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In Memory of **Robert James Bruce**

May 16, 1933 - March 14, 2017

Obituary



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Robert James "Bob" Bruce was born in New York, NY on May 16, 1933. He was adopted and raised by Herbert Bruce & his wife Lillian Douglas, both from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Bob grew up in Highland Park, MI. His favorite childhood activities were playing stick ball in the streets, and playing catch with his father. He graduated from Highland Park High School in Highland Park, MI, and attended Alma College in Alma, MI.

Bob was drafted into the United States Army in 1956 and served 2 years. He was in the Special Forces at Fort Lee, VA. He also played on the Army baseball team.

Bob married Betty Lou Rytel from Birmingham, MI in 1956. Bob & Betty were married 32 years. They adopted their first son, Robert, in 1962. They then had 3 more children: Michael, Patrick and Mary Ann. After their divorce, Bob found love 2 more times. Around 2003, he married Loyce Pearson from San Antonio, TX, but divorced soon after. In 2006, he married Tiffeny Wrench from McKinney, TX. Although Bob and Tiffeny divorced in 2013, they remained good friends until his death.

After his adoptive parents passed away, Bob reconnected with his biological mother, Betty Barber from Marquette, MI. Bob and his birth mother had a very close relationship until she passed away at the age of 102. After growing up as an only child, Bob enjoyed getting to know and love his 4 younger half siblings later in life: Helen, Judy, Phil and Bill.

Bob had 2 careers: baseball and real estate. Bob made his Major League Baseball debut on September 14, 1959, for the Detroit Tigers. He played for the Tigers from 1959 - 1961. Bob was traded to the Houston Colt .45s in 1962. On April 19, 1964, Bob became the twelfth pitcher in major league history to strike out 3 batters in 9 pitches. On April 12, 1965, Bob pitched the Houston home opener in the "Eighth Wonder of the World," the Astrodome. This was the first official pitch ever thrown in a domed stadium. On this day, the Houston Astros were born. In 1966, Bob was traded to the Atlanta Braves. He played there one year and retired from professional baseball after the 1967 season.

After his baseball career, Bob found a new passion in real estate. He worked in every facet of the real estate industry: new home & neighborhood development, construction, marketing, property management, and home & condo sales. He truly enjoyed helping others turn their dreams of owning a home into reality. Bob never retired from real estate and was even starting a new real estate venture at the time of his death. He loved his job, and developed many lifelong friendships with his clients.

Bob would like to be remembered as a true Christian, a patriotic American, and one hell of a pitcher. He was a great Dad to his children, and a very loving grandfather to 11 grandchildren. He loved to attend Grandparents' Day at his grandkids' schools, and he rarely missed a game or performance. He was a very hard worker, generous to all, and stubborn as a mule. Bob loved to tease people, and he had a nickname for everyone.

Bob approached every goal he set with fierce determination, on and off the baseball field. This determination is remembered by his children with the following story:

In the 80s, the Bruce family lived at Canyon Lake, TX. One Summer, Bob's children wanted to teach their Dad to water ski. It was difficult for "Big Bob" to get up on the skis with their slow speed boat. But, Bob would not give up. Bob would fall forward, his skis would fly off behind him, and he would not let go of the rope. As he was dragged face down in the water, Bob was still determined to get up on those skis that had been left in the water ½ a mile behind him.

Bob loved hockey and had season tickets to the Dallas Stars games. And he loved to watch baseball, of course. He supported both the Houston Astros and the Texas Rangers. But, most of all, Bob loved to spend time with his children and grandchildren. More than anything, he enjoyed teaching children the game of baseball that he loved so much. He coached his sons, his grandsons, and even his youngest grandson's Little League team in his 80s.

Bob was preceded in death by his adoptive parents Herbert & Lillian Bruce, and his birth mother Betty Barber.

Bob is survived by his 4 children: Robert Bruce of Romulus, MI; Michael Bruce & his wife Monica of Rochester, MI; Patrick Bruce & his wife Cindy of Aubrey, TX; and Mary Ann Parrish of Dallas, TX; his 11 grandchildren: Colette "Punkin," Brandon "Bugger," Ashley "Sweet Pea/Dr.Pea," Hailey "Squirt," Avery "Pistole," Dominick "Slugger," Joseph "Big Turkey/Sticks," Nolan "Nolee," Alexander "Middle Turkey," Ryan "Little Turkey," and Carly "Stinky;" and his 4 siblings: Helen Mastaw & her husband Tony of Appleton, WI; Judy Mastaw of Livonia, MI; Phil Barber & his wife Pam of Royal Oak, MI; and Bill Barber of Marquette, MI.

A lone quote was found on Bob's laptop, on which this obituary was written:

"If a man does his best, what else is there?" - George S. Patton
Bob Bruce truly did his best at everything he did in life. Bob's best was fantastic, and he was truly loved. He will be missed by his family, friends, teammates, business associates, tenants, and fans. Rest in peace Bob/Dad/Grandpa/PePa/Coach/Bruce/Old Fart. Thank you for everything.

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