

# A Tribute For Our Brother

*Dr. Robert Madison Tucker Hunter, Jr.*

*By Jim Hunter*

A celebration of life for *Robert M. T. Hunter* will be held on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, at 1:30pm at the **Bridge Christian Church**. 8150 N. Sandy Desert Trail, Tucson, AZ 85741. Family and friends are invited to join us as we remember and honor Robert.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested a donation to **The Silver Bell Historical Society**. The Society is a 501c3 organization that is building a museum in the Red Rock area. The museum will preserve the rich history of the *Silver Bell Mining District*, including silver and copper mining as well as the *Arizona Southern Railroad*, along with recognizing the town of Silver Bell where Bob Grew up. [www.silverbellaz.com](http://www.silverbellaz.com)

*Dr. Robert M. T. Hunter, Jr.*, known simply to family and friends as Bobby, was born in Fairmont, West Virginia, on December 29, 1951. Our father, Bob, became a W.Va. state trooper and was transferred to the small town of Williamson along the Tug River, which served as the border with the state of Kentucky. This was the heart of Hatfield-McCoy country, and as our mother would say, "we knew some of them Hatfield boys." Among our father's duties was busting up moonshine stills along with patrolling the state highways (no freeways existed in W.Va. in the 1950's). Our parents determined they did not wish to raise their boys in an impoverished area with little opportunity. During this period, our uncle Jim served a tour of duty in the U.S. Air Force and was stationed at Davis Monthan AFB in Tucson. After his discharge, he stayed in the Sonoran Desert, where he joined the ASARCO mine at Silver Bell. The new community seemed like a good place to relocate, and we were on our way to Arizona in 1957 in Dad's less than one year old 1956 Oldsmobile Holiday, a car that remains in the family today. Bobby was the perfect caretaker and handled most of

the maintenance for the past twenty years. We still have the original bill of sale and spare tire.



The desert was our playground. Activities included BB gun and rock fights, exploring old mine sites, riding our motorcycle along cattle path trails, playing basketball on our dirt court outside of our back yard, playing all sports (depending on the season), riding our neighbor's horse, swimming at the community pool, and hanging out at the rec hall. We constructed a go-cart track by hand, also on the vacant lot, which our dad bladed with a bulldozer borrowed from the mine.

Spending money had to be earned, but it was easy to find odd jobs mowing lawns, digging post holes, washing cars, etc. It was a different time. Starting with Bobby, the boys shared a paper route under the direction of Cybil Moser. Mrs. Moser would pick up Bobby at 6:30 am, go to her home, where papers would be rolled and a rubber banded. Her husband, George, would be inflating the older tires with a hand pump on their Rambler automobile and then the route would start through the streets of Silver Bell. A NASCAR driver would be envious. With a coffee cup sitting precariously on the dash, cigarette between her fingers, pet dachshund with rear paws on the seat back, front paws on the open window jamb, and newspapers between her and Bobby, they would speed through the neighborhood, throwing paper after paper into the front

yards. Hitting the small front porch solicited a smile and quick nod, a kudos from our driver and mentor.

There was also no shortage of mischief in Silver Bell. We resided in a nine hundred square foot house with one small bathroom. There were five boys and our grandmother some of the time, which had its own challenges. We practically lived outdoors and most days it was more convenient to pee in the desert, versus coming into the house. We were truly desert rats.

Thinking back, we often walked through the desert trails after dark, never thinking about the rattlesnakes that we probably stepped adjacent to or over while navigating to and from the rec hall or from the neighbors at the lower end of the community. During the summer and on many weekends, we were allowed to pitch a tent and sleep outdoors. This made it easy to sneak out, ride our bikes through the neighborhood at 2am, and break into the community pool to swim and toss the lifeguard chair into the water, especially if it was a lifeguard we didn't like that summer.

The 1956 Olds continued to be our father's pride and joy. The car was parked on the gravel driveway, just outside of the car port, in the staging area to be washed. During one of the brother's disputes, a rock was thrown, which ricocheted off the gravel and shattered the rear passenger window of the Olds. Being the oldest and smartest, Bobby concocted a plan. Timmy was the rock thrower, so he would be chosen to take the fall, but we would be there to back up his story. The handlebar from our old three speed bikes lined up perfectly with the point of impact to the window. As the story went, Timmy would be riding his bike, when the tire hit the gravel, causing it to go out of control and slam into the glass. The plan was rehearsed repeatedly. Our dad was a very type A person, so when he got home from work, we all bailed out on backing up our brother's story. However, Timmy must have given an Oscar worthy performance, since dad bought the story. Was it worth it? Maybe not, since Timmy still feels guilty about the fib to this day.



Regardless, even though we fought quite a lot, when problems arose the brothers usually stuck together.

In order to help us settle disputes, one of our Christmas gifts from dad was boxing gloves. This worked well until a cut resulted in stitches. The drive to our family physician, Dr. King, was *fifty* miles!

We had just returned from the trip and started a pickup game of basketball, when an elbow caused another cut to the face. It was *another* fifty miles back to Dr. King for *more* stitches. That ended the boxing gloves era, but was just part of growing up with five boys in Silver Bell.





Bobby was a top performer at virtually everything he did. He was always a straight A student and graduated from Marana High School in 1970 with honors, as Salutatorian. Term papers were turned in ahead of time, with articulate references, foot notes, and photos. Bobby's hobbies included Judo, art, rockets, which were fired from a launch pad, and model cars. Model cars included hair thin spark plug wires, which Bobby installed after hand painting the manifold, head covers and each bolt in the engine compartment. That's how Bobby did things. His later projects, as an adult, included leatherwork; building old McClelland saddles with covered stirrups from the original wood frames, belts, saddle bags, wallets, etc. Bobby also owned numerous firearms, which included historic weapons.

While my hobbies growing up were mostly sports, classic cars, and chasing girls, Bobby rarely dated. He made this up in college by bringing home a *vivacious* blond, named Carol Conley, to meet the parents in Silver Bell. Carol was a freshman at the U of A and was from a suburb of Philadelphia. The southwest was a complete turnaround for her. She grew up with three brothers, so Carol was right at home with Bobby's brothers and relished their teasing. Sun bathing in her bikini in the back yard, and playing pool on our patio with the neighbor kids, who practically lived at our home, raised a few eyebrows, especially from our parents. Carol was a force of nature. The only question we had was, "who are you and what have you done with our brother?"



Carol won us all over, including mom and dad, who loved her deeply. She has always been there through thick and thin, including taking a lead in caring for family and friends, and her key role in the *Silver Bell Historical Society*.





Bobby's life-long friend in college was Wade Anderson. The room they shared, and which I joined a year later at U of A was *Cochise Hall*, the oldest dorm on campus. There was a study room on each side of a central area, which slept four. We moved all four beds into one of the study rooms, by constructing bunk beds, moved both desks into a single study room, and had a good-sized lounge, where all of the fun was had. Our parents showed up unannounced on a Saturday morning and were greeted with hippie beads covering the main entrance to the room, a black bra as a light switch, 3-day old popcorn on the floor, and a half-completed playboy puzzle on the lounge table. Dad cracked a wry grin, but mom was a little horrified! Our attitude, "they should have called first."

You would think that becoming a doctor for a high IQ and driven person would have been quite easy, but it wasn't. The process in the 1970's was often political, with legacy applicants gaining priority. Bobby didn't

succeed after obtaining his undergrad degree at the U of A. He then obtained a dual masters in Biology and Psychology, which did not parlay into med school enrollment. Bobby and Carol relocated to Springfield, PA, just outside of Philadelphia (near Carol's family). Bobby's love of the Sonoran Desert, as well as Carol's, was robust, and we knew they would someday find their way back.

Bob succeeded in getting a job with a Medical Documentation Service associated with The College of Physicians, renowned for its mission of collaborating with Physicians and the local community on the well-being of mankind. The college housed the second largest medical library in the U.S. Bob worked there for two years before being accepted at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. Bob's job was to sift through the literature and find pertinent information for clients needs. It was an excellent job preparing him for Medical School. As an older student, he had a wealth of knowledge in the medical field from all of his research.

During his first year in Medical college, Bob signed up for a Public Health Scholarship, a program that resulted in his medical college being covered with no residual debt, provided that he practiced in an underserved area for three years. The government provided a list of places. Bobby and Carol selected St. Johns, AZ, in the White Mountains, to complete this requirement, before moving back to their home in Tucson. He became a highly capable and respected physician, eventually working as a civilian practitioner at Davis Monthan Air Force Base. Bobby never "fully" retired from medicine and remained the only brother still working. Bob worked part time for fifteen years in clinical research and performing immigration physicals on legal immigrants that needed to renew their status. He also worked part time for three years at a Neurological office, monitoring research studies for Multiple Sclerosis. His official retirement date was August 15, 2024, soon after his diagnosis. He was also ahead of the curve on Covid, writing a lengthy article about the long-term impacts of the COVID injection protocols.





Another one of Bobby's passions was history, especially the western cavalry period and to a lesser extent the Civil War era. This included being part of a reenactment group, the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Belonging to a cavalry group often comprised riding in Civil War battle reenactments at Picacho Peak, the Geronimo campaign at Ft. Bowie, Monument Valley, Ft. Verde, Ft. Lowell and others. Enjoying a day riding horseback through Monument Valley with my brother continues to be a memory of a lifetime.

Reenactments also included background riding in some Hollywood productions, one with our brother Scotty joining us. Armand Assante and Elizabeth Shue were the lead actors along with a small part for a then young Jack Black, where we shared a wagon being driven away from the movie shoot. The thing we learned, visiting with the professional riders, was that most were *Screen Actors Guild Union* members who rode on the rodeo circuit for up to six months each year. Whether Bobby checked the box on our form as "*Expert Riders*" on purpose is not known, but the day spent bolting over canyons while firing blanks from our six shooters, presented a real challenge for a doctor and his banker/desk jockey brother.



Another hobby was Judo, where Bobby competed and rose to the level of Godan Fifth Degree Black Belt. As a Judo practitioner and teacher for decades, Bobby was a driving force in his dojo.

During 2019, a small group of old Silver Bell friends decided to host a reunion. We hadn't seen some of our friends in 45 years. We ended up with 354 in attendance, which reflects the impact that special town had on all of us. People brought their kids and grandkids. Events included a mine tour, food trucks, a dinner at Lil' Abner's, a dessert event and family picnic. We formed a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, *Silver Bell Historical Society* (SBHS).

A second reunion was held in 2022. A museum is well underway at Red Rock to preserve the rich history of the Silver Bell Mining District. Bobby has served on the board of directors since inception, and has been instrumental in all of the activities and success of SBHS. He was the director of the Scholarship Fund, which has raised \$13,000 to support college and trade school endeavors of descendants of Silver Bell miners. Bobby set the criteria, created the application, assessed applicants, presented each one to the board, and is so well respected, that the board voted to name the scholarship in his honor in perpetuity, "The Dr. Robert M. T. Hunter, Jr. Scholarship." Bob was thrilled at the board's decision, a real tribute. Bob's saying, "Don't just prepare for your career, prepare for

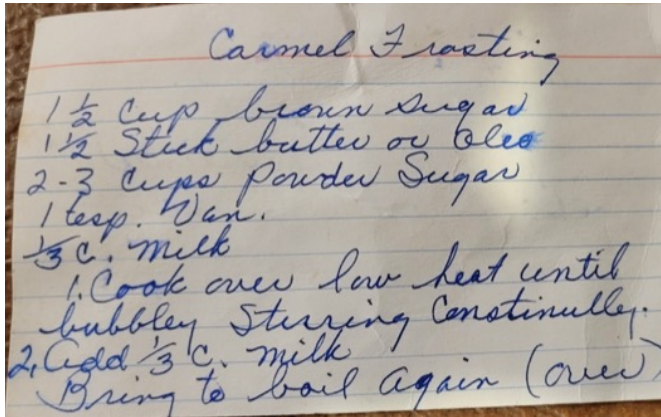
life," will also be carried on and will be a major part of our scholarship award language.



*The greatest decision of Bobby's life was to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal savior.* Anyone who is familiar with Bobby knows this was not taken lightly, or done on the basis of blind faith. In addition to faith, Bob in tandem took a scientific approach. Pastor David McAlister was a major influence in Bobby's life. Seminars including "The Facts Behind the Faith," and "Creation vs Evolution," were primary factors, along with his own self-directed and comprehensive studies comparing prophecy to New Testament events, which proved instrumental in Bobby's faith. Once the decision was made to follow God, Bobby never wavered. During the six months after his cancer diagnosis, I offered to drop in any time that Bobby experienced a bad day or just needed to break down and let it all out. He never broke down, not once. The opposite was true. There were numerous visitors to their house every day. Bobby enjoyed every visit, and was the one who was providing encouragement, often assuring concerned family members that he was not afraid. Bobby would doze off in his recliner for a brief period, and then rejoin the conversation. If you entered the room blindfolded and just listened, without seeing Bobby's withered body, you would never know he was ill. His eyes still had a glow when he shared a



story. Bobby turned 73 on December 29<sup>th</sup>, just three days before his passing.



He enjoyed a small slice of birthday cake. The homemade frosting is from an old family recipe, which is still in our mother's handwriting, on a 3x5 index card. Bobby was lucid to the end of his life.



How do you pay tribute to such a remarkable person? Saying that Bobby was a highly accomplished person would not be sufficient. While we could never really do this effort justice, Bobby made things much easier for us. We were designed by our creator to experience the most growth during times we are hurting or are experiencing difficulty. Bobby was a center of influence in so many areas, medical peers and co-workers, Church, family, friends, Judo, Cavalry and Silver Bell Historical Society. He impacted all of us. Family visited from North Carolina, California, Utah and all over, and were drawn closer.

The 1956 Oldsmobile afternoon drive during this time with the five brothers was magical, Bobby, Jimmy, Tommy, Timmy and Scotty. Our daughter Beth, who was a restaurant owner and earned a Le Cordon Bleu culinary degree, prepared seafood and beef broth for months, which kept Bobby going. He had enough of a sense of taste to enjoy this until the end of his life. Sean, Jocelyn, Rob, Drea, and grandchildren Remy, Myles, and Addie stepped up in a big way and were always there. A large family cookout doubled as a Baptism for our daughter Briana. Bobby was thrilled to host this special time in his back yard.

Thanksgiving was another large family event, where Bobby was engaged and enjoyed every aspect of that blessed day. We even held a Silver Bell Historical Society board meeting at Bobby and Carol's home to facilitate his participation. It was Bobby's desire to be alive through Thanksgiving, but he did one better by enjoying a family gathering for Christmas, his birthday, and passing on the first day of the new year. Jocelyn provided most of the cooking and was supported by others in making the holidays special. Jim wore his Cat apron and Janette created fun fruit creations Noah's Ark, a one-eyed Turkey for Thanksgiving and cute marsh mellow reindeers for Christmas to add cheer to Bobby and Carol's holiday feasts.









The Thanksgiving Turkey was cooked in Mom's roaster (circa 1948-1949), which was purchased when she was a Westinghouse employee in W.VA. It still works like new!

Sean drove the 1.5 hours each way from Hereford every week to stay for days, providing care, building shelves, etc. Carol balanced her already active life with providing daily care and meeting all of Bobby's needs, as well as hosting all the holiday activities and dozens of visitors.

Despite the eleven-year age difference, Bobby and Scotty shared a special bond. Bobby served as a mentor during Scotty's formative years, with the younger brother often emulating characteristics and interests. Scotty and Jackie were frequent visitors, with Scotty spending several days each week sharing stories and watching *High Chaparral* re-runs with Bobby, sometimes for hours. Somehow it seemed appropriate during his final weeks for Bobby to turn away from politics and societal ills to focus on simpler times, permeated by a moral code.



The best tribute to Bobby is that his legacy will live on. This will be done through the continuing influence and impact he has on the lives of

everyone he touched, and was best evidenced by the overwhelming outpouring of love and devotion which is a true inspiration to all of us. We only need to continue the love and momentum that he created, and all that we experienced during Bobby's protracted malady.

Thank you Bobby, for a life well-lived. You will continue to live in our hearts and be part of every gathering of family and friends for as long as we live and until we are reunited. We love you so very much!









Until our reunion in Heaven one day,

*"Well done, good and faithful servant..."* **Matthew 25:21**

*"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* **Philippians 4:6-7**