

4/19/2010

Most of the time when people die we often hear or say that a light has gone out. Today, my dear friend Bob passed away. This day, a light didn't go out but only grew brighter as all of us who were changed by the love that flowed from Bob remembered his words and let our lights shine. I miss him so much and it is the kind of missing that won't ever go away. I renew myself today in his death, remembering that life is full of opportunity no matter where we are. Bob once told me in response to my complaining about living stateside in a city I didn't like "Baby, you live in your head". Today, I begin again, living in my head, living through my heart. Bob's life and words remind me of what I'd forgotten; to live out loud, walking my talk and feeling the gratitude for simply having life. The only thing that last forever is the love you give to others. Or as Bob often quoted "Love ain't love 'til you give it away".

For part of 1997 and 1998 my dear friend Cathy and I were fortunate to have some quality time with Bob, spending evenings in St. John sitting in his apartment listening to him tell tales about people and life. The tiny little boom box on his desk provided the perfect soundtrack, softly offering up tunes through the rich voices of Dina Washington, Sara Vaughn, or Billie Holiday. Bob would often sing a line or two after he finished a story. "The way you wear your hat, the way you sip your tea, the memory of all that, no they can't take that away from me", he'd croon and smile as he closed his eyes. Every so often, like a special effect for the story being told, the Caribbean breezes blew in waking the wind chimes on the balcony before swirling around the room rustling piles of paper and old photographs. Bob sat at his round table, a work of art itself, surrounded by beautiful pieces of tumbled glass. His hands moved steadily as he worked transforming each piece into a treasure to be worn around the necks of pretty ladies. Most of the room's surfaces were covered with Bob's photography and a variety of magazines and artifacts he had found interesting enough to collect along the way. We sat in the candlelit haven, eating Bob's fresh catch of the day, and hanging on every word he said. Many nights we were treated to his famous key lime pie. The main event was not so much eating it but watching Bob make the crust. While the butter melted in the microwave, he dropped several wrapped granola bars on the floor and did a little jig using his feet and sense of rhythm to achieve the perfect consistency for pie crust.

With Bob, every one had a story and every one was special. Most had a nickname and others were referred to using their first and last names together always. Everyone was held in high regard and he could usually note at least one amazing quality for anyone. I don't remember any conversations about politics or the economy or corporate greed or what we'd been cheated out of or what we deserved. I remember stories of love, hope, and gratitude; stories of dream chasers, lost loves, rebels, and adventurers. I never knew if the people he spoke of were rich, poor, or middle class, educated or drop-outs. Those things we so often use to measure each other by were not part of Bob's stories. I remember being drawn into those stories of people and believing that I was a creation made special by my Creator, a light to shine - if only I would let it.

My last visit with Bob was just three weeks before died, the weekend of 3/27/10. Marlene, another of Bob's babies, and I journeyed to an Oklahoma VA home thinking we would probably "bust out" Bob and get him at least as far as Florida! This wasn't just a visit. We were on a mission to make sure that Bob felt the love not just from us but from everyone we knew who had been blessed to call him friend. During our trip, Bob spent most of his time laying in a hospital bed apologizing for being so tired. He wore the most beautiful piece of sea glass on a gold chain. It was red with orange swirls that imitated a sunset. Those blue eyes still sparkled and his hug was still strong making me feel safe and loved. I felt happy to visit him and give him some joy - a snicker bar or two, strawberry waffles for breakfast, and a Billie Holiday CD. We held hands a lot and kissed each others cheeks. Sometimes,

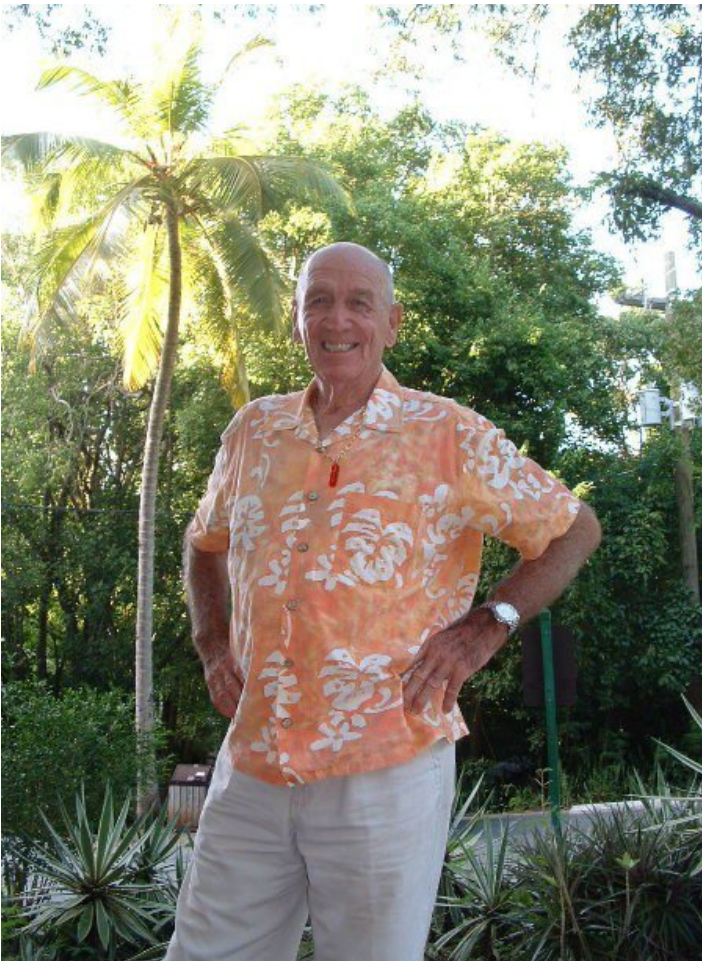
we just looked into each others eyes and rested. And for once, I was silent; we were silent. Taking in his stare and letting my heart soak up everything Bob, part of me knew he was at peace but the other part of me begged God shamelessly for one more dinghy ride around that rock. I whispered to Bob that I knew God loved me and him because He had not let me rest until I'd found Bob again. I told Bob that he had changed my life and my love for him was never ending. He just smiled and said softly with attitude "well yeah baby" as if I was stating the obvious! I hugged him so hard I think I hurt him and then I told him I would be back soon. He drifted off to sleep as we walked out the room.

Today, as I reflect on that visit I realize that God did the giving when He gave me the gift of seeing Bob one more time. And I did the taking, feeling that specialness that you only get from being one of Bob's babies.

My heart is full; I am so sad and so very happy. Thank you God. Thank you Bob.  
- Over and out

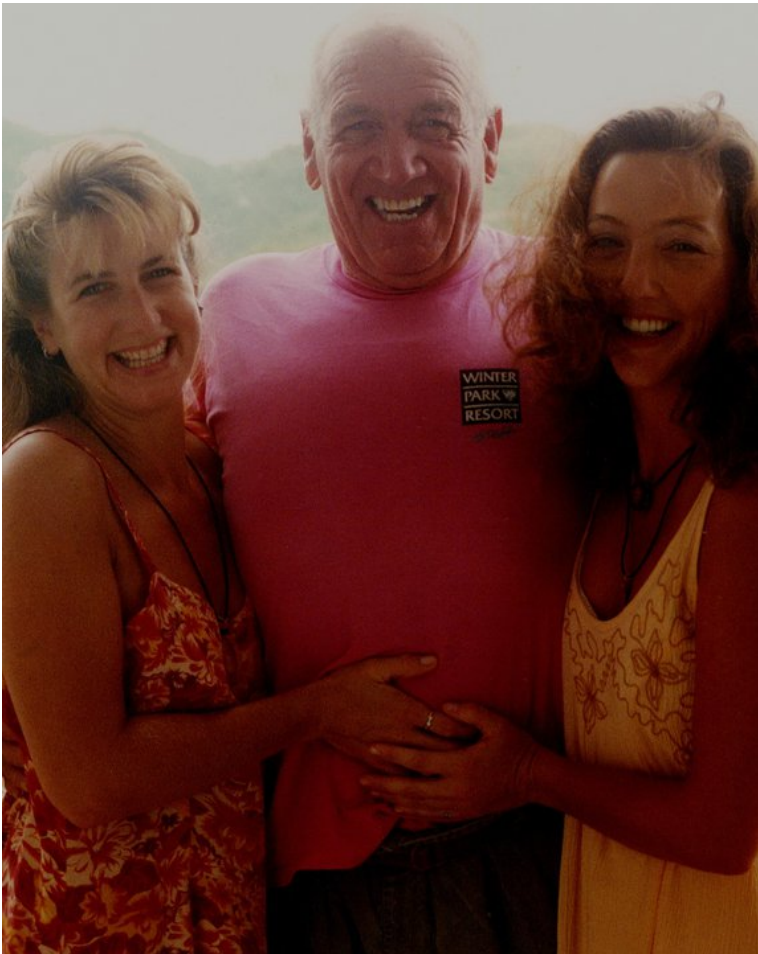
love eternal

Julie Baby (aka Gourd head)





Coral Bay



Cathy, Bob, and Julie Coral Bay 1997



Bob and Julie 3/27/2010

There are many many crazy things  
That will keep me loving you  
And with your permission  
May I list a few

The way you wear your hat  
The way you sip your tea  
The memory of all that  
No they can't take that away from me

The way your smile just beams  
The way you sing off key  
The way you haunt my dreams  
No they can't take that away from me

We may never never meet again, on that bumpy road to love  
But I'll always, always keep the memory of

The way you hold your knife  
The way we danced till three  
The way you changed my life  
No they can't take that away from me

Gershwin