



## Dr. Robert (Bob) Lee Wheeler

January 17, 1944 - June 1, 2020

Dr. Robert (Bob) Lee Wheeler, 76, of Blacksburg, VA died June 1, 2020. He was born on January 17, 1944 in Minneapolis, MN to Leonard and Dorothy (Swedenborg) Wheeler. He met the love of his life, Barbara (Petersen), at age 19 and spent 57 wonder-full years together. Bob was an amazing dad to Elliott (Cindy), Catherine (Jason), and Brian (Carrie) and loving Grandpa/Poppy to Chloe, Jack, Mia, and Eva. He was preceded in death by his parents, brother Gary, and dog Resi.

Bob was professor emeritus of the Virginia Tech Department of Mathematics. Recipient of the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, he was a proud graduate of the University of Minnesota (BA) and the University of Wisconsin (MA, PhD) with degrees in Mathematics. After working 8 years at the University of Missouri, Bob taught math, advised students, and conducted research at Virginia Tech for 31 years. He published 36 papers in a research program supported by the National Science Foundation and the Air Force Office of Scientific Research and delivered 39 invited conference lectures and colloquia in five countries. Bob's passion for education led to his participation in math curriculum improvements, including calculus reform efforts to strengthen ties between engineering and mathematics curricula, and the development of computer-aided instruction.

In addition to his prodigious career, Bob was a devoted husband and together with Barbara they built a life for their family in the Blacksburg community. He enjoyed traveling with Barbara, served as Scoutmaster for Troop 706, never

missed his kids' soccer games or track meets, and learned countless new skills to be involved in his wife and kids' lives. He was always a willing book reader or game player for his grandchildren. A caring and friendly man, Bob was quick to smile and chuckle at a good joke. He was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church for 41 years and an avid Hokie sports fan. Bob volunteered at the Montgomery County Christmas Store and was an active member of the Blacksburg Kiwanis Club where he especially enjoyed reading to Prices Fork Elementary School preschool students. He kept in touch with his Minnesota roots and was a continuing presence in the lives of his nieces, nephews, and cousin.

Whether it was career or personal, Bob held himself to the highest standard, always gave 100-percent and made sure things were done right. He lived life well (or half decent as he would say) and did everything he could for people and things he cared about without fanfare. His support and patience were unwavering; he provided quiet and steady leadership and encouragement to those who needed it. He loved his wife, his children and their spouses, grandchildren, friends, and his dogs and they knew it.

A family service was held June 8; a memorial for friends and colleagues will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Bob can be made to the Blacksburg Kiwanis Club Foundation to support a food pantry for preschool students and their siblings at local elementary schools. Memorial Mass will take place at St. Mary's Catholic Church on Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at 1:00 pm with visitation at the church from 11:00 am -1:00 pm (masks and social distancing protocols will be in effect). The mass will also be live-streamed on our Facebook page. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.

# Previous Events

## Service

JUL **21**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

St. Mary's Catholic Church  
1205 Old Mill Rd  
Blacksburg, VA

# Tribute Wall

JF

“ I just found out that my favorite mathematics professor passed away. Please relate my sincere and deepest sympathy to the family of a wonderful person. Once he wrote on my graduate exam in his course on integral equations "I like your solution better". Wonderful sense of humor. I enjoyed his friendship and instructorship when I was a student at VPI&SU.

*Dr. J.I. Frankel, Department Head and R. Myers Endowed Professor*

*Associate Fellow, AIAA*

*Top 2% Scientist in the World in his research area per recent Stanford University Study (2020,2022)*

*"Society of Distinguished Alumni", Virginia Tech, Mechanical Engineering (Inducted: 2022)*

*Associate Editor, AIAA J. Thermophysics and Heat Transfer (2021-present)*

*Fellow, Wessex Institute of Technology (UK)*

*Emeritus Professor, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (1993-2020), Awarded: 2020*

*Email: jfrankel@nmsu.edu*

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**Jay Frankel** - June 20, 2024 at 12:22 PM

CH

“ I worked with Bob at Virginia Tech for 15 years and lived near him for 10 years. I was always happy to chat with as he was such a pleasant and funny fellow, even when doing not-so-fun tasks. I offer my sincere condolences to his friends and family.

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**Chuck Hodges** - September 22, 2020 at 07:38 AM

DB

“ I was fortunate to have met Bob through my bi-weekly social poker group. We discovered we worked in the same building at VT and shared a love of Math and dogs. Whenever Bob was in McBryde Hall with Resi he always brought Resi by my office. In all my years of playing poker with Bob I could never figure out when he was bluffing. I and my poker buddies will always miss him at our games. Barb, please accept my heartfelt condolences.

*Dwight Barnette*

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**Dwight Barnette** - June 11, 2020 at 10:21 AM

JP

“ Bob and I became good friends when we were sophomores at Edison High School in Minneapolis and graduated from there in 1962. Not surprisingly, Bob graduated first in our high school class; he was always a very bright guy. We also attended College together at the University of Minnesota and graduated from there in 1966. I met Barb at Minnesota when she was dating Bob; so I've known her almost as long as I've known Bob. After college, we got physically separated but have kept up these last 50+ years despite the distance. Bob served as the best man at my wedding to my wife, Sandy, nearly 49 years ago. Last June, Sandy and I made a special point to visit Bob and Barb in Blacksburg when we were traveling out east. We had a really nice visit with Bob and Barb and daughter Catherine and granddaughters Mia and Eva. I'm incredibly happy that we paid that visit. It was the last time we would see Bob.



*I will really miss Bob. He was a great friend and a wonderful person. Sandy and I send our deepest sympathy to Barb, his family, and everyone who cared about him.*

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**James Przybylski** - June 10, 2020 at 05:44 PM

GF

“ It was always a pleasure being with Bob and his family. Bob always presented himself as a gentleman and a person who cared about others. He was generous with his time with the family, school, church, and volunteer organizations. Bob was an individual who made you pleased you had the opportunity to know him. He will be missed and his memories will always bring joy and smiles rather than sadness and tears.

*George and Charlene Flick*

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**George Flick** - June 10, 2020 at 02:59 PM