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WHAT WILL THEY SAY ABOUT ME WHEN I AM GONE: A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT “BOB” HUSSEY

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I’m glad we had 60 good years ~ Laura Hussey

Story telling has been used for centuries as a powerful vehicle for communication. Whether someone is talking on the phone, reading a book, watching TV, surfing the web, or chatting with a friend, a story is being told and shared. But what makes a good story? What makes a story worth telling and worth listening to? Arguably, a story must have the right ingredients for us to be drawn to it. Most would probably agree that a story must be exciting; a story must have the ability to move us and make us think; a story must be relatable; a story must be believable. As a researcher, I am challenged to address each of these ingredients, and others, in constructing a piece of work that will attract readers and hopefully impact their lives. In my humble attempt to accomplish this, I think I may have sufficed these expectations by telling the story of a man whom we all can identify and relate to. Robert “Bob” Hussey was a person who wore many hats. He was a husband, father, friend, teacher, coach, public address announcer…just to name a few. Bob did an exceptional job of fulfilling each of these roles; however, none actually defined the person he was. At this point, if I have not peaked your interest in this story, you are welcome to stop here; if you are still curious, please read on………

The remainder of this story will be broken down into two parts: 1) the first part will detail Bob’s final day with us through the eyes of his wife Laura, son Kevin, and myself (researcher) interpreting their perspectives and adding my own interpretations; 2) the second part will be comprised of comments people have shared about Bob and his influence on the lives of many. As one can guess, interpreting one’s thoughts and feelings when they are not present is a difficult task……Bob…I hope we can do you justice and you will be proud of our efforts……God Bless You!!
Saturday, November 19, 2011

The day started out as a normal day for Laura and I. Laura always looked out for my best interests and supported me, even when my stubborn Irishman characteristics wanted to get in the way. She was concerned about me because I had not eaten a good meal the night before. Having a woman in my life like Laura was truly one of the best things that could have happened to me. You know what they say….behind every good man is a GREAT woman!! She insisted that I have a good breakfast so she made the “usual”; 2 eggs, bacon, toast, and orange juice. The smell of breakfast consumed the room and before long my stubborn Irish ways were no match…..I gave her no resistance and ate my breakfast. After a breakfast of this nature, how could a man not want to lie down on the couch and relax? I went to the front room to lie down on the couch. I was very cold and Laura covered me with a blanket; for quite some time the day was uneventful as I enjoyed some relaxation time. During this time, Laura and I talked and chatted about things, and I was having trouble verbalizing my thoughts. I could sense Laura’s concerns for me and it made my heart hurt for her. We prayed the rosary…what a special time for her and I to be close to God together………………..

While praying the rosary, I became very warm….I know I was so cold before……but now I was very warm and started to take off my pajama pants. Laura asked me, “What are you doing”? I was unable to answer her and I continued to take the blanket off of me to try and cool down. I began to perspire profusely….it was frustrating because Eric and Susan had stopped by earlier to visit and I was so glad to see them both. I was able to converse with them and now I was having difficulty sharing my thoughts……….
My son Kevin had arrived earlier and at this point I was having trouble communicating. I asked for a clipboard and Laura hurried to find one. She brought me a clipboard and a pencil and I started to scribble……only God and I know what those scribbles meant. I handed the clipboard and pencil to Laura and said, “You know what I want to say, so you finish it”. When Laura looked at the clipboard, she was unable to distinguish anything I had written. I could sense her frustration in trying to help me…..but she kept trying….that was Laura!! Kevin tried to help but my scribbles and “symbols” were difficult to translate……only God and I know what those symbols and “birdie” meant. The smile on my face was felt by Laura and Kevin….they could sense my pleasure in scribbling on the clipboard!! Today was also a big day for my grandson Sean—he was playing in a state playoff football game. Laura had reminded Kevin that he should get going so he would be there in time for the game festivities. Before Kevin left, Laura invited us to pray. We said the Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Glory Be….I even led the prayers and could verbalize them…….a moment I hope we will never forget!! No one could understand me for most of the day, but when we prayed….I was like one of God’s angels. Kevin had left for the game………..

I was still very warm and I looked at Laura and said, “I have to go”. I tried to get up and go to the bathroom…..but I couldn’t. Laura assisted me in trying to go to the bathroom but I was still unable to do so. Laura had sensed that my kidneys were failing me……Laura encouraged me to sing with her. She requested Rosie O’Grady and I attempted to finish it with her. Let me be honest with everyone…..I was not doing a very good job with the song and I could tell Laura was concerned, so we switched to Irish Eyes Are Smiling. Once again, my Irish stubbornness came out and I wanted to go back to singing Rosie O’Grady……truly this was a frustrating experience for both of us…………. What Laura said to me next will never leave my
heart….and I hope not her heart either. Laura looked at me and said, “I would like for you to tell me that you love me”!! Laura began to sing…..”I love you…a bushel and a peck….a bushel and a peck I do”. I looked into Laura’s eyes and said, “I LOVE YOU…..I LOVE YOU”……and then I stopped………..

    During these moments, we were listening to Sean’s game on the radio and Laura told me that they were winning. Although they were actually losing the game, Laura wanted me to always remember that they were winning……that was Laura. Laura told me she was going to call Father John but was unable to reach him…she thought he may be in mass. She left a message and asked him to come to the house when he could. Shortly after…around 4:30p.m., Kevin came back to the house. I was not feeling well and I was breathing softly. I took a deep breath to regain myself…..I was not ready yet. Kevin reached over to me and I breathed again……one last time……my time to enter the Gates of Heaven had come……there was silence in the room……it was about 5:00p.m. I laid in peace in the front room where I loved……the warmth of the sun shining through the window felt so comforting…..that’s where I wanted to be. Before I passed away, Laura said to me, “If he is calling you, then let go”. Laura…..my love……those are words I will never forget…………

    I am sure Bob Hussey is no different than any of us……I wonder what people will say about me when I am gone from this earth? While the following is a snapshot of comments from people who knew Bob, I think you the reader will witness and feel the immeasurable influence Bob had on the people who knew him. Through these comments, my intent was to share the impact one person can have on the lives of many, and that these comments can inspire all of us to follow in Bob’s passion for helping others.
Comments Shared by Others

- The highest compliment I can pay is there was not a nicer gentleman in the world than Bob Hussey.

- Bob is someone I really looked up to. He was a very involved professional.

- I was Bob’s doubles partner and I was “ridiculously bad”. He suggested I stand back and keep score while he played.

- 50 years later..I am still playing badminton because of Bob Hussey.

- Bob was a guy who lived what he preached about physical fitness. Even in his last few years he would come to the fitness center.

- Bob could take people who didn’t even want to square dance and have them loving it in a half an hour.

- Bob led by example and his abundant love and affection for his family was steadfast.

- Bob was a kind and gentle man of good character who was a true friend for many.

- Dr. BOB is an icon of Charleston and EIU…..what a great contributor to the quality of life.

- I smile and think of the countless times he ran me around the badminton court and then always shook hands with a smile and said, “I enjoyed that”!! We have passed that love of competition on to our own children.

- We will never forget St. Louis and our net games on the court at the hotel.
He was my favorite professor at EIU. His passion for students and the profession was amazing. He had more energy than all the students combined. He was such a positive role model for all students!

I still remember how he taught Dave tumbling; a skill that Dave still uses.

We will always remember Bob helping Jane in gymnastics.

I will always remember his kindness and smile.

Our lives are much richer having known him.

You have no idea the impact Bob had on me and many, many others. He was a great role model for me and I have so many fond memories of him.

I remember Bob as an energetic go-getter!!

I am picturing Bob walking on his hands on the steps into Heaven.

Bob was such a nice man. It was a pleasure to know him.

I will never forget all those badminton days and Bob laughing when he would burn me on the court.

Bob left a legacy at EIU. He was such an inspiration to so many students and non-students. He was the best square dance caller I have ever heard.

Bob was one of my favorite professors at EIU. I loved his square dance class so much that I enrolled in badminton. His enthusiasm was infectious.
I know he is showing off his skills and tricks with his new body on Heaven’s tumbling mats.

I still remember when Dr. Hussey would come in with his walker and go around the track at the Rec Center. He always had a smile on his face.

He was always patient and exhibited a true love for others.

I wasn’t sure if physical education was what I wanted to teach for the rest of my life. But one class with Dr. Hussey confirmed that is what I wanted to do. He was definitely a student motivator.

I can remember my 8:00a.m. class where he would do a hand stand on the top of a desk to get our attention. He would tell us not to sit in the first row unless you wanted a shower of spit. He was the BEST professor I ever had.

I learned to enjoy square dancing because of Dr. Hussey.

He inspired me to become a badminton coach and mentor to young teachers in our field.

Bob touched many lives and made all kinds of people feel included and that they belonged.

Bob was a very loving and affectionate man.

I always enjoyed seeing Bob at McDonalds and talking with him. He was an inspiring person.

Dr. Hussey had great enthusiasm and expected nothing but greatness from us as students.
Another people

Red

Kind expression and help - consider

Thankful.

Getting off the hook but you made it

I understand and any struggle is worth

It was good seeing you and I - y

Ed

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