



Robert Stephen Schulman

January 3, 1947 - April 27, 2021

Surrounded by his wife and children, as dusk was falling on April 27, 2021, Bob Schulman, 74, left us for his eternity, after an incredibly brave and all-too-brief six month journey with lung cancer. Robert Stephen Schulman was born in New York, N.Y. on January 3, 1947, son of Maggie and Cy Schulman. When he was two, his family moved to Washington, DC, where Bob graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1964.

He attended Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie-Mellon) in Pittsburg, Pa., and received a Bachelor of Science in mathematics in 1968. While teaching in the public school system in Oxon Hill, Md., Bob earned his Master's degree from the University of Maryland in 1970. At the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, N.C., he was awarded a PhD in psychology with a specialty in biometrics in 1974. He then accepted his first, and only, job in the Department of Statistics at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., where he spent the rest of his career and his life. Bob loved teaching and was inducted into the Virginia Tech Academy of Teaching Excellence. He served as Director of the Department's Graduate Program as well as Director of the Statistical Consulting Center. After retiring in 2007, Bob endowed the Robert S. Schulman Enrichment Fund for support of the Department of Statistic's Graduate Program. He also had an active consulting career for over 20 years, teaching a three-day intensive short course on "Statistics in Plain English" for hundreds of companies across the United States.

In 1986, Bob met his life companion, Debby Hix, on a blind date, and they were married in Blacksburg on 9/9/89 (so they could easily remember the date!). They designed and built their dream home, which they moved into in 1996, and spent most evenings with a cocktail in hand, enjoying the view across the Ellett Valley. Bob and Debby loved to entertain at their home and hosted dinner parties, house concerts, fund raisers, and lots of other social events. They also frequently went to their water-front condo at Smith Mountain Lake, where they mostly chilled and occasionally took out their boat.

After he retired in 2007, some of Bob's favorite activities were playing duplicate bridge two or three afternoons a week at Blacksburg's Senior Center, reading story books to children

at several local preschools, and playing poker with the same gang of guys every other Thursday evening for almost 40 years.

Bob (often reluctantly) traveled the world with Debby, accompanying her to six continents. He would fuss and fret about a trip and then have a grand time on it. He particularly enjoyed the trips with friends and family – cruises, ski trips, beach vacations – especially Rehoboth Beach and the Outer Banks.

Bob had many titles: professor, award-winning teacher, accidental tourist, avid skier, Storyman Bob, bridge Ruby Life Master, poker buddy, VT Hokie fan, VT Guy, Bob Humbug, TikTok Grandpa, BS1, Old Timer, Uncle Hershey/Icicle/Flu Bug... But of all his titles, by far his favorites were Dad, Grandpa Bob, and Poppa. He deeply treasured his family and his biggest regret in leaving us too soon was that he won't get to see his grandchildren grow up and share in their life stories.

Bob had excellent and compassionate medical personnel, and he did everything that was asked of him – every treatment, every appointment, every procedure, even when he didn't feel up to it or didn't want to – that might give him more quality time. "Team Dad" did everything humanly possible to maximize his time with us and the quality of it. In the end, it was too short, but it was always going to feel that way.

Bob is survived by Debby, his wife of almost 32 years; his son Kevin and his wife, Michelle, of Great Falls, Va., and their children, Trey, Finn, Keeley, and Leighton; his daughter Julie and her husband, Ben Hannam, of Chapel Hill, N.C., and their children, Ruby and Beckett; his sister, Susan Kirschenbaum and her husband, Louis, of Kingston, R.I.; and his brother, Jeff Schulman and his wife, Nancy, of Sarasota, Fl.

In lieu of flowers, Bob requested you make a donation to the Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley, 1217 Grove Avenue, Radford, Va. 24141; Town of Blacksburg's Department of Parks and Recreation, 615 Patrick Henry Drive, Blacksburg, Va. 24060; or a charity of your choice. He also requested that, if you are so inclined, you perform a random act of kindness in his memory. A Celebration of Life service is planned for the afternoon of June 5, 2021 at the Hahn Horticulture Garden in Blacksburg.

Comments



“ Garcia & Koeninger Families purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Robert Stephen Schulman.



Garcia & Koeninger Families - June 03 at 02:19 PM



“ Bob was one of the nicest, kindest persons I've ever known. I cherish my many varied interactions with him --- when he was a faculty member and I was dean; when he was one of my most favorite partners at bridge; when I learned that, as "Storyman Bob", he had long included in his kindergarten audience for story-hearing my appreciative grandson Eli.

I marveled at his strength during these last months.

Bob left us much too soon. My feelings are too raw for me to write more just now.

Henry Bauer

Henry H. Bauer - May 23 at 11:44 AM



“ I was deeply saddened to hear of Bob's passing. He and Debby were incredibly generous in sharing their beautiful home for fundraisers, and seeing the view from their living room window made all of us grateful to live in such a beautiful valley.

--Linda and Ray Plaut

Linda Plaut - May 03 at 08:40 PM



“ I was so saddened to hear the news of Bob's (Mr. Schulman) passing. The obituary photo perfectly captures my image of him...dating back 30+ years as a good friend of his son, Kevin.

I will always remember him as the photo represents...smiling, happy & seeming content...even those few (OK, perhaps many) times he may have come home from work, walked downstairs, only to to immediately turnaround & roll his eyes (trying to un-see) at whatever mischief Kevin, me & others may have been involved in at the time. Or, the time Kevin & I both brought home our grades from our first semester at UVA...to which I believe both of our fathers (university professors, respectively) questioned the merits of our returning for a second semester.

We all turned out OK...and, I'm certain Bob was proud of everything Kevin & Julie have accomplished...specifically, all the grandchildren he leaves as a lasting legacy.

The entire Ebel family sends our deepest sympathies & condolences to Kevin, Julie, Debby & the entire Schulman family during this profoundly sad time.

Our thoughts & prayer are with you,
Ed Ebel

Ed Ebel - April 30 at 01:11 PM



“ I first met Bob through the alternate Wednesday bridge evenings at John Newcomb’s house starting back in the 1980’s, for me at least. He was the one who could remember every card that had been played. After assessing that we had similar skill sets (even though my memory was not quite as sharp) and compatible personalities, we played tournaments together from time to time, winning a few Master points every so often. We enjoyed playing together, not because neither of us ever made stupid mistakes but because for both of us the camaraderie was more important than the game. I enjoyed our conversations going to and from the tournaments as much as the game itself. Because of our resemblance – build, hair, beard, countenance, other players would often ask if we were brothers. Bob solved the miscalculation by printing T-shirts that we could wear: No, we are not brothers. Once a black guy stopped us as we were emerging from a tournament. He glanced at our T-shirts and said: “We are ALL brothers.” He was right.

Although we were close in age, Bob retired early and I retired late so my time for bridge tournaments was greatly reduced compared to his and I was not playing for the better part of 10 year. He had been racking up the Master points while my game was languishing but he pulled me back into the game after I retired. We played on-line bridge together right up until a few days before he passed, after he had been dealt an especially bad hand a few months earlier.

Bob enjoyed many more aspects to life than bridge. He was close to his family, looked after his mother’s affairs as she became less competent to handle them, took care of his infant granddaughter for a couple of years. He skied and played tennis occasionally. He and Debbie built a unique and lovely house with a spectacular view. He was a gifted teacher in the Statistics department at Virginia Tech. He engaged people readily and sought common ground. He developed and maintained the website for the local bridge club. Although his bridge game was something to be feared, his affability made the losing opponents, of which there were many, feel better. He never gloated after winning, just as he never moped if he lost. He was basically a well-rounded guy living a good life; a guy I enjoyed knowing and with whom I looked forward to spending time. He personally posted his challenges on Caring Bridge, keeping us all informed of his effort to fight the disease that would ultimately and rather quickly win. No aces up his sleeve.

Before the pandemic, when duplicate bridge games were in person, he was hale and hearty, working out regularly, traveling at his pleasure, and keeping us all challenged at the bridge table. We will miss Bob terribly. His passing is a testimony to how quickly fortunes can change. We cannot take anything for granted; just live the life as well as we can as long as we can, like he did.

Richard Veilleux

Richard Veilleux - April 29 at 09:24 AM