



Robert Heilala

August 11, 1943 - June 13, 2025

Barbara D. Heilala of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, passed away peacefully on May 27, 2025, at the age of 80, after a protracted illness related to a rare, late-in-life diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes.

Robert F. Heilala (Bob) of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, passed away peacefully on June 13, 2025, at the age of 81, just two and a half weeks after his beloved wife, Barbara.

Bob was born in Marquette, Michigan, in August of 1943, to Andrew and Lorraine Heilala, the middle child between his older brother, James, and younger brother, Donald. He grew up in Republic, Michigan, spending time in the woods helping his father cut pulpwood and sharing adventures with his lifelong friends Curtis and Biff. Bob graduated high school and went on to attend Michigan Tech, where he studied accounting. After graduation, he moved to Detroit and began working for the Internal Revenue Service.

Barbara was born in Detroit, Michigan, in November of 1944 to Joseph and Loretto McDonald and was the youngest sister to Ann and Joan. She attended Immaculata High School and graduated from the University of Detroit with a degree in education. She later earned a master's degree at the University of Michigan.

It was in Detroit that Bob and Barb met, fell in love, and married in 1971. They welcomed their son, Mark, in 1979.

Barb's professional passion was educating children. She taught tirelessly in the Detroit Public Schools for 32 years, working with students from

kindergarten through second grade. Not content to retire, she became the librarian at Detroit Country Day Lower School in Bloomfield Hills, where she worked for an additional 11 years. There, she shared her deep love of reading and children's literature with everyone she encountered. Barb touched the lives of countless children with her seemingly endless enthusiasm and relentless dedication.

Barb loved her home in Bloomfield Hills and was an avid gardener. She treasured time with her husband and son, especially family camping trips and ski adventures in northern Michigan. Fall Saturdays were devoted to attending University of Michigan football games with longtime friends, where she always insisted on tailgating and brought elaborate spreads of homemade food-including her much-loved and ever-present brownies.

Bob spent 35 years as an IRS agent. He was active in Scouting with Troop 1022 and loved camping trips with his son. In retirement, Bob enjoyed golfing and sharing lunches with friends. He had a lifelong fondness for country music, westerns, and history documentaries.

Together, Barb and Bob traveled extensively in retirement, exploring North America-including Alaska and Canada-as well as destinations abroad such as China, the Holy Land, and Europe. They also loved spending time with their son, Mark, and daughter-in-law, Amy, at their home on Walloon Lake in Petoskey, Michigan.

Barbara and Bob shared a deep faith throughout their lives and were active parishioners at St. Owen Catholic Church in Bloomfield Hills. Barb was also deeply involved in her Catholic women's group, the Cabrini Guild, as well as the Christ Child Society.

Towards the end of her life, Barb devoted much of her energy to caring for her husband, Bob, who was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis and required supplemental oxygen at home, as well as her older sister, Ann, who was living with metastatic breast cancer in an assisted living facility.

For the final eight months of their lives, their son, Mark, and daughter-in-law, Amy, relocated to Bloomfield Hills to care for Barb and Bob during a long and

complicated hospital and nursing home stay.

Their lives will be celebrated at a memorial Mass at St Owen Catholic Church in Bloomfield Hills MI on Saturday, September 20th at 11:00 am with a luncheon to follow.

Barb and Bob had big hearts, generously giving their time and resources to help people and causes close to them, especially those less fortunate.

Consider a donation in their honor to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen to help feed those in need.

Previous Events

Memorial Mass

SEP **20**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Owen Catholic Church
6869 Franklin Road
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301

Tribute Wall

JS

“ My condolences to Mark, Amy, and loved ones of Bob. I have been blessed to know Bob for over three decades as a friend of Mark's. He was a constant inspiration to us guys in the Boys Scouts. Bob relentlessly taught us on countless scouting trips, whether it was properly sanitizing pots and pans or providing us with advice on demonstrating leadership to a group of younger scouts. Bob was a remarkable gentleman that we greatly looked up to. You are in my thoughts and prayers.



Joris Soeding - September 18, 2025 at 10:23 PM

SH

“ Dear Heilala Families,

It is with great sadness to learn of both Barb and Bob's passing

*My late husband Curt and I spent a great deal of time making
Fond memories with these fun kids.*

*Curt and I(Sue) grew up with Bob in our little humble town of
Republic.*

Bob was my first beau, when we were in Jr. High School.

*When Bob and Barb were to marry, Bob asked Curt to be his
Best Man. Oh what a Fun Wedding Reception, so mischief making
as well. Bob WAS NOT AMUSED!!!*

*Some years later, we asked B&B if they would be God Parents of
our youngest chid, without hesitation, at the same time, both
replied, "We Would Be Honored"! and so our Teresa, had
Fun, Loving and GREAT God Parents.*

Bob and Barb, Rest in Peace...

Lovingly, Sue

Sue Hendrickson - September 12, 2025 at 06:08 PM

LH

“ I've known Bob all my life, and Barbara since they were married. He and my brother Curtis were in the same grade in high school, and both were starters on the Republic basketball team that lost only two games their senior season. Unfortunately, both were to Champion. Bob came to Michigan Tech while I was still there, so we spent a lot of time, and a few beers in Tony's bar, together.

I was fortunate to spend a time with them during our adult lives. We made a fishing trip to Alaska, as guests of Bob's brother Jimmy and his wife Myrna. Curt Bob and their wives spent time in Arizona several times during winters in the Midwest.

He was more like a brother than a friend. My wife Carolyn got to know Barb from their many visits to Arizona, and we both thought she was the perfect wife for Bob. It's sad to know they are gone but we enjoyed every minute we spent with them when they were with us.

Our sincere condolences to their families.

Lester & Carolyn Hendrickson

Lester Hendrickson - September 12, 2025 at 04:27 PM

RB

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Robert and Christine Bruce - September 10, 2025 at 06:50 AM

RB

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Robert and Christine Bruce - September 10, 2025 at 06:47 AM

RB

“ Dear Family- Christine and I will greatly miss Barb and Bob. "Our gang" spent many wonderful times with friends on yearly New Years Eve dinners, lunches boating on Lake St. Clair and weekly lunches at various restaurants around Rochester Hills. We know they are together in HIS arms, free of all pain. God Bless them and the entire extended families.



Robert and Christine Bruce - September 10, 2025 at 06:46 AM

RB

Lunch with the boys at Jack's Waterfront in SCS. L>R Me, Tom, Jim, Bob and James

Robert Bruce - September 21, 2025 at 12:53 PM