can remember for many years Tony and Bob sitting in the big corner booth. We had such good times! You have my deepest sympathy.*

Terry Linskey - Homestead Restaurant

Terry Linskey - November 08, 2014 at 10:27 PM