Wills, Robert Jack “Bob”

March 20, 2024



Robert Jack Wills, “Bob”

September 1, 1955 – March 10, 2024

On February 23, 2024, Robert “Bob” Wills was involved in a serious accident in Bali, Indonesia which eventually proved fatal. However, our Bob needed a little more time to meditate, rest, and say goodbye to family and friends before he journeyed onward. Before he was set free.

Bob took his final breaths, with his eldest daughter Mecah and dear friend of 50 years Paul Ross (Bosco) by his side, on the night of March 10, 2024, after ‘Pengrupukan’ – a parade of giant effigies meant to cleanse the island from the year’s misdoings and bad omens– passed loudly through the streets of Bali; heard clearly from his hospital room. The following day in Indonesia was ‘Nyepi’–a Hindu celebration of silence, fasting, and

meditation. A holiday that embraces the Balinese philosophy of life: Tri Hita Karana, a philosophy which emphasizes harmony between the spirit realm, the human world, and nature. Despite our immense sadness and shock, we can't help but feel like this was a true send off to Mr. Bob, who even in his final moments would have found this terribly impossible situation poetic. After all, he was poetry in the flesh.

Born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to parents Jack & Leona "Pat" Wills, Bob was the third of five children (Jeff- Steveston, BC, Jill-Cochrane, AB, Jim- Lethbridge, AB and Joe-Moose Jaw, SK). He was a part of the self-described 'East Side Crew' growing up on the corner of Third and Hall St. East. This special corner was an important meeting place for neighbourhood kids before a time of internet & instant interconnectivity. Friends would come from the other side of town (or at least the other side of Main St.) to join Bob in a game of football or loiter in front of Batty's Fine Foods. Urban legend still states that the corner of Third and Hall St. E had the best marble pitch in the city. It would be remiss to remember 'Third and Hall' without remembering the dynamic duo that was the late Wayne Cole and Bob Wills. Together again, at long last, Wayne and Bob are somewhere out there sipping a cold beer and catching up on the 20 years they were without each other.

Bob & high school sweetheart Marylou (nee Epoch) moved to Edmonton, Alberta where Bob pursued his Bachelor's & Master's degree in Rural Sociology at the University of Alberta. The couple married in June of 1982 and soon after had their hands, home, and hearts full with four beautiful children: Jasper (Moose Jaw, SK), Booker (Saskatoon, SK), Mecah (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) & Jobey (Edmonton, AB). Bob's greatest title was 'Father of Four'. He loved being a dad and was proud of his kids not only for what they achieved, but for who they were as human beings—curious, intelligent, talented, and kind people. Bob's firecracker spirit will live on through his children and two granddaughters (Rosemary & Niamh).

In 1994 Bob and family journeyed back to Moose Jaw where he worked as the General Manager at Wakamow Valley. 'Wakamow Bob' was a committed professional who lived his passion of preserving the integrity and beauty of Moose Jaw's Wakamow Valley. Bob's children have fond memories of their time accompanying their dad

to evening board meetings and many a steak night fundraiser at the Sportsmen Centre. Countless community members looked forward to reading his Wakamow Valley Diary Entries and quarterly updates in the Moose Jaw Times-Herald.

Ever the maverick, Bob started travelling the world in 1979. In search of answers to life's great questions, he traveled to far away places like Nepal, Egypt, India, Greece, and Malaysia—only to name a few. He continued his globetrotting ways into retirement with his travel partner, Angela Kuster of Switzerland. No matter where he went in this world, Bob always came home. The vastness of the prairies had his heart. Saskatchewan held his lineage. Moose Jaw was his home. Though not the way we imagined this international journey would go, as he always did, Bob came home.

Bob was a multitude of characteristics that somehow managed to fit into one physical body. He was a restless wanderer and a dedicated dad. A free spirit and a constant, lifelong friend. A loyal son & loving brother; an uncle and grandfather. He was a charismatic storyteller, a music aficionado, mediocre dancer, and wearer of tweed suits well past their prime. He was a connecting piece of our family puzzle with the ability to bridge differences of all kinds. He was a spiritual man though many may consider him a non-believer. He was someone who genuinely laughed. And oh, when he laughed, the room awakened. He was a compassionate man and a questioning mind who felt deeply and gave freely. He was a trailblazer.

Whether it be testing his luck in local politics, traveling the globe, spending quality time with family and friends, or putting around his garden listening to his ancient AM/FM radio, Bob lived. He was many things to many people and his circle spanned continents. But one thing he was to every single person who had the privilege to know him, was a light in the dullness of an ordinary day. Bob, simply put, was extraordinary.

An Irish Blessing for Bob

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
and the rains fall soft upon your fields.

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Like his mother and father before him, Bob was not one for formalities. The taste of the Salt of the Earth was better to his liking. As such, a celebration of life will be held in Moose Jaw, SK sometime over the summer months—with cold beer, poetry, and storytelling a plenty. When details are confirmed, the family will share widely.

The family would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you for the generous outpouring of love and support during this difficult time. In lieu of flowers, please consider donating in Bob's memory to CKUA, a donor-supported broadcaster that connects through the power of music, arts, culture, and story. Bob was an avid listener and loyal supporter for years. In fact, there wasn't a day that went by that Bob did not have his tunes playing. His notebooks and journals are scattered with song lyrics, and we continue to grieve and remember him through his eclectic taste in music. For anyone interested—we have created a 'Remembering Bob Wills' playlist that can be found here.

1.



Jared Wendt on March 20, 2024 at 9:29 pm

We are thinking of you, Wills family, one of the most beautiful branches of our extended Smith family. Bob was on of my favorites, and always made a point of catching up with me and my family no matter how far across the room I may have been. My heart (and all of our hearts) are with you in this difficult time, and wish you peace, love, and fond memories of the most genuine poet I've ever known. He will be missed.

Reply

2.
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Sandra on March 21, 2024 at 5:42 pm

I agree with Jared. Bob and all of the Wills families were pretty close. It is so sad to think that he is gone, but only in body. We will always remember him, especially at family reunions.There are no flies on us was a fun time, especially after a few drinks. Lol. Rest in peace. Love to his family

Reply

3.



Don on April 1, 2024 at 5:47 am

Although I only met Bob a few times I was impressed by his compassion for Wakamow. It still makes me smile when remembering when we first met, he came out of his office at Wakamow and asked if I was “the unofficial.” Condolences to his family.

Reply

4.



Lea Cole Spicer on September 4, 2024 at 11:27 am

I loved your father as a brother. He and Wayne were so good for each other .

Reply