



Robert D. Mitchell

April 26, 1940 - September 27, 2022

ROBERT D MITCHELL, PHD

April 26, 1940 - September 27, 2022

In loving memory of Robert D Mitchell, 82, of Naples Florida, who surrounded by his loved ones at home, made his transition September 27, 2022 after a three year challenge by both end-stage kidney and heart issues. He was born on April 26, 1940 to Robert Mitchell and Annie Taylor Davis in Motherwell, Scotland. Bob was a war-time baby issued with a gas-mask. He grew up in the steel capital of Scotland where his father was a steelworker and his mother a homemaker. Bob attended the Glencairn Primary School in Motherwell, graduated from Dalziel High School in 1958 where he was athletically active on his high school track and soccer team which reached the state finals in his senior year. He graduated from the University of Glasgow with an honors degree in Geography and Economic History in 1962. He immigrated to California in 1962 to attend graduate school at UCLA. He was inspired to go to California by his aunt who lived in Long Beach, CA and had sent him "care packages", including comic books during World War II. Bob studied two years at UCLA before transferring to the University of Wisconsin, Madison where he completed his Ph.D in 1969. For the next 30 years Bob was a professor at the University of Maryland, College Park. As a professor and scholar he taught geography and conducted research in addition to mentoring 25 graduate students in both master's and doctorate programs. To

this day Bob has maintained on-going relationships with some of those graduate students who remain very dear friends with him.

Bob married Karen Oleon Wagener in 1965 and adopted two children, Mark D Mitchell, Assistant Dean, University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine, and Kimberly Tsabari. Karen and Bob were divorced in 1979. Later in life they reconnected and kept that connection. Bob and Mark shared a loving father-son relationship which they nurtured with weekly phone calls until Bob's transition. At one point, Mark provided respite care to Cynthia and Catherine caring diligently for his father. That time together left an indelible mark of gratitude on both father and son.

For 8 years Bob was co-editor of the International Journal of Historical Geography, and co-editor with his colleague Dr. Paul Groves of North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent. This book described more than 450 years of the settling of the continent. Other books written or edited by Bob include: Appalachian Frontiers: settlement, society & development in the preindustrial era, The Appalachian Frontier: views from the East and the Southwest (co author, Milton B. Newton, Jr.), Geographical perspectives on Maryland's Past/edited with Edward K Muller, and Commercialism and Frontier: perspectives on the early Shenandoah Valley. It was during his time at the University of Maryland that Bob was also instrumental in the formation of the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, Virginia. He continued a life-long association with Israel and lectured at the Hebrew University between 1979 and 1999.

In 1980 he married Nava Zamoff, who had four children of her own from previous marriages, Daphne Rulf, Dore, Bennett, and Jeffrey Zamoff. They shared 15 years together often visiting Israel. At one point they supported five children in college for several years. During the summer months all the children, Bob's two and Nava's three boys, spent two months together and

shared memorable times as a family, including vacations. Nava and Bob created a scholarship to Hebrew University which enabled a student at Hebrew University to publish a book on Orthodox Judaism and Israeli women. Nava died in 1995. Bob continued to keep in close touch with Nava's cousins who live in Maryland and were featured in the TV documentary series entitled, " We'll Meet Again", regarding their rescue to Oswego as Holocaust refugees.

Bob enjoyed international and US travel, reading, listening to classical music, especially Beethoven, and contemporary music, especially of artists like Tony Bennett, Andrea Bocelli and Helene Fischer. Bob had a passion for visiting museums wherever he travelled and as a social extrovert he reveled in bringing flowers and visiting with family and friends. He had many caring friends whom he treasured. In fact, even his caregivers found him to be a remarkable and entertaining gentle spirited man. Bob also enjoyed photography, bird watching, which he taught Cynthia to do, and theater here and in the UK. Some of his favorite musicals included Hamilton, Les Misérables, Cats, and Phantom of the Opera. He was an animal lover especially fond of tigers, cats and dogs of all kinds. He was an avid sports enthusiast, a dedicated Dodgers fan and he loved "football" aka soccer.

Bob was raised as a Presbyterian in Scotland. In later years he became a member of St. Monica's Episcopal Church in Naples, Florida, and served on the board of directors. He also frequented Unity Services both in Ft. Myers and Naples, FL. Bob and Cynthia enjoyed a rich spiritual life together and started each day with prayer and practices. Bob loved to listen to Unity Meditations with Cynthia and Catherine and his care team daily - especially before going to dialysis treatments.

In 1996 Bob met Cynthia Imondi Villari in an airport limo that they both shared. In 1998 he moved to be with Cynthia and her soul sister Catherine V Fazzina,

of 38 years, in Narragansett, Rhode Island. Between them they had three dogs named Dodger, Bob's favorite - a German Shepherd Huskie, Jiggles, a Corgi, and Hector, Cynthia's and Catherine's Lhasa Apso. They enjoyed living in the home of Cynthia and Catherine - an ocean side 101 year old Victorian in Narragansett. Bob often walked his dogs by the ocean wall, and Jiggles would bark at the sea.

Bob was a voracious reader who loved books. In one of his favorite books, *The Shadow of the Wind*, by Carlos Ruis Zafon, there is a quote which truly resonated with Bob that states: "as long as we are being remembered we remain alive." When Bob moved to Narragansett to join Cynthia and Catherine he sent 25 boxes to the University of Rhode Island and recently in 2022 he parted with 18 more boxes of books to one of his favorite charities, St. Matthew's House in Naples, Florida.

In 1999 Bob took early retirement from the University of Maryland and wed Cynthia in Narragansett. They moved to a home that Bob and Cynthia had built in Naples, Florida. Catherine joined them in 2000, and the three of them along with their new Lhasa Apso, Angelique, enjoyed an inclusive community which had a respect for people of all races and ages. In 2003 Cynthia's parents, Hank and Rita Imondi joined them. Bob cared for them all the remaining years of their lives as if they were his own parents. In early 2003 Bob joined Cynthia and Catherine as an officiant in their wedding company and was sought after by couples to officiate more than half of their destination wedding ceremonies in southwest Florida for more than 20 years. Throughout their 23 years of marriage (25 years together) they traveled regularly to Scotland to be with Bob's family, to Israel, Italy, Spain, and the cities of Paris and London, and when they weren't traveling abroad, they enjoyed places like Barbados, Bermuda, the Caribbean, and throughout the U.S. Bob and Cynthia built two homes and renovated 2 other homes in Naples, Florida. Each home provided a space of welcome for family and friends. The beauty of the

sunsets, the Gulf, flowers, and the birds in Naples mesmerized him.

Bob loved his homeland of Scotland and was grateful for his niece Pamela's daily texts and grandniece, Ashley's outreach and recent two-week transformative visit with him. He looked forward to his Sunday phone calls with his brother, Davis and sister-in-law, Margot, and video calls with his entire family in Scotland. Their love provided a huge contribution to his life, especially during these last 3 years.

Bob is survived by his beloved wife, Cynthia, his soul-sister, Catherine, his children Mark of Pennsylvania and Kimberly of California, his granddaughter Kaya of California, his family in Scotland: brother Davis Mitchell, his sister-in-law, Margot Mitchell, his niece Pamela Mitchell, his nephew Cameron Mitchell, grandniece Ashley Purdie, and cousin, Winnie Goodwin. And through marriage by his brothers-in-law, Ron Imondi (Cara), Charles Imondi (Paige) and nephew Michael Lakin.

Bob was and is a benevolent presence of love who had an insatiable desire to learn every day of his life. Cynthia will remember him as her beloved sweetheart, and by many as a remarkable human being with a sense of humor and an uncanny way to cultivate generosity of spirit. In his wedding ceremonies, Bob used to quote the poet Rumi who said, "Lovers don't finally meet somewhere, they're in each other all along". Bob's hope was that every time we remember him we would remember love.

A Celebration of Life will be held in Naples, FL on October 29, 2022. If you choose to join us, please RSVP

Catherine at catherinevfazzina@gmail.com for further information.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to AVOW Hospice, Naples, Florida (239) 261-4404 or The Unity

Prayer Ministry c/o Unity Village, Missouri (816) 524-3550.

To sign Bob's guest book or to leave online condolences, please visit www.ShikanyFuneralHome.com

Arrangements are being handled by Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home & Crematory Family Owned and Operated Since 1978

Tribute Wall

SB

“ I'm saddened to learn of Bob's death. He was the key to my earning a PhD in 1998, because he showed me how to combine my love of early American history with my love of geography. That was an intellectual feat, but it was his merry personality that helped me get through the difficult research and writing, and his presence on my committee made the whole experience a pleasure. In recent years I have been researching my Scottish ancestry (Ancestry says 64%), and I wish I had told Bob about it. I bet he would have had all sorts of insight for me. He was a wonderful man and mentor. Thanks, Bob.

Sam Brainerd - January 07, 2024 at 12:54 PM



“ Robert D. Mitchell

October 09, 2023 at 03:40 AM

DC

“ I took several courses with Dr. Mitchell back in the mid-1990s at the University of Maryland. Of the dozens of teachers I have had over the years, he still stands out as my favorite. He made his classrooms engaging and fun, and I still tell stories about how he had lunch with students once a week, just to connect and talk about travel, books, life. I am as I write this crafting an essay about my favorite teacher, and it is about him. This is what sent me to the internet to look him up, only to find he just passed very recently. He was a gifted educator and I am grateful to have found my way into his classes.

Dana Cohen - November 06, 2022 at 11:07 AM

CM

*Dear Dana,
Thank you so much for helping us appreciate Bob through your lens.
He would have loved to hear from you and I as his wife are so grateful
for your words.
May his memory continue to be an inspiration to you.
Gratefully,
Cynthia Mitchell*

CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - November 08, 2022 at 04:17 PM

SS

*“ My deepest condolences to Cynthia and Catherine. I loved the
times that I had visiting all of you. Bob was a special soul and I'll
truly miss him !!*

Suzanne Specht - October 27, 2022 at 12:59 PM

CM

*Thank you Suzanne.
Bob had such a lovely relationship with you.
We all enjoyed your visits.
May your remembering bring you blessing as it blesses us.
Love,
Cynthia*

CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - November 08, 2022 at 04:19 PM

TR

*“ Good Bye Robert, I will miss you fiercely. Without you I would not
have gotten my Ph.D. at the University of Maryland, nor would I
have had a career in academia. You were mentor, leader, but most
of all friend.*

Tom Rumney

tom rumney - October 23, 2022 at 07:15 PM

CM

*Dear Tom,
Words somehow do not do justice to the importance of your mutual friendship. Especially during these last years, your regular letters made such a difference in his life...as did your many gifts to include apple pancake mix and genuine syrup. May the blessing of your friendship live on as you and Hong start your next chapter of lives well lived.
My love,
Cynthia*

CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - November 08, 2022 at 04:25 PM

TF

“ *The Youte Family purchased the Your Light Shines for the family of Robert D. Mitchell.*



The Youte Family - October 22, 2022 at 05:17 PM

SW

“ I can certainly attest to the love shared by Bob and Cynthia, and to the life they created for themselves and Catherine. As Cynthia's college 'roommate', she would ask me, all those years ago, how she would know for sure when the right one came along. My answer was simple, "you'll just know." And when she met Bob it was love at first sight for both of them. I was honored to be a part of their wedding party. What a party it was - an entire weekend event. First a dinner on Friday night with out of town friends and family which included a storyteller/poet. Then Saturday came with the bagpipers walking through the streets of Narragansett, kilts worn by Bob and his brother, the heartfelt wedding vows, the picture taking and video done on the beach, the reception with the performance by Scottish dancers, the wedding cake made by Cynthia's brother, Charles, her Dad wearing his "father of the bride" cap, and Bob presenting Cynthia with a shawl in the Mitchell plaid. Talk about an extravaganza! But wait, that wasn't all. The next day we all celebrated a delicious brunch, listened to a flutist, and watched as rings were exchanged that Bob had made and sent from Israel. At the church, Catherine, looking stunning, was their maid of honor. Bob's son Mark accompanied me as we walked down the isle. Even the flower girl was adorable. Bob and Cynthia were just so happy. They took the becoming "one" to a new level. Such love and devotion they had for each other. I can safely say that we are all in awe of the relationship they have. I believe that the special magic they shared was not "til death do us part" but rather "until we meet again". Hold on to that my dear friend Cynthia. Your loving roommate - Schlegel

Suzanne Wood - October 18, 2022 at 08:40 PM

CM

*Dear Loving Roomate Schlegel,
As I read your words tears flowed from my heart. You have captured the essence of our love, the depth of which to even Bobby and myself was astounding. We were privileged to experience the Belovedness of God through loving one another and others, especially you and Mark through our marriage.*

You write "until we meet again", my prayer is that when I get through and beyond this deep grief, I will more and more feel Bob's presence in my heart.

*I love you,
Cynthia*

CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - November 08, 2022 at 04:49 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Robert D. Mitchell.*



October 18, 2022 at 12:59 PM

KJ

“ *My father and I extend our deepest sympathies.
Bob was a lovely human being, and my parents felt fortunate to have him as a neighbor.
May he rest in peace and his memory always be a blessing.
Kathleen Jaron and Gene Jaron*

Kathleen Jaron - October 16, 2022 at 04:46 PM

CM

*Thank you Kathleen.
Bob enjoyed your father's presence.
We are so grateful for your kind words and for your father's desire to join us on the 29th for Bob's Celebration of Life ceremony.
Gratefully,
Bob's wife,
Cynthia*

CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - October 18, 2022 at 09:57 PM

KW

“ *Dearest Cynthia and Catherine,
We grieve along with you and pray that your pain will slowly subside and turn to joy and happiness again, once your hearts allow you to reflect on all the good memories you share of your beloved, Bob. He was an extremely special man. His humble personality shined through whenever we were in his presence. He had a special knack for asking you how things were going in our lives and would intently listen to your response, without interruption. He was a master at making you feel appreciated and loved. We truly cherish the moments we shared with him and will miss him deeply. He could engage in conversation on nearly any topic all while sharing his experiences throughout his life. We will miss him and we are here for you and your family with whatever you need, while healing from such an incredible loss. Bob RIP and please watch over your friends and family. We love you. ❤️ Kevin & Lesley*

Kevin Waters - October 12, 2022 at 09:26 PM

CM

*Dear Kevin & Lesley,
What a beautiful tribute.
Bob would be so grateful for your words which are powered by your love.
Whenever he was in need..you two were the first to help.Whenever we reach out, you are by our side.
May God continue to bless your love, and all who love you.
Cynthia & Catherine*

CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - October 18, 2022 at 10:01 PM

GM

“ *Bob had a way of making everyone feel special. Though he was someone who accomplished so much in his life, he remained humble and was kind to everyone. I have met few people as gracious as Bob. Although I did not see him often, I will miss him. My mom often said he was one of her favorite relatives, and I concur. I'm so thankful you were part of our family.*

Gloria Masse - October 12, 2022 at 01:47 PM

CM

*Dear Cousin Gloria,
Your tender heart recognized Bob's.
And yes, every time we spoke your mom would ask for Bob. They shared a mutual affection for one another.
May his memory continue to warm your heart and bless all your loved ones.
My love,
Cousin Cynthia*

CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - October 18, 2022 at 10:05 PM

NS

“ *Dearest Cynthia and Catherine, Thank you for sharing the beautiful obituary with your friends and family. What a well-lived full life! Bob was a kind and lovely man; he never flaunted his intelligence, meeting each person where they were. Sending love to you both.*



Nancy Scarpa - October 12, 2022 at 11:39 AM

CM

*Dear Nancy,
Your words bless Catherine and myself and most importantly Bob.
It is fitting that we were able to have his Celebration of Life at OC, and
it is natural for us to remember you and the happiness we shared when
you worked there.
Do keep us all in your prayers as we navigate with God's Grace this
time in our lives.
Love,
Cynthia & Catherine*

CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - November 08, 2022 at 04:55 PM

CI

*“ When Ron and I visited Bob and Cynthia we were so impressed
with the love they shared with one another. You could always tell
they cared deeply for each other either by a touch of a hand or a
glance of the eyes. We felt so happy and blessed that we could
share in their love and affection. We will always feel that if you truly
love someone they are always with you.*

*Lovingly,
Cara & Ron*

Cara & Ron Imondi - October 10, 2022 at 10:43 AM

CM

*Dear Cara & Ron,
sister in law and brother,
thank you for reflecting here on your thoughts and feelings, especially
as you observed our love.
What a blessing that we could all share in the love of family too. May
Bob's memory live on through both of you as love, and through each of
us, especially when we gather together.
Tiamo Sempre,
Sis*

CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - November 08, 2022 at 05:01 PM

CB

“ My deepest sympathies go out to Cynthia, Catherine, your families and friends. Although I never had the privilege of meeting Bob, I could tell he was a wonderful and amazing man. So gentle and loving. As he continues on his spiritual journey, may you find comfort and peace during this difficult time in the wonderful memories you have of him. ❤️🙏



Cathleen Burke - October 09, 2022 at 11:17 PM

CF

“ Thank you Bobby for all the care and adventure. May your enlighten guidance open the way for Cynthia and me.



Catherine Fazzina - October 09, 2022 at 10:59 AM

KW



Kevin Waters - October 12, 2022 at 09:32 PM

CM

“ I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine"...shine your love my Beloved, shine the Light of God's Love.
Your grateful wife,
Cynthia



CYNTHIA V. MITCHELL - October 06, 2022 at 09:07 PM

KW



Kevin Waters - October 12, 2022 at 09:32 PM

MP

“ I first met Bob and Cynthia from a customer I had years ago that I cleaned for in Bears Paw, Naples FL. They wanted someone to clean the condo they had just bought. I loved visiting with Cynthia's mother, Rita, I felt so blessed and encouraged when I left their home. In time, I had met my now husband and found out about their wedding business. Mike and I met with them and the three of them helped us with the wedding and Bob married us. I will now cherish the pictures we have of us and Bob. The three of you knew how to make a person feel loved and appreciated. ❤️🙏

Maria S Peabody - October 06, 2022 at 05:56 PM

CR

When Ron and I visited Bob and Cynthia we were so impressed with the love they shared with one another. You could always tell they cared deeply for each other either by a touch of a hand or a glance of the eyes. We felt so happy and blessed that we could share in their love and affection. I always feel that if you truly love someone they are always with you. Lovingly Cara and Ron

Cara & Ron - October 08, 2022 at 07:59 PM