



Robert F. Groff Jr.

November 2, 2023

Robert F. Groff, Jr., 93 years young, of Lancaster, PA died on Thursday, November 2, 2023. Born in Lancaster, he came into this world as the son of Robert F. Groff and Nancy Snyder Groff.

For the next 93 years he shared his good fortune with his family, friends, his church and his community, and with it, his open smile, his twinkling eyes and his deep curiosity. It was a curiosity that was sometimes philosophical, sometimes whimsical, sometimes irreverent, and always joyful. His mantra was: God loves you; Let go, let God; Be here now!

As he loved to recount, he heard “God loves you,” from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, when Tutu delivered the homily in Harrisburg for the installation of Nathan Baxter as Bishop.

Bob always sat in the right front pew of his beloved St. James Episcopal Church. On the wall next to that pew was the inscription: “Death is but a refinement of life.” This he knew and believed. St. James named Bob a Life Vestry member.

Bob was a ninth-generation Lancastrian. He possessed the natural confidence that comes with the Groff legacy dating back to 1695. He knew he was deeply rooted in Lancaster, and he knew Lancaster was a good place. Throughout

his life, his sense of rootedness remained. He was the third generation to work in and eventually own the Fred F. Groff Funeral Home. Three of his children and one of his grandchildren are now in the funeral business. As you watch them work, you can see Bob's spirit refined and working through them.

This sense of self and place was expanded through fifteen years of time spent away. At thirteen, he left for Culver Military Academy in Indiana. From there he went on to Amherst College in Massachusetts. Upon graduation, he married, and enlisted in the Army, and became part of the Counterintelligence Corps at the age of 21, stationed in Philadelphia. He married Jean Carraci and had two children (Fred and Sandy Groff) by the time he was 23. After serving, Bob went to Mortuary school and then moved his family back to Lancaster to join the family business in 1955. Two more children (Lisa and David Groff) were born in Lancaster.

Bob worked for 45 years as a respected and highly regarded funeral director. His entrepreneurial spirit led him to successfully acquire 14 funeral homes in his career. Accolades such as The Exemplar Award from the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, were a source of great pride for him.

There were a few life events that would deter most but Bob bounced back from each with a positive outlook for greater days ahead. Notably, Bob nearly lost his life in a horrific home invasion, in 1973.

Squash served as a healthy foundation and staple in his life. He and his dear friend of forty years, Wally Otto, played often and afterward would go out to breakfast with a group of cherished friends. Those meaningful breakfasts continued throughout his life, long after Squash was no longer an option, but the storytelling still was.

So legendary were Bob's foibles that his long-time good friend Mike Abel

found him to be the perfect subject for a myriad of cartoons, fondly referred to as “Bobtoons.”

In 1976, Bob married Ellen Arnold Watt. She was an artist, and a life force, who brought two more children (Laura and Tim Watt) into Bob’s life. Married for thirty-six years, Bob and Ellen worked side-by-side growing the family business and were dedicated supporters of: The Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster History, Hospice & Community Care, The Fulton Theatre, The Lancaster Museum of Art, Franklin & Marshall College, The Lancaster Symphony to name just a few. With their love of the Arts, they enjoyed supporting many artists in Lancaster and throughout the world. Unexpectedly, Ellen died in 2012, at the age of 67.

Bob married Linda Frankenfield in 2017, a spiritual advisor to her church community, and a gifted woman with whom Bob shared his life, his curiosity and his spirit, as he continued to serve Lancaster. He was one of the founders of the Parish Resource Center, donating and raising significant funds; and he worked with many in the religious and business community. He proudly started a New Conversations Group that has met monthly for more than thirty-six years.

The wonder of this man is lost if you talk only of his financial contributions or his fundraising acumen. He gave fully of himself. He encouraged and supported others with an energy that was transformational.

Bob was an exceptional, very human, being. His favorite poem, by Walt Whitman says it best; “Oh Captain, My Captain, our fearful trip is done. The ship has weathr’d every track, the prize we sought is won”. Bob’s was a life full of mighty challenges, and of love, laughter, a large and loving family, deep friendships, intellectual and spiritual adventures, and pure joy. He will be

remembered for this always.

In addition to his wife Linda, Bob is survived by his children: R. Fred Groff husband of Robin, Sandy Groff husband of Nancy, Lisa Groff spouse to Kerry Halloran, David Groff, Laura Watt wife to Clark Thompson, Dr. Tim Watt husband of Amity Gaige, stepsons Dustin Frankenfield husband to Rebecca and Colonel Gordon Frankenfield. Bob was very proud of each of his grandchildren: Dr. Robert Groff husband of Stephanie, Dan Groff husband of Kyle, Sanford Groff spouse of Tony Romano, Spencer Groff husband to Tresha, Susan Kelly wife of Jamie, Tanner Groff, Sydney Groff, Gus Thompson, Lydia Thompson, Atis Watt and Freya Watt. Bob was blessed to have known his six great-grandchildren: Isabella, Ellis, Anastasia, Reagan, James and George.

Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend Bob's Requiem Eucharist at St. James Episcopal Church, 119 N. Duke Street, Lancaster, PA 17063 on Saturday, November 11, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. with The Reverend David W. Peck as Celebrant. The family will receive friends from 9:30 a.m. until the time of service. A Viewing will be held at The Groffs Family Funeral Home, 528 W. Orange Street, Lancaster, PA 17603 on Friday afternoon, November 10, 2023 from 3:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m. A Livestream of the service will be available at SaintJamesLancaster.org.

In true Bob fashion, colorful bow ties should be worn in his honor.

A private family interment will be held at Greenwood Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family sincerely requests that a memorial contribution be made in Bob's name to any organization that does positive things in our community or world. Bob believed deeply in this.

To watch Bob's service click on the link: <https://www.saintjameslancaster.org/funeral-service>

Cemetery Details

Greenwood Cemetery

Lancaster, PA 17603

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV **10**. 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

The Groff's Family Funeral and Cremation Services Inc
528 W Orange St.
Lancaster, PA 17603
(717) 394-5300
admin@thegroffs.com
<https://thegroffs.com/>

Funeral Mass

NOV **11**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. James Episcopal Church
119 N. Duke Street
Lancaster, PA 17603

Tribute Wall



“ *The Groffs Family Funeral and Cremation Services Inc. created a Tribute Video in memory of Robert F. Groff Jr.*



The Groffs Family Funeral and Cremation Services Inc - January 17, 2024 at 01:10 PM

MC

“ *Just became aware of Bob's passing this December Day. God Bless Lancaster's and the World's Renaissance and Ever Re-Inventing Man. We were privileged to have been touched by his joyful presence!*

Michael & Susan Carr

Michael Carr - December 09, 2023 at 06:16 PM

AD

“ REMEMBERING BOB GROFF

We got to know Bob well in our several years working out at a gym with him.

His arrival always included a hale “Good Morning!” and hearty “How are you today?” to all he met.

We spent many sessions working out with him, often engaged in serious conversations while pedaling our bikes and covering topics from politics to spiritual life.

It was a special pleasure to hoot along with his delight in new and old jokes, puns, and witticisms, and then laugh along when he found his own material good.

One time we brought up “portals.” There was a widespread notion that passing through any doorway made you forget things. Every front, back, closet, screen and other door simply erased what you were thinking. You forgot to pick up your mail, take milk from the refrigerator, or that your eyeglasses were on your head.

Bob’s eyes immediately lit up with impish delight. “I like that. Can I use it?” He started pretending he forgot why he came into the elliptical bike room or was standing at the weight rack. “Why am I here? Oh, it’s that darned door again,” he laughingly told those nearby. Then he explained the door portal mystery.

We’ll miss Bob as will his friends and family. But we won’t forget him.

Amy and Lee Dmizak

Amy & Lee Dmizak - November 18, 2023 at 02:12 PM

AA

“ Hugs go out to your family. I enjoyed seeing Mr. Groff on the Saint James Compline each evening and his kind words he shared with me when I saw him at services.

*All The Best,
Andrew Atkinson*

Andrew Atkinson - November 16, 2023 at 12:54 PM

LH

“ I first Bob in 1977 or 1978 when I served on the Mental Health committee which he chaired. Our paths crossed many times Ober the next 40+ years. Every meeting was a joy and I will dearly miss his sparkling conversation and deep knowledge of local history. I was a witness to his sage and useful advice offered to LancasterHistory and appreciate the his role in making that institution the leader which it is now. He will be sorely missed and my sincerest condolences to his family at this most difficult time.

Leroy Hopkins - November 13, 2023 at 08:43 PM

GS

“ So sorry for your loss. May his memory be a blessing.

Gary Shapiro - November 13, 2023 at 08:55 AM

RS

“ Dear Family:
Bob was a true and loyal friend that you could always have an interesting conversation with. It was not about him but about you. The impressive service and attendance was a testimony to his character and value to the community. Thanks for sharing him all these years.
Ron and Dee

ron smith - November 12, 2023 at 10:07 PM

JM

“ What a lovely tribute that captures the essence of your dad. He brightened any room he walked into with his smile, and never looked at the Gilburg's with judgement as we rushed in behind the choir and took the right side BACK row. Love to you all during this sad time.

Jen Gilburg de Magnin - November 11, 2023 at 10:06 AM

BP

“ Lisa & Family,
We are thinking of you in this time of sadness.
May your dad find peace in the arms of the
Lord.
His spirit will live on for all of you to cherish.
Beverly Piscitelli & Marty Eppley



Beverly V. Piscitelli - November 10, 2023 at 10:13 PM

RR

So very sorry for your loss. Bob was a special man. I never seen him without a smile on his face. Such a kind and warm man. Once he knew your name, he never forgot it. Rest in peace Bob.

Richard Rebman - November 17, 2023 at 03:36 PM



“ Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Robert F. Groff Jr..



November 10, 2023 at 07:11 AM

TC

“ Tucquan Club planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert F. Groff Jr..

Tucquan Club - November 10, 2023 at 07:11 AM

EK

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Eric Keyser - November 07, 2023 at 04:46 PM

MG

“ Sending heartfelt condolences to Lisa, David, and the entire Groff clan - including the many, many friends who became surrogate family - who grieve the loss of their elder statesman, resident philosopher, sartorial trendsetter, and beloved patriarch. Our community has lost a generous advocate and advisor who left an indelible mark on Lancaster. Bob leaves a legacy including many memorable "Bobisms" - nuggets of wisdom, wit, and silliness - the one that immediately springs to mind is his advice for a long life: always drink room-temperature water. Cheers to you, Bob! You always brought the fizz!

Meg Graham - November 07, 2023 at 04:19 PM

FM

It was my privilege to know Bob over his last twenty years. His presence always made me smile. His wisdom made me ponder. Generous in thought and deed, he nourished optimism and assurance in his company. He was a keen observer of life. And I will always remember that Bob was a good man.

Frederick C Saunders, M.D. - November 09, 2023 at 10:19 AM

PF

“ I will always remember Bob's great smile and his welcoming me into his home for family reunions. He was always eager to hear about what was going on in my life and a great social butterfly. May he rest in peace and my dear Aunt Lin find comfort in the loving care she provided him. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Pam Frankenfield - November 07, 2023 at 01:58 PM

DM

“ Sending my condolences to the Groff family in your time of loss. Bob was a generous supporter of Hourglass and we appreciate all he did for the community. He certainly left a legacy and inspired many others to do good.

Diana Martin - November 07, 2023 at 12:15 PM

AH

“ What a lovely tribute to a wonderful man! Sending my sympathy to the entire Groff family on your loss.

Amy Hunt - November 07, 2023 at 10:58 AM

BH

“ Our deep condolences to David, Lisa and the entire Groff family. Bob was a gentleman of the old school: thoughtful, interested in others and quick to share a warm smile or encouraging comment. My husband and I always looked forward to chatting with Bob. Bob was ageless. His passing has left a great void in our community.



Bob & Aileen Hamilton

Bob and Aileen Hamilton - November 07, 2023 at 07:54 AM

JL

“ Bob, Jr. personally taught me how to create the best scrambled eggs as we served breakfast together at St. James Church. He manifested the love of God in his life and positively impacted and inspired numerous lives in their times of grief. We are eternally thankful for the honor of knowing you. Thanks be to God.



John Leaman - November 07, 2023 at 03:57 AM

JM

“ Bob was one of those rare people who inspired others to live life as a blessing with joy and wonder for each day. He loved the company of his many friends and left them knowing that he did. His curiosity was contagious and enriched any encounter that you were lucky enough to have with him. Jan Masland

Jan Masland - November 06, 2023 at 09:45 PM

LT

“ It was a pleasure getting to know Bob these past 6 years since marrying my Aunt Lin. He always had a smile on his face, always engaged and interested in what you had to say and in getting to know you, truly connecting with you - which is a rare and precious attribute!

*Sorry for you loss and sharing in your sorrow.
Lisa (Frankenfield) Tornello & Robert Tornello*

Lisa Tornello - November 06, 2023 at 07:02 PM

AL

“ Bob was a real gentleman. When I would meet him at a Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry event he was warm and cordial and easy to talk to. Very enjoyable person to be around. he will be missed. ALAN LOSS

Alan Loss - November 06, 2023 at 04:51 PM

TW

“ What a great man! My sincere condolences to the entire Groff family. Todd Waid, Waid Funeral Home.

Todd Waid - November 06, 2023 at 01:10 PM

DJ

“ I had the privilege of getting to know Bob and his family during my years working at Kegel's Seafood Restaurant. He truly was a special man and passed more than the business to his family. They are just as special he was. I also got to know his dear sweet mother. I feel blessed to have this experience.
Thinking of you
Dee (Dottie Jamison)

DOTTIE JAMISON - November 06, 2023 at 12:43 PM

JM

“ Thank you for all Bob did for Lancaster, I appreciate the time you shared with me, ...you talked to my class about Death and Dying...You opened up your funeral home for my fifth grade class tour. You helped me with the 20/20 feature.
Later, I was hired to do part time work for Groff Funeral Home. I really enjoyed the opportunity and the experiences .
There will always be special memories of my time interacting with the Groff Family. Again, Thank You.....Jim Mueller

Jim Mueller - November 06, 2023 at 12:26 PM

WF

“ *With Love, The Del Terzo Family purchased the fiery Lily and Rose for the family of Robert F. Groff Jr..*



With Love, The Del Terzo Family - November 06, 2023 at 11:50 AM

OA

“ *Orissa Agnihotri lit a candle in memory of Robert F. Groff Jr.*



Orissa Agnihotri - November 06, 2023 at 11:15 AM

SP

“ *Sending prayers to the whole family, and especially to Lisa and David who helped us through our grief recently, as you have done for so many of us in this community. We hope for peace as you grieve and for joy as you remember your Dad. So grateful for the legacy and example he left for us to be generous to our community and with each other. Sending light and love. Fondly, Susan Prentiss, Sally Lehman, and Jo Lutton*

Susan Prentiss - November 05, 2023 at 07:44 PM

BW

*George and I send our condolences to Sandy, Nancy , Susan, and the entire Groff family. What a life well lived. Such an amazing man!!
Fondly, Barbara and George Wilgus*

Barbara and George Wilgus - November 06, 2023 at 12:05 PM

AW

“ *Bob has been a huge help to me when times and people were not good. I am so grateful to have his admiration, helpful wit, and friendship for many many years.*

Anne Williams - November 05, 2023 at 06:04 PM

WS

“ *With love, Deidre & Bill Simmons planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert F. Groff Jr..*

With love, Deidre & Bill Simmons - November 05, 2023 at 04:09 PM

WS

“ *With love, Deidre & Bill Simmons purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Robert F. Groff Jr..*



With love, Deidre & Bill Simmons - November 05, 2023 at 04:09 PM

DS

“ I have so very many memories of Bob! Among my favorite memories are of the many times I went to London on the London theatre tour in my role at the Fulton with the then Artistic Director, Michael Mitchell. Bob, Ellen, Michael and I were the “ Four Musketeers!” We went everywhere together during the days we were not at a matinee. Museums, lunches, shopping you name it!

I had known Ellen for years and years, but only knew Bob from events and, of course, their gracious entertaining. Bob and Michael were a hoot together. Ellen and I called them “Frick and Frack.”

In those times together Bob’s uncanny wit, sense of humor and incredible curiosity for life and joy in the simplest things became a reason I loved the man as well as admiring and respecting him for all he did for Lancaster.

During the pandemic, we became phone buddies chatting about just about everything when the world was so bleak. He cheered me up so in our long conversations.

His abiding and unwavering faith in God and people always amazed me. His intellect never missed a beat through all of his life. He overcame a lot in his storied life but his zeal for life was infectious!

Deidre Simmons - November 05, 2023 at 03:49 PM

DE

“ Bob and the Groff Family have been friends/neighbors since Atkins Ave. days. Despite the span of many years and now great geographic distance, Bob has been so valued as a friend. Surely the description “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” is a most fitting tribute. Keeping you close in my thoughts and prayers in the days ahead.

Deborah Benson Everett

Deborah Benson Everett - November 05, 2023 at 10:34 AM

JH

“ Bob had such a positive and infectious outlook on life. The cup was always half full for Bob. A favorite memory is playing tennis with Bob, 25 years my senior. He didn't project a lot of athleticism and I completely underestimated Bob's ability to run me around the court huffing and puffing, while he calmly placed shots and congratulated me on my effort. A profoundly kind man, the world is a better place for the life and love shared by Bob Groff. Andrea and I send our sympathy to Bob's wonderful family.

John Horan - November 05, 2023 at 10:10 AM

MH

“ Thank you Bob for your smile, thoughtfulness and being here for our community. Molly and Alex Henderson

Molly Henderson - November 05, 2023 at 09:45 AM

KS

“ So sorry for your loss. Mr. Groff was a wonderful man. He will be missed. God bless the family during this sad time and may the memories bring you comfort. Rest in peace!
Love and Prayers,
Paul and Kathy Speitel 🙏

kathy speitel - November 05, 2023 at 09:31 AM

BB

“ I remember a staff christmas party at Valley Rd when Bob took a few private minutes during the party to show me the art in the house. The impact of that stroll expanded my dedication to art and the beginning of special relationship that helped me strive to emulate his style in my businesses. Whenever I was in his company he always made me feel that I mattered. What a wonderful gift he gave to me & others!

Bill Boyd - November 05, 2023 at 09:18 AM

HH

“ A remarkable man with a keen intellect, humor, and kind heart. My deepest sympathies to the family, friends, and community. He had such a sparkle for life a blessing to all who knew him and even those who never met him. Truly a great man with a great family to carry on his legacy! May you find peace and comfort surrounded by all the love and goodwill Bob brought to all.

Henrietta Heisler - November 05, 2023 at 07:32 AM

RF

“ Edina and I offer our deepest sympathies to the Groff family. I have many fond memories of Bob from the 1970s when I was a frequent guest at his house, his youngest son David and I being close friends. I remember Bob taking us to basketball games and nativity displays at various Lancaster churches at Christmastime, and being invited to join the audience of WGAL's "Sunshine Corners" where David was a featured guest (and having to get up unusually early for a Saturday morning). I remember attending Bob and Ellen's wedding at Saint James Episcopal Church and getting to know David's new siblings while endlessly bicycling around North School Lane Hills. In the decades that followed whenever we bumped into one another Bob was always friendly and interested in what I was doing. My last memory of Bob, for which I am truly grateful, is of Linda and him thoroughly enjoying themselves at a soiree hosted by mutual friends about a year ago. Congratulations, Bob, on a life well lived! Thank you for all you and your forebearers did for Lancaster. May the Groff tradition of generosity and dedication to family, friends and community continue long into the future!

Richard Field - November 05, 2023 at 04:38 AM

MB

“ Saddened to hear of his passing but I feel blessed in life to have met this man and get to know his family.
My best to all the Groff's.

Michael Redmond & Susan Bedwell - November 04, 2023 at 11:42 PM