



Robert Fernandes Perry

December 11, 1938 - June 25, 2023

Obituary: Robert Fernandes Perry, DOB: 12-11-1938 / DOD: 6-25-2023

As in life, so was Robert Perry the leader of his family in death. Bob would not want Shirley, his beloved bride of 65-years, to enter those heavenly gates without seeing his loving face of 'welcome', just behind that of their Lord and Savior's.

Bob loved three things unequivocally: God, family and nature. Sunday, June 25, on a morning walk near his Visalia home, surrounded by nature, he left this world. He chose this moment to see the eyes of God; away from the ones his passing would most hurt.

His departure was unexpected, his terms were not.

Bob is survived by his life's love, Shirley, their sons Mike (and Marci) and Mark (wife Karolina), five grandchildren: Joshua, Kristopher, Stephanie, Alyssa and Aaron and four great grandchildren: Savvy, Noam, Eva and Clover and nephew, Steve Perry. Timothy Perry, Bob and Shirley's third-born son, did not survive his first day of life in 1963.

Bob's life was a testament to a Portuguese and Pereira ancestry work ethic, ingenuity and family commitment aligned with American values and

opportunity. He and Shirley would build a loving family and successful business with those ideals.

Bob was called for duty in the US Army in 1959, the year after he and Shirley married. He and Shirley left the family farm in Hanford to move to Fort Ord, CA where Bob had his basic training. They subsequently settled in North Hollywood where later that year Mark was born. Almost two years later, with Mike on the way, Bob and Shirley decided she should return to Hanford so that Shirley's mother, Emma Cotta Portugal, could help with childcare.

In 1962 Honorably Discharged from his military service, Private 1st Class Robert Perry, his bride of four years and young sons, Mark and toddler, Mike, settled in Hanford where Bob worked as a machinist. In 1963 they bought their first home there.

The family's next move and home purchase was in the tight-knit community of Three Rivers where they enjoyed a landscape that fed their passion for outdoor activities of hunting, fishing and boating. This environment also nurtured Bob and Shirley's dream of starting their own business - a school that would teach Medical Assisting, drawing from Shirley's training and work experience.

The growing city of Visalia attracted them and in 1977 Bob and Shirley risked everything they had to launch San Joaquin Valley College with three Medical Assisting program students and high hopes for success. Bob ran the business operation and Shirley handled the curriculum, instruction and stability of the MA program. Teenagers Mike and Mark started out as school janitors before growing into pivotal positions of admissions and operations. Together, this family of four ignited an unimagined trajectory of success.

As soon as their efforts began to show a promising return, the family moved to

Visalia where they bought a home and set roots that would one day deeply penetrate their new community.

In 1995 with campuses in three cities, Bob and Shirley turned SJVC's reins over to sons Mike and Mark - the same year Shirley's health suffered a crisis. Bob was a member of SJVC, Inc. Board of Directors at the time of his death, continuing to influence the college's direction, scope and success. He was also a board member of the We Achieve Foundation.

Today SJVC is a private university of 18-campus in California. Their acquisition of Carrington College in 2018 added 17-campus (ten outside of CA) and furthers a corporation of growth that has provided medical, business and technical education to almost a quarter million graduates that settled into new careers in seven western states. At this moment, nearly 12,000 students are realizing their education and career goals through the doors Bob and Shirley first opened.

Bob's family-shared legacy - both personal and professional - continues to touch many lives and will live on with each new generation of students, family and community.

Bob was an entrepreneur, businessman, educator and raconteur. His adventures hunting, fishing, traveling and exploring made him a great storyteller. He was a keen observer of nature, human behavior and the intricacies of life, love and commitment. He did not have to say much to let you know he was a safe place to go to listen, commemorate, laugh. His long-held friendships included Mel Blanchard, Joe Armas, Stan Garcia, Don Woods, and Choony.

He possessed a fine balance of pragmatism and sensitivity. As a hunter, Bob

was practical. An animal harvest was a demonstration of both precision and beauty. A mounted head honored the life and spirit of the animal; the skin a useful hide and homage to the animal it served.

Bob showed his love both overtly and quietly, often in a piece of wood transformed from its raw form into functional art. His carved and smoothed pieces demonstrated the beauty of persistent attention. The love he and Shirley shared, the strength of their marriage, was a mirror of this quiet practice.

He was a master woodcrafter. He could take a curl of wood, a smooth slice of abalone, a wistful feather and create a walking stick, cane, bow, picture frame, cross, hope chest or rocking horse that might transfer magical powers to its recipient. American Indian culture and artistry influenced Bob greatly. His artistic talents stretched broadly and brought smiles, hugs and squeals of delight to the many faces of family and friends who were lucky recipients of his creative expression and affection.

Foremost, Bob was a man of faith. He and Shirley were and are members of St. Mary's Church in Visalia. Their shared faith fed their commitment to each other and created a haven for generations to share. Their family bible is their most honored possession and is set in full display in their home.

A Memorial Service for Bob will be held at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Visalia on Saturday, August 5th at 9:00 AM, graveside service to follow at the Visalia Public Cemetery. Pallbearers are Joshua Perry, Kristopher Perry, Brian Perry, Anthony Florez, Scott Perry and Matt Sozinho.

Memorial donations may be made to: Bethlehem Center, Visalia: <<https://www.bethlehemcentervisalia.com/>> or to Three Rivers Historical Museum: <<http://www.threerivershistoricalmuseum.com/>>

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Previous Events

Mass of Christian Burial

AUG 5. 9:00 AM (PT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church
608 N. Church Street
Visalia, CA 93291

Graveside

AUG 5. 10:30 AM (PT)

Visalia District Cemetery
1300 W Goshen Ave
Visalia, CA 93291

Reception

AUG 5. 11:30 AM (PT)

St. Mary's Parish Hall
506 N Garden St
Visalia, CA 93291

Tribute Wall



“ *Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Robert Fernandes Perry*



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - August 03, 2023 at 12:49 PM

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“ *Mobile Webcast of the Mass of Christian Burial at 9am Saturday August 5th*

<https://www.viewlogies.net/salser-and-dillard/fE-Gziatx?pin=571248>

Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - July 24, 2023 at 12:40 PM