

Tribute to Robert R. Meeker
(January 26, 1928 - October 4, 2016)

I met Bob when he passed out kazoos to us to play the Kent State University fight song at KSU football games. He named all Kazoo players as members of the KSZOO Band. We played after touchdowns, which occurred more frequently in the 1970's than they have in recent years. Ruth and I were members of the Twin Lakes Country Club and Bob was one of the leaders in the club. I didn't really get to "know" Bob until Barb and Bob lost their son Randy, very unexpectedly a few years after we had lost our son, Jon, in 1980. When we heard of their loss we drove over to see if we might be of some comfort as we were familiar with the grieving process. It was just a short visit, but Bob never forgot it, and would frequently mention our visit that evening over the years. It started a bond between us that would last until Bob's death.

I started to play golf in 1996, after my retirement. After taking several lessons and practicing for a month, I got up the courage to play in the Tuesday night men's outing. Bob was very encouraging although I was a 36 handicap golfer (being warded two strokes on every hole). Bob was either being very nice to accept me as a partner...or maybe he thought that those two strokes a hole might be of some assistance to him! On the fifth hole, (the green for the hole being right next to Diagonal Road), I got on the green in three strokes, my best effort of the evening. I was only 18 inches from the hole and Bob was excited for if I could make the side hill putt, we would get a score of 2 (with my two stroke handicap), or an eagle for the hole. Bob helped me line up the putt and he said, "Now, hit it very firmly." I hit it firmly, but off line and it not only missed the hole, but rolled off of the green and down the hill, picking up momentum as it rolled...stopping

twenty five yards down the fairway!! We didn't get any points and Bob never let me forget that moment. Our friendship...and our mutual teasing, began with my missed putt. I loved the "give and take" that we had for over twenty years. One never dared to tease Bob if they couldn't take it in return...or they would regret it.

Several of my favorite stories about Bob:

1. After complaining one day that we didn't get to know new members because of our tendency to always sit at the same table each week, the Rotary president suggest that suggested that I do something about it. I put up posters and declared that the **Second Tuesday** of each month we needed to sit at a different location and get to know other members better. Although some members didn't like the idea, many thought it was a good idea and and most complied right away. Rebekah Wright even designed some table topics for discussion so we would get to know new, and even older members. Bob resisted! Finally after several months I called Bob and asked him to move, even if it was only one seat away. He said he would do that for one meeting, "but never again!"

At the meeting I reported that everyone had joined the **Second Tuesday** program, even Bob Meeker. I said "Thanks Bob." Bob responded, "I don't like it because these other (identical) chairs aren't as comfortable. Bob kept his word and never moved again. I told him that there was a picture of him beside the word curmudgeon in the dictionary. Bob laughed and said, "I'm not moving again! (Note: Today, a week after his death, an announcement was made that Bob's Chair will remain unoccupied until next year.) Bob won!!

2. I was a professional speaker for over forty years and after a speech I gave at Rotary one day, Bob raised his hand and asked, "Do you actually get paid for giving talks like that?" I said

that I did and he just shook his head and as the other members roared.

3. Several weeks before his death, Ruth and I took a pie to Bob. We had a nice visit and Ruth suggested we had been there long enough and should not “wear Bob out.” As I stood up, Ruth grabbed my arm as I was about to step on Bob’s oxygen line. I said, “Bob, I’ve never cared that much about you but I would never step on your oxygen line.” Bob said, “I’m not worried about you stepping that line, because I have always considered you a light weight.” He did it again! You couldn’t top Bob! As we were about to walk out the door, Bob put his arms around me and said, “Thanks for coming over...I love you.” That old curmudgeon wasn’t a curmudgeon at all...but a teddy bear in a curmudgeon costume. I love you too Bob! We need more folks like you in this world.

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