



Robert William Nelson

September 11, 1943 - March 17, 2022

Robert William Nelson was born in September of 1943 in Naperville Illinois. He was raised by

J. Vernon and Violet Nelson and had a wonderful childhood with his sister, Karel. He graduated from Naperville Central High School – where he said his biggest challenge was that his father was a teacher and that he had to stay out of trouble!

Bob graduated from North Central College in 1966 with a degree in Music and Secondary Education. Later, Bob obtained a Master’s Degree in Educational Administration from Western Michigan University.

He was beloved as a teacher, coach and administrator – they called him “Mr. Sunshine.” He lovingly taught students in several high schools – choir, band, history. He ended his career as the Superintendent of Carson-City-Crystal Area Schools. Bob’s connection with his students and staff was remarkable as evidenced that many were still in contact with him.

Bob’s varied interests allowed him to share his knowledge and passion to those outside education. He was not just a Civil War buff; he was an expert! Bob could tell you anything about the Civil War. He was actively involved in Civil War chat groups, led Facebook pages, wrote historical accounts for others to learn from and had an impressive collection of Civil War books and memorabilia. One of Bob’s proudest accomplishments is receiving the rank of Master Mason, the highest rank of the Freemasons, which is the oldest fraternal organization in the world. Bob also loved all animals – he especially had a soft spot for his cats; Eddie, Cocoa, Peanut and especially Waif, who he found rescued and nursed with a bottle back to health.

After retirement, Bob led a life filled with all things he loved. He married Beth Jepson in October 2004 and they built a life based on family, humor and music. They enjoyed traveling, going to shows and concerts, cooking and just being with each other. He made sure everyone knew how much he adored and loved Beth. He also continued to work

during retirement by teaching private music lessons and working at the Grand Rapids Public Museum – both allowed him to be the social, engaged teacher, mentor and historian he was. Bob also continued to be a part of multiple musical ensembles – playing the clarinet and bass – in classical orchestras, swing, jazz bands and even a hard rock band!

He has three stepchildren: Todd, Terah and Jeremy. And he loved his grandchildren: Conor (19), Jadyn (18), Scarlett (5) Theodore (1) Lamer and Alex (16), Anna (14) and Claire (11) Bozarth.

Bob loved to talk, fix things, and plan. But most important, he positively impacted the lives of those he met – his students, his colleagues, and his friends. But most of all, it is his family and Beth that he most enriched with his knowledge, music, kind heart, generous spirit and love. Services for Bob are to be determined, interment has taken place at North Shore Memory Garden, Coloma. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Humane Society will be appreciated.

Cemetery Details

North Shore Memory Garden

5027 M-63

Coloma, MI 49038

Tribute Wall

DB

“ Bob was a very dear friend to our parents, Ray and Bunnie. They enjoyed their many adventures together and held those memories close to their hearts. Bob was always a part of our special events, and even played guitar at our wedding. I have many wonderful memories of him and we will all miss him terribly. I know for certain that he was given a big bear hug from my dad upon arriving in heaven. They are likely having one heck of a reunion. My deepest condolences to Beth and the family. May the memories shared here bring you peace and comfort.
Love, Deb ((Bock)) Becker

Deborah Becker - March 22 at 01:16 PM

GS

“ Bob was my choir teacher, freshman basketball coach, good friend. Many great experiences. He took me to his Alma mater for a scholarship in the music department He was always in a good mood which translated into fun. We were very fortunate to have such wonderful popular music. Simon and Garfunkel, 5th Dimension, Beatles were the tunes of the day and we did them well with harmonies. Prior to Bob there hadn't been choir and he built the program from scratch to where we were doing full musicals. Our concerts were always new tunes for each show. He's definitely the most consequential influence I've ever had. So sorry for your loss. I know Bob loved his family very much. We were lucky to have him and he will be missed.

Greg Schihl - March 19 at 01:28 PM

SB

“ Bob was my choir director and taught me so much about singing and breath control. He encouraged and had the faith in me to participate in our high school musicals I have stayed active in choirs, musicals and solo singing because of his encouragement. There is so much that I learned from him that I still use. He definitely was one of my favorite teachers. I am so thankful that I was able to reconnect with him these past two years.

Sande Borushko - March 19 at 09:54 AM



“ Mr. Nelson was a great choir director and encouraged his students to keep trying! I will miss him!!

Wendy Tober - March 19 at 05:05 AM

JD

“ To Bob’s family I send my sincere condolences. I only knew Bob for a short time, yet his gumption despite some physical difficulties and especially his bass playing in Sam’s band was an inspiration. I looked forward to and immensely enjoyed talking and rehearsing with Bob. RIP, Bob.

Jim Dexter
Trombonist

Jim Dexter - March 18 at 07:37 PM

KI

“ Mr Nelson was a man of many talents which I can say he needed with me and he knew how to get the best out of me and I can honestly say that I appreciate that still today RIP Mr Nelson

Kevin Ishmael - March 18 at 07:10 PM

VS

“ So sorry to hear about Mr Nelson he was loved by so many

Virginia Shane - March 18 at 06:28 PM

WG

“ Mr. Nelson. He was more than a teacher, much more. He could encourage, challenge and drive our choir toward excellence while making it fun. He had a great sense of humor which could take off the edge. Certainly my fondest high school memories are from Mr. Nelson’s class.

William Gregor - March 18 at 05:45 PM

SL

Mr. Nelson, you inspired me to become a champion for children. Your humor, your incredible ability to make us see the greatness in ourselves, the gorgeous music we made year after year, from The Beatles to William Byrd. Thank you for your belief in me, your tremendous capacity for love. You will always be an inspiration.

Shirley Lemon - March 18 at 07:01 PM

RW

I am so sorry for the loss of this talented man. Loved being in the Choir at Watervliet. He taught me to love a variety of music. It was and honor to be taught by him. Thank you Mr Nelson for your kindness and inspiration.

Robin Sonnenberg Winkel - March 19 at 07:22 AM

FC

I spent many hours over the last 20 years reading Bob's many posts about the Civil War in the old Yahoo discussion groups, and then on Facebook. While I never actually met Bob, i spent hours discussing the Civil War with him, and other history subjects as well. My wife joins me in sending condolences to and praying for all of Bob's family and friends in their time of loss. God Bless!

Ferlin Cosgriff - March 20 at 02:12 AM

BK

In the past couple of years, I shared a memory with Bob , about the OVERNIGHT trip to Chicago to see Jesus Christ Superstar. I thanked him for Opening the world of music to Watervliet kids, and the adventure we had following, of a broken down bus, and the inn keeper at the Conrad Hilton, who did have room for us at to Inn. In retrospect I can see now how all that transpired back in the 70's, and the many years past acknowledgement is a giant GOD wink for a job well done. BOB is in good hands. WE WILL MISS HIM !!!

Bruce Kibler - March 25 at 03:35 PM