



Mr. L. Robert Vaughan

December 13, 1930 - May 27, 2022

L. Robert Vaughan spent his entire life serving others. When asked very near the end of his life what made him happy, he answered simply, “Making other people happy.” And that he did, up until the day of his passing on May 27, 2022, at the age of 91.

“Uncle Robert” to family, or “Bob” to others, was born in Hartsville, SC, on December 13, 1930, to Leonce Vaughan, Jr. and Eleanore Whittinghill Vaughan. Leonce met Eleanore while he worked at Carolina Fiber Company and she taught piano and organ at Coker College (now University). Robert was the second oldest of five Vaughan children: Helen, Robert, Charles, James, and Dexter. The family lived in a quaint Craftsman-style Sears Roebuck “kit house” near downtown Hartsville. Robert played baseball and rode his bicycle to school where he excelled in academics. He became his high school’s valedictorian, but his classmates say he was shy and too modest to talk about that honor, even with his parents.

Robert demonstrated valor early on. His brother Dexter recalls that when Robert was just 16 years old, he saved a boy from drowning in a boating accident. Robert dove under an overturned boat and found the boy clinging to the upside-down seat. He convinced the boy to hold his breath and hold fast to Robert as both boys plunged back in the water and swam to safety. Perhaps this incident was the impetus for his fascination with building and

owning boats of many kinds!

Robert's good grades landed him at Wake Forest College (now University) where he planned to study medicine until he had a change of heart. Following his natural gift of understanding how things work, he switched majors and schools to obtain his Electrical Engineering degree at Virginia Tech (Virginia Polytechnic Institute), graduating with top honors in 1952.

After completing ROTC in college, Robert spent four years on active duty in the Army's Signal Corps stationed at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. He achieved the rank of 1st Lieutenant by the time he was discharged in 1957.

A whole new world opened up when Robert got his first job in 1957 at General Electric Company, located in Roanoke, Virginia. When asked to identify his most rewarding work-related accomplishments, he answered, "Diagnosing and fixing things that no one else could." This expertise was recognized by GE management who sent him all over the world to troubleshoot control systems for heavy equipment in steel mills and other industries. Robert built a nearly 40-year career of serving others in Taiwan, Poland, South Africa, Mexico, Japan, and Australia by "fixing things" that others could not.

While at Virginia Tech, Robert met Earl Rakes who would become his colleague at GE and best friend. Earl's wife, Mary Lou, and their family became Robert's second family. After retirement from GE in 1995, Robert remained a resident of Virginia and traveled frequently to Hartsville to manage the Vaughan family forestry business, a service he faithfully performed free of charge for over five decades.

Thoughtful, caring, humble, hard-working, always smiling, scrupulously honest, fair and ethical, mentor to many—these are the words Robert's friends and family use to describe him. Family members recall fond memories of what

made Robert special:

He was always 'Johnny on the spot', willing to fix anything that was defective, even took his tool kit to the beach and often made repairs to the vacation rental houses.

I called one of his high school classmates yesterday and she remembered Robert as being, "very smart and valedictorian of their class." She said he always blushed when he talked with her.

Robert's mother once told me that while shopping she ran into a friend who said, 'How about Robert?' Mrs. Vaughan said, 'What has Robert done now?' And the friend said, 'He is valedictorian.' He was very modest.

When he was a child, his mother wanted him to be a Concert Pianist, but he didn't like wearing a tuxedo.

I am forever grateful for having such a good man in my life from as far back as I can remember. Robert served other people all his life. I will never forget him.

We shared some of our memories of Uncle Robert, from the 'Cabbage Patch Doll' he made with a head of cabbage for Christmas one year to many good times at Ocean Isle Beach and at Rick and Donna's for all of those wonderful family Christmas weekends. I am grateful for Uncle Robert's presence in my life and in our family. His kind heart, generosity, and sense of humor stay with me and will always remind me of a life well-lived.

I recall his fun Christmas gifts like the 'wallet' he made out of an envelope with dashes drawn for stitching and... the sleeping bags we used until we were in high school, decorated like a Crayola crayon box or a Cracker Jack box

depending on which one you received...so many fond memories that I cherish.

Uncle Robert was the most generous person I know. He loved gadgets and loved to give gifts, but he also loved to give his time and attention to be of service. He never walked into a home empty-handed nor left anything in it broken. He fixed things, solved problems, and loved every single person in both his families.

Uncle Robert always, ALWAYS had a smile on his face and was quick to laugh and joke. That made him so easy to be with.

Robert is survived by his Vaughan relatives in SC, NC, and TN: brother Dexter Vaughan, sister-in-law Virginia Vaughan, nephew Rick Sink, nieces Cindy Sink, Eleanore Vaughan Langley, Edee Vaughan, Jane Vaughan, and Leslie Vaughan, plus all their spouses and children. He is also survived by his Rakes family members in VA: Mary Lou Rakes, Barry Rakes, Jeff Rakes, Pam Jennings, and Michael Rakes, plus all their spouses and children.

At Robert's request, his ashes will be quietly laid to rest in the family plot at Magnolia Cemetery in Hartsville. Memorial gifts may be made to the charity of your choice. The Directors of Brown-Pennington-Atkins Funeral Home & Crematory are caring for the family.

Cemetery Details

Magnolia Cemetery

140 South Cedar Lane
Hartsville, SC 29550
(843) 383-3004

Tribute Wall



“ 57 files added to the album *Memories Album*



Brown-Pennington-Atkins Funeral Home - June 30, 2022 at 09:25 PM



“ *Sandy Morrison lit a candle in memory of Mr. L. Robert Vaughan*



Sandy Morrison - June 30, 2022 at 05:39 PM