

The Heart of Bobbie:  
One woman's transformative life  
and the lessons she left behind

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## **Acknowledgments**

This book would not exist without the explicit permission and gracious participation of Tom Bosworth, Bobbie's loving husband of nearly 25 years. At times I was concerned about how emotionally draining a project such as this would be for Tom, but my worries were baseless: the emotions that did arise, both grief and joy, were healing and in the spirit of honoring Bobbie's life and the impact she had on those around her. Thank you, Tom, for opening your home and your heart to this endeavor.

This project would also not have taken place had it not been for the generosity of time and spirit of all of Bobbie's friends and family who were so willing to speak about Bobbie and the effect she had on their lives. I was truly touched, over and over again, at how open and thoughtful the interviewees were. Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to get an understanding of what Bobbie meant to you.

I also thank my husband, Kevin, for his kind support and advice and giving me the space I needed to complete a project that required several rounds of traveling, lots of tissue, and too much printer ink. I hope that we continue to have the kind of close relationship that was so evident between Bobbie and Tom.

Finally, to Bobbie: the life you led is nothing short of inspiring. Thank you for being the caring, joyful, loving person you were. One of my favorite quotes from this project came from Karen, a co-worker of Tom's, who wrote a quote to Tom from the 1800s British preacher and writer Charles H. Spurgeon: "A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you and were helped by you will remember you when forget-me-nots have withered. Carve your name on hearts, not on marble." Bobbie, indeed, carved her name on the hearts of many.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

On Saturday, September 13, 2008, Bobbie Bosworth and her husband Tom got up and took their dog Beau for their usual weekend outing to the dog park at Ben Brenman Park in Alexandria, Virginia. They spoke with their friends and talked about how it would be nice if the city would plant some trees to add shade in the fenced-in area, install some park benches so people could rest and watch the dogs play, and provide fresh water for both people and animals. Bobbie and the other dog owners talked about where these things could go, walking around the enclosure scouting out sites. After Beau finished playing, Bobbie and Tom said good-bye and left. They stopped at a local restaurant for breakfast where they ran into a friend and neighbor, also named Tom, and had a nice chat. They went home, where Bobbie started preparing for the change of seasons by getting out her fall decorations.

Bobbie had been losing some weight recently, thanks to the daily walks she had been taking in the last few months with Tom and Beau, and needed to get a new pair of jeans. She decided to go to Springfield Mall. She and Tom made plans to rendezvous back at the house around 3 pm. She needed to get some gas in her car and Tom always filled it for her; they would do that and then go out to dinner and maybe see a movie. Bobbie said goodbye and left.

Tom never saw his wife again. Bobbie was abducted and killed that afternoon in a car crash.

### **What this book is about: An introduction to Bobbie**

This book is a celebration of Bobbie's life. She was a person who made a difference in the world through her kindness and openness. A fashion- and style-conscious woman, she transformed not only her outer appearance, but her inner being as well, becoming more aware of

the Earth, nature, and others, exploring a new religion, and forging a relationship with her husband that became a model for other couples.

Two things stand out about Bobbie's life above all else: her love of her friends and family and the importance of her relationship with Tom. Bobbie was a community activist and neighborhood organizer before those terms ever became in vogue. She wanted her neighborhood to be a community, and she made it happen: initiating and throwing parties, striking up conversations with newly moved-in neighbors, and deepening acquaintances to become friendships. She wanted to live where those around her were like family; a place where people know each other and keep an eye on each other and help each other. To her, a quiet suburb where people drive into their garages and go directly into their houses every night, then turn around and do the reverse the next morning, would not suit. She wanted to know the people who lived around her, to be able to trust them; and she wanted them to want the same thing. It was frustrating for her when someone new would move in who did not want the same level of commitment to friendship that she seemed to need and want. She was the hub, the mother, the connector. It hurt her when people rejected this role she had put on herself.

But when things worked – ah, that was the stuff! One of Bobbie's best friends Rick said at Bobbie's memorial service, “For those of you that know me well, you know that there were two girls in my life: Jackie and Bobbie. So when the time came to make a pilgrimage to the Jackie Kennedy exhibit in Boston, all I needed to do was pick up that phone, and Bobbie was in.” Bobbie and Tom threw a New Year's Eve party on December 31, 1999, and insisted that everyone wear black tie and formal wear. It was a catered affair, and their friend and neighbor David said, “I bet it was one of the best parties anywhere that night.” [15j]<sup>i</sup> To Bobbie, going

all out for an event was not bothersome or annoying; she relished being the hostess, making people comfortable in her home, and creating a space and an ambiance that would leave everyone thinking and saying, “Wow!” This was not done to be pretentious and she was not in the least stuck-up. She wanted to create something memorable that people, years later, would say, “Do you remember when Bobbie and Tom threw that party...?” “Oh, yeah, wasn't that great?” She wanted to provide an experience for people who she loved and cared about. Charlie, Bobbie's stepsister's fiancé, recalled coming to Bobbie and Tom's house every year for Christmas. He described Bobbie's attention to detail: “[Everything was] perfect. The napkins, the way the knives were looking, everything, the food.... You thought you were in ... a great restaurant, I mean it was like unbelievable, everything was beautiful, the setting was just amazing. She went out of her way to please people.” [10k]

Bobbie's relationship with Tom was the single most important thing in her life. In the interviews conducted for this book, everyone, usually spontaneously, remarked on how important Tom was to Bobbie. Rick said, “[Bobbie] really appreciated what she had, and realized how lucky she was.” [4qq] Their neighbor Susie told Tom, “I felt that you all were each other's best buddy.... You were dancing the same dance together. You were dancing the same dance. You were each other's family. You didn't have children. You were each other's family, and it was a love story.” [14y]

Other people looked up to them as a role model for how to get along as a couple. Xhilda, one of Bobbie's friends at work, emphasized this: “[Bobbie] was a good tutor for me as far as relationships are concerned, and marriage. She was the person that I could see love her husband the way that I would want to love my husband here and 25 years from now.” [11q] Tom was at

first surprised, and then pleased, to learn that others thought of his marriage with Bobbie as a model. Bobbie seemed to have more awareness of the special quality of her relationship with Tom, and in some way, it concerned her.

Several people, including Tom, have wondered if Bobbie knew that something was going to happen to her; that she maybe had a premonition about her life ending early, and perhaps, tragically. She made their friends Rick and Carlos promise her, over and over again, that if something ever happened to her they would take care of Tom. Would someone who didn't suspect anything do this? Maybe she was just a worrier and wanted to relieve her anxiety. Or maybe the question she asked Rick and Carlos, and the affirmative answer she demanded, demonstrates how much she loved Tom, and her concern about how he could survive the loss of the love of his life.

The legacy of Bobbie's impact on the world is the connections she made with others. Her way of being in the world – forging her own path, evolving as a person over time, being open to new people and experiences – is an example for the people she came into contact with.

### **What this book is not about**

This book is not a true-crime story. The focus is on Bobbie's life and the impact she had on others, not on the nature of her death. Of course, had Bobbie not died the way she did, this book would likely not exist; therefore, let's dispense with the bare minimum of details about what happened to her. Bobbie went to a mall near her home and was abducted by two 19 year-old African-American men carrying a fake gun they had just stolen from a sporting goods store. They forced Bobbie into her car and drove to a local convenience store to try to get cash from her ATM card, which was captured on a security camera. A Good Samaritan intervened, and

alerted police as to what was happening. When Bobbie and the two assailants left the store in Bobbie's car, the driver of Bobbie's car sped up, ran a red light at a major intersection, and crashed, flipping the car over several times. Bobbie was killed instantly; one of the assailants died a few days later. The other assailant survived despite severe injuries and is currently incarcerated, awaiting trial.

The incident drew regional and national attention. Tom was asked to interview on “Good Morning America” and “Nightline,” both of which he declined. Oprah Winfrey discussed the abduction on her show. News vans were parked at the end of Tom's street for a week, trying to get additional information and interviews with neighbors. It was the lead story on local news broadcasts and newspapers in the Washington DC area still regularly report updates on the case and the upcoming trial. Bobbie's abduction and death has grabbed hold of the hearts of many who heard about the senseless tragedy, even those who never had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know Bobbie as a person.

### **Bobbie's memorial service**

I traveled out to Alexandria, Virginia, for Bobbie's memorial service with my parents. (My mom Jane is Tom's first cousin; that makes Tom and I first cousins once removed.) I was touched and impressed at the memorial service with the wonderful memories and thoughts people shared about Bobbie, but the people themselves were also remarkable: they were from all walks of life, and were a wonderful blend of diverse colors and ethnicities; American-born and international; goddess-centered and Christian; heterosexual, homosexual, and transgender; lower socio-economic status and upper; young and old. It was a visual and embodied testament to the kind of person Bobbie was that all these people had one thing in common: they were connected



to her in some way and were shocked and saddened at her loss.

I was so moved after attending Bobbie's memorial service that I wanted to do something to pay tribute to her life and the impact she had on others. I wrote Tom a letter and sent it to him with a copy of my favorite grief book, How to Survive the Loss of a Love.<sup>ii</sup> In the letter, I explained to Tom that I wanted to write a book about Bobbie's life and asked if he thought it would be a good idea. We spoke on the phone, and he said not only did it sound like a good idea, but he would be honored to have such a book written about her. He also said that Bobbie would have never thought that her life was special or unique enough to justify writing about it.

### **The interview process**

Tom and I discussed how the interview process would work and what each of our roles would be. We decided to conduct as many interviews as possible with both of us present, so that Tom could trigger certain memories or stories for the interviewees to share. I didn't fully appreciate it before we started, but I came to understand how Tom being a part of the interviews and asking questions could be helpful to not only me, but to him as well. He was able to directly hear from the people who loved her how much Bobbie had meant to them. According to Tom, the process of gathering material for the book – interviewing friends and loved ones – became one of the most healing aspects of his grief journey. Even regarding his own recollections, Tom noted that “it's comforting to think of these things.” [2kk]

I digitally recorded and transcribed each interview. I then provided a copy of the transcript to everyone who had participated in that particular interview, in addition to Tom, if he was not able to be present. Interviewees had a chance to make changes or edits or corrections. I also transcribed Bobbie's memorial service. In all, I conducted 23 interviews with 35 people and

amassed over 18 hours of recording which resulted in nearly 350 pages of transcript.

Additionally, I had many informal conversations with Tom that were not taped; I kept a journal and recorded the stories he told me at the end of every day during my visits with him.

The interviewing process was unique in each interview; neither Tom nor I had a set list of questions, but we frequently covered the same topics with each person or group that we interviewed. Tom consciously tried to express to each interviewee what she or he meant to Bobbie. For example, with her friend Bill, Tom stated that Bill was the one that Bobbie could talk to about fantasy books because he shared this interest and Bobbie knew Bill would not judge her for her interest in such a “geeky” genre. Bill responded, “We did have just so many opportunities to be grateful for, and it's something where I was privileged that there were those points of connection. That some of them were unique just makes it all the more special.” [18y]

Because of Tom's involvement, he was able to ask questions that led to stories that he thought would be helpful for me to hear; however, he also heard stories in just about every interview that were new to him. There were many times when Tom or the interviewee or I had tears in our eyes; it was just as likely, however, that we would be laughing at a story told about something funny that Bobbie had done, or a humorous remark made by Tom. The interviews and the stories that people related were nothing short of inspiring. For that reason, I have quoted extensively from them in this book without adding my own “filter”: I think the best way to get to know Bobbie is through the words and descriptions of the people who knew and loved her best.

Let me say a little about the people you will meet who knew Bobbie. Bobbie's primary group of friends were her long-time neighbors at Early Street Village, a townhouse development in the suburbs of Alexandria, Virginia (some of whom have since moved.) She and Tom moved

in when other homes were still being finished in 1996; Tom is now considered the “old-timer” along with one other homeowner who has been there as long as he has. Many of Bobbie's friends, as well as friends that she and Tom shared, were male: Rick and Carlos, Drew and Emmanuel, Joe, David, and Bill.

Rick and Carlos, a couple for nearly 20 years, were one of the first couples that Bobbie and Tom really bonded with and spent a lot of time with, including taking vacations together. They moved into the model home at Early Street Village and have known Bobbie and Tom for 12 years. Rick, a soft-spoken and reflective individual with a wonderful sense of humor, led Bobbie's memorial service at Tom's request. Carlos, a vivacious, energetic Puerto Rican, is known in his circle of friends as the person who has the best music library (he claims he has to have the sheer amount of CDs he does in order to provide music for his spinning classes).

Drew and Emmanuel lived in the corner townhome just a few doors down from Bobbie and Tom and their side yard was the setting for Bobbie and Tom's vow renewal ceremony in 2004. Emmanuel is the extroverted, entertaining half of the couple and has himself experienced the loss of a family member due to homicide. Drew is the quiet, grounded half of the couple who travels extensively to Africa for his work.

Joe is their across-the-street neighbor of six years, a former chef and a Southern gentleman with lots of colorful phrases. He also has just about anything imaginable you might need in his house; a sample of things that he brought over to Bobbie and Tom's during my time there included a coaxial cable; a can of WD-40; a pair of men's khakis, size 40; and countless food dishes to feed 20 or more people at a time. His partner Gary is shy and not much for interacting with others, but he put his technical skills to use in creating the program for Bobbie's

memorial service.

David is a clear-spoken man, and a cantor at his church; he and Bobbie did a lot of shopping together and were a mutual admiration society. They met at the first social gathering in the neighborhood, before he and his then partner Bill moved in. Tom joked it was a good thing David is gay, otherwise he would have been worried about Bobbie's close bond with him.

Bill, David's ex-partner and former neighbor of Bobbie and Tom's, is interested in all kinds of things: spirituality and religion, science fiction and fantasy, and Hawaii. He and Bobbie shared many long conversations about overlapping areas of interest.

Other friends and neighbors include Joan and Susie. Joan, a 10-year resident at Early Street Village, was about Bobbie's age and they share an additional trait: red hair. Susie and her husband Steve moved into the neighborhood when they still had children at home six years ago, but she and Bobbie still found time to bond together.

Bobbie was a Wiccan and made many friends through the local association, the Chantry of the Silver Veil, including Patty and Terri, who were in her first Wiccan class in 2000. Patty, like Bobbie, loves nature and animals. Terri, now a leader of her own coven, grew close to Bobbie and was one of only a couple of girlfriends that Bobbie had. Millie was Bobbie's teacher and an important connection for Bobbie, and she is the leader of the Silver Veil. Millie is a tall and striking woman who just happens to be a transgendered individual. Bobbie co-taught a first-year class with Millie and one of their students was Beth.

Several of Bobbie's co-workers grew close to her as well. Margie, who is from South Africa, and Xhilda (pronounced "Jilda"), from Albania, were both in the administration department with Bobbie. Jaimie and Meg, who are accountants in the firm, also became friends.

A new group of friends who only knew Bobbie for several months were those people she met at the dog park. Paula, Annette, Joyce, Debbie, Judy, and Joe all wish that they had had more time with Bobbie and had gotten the chance to know her better.

Bobbie's family includes her sister Bonnie and her brother Barry; her mom and dad, Wanda and Jack, now divorced; Jack's wife Marge; and Bonnie's daughters LeaAnne and Bunky (aka Laura). Jack was also previously married to Nina who died of cancer; Bobbie was close with her as well as Leslie, Nina's daughter, and Leslie's fiancé Charlie.

Several of Tom's family members were also interviewed. His mom Sue (not to be confused with their neighbor Susie) wasn't sure what she was going to say, but ended up telling a story that Tom had never heard. Jane and Al were also interviewed: Jane is Tom's cousin, Al is her husband, and they happen to be my parents.

Several people who were interviewed also spoke at Bobbie's memorial service, including Rick, Carlos, Sue, Leslie, Charlie, LeaAnne, Terri, Emmanuel, and Tom. Two people spoke at Bobbie's memorial service and were not interviewed further: Paul, a retired partner at Bobbie's work and Duane, Tom's brother.

I appear several times in the text of the interviews under my own name.

Following is a summary chart with the names of interviewees and their relationship with Bobbie.

The book is structured using chapters and interludes. The chapters move the main story forward, while the interludes provide additional stories, words written by others, and observations. Chapter Two describes Bobbie's personality and who she was as a person, answering the question, What was it like to have Bobbie as a friend? Chapter Three delves into

Bobbie's life more deeply, from her constant evolution to her sense of feeling different and how she used this to relate to others. Chapter Four tells the love story of Bobbie and Tom's relationship. Chapter Five, a short chapter, relates several stories that interviewees told about the circumstances in which they heard the news of Bobbie's death. Chapter Six describes the aftermath of Bobbie's death, and how those who loved and knew her are coping. Chapter Seven is the what-do-we-take-with-us part of the story: how do we as individuals and a society make meaning out of these circumstances? Chapter Eight is the full transcript for Bobbie's memorial service. I've already indicated how important this service was to me: simply put, this book wouldn't exist if I hadn't been there. But the memorial service was also impressive to others as well; it was described by one attendee as “one of the best celebrations of life I have ever witnessed.” Chapter Nine is the speech given by Tom at a bench dedication ceremony in June of 2009 in which he both looks back in fond remembrance of Bobbie and also starts to look forward.

Neighbors:

Rick and Carlos  
 Drew and Emmanuel  
 Joe  
 David  
 Bill  
 Joan  
 Susie

Wiccan associates:

Patty  
 Terri  
 Millie  
 Beth

Work friends:

Margie  
 Xhilda  
 Jaimie  
 Meg

Dog park friends:

Paula  
 Annette  
 Joyce  
 Debbie  
 Judy and Joe

Bobbie's family:

Tom (Husband)  
 Wanda (Mom)  
 Jack (Dad) and Marge (Step-mom)  
 Bonnie (Sister)  
 LeaAnne and Bunky (Nieces)  
 Leslie (Stepsister) and Charlie (Leslie's fiancé)

Tom's family:

Sue (Mom)  
 Jane (Cousin) and Al (Jane's husband)

## **Interlude: Observations about Interviews**

There were two touching observations I made about the interviews that related only indirectly to Bobbie; one was the several coincidences that occurred that had to do with nature and animals, and the other was how people dealt with the sadness and grief that inevitably came up during the interviews.

### **Nature and animals**

When it came time to interview Bobbie's Wiccan friends, it was unusually sunny and warm out: the scheduled high was 54, but it actually reached 59 that day at the airport nearest to Bobbie and Tom – and this was in early February. Wicca is a religion that has a long history and is known as an Earth-centered tradition. It almost seemed as if we were being told to meet outside in order to discuss Bobbie and her relationship with Wicca and the Earth, so we sat and talked on the patio behind Bobbie and Tom's house.

When Tom and I interviewed Bill, he brought along his 16 year-old Chihuahua Poncho (who, sadly, has since passed away). Poncho has always been an alpha dog, and yet during the interview he stayed in a little backpack pouch that Bill wore and was relatively quiet. Bill commented at the end of the interview, “Bobbie must be present in spirit here because Poncho is usually so aggressive, and trying to be bossy in other people's homes about how dare other dogs and cats just even exist, and here he is quite peaceable. Poncho, did you learn a lesson about trying to be good to your neighbor dogs?” [18ff]

Bobbie and Tom's cats, Max and T.J., are indifferent at best, and intolerant at worst, of Beau, their dog. However, at the end of our interview with Rick and Carlos, which took place in the living room, we all observed Beau and Max sleeping next to each other on the sofa where

Tom and I were sitting. Tom remarked, “You guys are witnessing a first here because this is the first time they've ever done this.” [4ddd]

The final interesting event I did not notice until I was transcribing the tape; it too related to Beau. During our interview with Bobbie's co-workers, they asked how Beau had been doing:

Margie: Did he miss Bobbie?

Tom: Yeah, at first he did, it's hard to tell with dogs. Of course the first few weeks after Bobbie died there were a lot of people here, so he got lots of attention, but yeah, I think he [did].

Margie: 'Cause sometimes they can sense...

Tom: Yeah.... He really bonded to me after that.... Just the other day I'd been talking to him, I said, “Do you remember your mom?” [11ii]

Beau had been sitting in Tom's lap for awhile, getting attention and scratching from Tom, but immediately after Tom said this, I could hear, audibly, Beau panting on the recording. It was as if he understood exactly what Tom was saying and was responding. <sup>iii</sup>

### **Yin and yang: Sadness and silliness**

As much as people were saddened by the loss of Bobbie and grieving for the hole in their lives from her not being physically present anymore, there was, perhaps surprisingly, a great deal of laughter and fun during the interviews. People had memories of the silly times with Bobbie, and Tom's sense of humor frequently came out in the interviews. It is almost as if once people had enough of the sadness, they naturally turned toward laughter to help deal with the pain.

Rick and Carlos provided a wonderful example of this:

Rick: I think of Bobbie every day, and it's weird because it'll be at times you wouldn't expect it. Like I told Tom, we were at the Tina Turner concert, and then one of the first songs early on in the concert was just one of those really old, typical, fun Tina Turner songs, and immediately in my head popped, “Bobbie would just love to be here, she would love this,” and then I started to cry, it's at the concert and I started to cry, and...



Carlos: I thought it was because I didn't buy you popcorn.

Rick: It was because you were singing. [all laugh] [4zz]

Tom has a sense of humor that lies in wait and then strikes when you least expect it.

Bobbie's dad Jack was unsure where to start when we began the interview with him, which left a good opening for Tom:

Jack: How far back you you want to go?

Tom: From the womb. [all laugh] [22a]

Bobbie teased Charlie, Leslie's fiancé, that if he ever hurt Leslie, she would kill him. (Of course, this was in jest; as a proper lady born and bred in the south, Bobbie would never threaten anyone.) We joked numerous times about this in the interview. Leslie set Tom up for a good retort:

Leslie: And then when she met Charlie, she turned to me, and she said, "Don't let this one get away."

Tom: So that's a good counterbalance to, "I'm gonna kill you." [all laugh] [10hh]

## Chapter Two: Bobbie As a Friend and Neighbor

A more loyal or devoted friend has never walked the face of the Earth. -Rick, friend and former neighbor

Bobbie made an impact when she met people, whether it was her readiness to hug someone hello or her exquisite fashion sense. Friends fondly recalled their first impressions of Bobbie, and what made her friendship so special to them. Bobbie wanted to create a community in her neighborhood, and her friends reminisce about Bobbie's role in making this happen in the townhouse development that she and Tom chose to call home.

### **“Bobbie just brightened up a place, she brightened up a room”: First impressions**

If you were to have met Bobbie, what would you have noticed first about her? Many of her friends who could recall their first meetings commented that she was friendly and “huggy” from the start. She was also very well put-together. Joe, a friend and neighbor for six years who wore one of his many kimonos during the interview and was preparing several dishes in his kitchen for a New Year's Eve party, described his first memories of Bobbie:

Bobbie, she was really friendly, and she was like, “Oh, hell, you're in the neighborhood, so to hell with the handshake, you're getting a hug.” And so ever since then I always got a hug and a kiss, always, no matter what, unless my hands were full. But at first I wasn't sure because every time I saw her, she was always dressed to the nines. I mean, you know.... I'm running around looking like Pigpen, and she's looking like she's stepped out of a fashion magazine, even on weekends when she's roughing it in the dirt, so to speak. And I thought, “OK, I can't keep up with her.” [1d]

Bobbie had a sense of style and loved fashion; she relished going shopping and searching for that perfect outfit. As Joe put it, if he told her they were going to go rob a bank, “Bobbie would think it was a hoot and a holler; she'd have to find an outfit.” [1x] Every special occasion, such as weddings for friends and family members, meant shopping for not only a new

dress, but jewelry and shoes to complete the outfit. One of her best friends and neighbors David recalled:

I remember the first couple of times seeing Bobbie out on the street as she and Tom were going out to dinner or engagements; she would transform herself every time I would see her going out. She would have a new hairstyle, a new hairdo, a new hair color, and she would look fabulous whether she was dressed in a formal dress, country, yard work, I mean, Bobbie could wear every style of every thing. And I always felt like she was such a chameleon, and that some people always look identical and wear black every day, or haven't changed their hair in 30 years, and Bobbie, every 30 minutes it was like a different creature. Almost like a new butterfly coming out of a cocoon every time I'd see her come out of the house. [15b]

Many others also commented on her fashion sense. Friend and neighbor Joan stated, "I always wanted to see what she was wearing. I think everybody always commented that she always looked so well put-together.... I never saw her walk out of the house that she wasn't ready to go somewhere, like an old-style type glamour girl." [13] Her friend and co-worker Xhilda noted the first impression Bobbie made on her, including what happened when they went out to lunch:

When I first met her, it was the first day of my work, because we have a tradition at my job that everybody that comes in on the first day goes to lunch with some of the friends that you're going to work with.... So I see the thing that impressed me about her was the way that she dressed. I'm very fascinated because I'm from Europe, so fashion is very important to me, I mean, I like it. I maybe don't pursue it as much in here. So, "Bobbie, you dress really good," you know, without even knowing her.... So after lunch we go to the jewelry store [all laugh] because we had enough time, and she's says, "Oh, this is my favorite place," she said, "where I buy my jewelry." So she just looks around, and [we] were like, "OK, let's just wait on Bobbie." [all laugh] And it was so funny. [11a-b]

Xhilda was not the only person at her workplace who was impressed with Bobbie's sense of style, her ability to change, and her extensive wardrobe. Four of Bobbie's friends at work came to Bobbie and Tom's house for dinner and dessert after a long day at work in order to be interviewed and they recalled:

Margie: Every day she'd have a different hair style, and that amazed me how she could do

something different with her hair.

Jaimie: She had a different overcoat for every outfit, you know, most of us just have the one coat, she had like a different coat almost every day and it would match whatever she was wearing.

Margie: Well, she was the best-dressed lady in the office.

Xhilda & Jaimie: Yes.

Margie & Xhilda: Definitely.

Jaimie: And the gloves would match the scarf, would match the hat, would match the...

Meg: Shoes.

....

Tom: One of the ironies about the way she dressed is, I left in the morning before she was dressed and I got home in the evening after she'd changed. [all laugh] I knew there was a closet full of clothes, but I hardly ever saw her wearing those clothes. [laughs]

Margie: Yeah, you missed out on the best part. [all laugh] She always looked smart. [11f-g]

With some people, Bobbie came across as quiet or more on the observing side. But even when Bobbie was quiet, a strong characteristic of being thoughtful and caring also shone through. Rick commented at Bobbie's memorial service on the very first time he saw and met

Bobbie:

I still remember the day that I met Bobbie. I was visiting the model home in Early Street Village in 1996. Tom and Bobbie had already moved into the neighborhood, and Bobbie was in the model, bringing a piece of cake to the sales manager. [laughter] And you know, Bobbie and I would talk about it years later, and she had absolutely no recollection of the meeting. [laughter] And it's clear, it's totally clear why: to Bobbie, that's what you did. You took a piece of cake to somebody.

A funny story that Emmanuel, a friend and former neighbor, told illustrated the depth of Bobbie's caring:

Emmanuel: I was sick once, this knock came at my door, and I came down, and it was Bobbie, and I looked at Bobbie, and Bobbie was all bruised in her face and everything. And I was like,

“Bobbie, are you OK?” And she says, “Yes, I just came by to see how you were doing, I hear you were sick.” And I was like, “Yes, I am, but you look sicker than I.” [all laugh] And she said, “Oh, no, it just looks worse than it is.” She says, “I’m OK.” She had had her face lifted, remember? She had had her face done.... And I was like, “Oh, that’s really sweet of you, Bobbie, but I’m fine, I’m fine, but you really, I don’t know about you though.”

Tom: “I should’ve been coming up to your house.”

Emmanuel: Exactly, right, “If I would’ve known you were like this,” but it was so funny ‘cause she was all so darkened in parts of her face and stuff, I was kind of laughing, and she laughed at it, and she said, “Oh, no, I’m fine.” That was really very sweet of her to do that, it just showed just more of that kind of caring that she had. [23f]

Joan, one of Bobbie and Tom’s neighbors who moved in after they were already established in the neighborhood, said that from the beginning Bobbie sensed that Joan was having a hard time and would check in with her. Joan was struck both by Bobbie’s caring and kindness, but also by the intuition that Bobbie clearly had and used in noticing that Joan was not doing well. Many people experienced Bobbie’s empathetic kindness, which was evident not only in the way she interacted with people, but with animals and nature as well.

Bobbie and Tom always had various cats, but in May of 2008 they got a dog at the local animal shelter, a Pomeranian named Beau. Shortly after adopting him, they started taking him to a dog park nearby. Every weekend morning they would see the same dogs and people and they started developing friendships with the other dog owners. Annette, one of these new “dog park friends,” described Bobbie as “very kind ... very caring of the animals, of all the dogs there, and just a really nice person.” [7f] Another dog park friend, Debbie, described her memories of Bobbie: “We just had general friendly conversation. The one thing that I remember about Bobbie the most is that she was very in tune to her surroundings, and was concerned that there was not enough shade for the dogs. [She] was always looking for ways to improve the dog park and talked about having benches and stuff in the dog park for us to sit on.” [12a]

### **“Bobbie was the heart of the neighborhood”: Being friends with Bobbie**

What if you got to know Bobbie better, on a deeper level; what was she like? Joe echoed a common sentiment when he observed, “she just loved people, and she kind of believed in everybody.” [1p] Her co-worker Margie described this quality as, “she took an interest in everybody.” [11z] Bobbie's cousin Jane recalled that Bobbie liked “to sit down with someone and really talk to them.... She was always interested in people.” [8e] Judy, one of her new dog park friends, said of Bobbie, “She would mix in anywhere. She could just walk in, but she could get along with anybody, she could talk to anybody, walk up and carry on a conversation. That's just the kind of person she was, you know, you never see anybody was stand-offish with her or anything, because she was always just so sweet.” [17aa] Her friend and neighbor Joan simply observed, “Bobbie was the heart of the neighborhood.” [13ff]

Friends described her as loyal, gracious, and funny. Once Bobbie deemed you worthy of her friendship, which would happen fairly quickly, she would be there for you no matter what. Bobbie both gave loyalty to her friends and received it in return. There were several times that a disagreement within the neighborhood caused division. Susie, one of Bobbie and Tom's neighbors, recalled during one of these difficult periods that “[I] turned into a maniac defending her [Bobbie].” [14j] Rick recalled that, “she was an extremely loyal friend, so if someone would wrong one of her friends, she would be the first one to stand up and fight, or go into fight mode; or you knew she would go to battle for you, if it came to that.” [4i]

If you were invited to her home, you could expect that she would welcome you and make sure your needs were attended to. More than that, she did not play favorites among her guests. Charlie, her stepsister's fiancé, noted that, “even though there were like eight of us in a room

doing Christmas – we'd be here almost every Christmas – she would divide her time equally for each person there, you could tell, and that to me said something about her character.” [10g]

Patty and Terri, friends who Bobbie met taking classes about Wicca, experienced Bobbie's hospitality first-hand. Patty noted:

Bobbie very graciously had us come and do some of the classes [at her home]. And I was very impressed with her decorating, but yet she wasn't one of those uptight people that you would think of that would have a very well-decorated and nice house. There was always a comfortable feeling with Bobbie. She was always able to make you feel at home, at peace, comfortable; she was kind. [9c]

Terri also had a story about Bobbie's graciousness:

Actually this is a story that L. told that I hadn't realized. Millie started another class like six or eight months after she started our class, and they were going to meet here [at Bobbie and Tom's house]. And L. is in that class, and she confused her dates as to when the start of the class was, and showed up a week early. And Bobbie basically said, “Hi, you're a week early, come on in and sit down,” and proceeded to answer all of those questions that you ask the first Wiccan that you meet, because in this case, Bobbie was the first person that L. met. And, it's one of those things where the first person you meet, you know how you can unintentionally get your entire impression from the first person, and it could be good, bad or indifferent.... And if you can think of anybody more gracious to do that job [than Bobbie], you know, I can't. [9e-f]

Bobbie also demonstrated her gracious personality at a wedding for the daughter of her friend and neighbor Susie. One of Susie's nieces, who was 13 at the time, wore the same dress as Bobbie for the occasion. Susie recalled that Bobbie made a big deal about buying a new dress for the wedding, telling Susie beforehand that she “got the greatest dress” [14u]. David, who both went shopping with Bobbie for this particular dress and attended the wedding, recalled Bobbie's words to Susie's niece: “As we were leaving they ran into each other in the lobby at the country club, and I remember whereas other women might have reacted negatively that someone else was wearing her dress, I remember Bobbie saying to the girl, 'You have wonderful taste.' [Tom laughs] And I thought that [was] how Bobbie always was, completely classy.”

[15f]

Many people noted Bobbie's unique sense of humor. Charlie described it as, "a very dry sense of humor; she would laugh at things that you really shouldn't laugh at. It's like, well, what does she think, what's so funny about this? But she laughed and I didn't, so I thought, 'Wow, that's interesting.'" [10f] Bobbie could also be silly; Rick recalled that she would sing along with the soundtrack when they watched movies or TV together. Her silliness also appeared on the rare occasions that she drank alcohol. (Because of a liver condition, Bobbie was not a regular drinker.)

Leslie, Bobbie's stepsister, said that although Bobbie was slow to warm up to her (they did not become related until Bobbie had moved away from Alexandria as a young adult), she could get Bobbie going and they had many silly times together along with Bobbie's sister Bonnie. In separate interviews, Leslie, Bonnie, and Jack all recalled a particular day when the whole extended family had an outing to one of the Smithsonian museums. Leslie tells it like this:

Sometimes [with] Bobbie there was like a properness thing, everything was done right, and just so. And then there's a side to her that when she'd let that down that could be very funny and goofy, that sense of humor, but you really had to draw it out, she just didn't like that guard to be down, I don't know why, that's just how she was.... So, [laughs] I can get goofy really easy. It doesn't take anything, so my affect on her was to be going, you know, we'd be looking at things, I went, like, [gasps] as we're walking past things or I'd spring out at her, something like that. Finally she started making the same kind of come-backs about things. There would be a bird, or we'd see a shrimp, and she'd be going, "Oh, my God, I didn't know they looked like that, their heads and everything, I'll never eat another shrimp." And we started just joking around, and that's a side you didn't, not too many people got to see.... It was just good chemistry, we were all relaxed around each other, we were just having a day. [10h]

Bobbie also demonstrated a sense of humor at the workplace. At the memorial service, Paul, a retired partner at the firm, recalled this exchange:



One day when I was walking by her desk I caught a fragrance, and I thought, “I know that fragrance.” And I walked over to her desk, and I said, “I think I know that fragrance, what perfume is that?” She had this little grin on her face, and she said, “It's not perfume, it's a man's cologne; I just like it.” [laughter] It was Obsession for Men. [laughter] I don't know if she was telling me something there or not. [laughter]

Bobbie's sense of humor and ability to have fun extended to people outside of her circle of friends to complete strangers. Joe related what Bobbie would say to the cashiers when they were out shopping together:

And then I remember when we'd go to the stores it was a hoot and a holler.... I would hold her other bags as she would be trying something on, and then we'd go to the checkout and the cashier there would say, “I see you brought your husband like everybody else does to hold your bags while you do shopping.” And she'd say, “Well, he's not my husband, he's my second husband. My first husband's at home.” And they would all stop and look at each other or her like, “What?” [And she'd say] “It's my neighbor, but he's like my second husband when we go shopping, we go out to lunch, and he holds my bags, and everybody thinks he's my husband, because I'm talking to him like, 'Honey, what do you think?'" [1g]

Throughout the interviews people used words like “caring,” “loving,” and “kind” to describe Bobbie. Bill described it as, “I think Bobbie is one of those people where, when you really feel somebody's warmth and love, you can be happy just being in the same room, you don't necessarily need to talk, the TV doesn't have to be on, and you know, there's just a feeling of comfort, and that was kind of Bobbie.” [18s] Other words that frequently came up were “thoughtful” and “empathic.” One way that Bobbie liked to demonstrate her connection and understanding of another person was to buy her or him a present. Once she had found the exact right thing, she wasn't finished: the wrapping and presentation were also part of the gift. Her co-workers remembered:

Xhilda: We would agree that we wouldn't exchange gifts this year ... but she'd still give us gifts, you know, [all laugh] like, we would agree no exchanging, and...

Margie: And then she comes up with all these beautiful gifts all nicely wrapped. And I think they

were personalized according to each person's personality.

Meg: Well, up until recently, I was still using the wallet she had brought back for me from one of your trips.

Tom: Oh, really?

Meg: I switched to this little purse, and it doesn't fit in there, but yeah. I have another little container that she had brought back for me from another trip where I had watched the cats.

Jaimie: I have a little, I don't know what it is, it's from Washington [state], when you went on a trip to Washington, and she brought back a little glass and it was like the volcanic ash or something, piece of glass, and it had a little swirl in it, and it's that purple thing that sits on my desk. And she had brought that back for me, and now it sits on my desk every-, and everybody goes, "Oh, how nice," I go, "Yeah, that came from Bobbie," [all laugh], so it sits on my desk. [11ff-gg]

Besides the gifts she would get her co-workers when they did her a favor or at Christmas, during busy times at the firm she would buy a rose for everyone working in administration to help keep their spirits up. She loaned not only books to her co-worker Jaimie who had just moved and whose books were still in storage, but also the bookshelf to store the books on.

Bobbie was also described as sensitive. This cut both ways; Bobbie wanted people to get along and to truly enjoy one another's company, and she became frustrated when conflict occurred and disrupted the family she had worked so hard to create. When she thought she was the one who caused a problem, she was quick to try to mend things. Emmanuel described what happened when a misunderstanding occurred one of the first times he and his partner Drew met her as a neighbor:

Emmanuel: But I can tell you my, one of my first experiences of Bobbie did not go so well.

Kimberly: Oh?

Emmanuel: And that had to do with I think cultural differences in the sense that I was probably coming with some sort of baggage in terms of me being from the South, being African-American, she being from the South and being a white American, because she was born right

here in Virginia, in Alexandria, born and raised, right? And so I was always somewhat a little skeptical of white people who came from the South and having years of prejudice and those experiences. And so I remember one of our first events we had, and we had a barbeque or something, up on the side of our yard, like a little picnic, or something like that.... And we were talking and Bobbie made a comment – and I think it had to do really the basis around people being able to get along – but in the sense that, in terms of-. I was proposing the struggles under which Black people suffer and this sort, and Bobbie's retort was something to the effect that, “There's been enough of time period that has happened that people should really be over it.” Well, nothing sets off a person like when someone says you should be over it. And I'm like, “Be over it?” And then I have to give my experience, and I was just like, oh, I can't believe this, and I thought, “Well, I'll never talk to this woman again.” [all laugh] And so I thought, “No, I'll never speak to her, ever, we just will never relate.” But to Bobbie's credit of course, she wouldn't let that hold fast, because she just recognized there must have been some miscommunication, and a misunderstanding that occurred.... And I was like, because I can be very dismissive around things, I was like, “Oh, it doesn't matter, oh, it doesn't matter,” kind of thing like that, but it really did matter.... So I just always thought that that was a very powerful way for someone to be able to approach life, and not just totally shut down, and not be closed off from change. And she came to realize that she couldn't experience what I experience, so therefore it was unique in that regard, and there was an appreciation of that, and so that was very, very good. And so I was very, very respectful of that. [23b]

There were two times in particular when neighbors were not getting along with each other and this conflict bothered Bobbie immensely. Both, however, ended happily: in one instance the couple creating problems moved, and in the other, Bobbie reached out to the couple who had previously given Bobbie and Tom a hard time. Rick and Tom recounted Bobbie's extending the olive branch to this couple and why she did it:

Tom: Well, [to] kind of bring the circle [with] the [neighbors] thing is that she's the one who really, far more than I did, she's the one who opened up the relationship back with them, and started just talking. We got Beau, and they had their dog, and Bobbie would meet J. on the street and talk to them and just kind of re-open the [relationship], and I would kind of like ignore J., and so forth. I was still upset about things and so, she kind of overcame her [resentment].

Rick: Well, I think it's because that was her frustration, the frustration was really the turmoil, because she wanted everyone to get along in the neighborhood, or in her family, her life; she wanted everyone to get along. So when it wasn't that way, it was frustrating for her. So I think that's why she was able to reach the point where she could reach out, because she recognized, “Well, I want to be beyond this, I don't like it, it's very unhappy for me to be in this situation.” 'Cause she wanted that positive energy around her, and she wanted to be in an environment, or in a neighborhood where people got along and respected one another. So it was difficult when it

wasn't like that. [4l-m]

When people rejected an idea that she had, she felt it was a rejection of herself. Several people mentioned that when certain neighbors refused to attend Bobbie and Tom's vow renewal on their 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary because it was a Wiccan ceremony, Bobbie was very hurt and distressed. However her friend Bill, with whom Bobbie had many discussions on a diverse range of topics, noted that Bobbie was very open when they had a philosophical disagreement: "I just found it fascinating that she loved to learn those things, and to just engage her openly and honestly and know that she didn't hold any less of me, or me of her, when we hit a spot where we disagreed." [18h] I would guess the discrepancy can be explained by the fact that Bobbie knew Bill was engaging with her in a non-defensive way, and he genuinely wanted to hear her opinion and hold a discussion with her, whereas the neighbors who refused to attend the vow renewal did not want to discuss any part of it or her being Wiccan.

Her sensitivity and empathy especially extended to animals. Tom remembered in an interview with Joan that, "I would joke with her that we could watch a movie, and let's say it's a Western and ten people just got shot and killed, and it wouldn't bother her, but the horse that fell over [all laugh] she would start crying, or the dog that got hurt." [13kk] Patty noted that "every time she [Bobbie] would touch a cat or an animal or something, there was definitely healing about it." [9u]

At one time, Bobbie and Tom had birds nesting by their front door. Bobbie's sister Bonnie explained what happened when she and her daughter went for a visit:

So we get there before Tom and Bobbie are off work, and there's a sign on the front door. She had left a key, and she said, "I really prefer if you got here no sooner than 6:30, but if you get here before that, there is a key, but try to be really quiet when you come in the house. Just try and not make a lot of noise when you come in the front door." So I'm thinking, "OK, what, has

she got a weird neighbor now?” Well, of course we get there, get the key and go in the house. Bobbie comes home and opens the garage door, she goes in the other way [through the garage door instead of the front door]. She's like, “You didn't disturb them did you?” “Disturb what?” “The birds.” “What birds?” “Oh, I hope you didn't scare them away.” “Bobbie, what are we talking about?” Well, she had that ivy growing on the wall, and of course, it was around that front area. Well, there were birds that had nested there and they had their eggs, and were sitting on their eggs nesting for their little ones, and she didn't want to scare them by people going in and out of the front door. So during nesting season you had to go in and out of the garage door. [19zz]

One time, Bobbie and Tom and Jack, Bobbie's dad, were on Chincoteague Island, known for its good birding and wild horses. The three were engaged in birding, but there was a wild pony about 200 feet away. Bobbie was more interested in the pony than birding, and she started slowly walking toward it. Jack recalled, “I was scared out of my mind. I knew that horse was either gonna bite her or kick her. But that horse looked at her, and she says, 'He's not going to hurt me.' She slowly walked up to him, and finally started petting him, [I thought] 'OK, this is a wild animal, just be careful.' She knew that horse was not going to hurt her.” [22mm]

Bobbie also had a strong creative and artistic streak that came out especially in the fashion and style areas. Several people spontaneously commented that she would have made a wonderful interior decorator or wedding planner. It was important to Bobbie that things be “just right.” After graduating high school, Bobbie had a job cutting hair. Tom and LeaAnne, Bobbie's niece, talked about Bobbie's experience:

Tom: She had a talent for [hair dressing], and she enjoyed it.

LeaAnne: Yeah, my grandmother said she was really good at it, but she, when you were [working] in a hairdresser [shop], you get paid on tips, and so the more heads you do, the more money you're going to make. And Bobbie was very meticulous about it, and so it was like she didn't want the person to leave unless every single hair was in the right exact position it needed to be in. So she wouldn't do it very, like it wasn't like this, [snaps her fingers quickly].... She was very meticulous about it, so she said she didn't make enough money to stay in it 'cause she was too much of a perfectionist with it. [3f]

Bobbie and Tom did extensive redecorating of their living room at least three times in the 12 years they lived in their townhouse in Early Street Village: repainting the walls, buying new couches and other furniture, and rearranging the furniture. However, Bobbie also liked to continually tweak the room by adding new smaller pieces and rearranging. Her attention wasn't confined to the living room; she moved pictures within and between rooms, she had the carpet ripped out and had wood flooring installed upstairs, and she oversaw the remodeling of the kitchen. Rick noted that aside from a relative of his who likes to move furniture and change rooms twice a year, Bobbie was the person he knew who did the most redecorating. One of Bobbie's games that she liked to play with friends was, "Guess what has changed?," even when only a minor thing had occurred, like the addition of a small vase. Carlos, one of their best friends, described this as a "difficult contest" that he could never win. [4bbb] LeaAnne's memory of her aunt's decorating is that there was always something different whenever she visited: "I have a million emails of her telling me all the new things they were, decorating things they were doing to the house. It's like every time she emailed, it was like, 'We're not doing much, but we're doing this, we're doing this, we're doing this, redesigning the kitchen,' and so every time I came here, it was like, 'OK, now what have you done.'" [3k]

Bobbie loved shopping and frequently took a friend with her for company and to bounce ideas off of. Joe and David were two of her favorite shopping companions. Joe said the following about shopping with Bobbie and one trip in particular:

Joe: We'd find things, and I'd say, "Well, that's Bobbie." And just pick it up and give it to her. Because I probably could go through the house and point out everything that we've gotten or I've gotten for her, like those lamps at the top of the stairs? Those three little [ones]? We got those at Burlington Coat Factory. I was with her [that] day. I said, "I want them." She said, "No, I want them." [all laugh]

Tom: Guess who got them?

Joe: They were intended to go in the master bathroom, right between the two sinks. But then Bobbie decided she wanted some light at the top of the stairs right there, and I said, “Well, that would look good there too.” Lo and behold, in the buggy it went. And that was the only one they had, so I lost out. Damn! [all laugh] [1tt]

Bobbie not only enjoyed shopping for herself, but she loved to help her friends with their shopping – for both home decoration and clothes – as well. David recalled how Bobbie helped him completely redecorate his bedroom:

David: I had an orange chair and green curtains that we had to figure out how to design a bedroom around. And she knew exactly where to go.... And she knew exactly how to put it together in ways I'd have never have thought of. And not that Bobbie was a free spender, but she did have a sense of, go ahead and spend maybe more money than you want, because in the long run you'll be happier. And so money might not be able to buy you happiness, but a little bit more money, as opposed to thrift, will make you happier with the final product.... And so I remember just agonizing at this HomeGoods store about this bedspread versus this one versus that.... And Bobbie said, “Just buy it all.” I'm like, “I don't need to buy it all.” She said, “Just buy it all and we'll put it all together and see how it works.”

Tom: And you can return it if you don't like it.

David: That's right, she said, “You can return it if you don't like it,” and so I did, I went ahead and bought it all, which was way more than I ever thought to buy. And the pictures, and everything. And I got it all home, and she knew exactly what to do with it all, and it still looks that way today, as she had designed it. So I can't go to bed at night, or wake up in the morning without almost the first thought being, this is basically Bobbie's room, this is a room designed by Bobbie, and seeing what she put together. [15o]

Sometimes Bobbie shopped one-on-one, and sometimes with a group of people. Terri and Patty have fond memories of going to the Maryland Renaissance Festival with a big group of their friends, breaking into smaller groups and running into each other all day:

Terri: And the Silver Veil gang [the coven that Bobbie joined with Terri and Patty] would organize ... so a whole batch of people would go on the same day. So you'd have 25 of us running around and we'd be going in and out and picking up, meeting groups and stuff. And a couple of those days I spent pretty much the whole day running around with Bobbie. And one of those trips was when she was looking for stuff for their vow renewal. And there was all sorts of really cool stuff, and trying things on.... I'm trying to think if I have any specific stories, other

than just we would walk from 10 in the morning to 6 in the afternoon, laughing our butts off the entire time. [laughs]

Tom: And what I kind of remember is that occasionally Bobbie and I would go, or I would go with her, and I clearly got the feeling I was not as fun as [going with all of you]. [all laugh]

Patty: Oh, dear.

Terri: Yeah, my husband would say the same thing, yeah.

Tom: I was not quite as fun. [9bb]

Interviewees usually remembered their own special connection with Bobbie. For Bill, this was their discussions on religion and fantasy books. For Susie, it was being the only other woman, along with Bobbie, at social functions in a group of eight or nine men. For Joe, Bobbie's across-the-street neighbor who is prone to wearing kimonos, it was something a little more mundane:

Joe: But I have to admit, I'm the only one that got a private ring on her cell phone. [all laugh]

Tom: I did not have my own ring.

Kimberly: Really? [all laugh]

Joe: Only I had my own ring. [all laugh] I had the only separate ring, it was my own private ring. No one else had a private ring tone, except me.... But it tickled me. I said, "Doesn't Tom have his own private ring tone?" "No, only you." "Well, damn, I am special." [all laugh] [1ee]

**“So before I knew it I was baking 40 individual two-tier chocolate wedding cakes”:  
“There's something about Bobbie that made you want to do things for her”**

Bobbie was able to get people to do things for her; not in a manipulative or devious way, but something about her generosity of spirit led people to treat her the same. Tom simply put it as, “there's something about Bobbie that made you want to do things for her.” [1qq] I recently read a quote from Bernard Lietaer who said friends are “those who do favors for each other.”<sup>iv</sup> If this is the working definition that Bobbie used, she had an abundance of people who saw her



as a friend. Rick described at Bobbie's memorial service how he made an offer that he thought she might refuse:

When Bobbie and Tom were celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, I foolishly volunteered to bake her wedding cake. [laughter] Now, you know, knowing how particular Bobbie was, I thought she wouldn't take me up on that offer in a million years. [laughter] So before I knew it I was baking 40 individual two-tier chocolate wedding cakes with raspberry filling and white chocolate cream cheese frosting. [laughter]

Joe, a retired chef, would often find himself cooking and baking for Bobbie's get-togethers. He related the story of one of their concoctions based on a recipe Bobbie found in a magazine while she was waiting for a doctor's appointment and Joe was keeping her company:

Joe: We were sitting in the doctor's office, and she picked up a magazine, and she said, "God, I would love to try that," and it was those baked apples we did last year [at Bobbie and Tom's Christmas party]. And I said, "OK." So, not having a paper or pencil handy, I read that thing, and I read it, and I read it, and I memorized it, and as soon as I got home I jotted everything down. Because you know I thought, "OK, if she wants it one day, I'll have it written down."

Tom: I didn't know that story.

Joe: Yeah, and so I wrote it down when I got home, and that's how you got those baked apples. Because she said, "Oh, those look so good." [1v]

Tom was also under Bobbie's spell. Joe related his take on what happened when it came time to plant in the spring: "She loved the outdoors ... and she loved watching things grow. And she would go to the [garden center] with Tom and say, 'Let's buy this, this, and this, and then let's get home and then Tom plant it, and I'll watch and supervise that it goes in the right place,' kind of thing." [1q]

### **"We're creating a family": Bobbie creates a community**

Bobbie wanted to live in a community, not just a neighborhood. With her initiative, the Early Street Village, right from the start, was a place where people interacted with each other more than a typical new development. Bill described Bobbie as, "You have somebody who just,

I think, really, really wanted people to get along and make things a better world and a better place for people to be happy. And that was definitely something that you could just pick up immediately from Bobbie.” [18p]

Bobbie organized the first party in the neighborhood; she also was the person to suggest that there should be a social committee in the neighborhood to help put together parties and events. David remembered vividly the impact that Bobbie had on him the first time he met her:

My first memory of Bobbie is when she organized the first neighborhood gathering. And, although it was at Drew and Emmanuel's house, it was obvious Bobbie was Master of Ceremony for the event. Although we had not moved in yet, we were still buying, we were future homeowners, and so it was the first time we got to meet all of the neighbors. And I remember Bobbie pretty forcefully saying that this was not going to be a neighborhood of strangers, that we were all going to get to know each other, we were going to like each other, we were going to create a neighborhood that everyone dreams of living in, but most neighborhoods are not like that. [15a]

Rick remembered that the first time he met Bobbie in the model home she was bringing a piece of cake to the sales person. Even though it was a small gesture it stood out on his mind and had an impact on him:

It felt very nice and neighborly for a first meeting, because it's-, the Washington area everything moves at such a fast pace and everything. And you went in and there was one of the neighbors bringing a piece of cake to the salesperson and everything. It just kind of felt like the type of place you would want to live because of her presence there and the gesture that she was making. [4b]

Friend and neighbor Joan described Bobbie's role in the community as, “Bobbie was the heart of the neighborhood.... She really tried so hard to create a sense of community here. Even though a lot of us were hopeless [laughs], she never gave up. And she was the center of any event that happened, she was the main person.” [13ff]

Drew, a friend and former neighbor, recalled one humorous instance where Bobbie was unsuccessful at bringing people together: “So I remember Bobbie liked hobbies ... she got on this

kick of stamps. And she insisted that the four of us [Drew, Emmanuel, Rick, and Carlos] come over here and talk and talk and stamp. [all laugh] And she was so thrilled with herself for these stamps, and we were like, we were not really impressed, but we were very polite [all laugh].”

[23l]

One reason that Bobbie wanted to create a family within the neighborhood was that even though some of her biological family lived nearby, she did not feel close to them. Tom's biological family, with whom they were more connected, lived on the other coast. Carlos reflected:

Our families are far away, and we're creating a family. And that's another thing a lot of people don't do, and Bobbie was very open to that. Family's not really the people related to you by blood.... She was open and she really enjoyed the harmony and people getting along and all that.... But really we became family.... We had a lot of things in common, we had a need to be together and we shared all that. [4dd]

Bobbie sometimes interacted with the men in her life as a surrogate mother figure. Tom mentioned this to David, who agreed. Carlos also felt this from Bobbie; he said in her memorial service, “Rick and I became part of her family. Both of our families are not in the area, so we had that comfort of a friend and a mother.”

Bobbie enjoyed events the most when her whole “family” was involved. Tom explains, “We had a lot of good times, a lot of fun with Rick and Carlos and Drew and Emmanuel, as groups we did a lot of things. And Bobbie was very happy when the group got together. She was happy with individual settings, but [when] the whole group got together she was very happy about that.” [15bb]

Even though there were other people who wanted the same thing for their neighborhood as Bobbie – a community, not just a neighborhood – people saw her as the initiating energy for

this. Perhaps because of her emotional and time investment in forging relationships, she could get easily hurt when others did not feel the same way. Bill commented:

I think she was fundamental to the idea of this neighborhood being an integrated whole, having the sense of everyone belonging. And I remember how hurt she was when people didn't always respond to that. And I think that's one of the things that disappointed her the most, were that people weren't willing to try to get to know each other as neighbors.... I just think she was all-around just such a special person, that it made this place a really wonderful place to be. [18d-e]

Bobbie also created a family within her family; a closer-knit group of friends that she would sometimes integrate into her biological family when various functions would occur. At Bobbie's memorial service, Rick recalled:

And once you were Bobbie's friend, it meant that you were part of her family. It meant invitations to family dinners hosted by her dad Jack, his lovely wife Marge.... Being Bobbie's friend and being part of the family meant Christmases spent with Leslie, Charlie, and Bobbie's niece LeaAnne. We would be searching through the house for the presents that Bobbie had hidden and frantically opening them; she loved Christmas.

Christmas was truly a special time of year for Bobbie. She relished the gift-buying process, getting ready for company, and decorating the house. Her step-mom Marge explains:

So the price of a gift for Bobbie, I got this from her. It's like me, if I'm gonna buy a gift for somebody, I'll like run into the store, I get something, and I come out. So, with Bobbie ... she thinks about it for a really long time, she plans it, like in her mind, [and] she sets it up. So for her, she spent the same amount of money, but look at all the enjoyment she got out of it. [laughs] Isn't that an interesting way to think? Now see, I didn't think like that. But she had the anticipation before she bought it, and shopping, it was a whole different way of thinking. [22aa]

For years Bobbie and Tom spent Christmas with Tom's side of the family. After a particularly rough trip out to Portland, Oregon, which took 22 hours, Bobbie and Tom re-thought how they wanted to spend their holidays. Tom said, "We kind of lost the fact that we could have Christmas here with our friends and so, we just kind of said, 'Let's just have Christmas with our friends.'" [2i]

It's not clear that Tom ever had a discussion with his mom about this, but Sue, in our

interview with her in Tom's home, put a positive spin on Bobbie and Tom choosing to stay in Alexandria for Christmas: "It was really obvious that you and Bobbie were finding your own family back here.... I always thought it was right, remember when you stopped coming for Christmas, you found your own family in this group, and coming out there was like being part of something else.... It was that you had developed your own family." [16g]

Throughout the interviews, I noticed that most neighbors commented that things were different now – not as neighborly, the sense of community had diminished. It's clear that this sentiment had been going on for several years, and was not just a reaction to losing Bobbie. For example, Susie, in the middle of talking about how much Bobbie liked parties, said, "there seemed to be more neighborhood parties then." [14f] Joan also discussed this in her interview: "A lot of the color has left the neighborhood.... So it just never was the same after that. I mean, there's nice people here, and some people are still here, but it was the chemistry between everybody.... We're just all kind of falling by the wayside now." [13vv]

So did Bobbie succeed in creating more than just a neighborhood? David seems to think so:

And by her sheer willpower, I think she did that, that this did become from day one, she set the tone of the neighborhood where we did know all our neighbors, we did know what cars people drove, and which kids went to which houses, and if you needed a cup of sugar, or an egg, or someone could walk your pet or check in on your house, that was the type of neighborhood that we had. [15a]

Even though things had changed in recent years, I think everyone in the neighborhood who opened themselves up to Bobbie and was willing to have her in their lives as a friend would say that she accomplished what she set out to do: create a community of people who cared for each other.



### **Interlude: “She was a defender”**

I found this story particularly interesting given what would happen to Bobbie only a few short months later. Joyce, one of Bobbie and Tom's dog park friends, relayed the following story about a man who gave Joyce a hard time at the dog park and Bobbie's reaction:

And I know one day ... there was an older gentleman who walked down that back path there. And one time when he was walking by himself, no dog or anything, and I had let my Blackie [her Black lab] off the leash, and he just raised hell with me because I had let the dog off the leash. It's against the law for the dogs to be off the leash, and I would never do it in the park there, but a lot of people do it after they cross the bridge near the dog park there in the back. And so I guess I had told somebody about it.... And so Annette [another dog park friend] ... said, “There's just something weird about that man,” and I said, “Oh I don't think so, I think he's just an old, grouchy man, that's all.” [both laugh] And what's funny is, I just remember from Bobbie, one day she said, “Now, if you're afraid of that man,” she said, “don't you worry,” she said. “I'll just go with you and if something happens, I'll be,” you know, something similar to, oh, she would be there to stand up for me [both laugh] if that man bothered me. Well, I don't think that man was going to bother me at all, he's just one of these oddball people.... So she was a defender, I guess you might say. She was ready to help me out if I was afraid. [5a]

### **Chapter Three: Bobbie as a Person**

You see things and you say, “Why?” But I dream things that never were and I say, “Why not?”

-George Bernard Shaw

Bobbie was her own person. She evolved over the years, continually changing and allowing herself to be open to new experiences. Bobbie also displayed some contradictions in her personality and her attitudes. She felt different from others, like an outsider, but instead of bemoaning this, she used it to her advantage to connect with others who felt similarly. Bobbie had a painful childhood, and her family members recalled stories that illustrated the difficulties she had during her growing up and young adult years.

#### **“Over the years she changed, she grew, she developed”: Bobbie evolved**

Almost everyone who has known Bobbie for awhile commented on how Bobbie changed and grew over the years. Bobbie's evolution was evident on several levels. Tom recalled that when he met her, she was largely apolitical. As they would watch news together or talk about current events he would provide his liberal interpretation, which Bobbie thought fit her worldview pretty well. She became more politically aware and started to vote Democratic. Bobbie also became more aware of discrimination in society, largely through the “interventions” of her gay friends. Carlos related her growth in becoming more aware of racial issues in the Washington DC area when he and Rick and Tom and Bobbie first started becoming friends:

And, because us not being from the Washington area, sometimes we would talk about her growing up in this area, and so she would tell us the history of the high schools and all that [from] the different places that she moved. And then we would ask Bobbie, “So Bobbie, how was it during the civil unrest and the fires in downtown, the burning of, I don't know, whatever areas there that were burned, and the march on Washington,” and it was funny to me because, and this is my recollection, Bobbie would say, “I don't remember anything about that, because I was doing my hair.” [laughs] She was a young girl at that time, and so her mind was in the moment, in what was happening in her high school, and so we always found that very



fascinating. So Bobbie realized that, I guess at that time, she wasn't paying attention to things, so many times I noticed throughout the years she was trying to recover. She was trying to learn, she was trying to be aware, to become-, to learn about all those things that, you know, probably because of her youth, and her mind on other things, she realized that she should have paid more attention. So she was always, I think, in this mode of learning, and that's the reason why these conversations went on so well. [4f]

Carlos also noted that he and the other gay men in their circle of friends “educated” Bobbie about gay issues. Although Rick, Carlos' partner, disagrees with the accuracy of this memory, Carlos recalled during Bobbie's memorial service that, “It was really our intent, we were mentors in gay life and gay culture for Bobbie. [laughter] And the funniest one was when Bobbie said, 'Oh, my God, I did not know the Village People were gay!' [laughter] And I said, 'Did you know about Liberace?' 'No!' [laughter]”

Bobbie wanted to learn and was open to both reading and discussion with others on topics of interest. Tom and Bill discussed how this dynamic worked between Bobbie and Bill:

Tom: A lot of this was new to Bobbie, I mean to learn about other cultures and ancient religions and so forth, and Bill knew a fair amount about it. You would engage each other and have conversations about it where a lot of other people wouldn't do that, so Bobbie always appreciated [that about Bill]. And I think at times she felt like some people weren't taking her seriously, and Bill would take what she was saying seriously and wanted to have a deep conversation – I don't know if “deep”'s the right word, but you know, thoughtful conversation.

Bill: I would say some of them were, yeah. And Bobbie had questions for me too, because being a Christian and being gay, that certainly seems to the world like an oxymoron, or something. [18i]

Bobbie's level of confidence also changed. People who have known Bobbie and Tom for years portrayed Bobbie as a somewhat needy person in her younger years; she would often look to Tom for support. However, in later years her self-confidence seemed to have grown and she became more confident and sure of herself. Sue, Tom's mother, portrayed Bobbie's development: And I guess over the years she changed, she grew, she developed from that kind of shy, quiet, young woman to her own person. Not pushy in any way, but she developed who she was, she

became a person unto herself that I didn't feel that in the beginning, or didn't recognize it. I will come from a very prejudicial point of view that I think Tom had a lot to do with her development. I would give him great credit, I mean, because of who he is, he and Bobbie developed together, they both grew a lot. [16a-b]

Another way that Bobbie grew was that she developed an ability to stand up for herself. Tom mentioned that there was a person at work who was widely perceived to be a bully; Bobbie stood up to this person, and in turn this person developed a grudging respect for her and they developed a cordial, though not close, relationship. Another example is when Bobbie confronted her Wiccan teacher Millie about what Bobbie perceived as being treated disrespectfully. Terri and Patty related the background and the event that they witnessed:

Terri: Millie is sometimes a little bit more abrupt than you might like, and she would have this tendency of kind of verbally slapping people around a little bit sometimes.... And as Bobbie got more confident, she started to become more aware of how this was not appropriate. And it was especially coming out I guess when they were teaching together, which I can totally understand having taught with Millie a little bit. And Bobbie was getting to the point, and she said to me at one point, "If she does it again, I'm walking out."

Patty: Because she had had conversations with Millie before that, that said, "This is not working, you can't do this. I'm not going to put up with this kind of treatment," which was completely understandable.

Terri: Yeah, I mean, it wasn't like out of the blue, she had been talking to Millie about it. And in the kitchen one day she said to me, "If she does it again, I'm walking out." And I basically went, "Yeah, I can understand you doing that, I hope it doesn't happen, but I understand."

....

Patty: [One time, during a meeting] Millie was in a bad mood, for whatever reason, and Millie snapped at her [Bobbie], I mean, to the point where the rest of us went...

Terri: "What?"

Patty: "What was that?".... Because we didn't see that anything horrible was happening to warrant that kind of reaction. And Bobbie, bless her heart, just simply quietly packed up her stuff and walked out.

Terri: "Gotta go," and walked right out. And I watched her go and said to myself, "That's what

she said she was going to do, and she did it.” And, you know, that's big, brass cojones. And she was totally right, you know.

Patty: She was.

....

Terri: Bobbie was such a strong person, I mean, she'd done her best to try to talk to her [Millie], and she said, “I'm gonna do it,” and she didn't make a...

Patty: A big scene, no.

Terri: didn't make a big scene, there wasn't a screaming match, she just quietly got up and walked out, and that was pretty cool, she ju-, you know?

Patty: It was.

Terri: 'Cause people don't do [that usually].

Patty: That she had enough respect for herself.

Terri: She had enough respect for herself and you could see that growing over time.

Tom: Yeah, 'cause [during] the first year she would not have done that.

Terri: No, no, exactly.

Patty: No, she would have just taken it.

Terri: Yeah, so there was the biggest sign-, funny, the biggest sign of growth was she walked out the door, and, you know, kids and parents, I mean. [Patty laughs]

....

Terri: And I think part of the thing with Bobbie was, not just how would we react, but the fact that we were like, “No, honey, you're part of us, we got your back,” 'cause I think there was this part of her that never really felt like she was worthy of [our support]. And part of the conversations I would have with her was, “No, dear, you are worthy of that.” [9gg]

Clearly Bobbie's level of self-confidence had grown, but she still needed the encouragement of her friends to remind her sometimes that she did not have to endure situations where she felt disrespected. There are other examples where Bobbie felt sometimes she wasn't

as smart as others; this seemed to have been true earlier in her life rather than later. Her conversations with Bill certainly were treasured by Bobbie, but there were times when she was quieter during conversations that she was involved in and she thought that other people were faster than she was in their thinking. Leslie related the following interaction she had with Bobbie on this topic:

I remember one time she said to me – and I think this is how she really felt – she said, “I don't feel like I think as quickly as other people, because by the time something comes to my mind to say something on what's going on the topic,” she goes, “it's already been passed on.” She goes, “So I like to just sit there and listen.” And I said, “Not everybody thinks too hard about what they say, they just say it, because they have something on that subject, they know something, an opinion, or just a joke.” I said, “You don't have to try so hard,” because I think she thought she maybe wasn't always as smart as other people, and she's very, very smart. [10j] <sup>v</sup>

Bobbie forged her own path; in not following convention, she allowed herself to be open to new things, new people, new ideas. She read voraciously; she thought about constructive feedback and was willing to change based on it; she incorporated what worked for her in her life philosophy. Eventually, this path led her to paganism and in 1999 she decided to become a witch. <sup>vi</sup> As Tom put it, “Not many people in their 50s would say, 'I want to explore a new religion.’” [13y]

### **Example: Wicca**

Bobbie was raised in a Christian household. Although it's not clear what exactly turned her on to paganism, she loved watching television shows like “Charmed.” Wanda, her mom, speculated that watching this kind of show “sparked an interest” in Bobbie and that Bobbie was “nosy. She had to know what was going on.” [19ccc] Bobbie had tremendous empathy with nature and animals, interests that most witches share. She had also decided that Christianity was not for her. She started taking classes in May of 2000 and met her friends Patty and Terri there.

This was the first class their teacher Millie taught. Millie described the energy of the people in her very first class:

They bonded together and each of them contributed something ... and I think Bobbie contributed the heart that was that class, and T. grounded the class, and Patty provided energy [laughs], and Terri the knowledge, the intellect of the class, and N. was always in the ethereal.... And so they each kind of integrated an offering of themselves.... I think that was the first place she could just contribute who she was.... And there was so much love present. [22k-1]

Most Wiccans take a new name when they start practicing; Bobbie, who was still wearing her hair red at the time, became known as “Amber Fox.” Millie explains what attracted Bobbie to Fox as an animal spirit:

Millie: They're smart, brilliant, 'cause they're really smart, and they don't allow other people's strengths to interfere with what she wants to accomplish. It helped her, tapping into that, to be cunning – she had that ability, that's kind of what that energy is all about, it's like, if it's not necessary to have a confrontation, I'm not going to, but if it is, I got no problem. They don't thrash about in the brush.

Tom: Yeah, that's kind of what I always thought about Fox, was, he's very secretive, he's on the edge of the [clearing].

Millie: He's so attuned to his environment, he blends into the environment, and I think it's because of the respect that Fox has [for] living things. It's almost like a fox asks permission before they act, before they even place a paw down, they get permission from where they're gonna put it before they put it there, and that's how they move. They stop and they get permission from their prey before they pounce. You watch, the prey will stop and know that it's dinner. [laughs] And in that moment they give permission, or the fox won't [pounce]. [22dd]

Part of the Wiccan religion is the ceremonies that take place to mark certain times of the year and the moon cycles. The ceremonies are rituals, but there can be a fair amount of freedom in the content that is used. Patty and Terri recounted one ritual in particular that was memorable:

Patty: In her third year, she and [male colleague] did a ritual together at Imbolc, which is February 2<sup>nd</sup>.... The two of them just did the most beautiful ritual.

Terri: Was that the one where they each did a Charge?

Patty: Right, right.

Terri: Explain that part.

Patty: Yeah they, well, it's just the cohesiveness of it, they each had mapped out obviously, and it took some coordination.... So the two of them did this ritual together, and it just, you would have thought that they had rehearsed this together for a month, it was just so natural, and so elegant. I know that word comes up a lot with Bobbie, but there's a reason it does. [Terri and Patty laugh] There is a particular piece of writing called the Charge of the Goddess that we usually say at Moons, it's a beautiful-, it's not really rhyming, but it's sort of instructions from the Goddess as to if you want to be a whole, cosmic, spiritually aware child, these are some steps for you to get there: honor the Earth, honor animals and other living beings, don't take things for granted, live with joy and beauty in your heart, that sort of thing. There 's a complementary part of that called the Charge of the God which doesn't come up as frequently, but it is instructions from the divine masculine as well, and what Bobbie and [male colleague] did for that particular ritual was, [he] read the Charge of the Goddess and Bobbie read the Charge of the God. And they really just had that balance of just very cadenced, it was beautiful, it was very moving.... The ritual itself was very memorable for me: "Wow, that's really neat."

Terri: Yeah, the folks, if you say, "the one where they did both [Charges] when they did it," people go, "Oh, yeah, that was really good." [Patty laughs] It was just, 'cause you could see that connection that Bobbie had to the Goddess, to nature, you could just see all of that kind of come out in full.

Patty: Blossoming.

Terri: It was just very cool. [9ee]

Ritual can also happen in more mundane ways. Terri recalled a conversation she had with Bobbie and a group of other Wiccans regarding ritual:

I remember one time we were at R.'s for full Moon, and Bobbie and I were talking, and I think somebody else had started in the conversation, but she was saying how she didn't think she really did a lot of ritual stuff. But then in the same conversation she was talking about there was a dragon statue by [her front] door. She said every day when she'd leave the house, she'd pet it [and] she'd tell it to take care of the house. [Patty starts laughing] When she got home, she would pet it and say thank you for taking care of the house. And I said, "Boy, that sounds like ritual to me." [all laugh] And R. was standing there, we got her into the conversation, explained it, and [she] was like, "Sounds like ritual to me." [all laugh] And Bobbie was like, "Oh, OK.... I guess I do ritual on a regular basis then." [9k]

Bobbie, Terri, and Patty's class was the first class that their teacher Millie taught. Millie formed her own association, the Chantry of the Silver Veil, and Bobbie became the first person to

fulfill outreach duties for the coven. In this role she answered email questions and met with people in person to determine whether they should be invited into the next class. Millie described the process:

Millie: We put up a website and she would interview people [interested in] joining our group. She was just a mastermind. She would determine whether they would fit in by having a conversation [and] find out about them.... She really enjoyed that.

Tom: Did she have a good feel for people?

Millie: I don't know if she ever turned anybody away, but I would have her interview them. But after she talked to them there wasn't a lot for me to do, because she would say, "This person do-do-do-do." Told me all about them, her sense of who they were, how they might fit into the group, and then I would choose whether they did or didn't. And most everybody she talked to is still in the group. [21n]

Beth, who became a student of Bobbie's and Millie's, described her experience meeting

Bobbie:

I met Bobbie in January of 2004. She was the outreach coordinator for the Chantry of the Silver Veil, and we had arranged to meet because I was interested in finding a Wiccan group. I was surprised at how "normal" she was. My first impressions were that she was extremely grounded, intelligent, "relatable," and gentle. I liked her immediately. [20a]

Once Bobbie had been a member of the group for several years, she co-taught a first-year class with Millie as part of her own learning and training. Beth indicated how important the class was to her own development and the role that Bobbie's presence played:

The class was life-transforming. Literally. Bobbie and Millie taught the class together, and Bobbie was a very grounding, comforting presence for me in class. The first few classes I was very nervous and withdrawn. I'm not sure I would have kept coming if it weren't for Bobbie being there.... Most of the Wiccans I had met before meeting Bobbie were people you could look at and label as Wiccan. By that I mean Gothic style, dark clothing, hair dyed black, harsh makeup, wearing lots of crystals and pentagrams. These people were not "relatable" to me at all, and I didn't particularly want to associate with them either. Bobbie was not like that at all! She was so grounded and "relatable" and realistic. I would have never been able to pick her out of a crowd as a Wiccan. She was so easy to talk to and gentle, that I felt comfortable with her right away.... Bobbie led me to the Chantry of the Silver Veil. Knowing that she was a part of that group made me feel like the group was safe. Being part of the Chantry has allowed me to grow

in ways I never imagined. I would not be the person I am today without my experiences there, and I never would have had those experiences if it weren't for Bobbie. [20b, c, f]

Millie described what teaching did for Bobbie:

Millie: That was such a gift for her to be able to teach, that was another rite of passage, she just blossomed when she was contributing. And I sat in on the classes. It was an offering, to teach a class was an offering from her heart to her students.

Tom: It speaks to her growth, because when you first met her, she would never have felt that she had much to offer.

Millie: She was all caught up into, you have to know something that they didn't in order for you to contribute. And that's not the way I teach at all. [laughs] She learned, from me she learned to give them herself. And you explore with them the material that is whatever the class was about. But being a contribution to someone else's growth, she was just glowing I bet when she came home. She loved to do that. [22i-j]

Bobbie was open with her non-Wiccan friends about her religion and beliefs. Her friend and neighbor Susie noted that, "I always knew the full moons were important to her... And so now a full moon to me will always mean Bobbie." [14m] Susie thought this connection in particular would continue for her since Bobbie died about 36 hours before the full moon on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008. At work, Bobbie's co-workers knew about Bobbie being a witch. Bobbie created the sign-in sheet for everyone in the office, and on the first of the month she would put "rabbit, rabbit" on the sheet to wish everyone good luck. Bobbie also had "Namaste" in her signature line on her email. (Namaste can be roughly translated as, "I respect that divinity within you that is also within me.")<sup>vii</sup>

Although Tom was not interested in becoming a Wiccan, he supported Bobbie in her search for meaning. He describes it as, he and Bobbie had similar spiritual beliefs, but where he can think about things and have an individual spiritual experience, Bobbie liked having a structure and a group of people to journey with.



Not everyone was supportive of Bobbie in her identity as a Wiccan. In particular, her mother was concerned about Bobbie no longer identifying as a Christian. Leslie, Charlie, and Tom discussed this:

Charlie: What I would think would bother Wanda, and she didn't mention this, would be Bobbie's religion.

Leslie: Yeah.

Charlie: I think that would really bother her.

Tom: Yeah.

Charlie: And I, she didn't mention that to me at all, but in just meeting her, and talking to her over a three-day span [when Wanda was in town for Bobbie's memorial service], I would think that would have been a very big crossroad.

Tom: And I know she was, I've heard that she was sort of upset that at the memorial service that was a big part of the service. And it was more I think, Wanda knew that Bobbie was Wiccan, but, "Do you have to announce it to the whole crowd, that that's what you are?" And I think she was concerned about, you know, will Bobbie go to heaven, 'cause she didn't [believe in a Christian God]. [10p]

Wanda herself seemed to frame the "problem" of Bobbie's religion as an issue with Bobbie's insistence on thinking for herself and being an individual:

Well, [Wicca is], it's anti-Christian, it's witchcraft. And the Bible says you don't, so you don't. We never could see eye-to-eye on that.... My mother brought me up strictly by the Bible, and I tried to bring my kids up [with its] teachings, and Bobbie and I had a long conversation. [Bobbie said] "But I..." I said, "There's no 'but I.' Here it is, it's written down, and it's what you do." "You just don't understand." [19nn]

Sometimes the coven itself was not as supportive as Bobbie would have liked. Bobbie wanted to learn all about Wicca, and she came across some disturbing information in learning about its history; however, this exploration and desire to understand – her inquisitive spirit – was tamped down. Bill recalled what Bobbie related to him:

Bill: I know that in exploring the Old Religion that she made some discoveries about

developments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the role of Gardnerian theosophy and she was somewhat critical, she wanted to actually be able to stand outside and be critical and she was really harshly, I think, overly harshly reprimanded for that...

Kimberly: Within her coven, do you mean?

Bill: Within her coven I think, and there was a certain degree of wanting to honor confidences that she never went into a great deal of detail, but it was one of those ironies that a vehicle for self-discovery and kind of being open and exploring had its own drawbacks and difficulties. But I think that's just part of being with humans, you know, we're a troublesome bunch at the best of times sometimes. [18z]

And then there was Bobbie's falling-out with her teacher Millie. Millie's take on the event was slightly different than Patty and Terri's description of it, but the positive aspect of growth for both of them, despite the tremendous pain, was evident:

Tom: Another thing I was thinking of, you and Bobbie had a falling-out. About that, do you think that was kind of a way to separate from you?

Millie: That was necessary or it wouldn't have happened. At some point, you have to detach from your teacher in order to come into your own and be a teacher. And for Bobbie, because she loved me so much, because we were so deeply connected, it had to be harsh. It [didn't have] to be, but I decided it had to be harsh. [laughs] I don't know what we were doing – oh, I was picking on N.... It's like I was damaging her [Bobbie's] children, and she was like a lioness protecting her cub. It was [a] hard, really painful experience. That confrontation, that day when I threw her out, or she said she was never coming back, that she was leaving. In that one instant, both our lives-, she became an adult in the Craft on her own, a witch in her own right, and I had to look at how I was teaching because I could get really harsh, and because of that incident, that class decided that I needed to address my anger issues. Because of her I became softer, gentler. I went through T.'s anger management thing that he teaches, and you know I haven't been angry at anyone at all [since].

Tom: That's interesting...

Millie: Such a contribution...

Tom: it was growth for both of you.

Millie: It was such a contribution because there's people that I've been able to heal and to help now because I don't get angry. And I'm able to teach people how to get past their anger. It was such a contribution to my healing practice, to all my relationships, and to my students.... And that's all because of Bobbie and that parting. You know, and it was never the same after that. It

was like when a child leaves home, it's never the same...

Tom: I know it was never the same for her.

Millie: especially if the child left [on bad terms].

Tom: It helps me to think about that as her growth, that she...

Millie: She came into her own, she really did.

Tom: she could not, if you think about the person you met for the first time at K.'s, zero possibility that she could have stood up to you and now she did based on her feeling that she needs to protect...

Millie: Somebody that she loves.

Tom: somebody she loves and somebody she thinks is [getting hurt]. [21v]

Things were not the same for Bobbie in the Chantry of the Silver Veil after her confrontation with and detachment from Millie. Although Bobbie occasionally attended ritual at Millie's house after that, she had lost her trust in her former teacher. Bobbie tried attending a few other local covens, but nothing spoke to her. Her friend Terri's new coven would have been a good option, but it was a one-hour drive away. Bobbie became a solitary witch, and according to Tom and others, started to drift away from Wicca. Those closest to Bobbie suspect that, given the opportunity, she would have continued to grow and learn about other religions and spiritual paths, such as Native American and Chinese religions, eventually incorporating parts of each that worked for her into her own, unique web of spiritual beliefs and practices.

**“I was often touched by her adult, precise demeanor and caught off-guard by that gentle, child-like happiness”: Contradictions in Bobbie's personality**

Like all of us, Bobbie's personality contained some contradictions. Perhaps most evident is that although she herself refrained from judging people based on how they look, she was extremely concerned with how she presented herself and the way she looked. Aside from being

very aware of her clothes, make-up, and hair, she had a face lift when she was in her 50s. As her neighbor and friend Joan explained:

I think the highest compliment I ever got on one of my kids is, I used to live in a high-rise building. And this older woman got on the elevator one day, and she said, “Your son is the only child in this building that speaks to me.” And that's the kind of person that Bobbie was. She didn't see the exterior so much, although she kept a great, great exterior. [Tom and Kimberly chuckle] But she really looked at the human being, and how that human being felt, whether they were happy or sad, she looked beyond the surface. [1300]

I would guess that although Bobbie gave others the benefit of the doubt in getting to know them, she wasn't sure that they would do the same for her, so she decided to give herself an advantage: to always look her best. That would be one thing she would have that others would not be able to fault her on.

Bobbie was sometimes described as “serious” in her demeanor or presentation, with a need to have things be “right” or “correct.” Her niece Bunky, in comparing Tom and Bobbie, recalled that:

I think us kids always saw him – they really came over around Christmas time and Thanksgiving and Bobbie was more sophisticated – but Tom would sit there and get on the floor and play Legos and blocks and he was a fun uncle, Bobbie was the more sophisticated [one].... You almost think of Bobbie as one of those china dolls, I've never seen her in anything less than dress slacks, silk shirt, or something, I've never seen her in sweat pants – even the time when I stayed in her house – never seen her in sweat pants, never seen her in shorts, always slacks, dresses, hair perfect, make-up perfect, earrings, the china doll of the family or something. And Tom was like, “OK, let's play on the floor.” And we'd always jump on him, and this and that, and Bobbie would sit there all prim and proper [and] talk to the adults. [19s]

Despite this, however, there was a side to Bobbie that could be very fun-loving. Marge, Bobbie's step-mom, recalled going to dinner about two weeks before Bobbie's death and Bobbie flirting with the waiter:

We were at dinner, remember when we were at dinner [and] the waiter was so cute. He was not interested in girls, but he was very cute, and she was just flirting with him, he was so cute! And she just tickled me to death, I mean, it was totally innocent, she knew it, she was just [having

fun]. [laughs] I said, “What are you doing?” Oh, and then Jamie [Bobbie's niece] said something to her, Jamie says, “But you're married.”... She [Bobbie] turned to her and she says, “I'm married, but I'm not dead.” [all laugh] And we just laughed our heads off.... Sometimes Bobbie comes off so serious and right, things had to have like an order to them. And then she'd do something like that, that would just relax you so much.... I was often touched by her adult, precise demeanor and caught off-guard by that gentle, child-like happiness. [22t, jj]

Another contradiction is that Bobbie loved nature and flowers, and some things she was able to help grow; Millie stated that, “anything that grew she had an immediate rapport with. I think that just being in her presence things flourished because of her relationship she developed with the mother, the Earth.” [21g] However, she absolutely could not take care of her favorite flower: orchids. Joe, who has container after container of healthy, beautiful orchids growing in his kitchen window, recalled, “She'd get so pissed off at me because her orchids would always die. And I said, 'You're over-watering them.' 'No, I'm not.' 'Yes, you are,' but then she would give me one, and I'd nurse it back to health.” [1mm]

A funny example of a contradiction in her personality came from Leslie, who noted a discrepancy between Bobbie's love of animals and this story:

Bobbie wanted to one time show one of the cats to me, and it was under the bed [starts laughing]. She's going, “Here,” this shows you how bad she can be, “Come here, honey, come on, darling,” she reaches under [makes cat yowl and hissing noises]. “That bitch!” [all laugh] And that cat just gouged her one, right. I said, “That's OK, I don't need to see that cat today. Named Taz?” [all laugh] [10ee]

Bobbie was generous in spirit, and yet sometimes she could envy what others achieved. In an interview with Bobbie's niece LeaAnne, Tom had the following take on how Bobbie saw and related to LeaAnne:

Bobbie really was very proud of what LeaAnne's accomplished. And I don't know if jealous is the right word; envious that she didn't have those opportunities, or didn't make those opportunities. So when you see somebody young who's gonna accomplish a lot professionally, and she hadn-, Bobbie didn't have, accomplish a lot professionally. I mean, she did her job really well, but I think she was really proud of what [LeaAnne has accomplished so far], and how hard

it, how much you had to work for it, that it wasn't just, my parents are paying for my education for four years, and so forth. [3w]

### **Example: Work Life**

People who knew Bobbie knew that she struggled with feeling valued at work. She chose to apply to receptionist positions and then usually felt that her broader skills and knowledge were underutilized. Tom and his mom talked about the position she liked the most, which she had when she and Tom lived in Oregon for a brief period in the early '90s:

Sue: I always thought Tom, and you can tell me if I'm right or wrong, that she loved her job in Oregon about as much as any job.

Tom: Yes, that's absolutely, yeah.... She worked in the mortgage application department.

Sue: Yeah, and she really, really enjoyed it. Challenging job.

Tom: It was the one job that I think people really respected her abilities, and she got to do a lot more than other jobs.... Yeah, she really did enjoy that job.

Sue: I think probably of the jobs she had, while I knew her at least, that was the happiest time she was in what job she was doing, and it was a hard thing for her to leave [she and Tom decided to move back to Alexandria]. [16p]

The norm, however, in Bobbie's various jobs was that she did not feel valued. Tom's cousins Jane and Al characterized Bobbie's behavior and feelings as:

Al: She seemed like the person that, it seemed like she changed jobs a lot, she probably didn't as much as I thought, but...

Jane: I think she did for awhile...

Al: it seemed like she could always find a job...

Jane: every couple of years it seemed like she was changing jobs.

Al: she got upset with this, she'd quit and go find another job.

Jane: But this last one, she stayed at a long time.... I think most of the time she felt like she wasn't appreciated for what she was doing and didn't have an opportunity to move up anyplace.

[8n]

Bobbie was stuck in a Catch-22: she did well in reception positions, but then got frustrated when she wasn't allowed to grow beyond the confines of a narrow job description of answering the phones and greeting visitors. Also, the nature of a receptionist position was such that she was always the lowest person on the totem pole in terms of job prestige; some people could not see beyond the position to the person. She was in her last job about 10 years, the longest she was at any job she held. Xhilda, one of her co-workers, described Bobbie's frustration as, "she knew more than what she was doing there.... And by most of us, she was perceived like a receptionist, but she was, I don't know, I accepted her way, way more than she was in there, way more." [11l]

Xhilda and several other co-workers who were close with Bobbie gave her esteem; however, it's clear that Bobbie could get very frustrated with others in her workplace and the way she felt she was being treated. Friend and neighbor Joe recalled that when he and Bobbie were in the car during their many shopping trips she would talk about her experiences at work:

She was a kind, loving, giving person and some people treated her like crap. I feel like, the way she spoke, people at work didn't appreciate her. But that's my opinion.... But she would talk about that they were very standoffish at her at work. They would only speak to her when needed, so to speak. And it kind of hurt Bobbie because they really didn't know Bobbie.... And I can't imagine Bobbie ever being unlikable. That's just the way her personality was. And we would talk about it, how she felt. [1j]

Her father, Jack, put his take on Bobbie's work experiences a little more bluntly:

Jack: What hurts so much is how she looked forward, in just a couple more years she could retire. I heard what they said [about her being a good worker and employee during the memorial service] at her work: she hated it. [all laugh]

Marge: She was done.

Jack: She hated it. She felt, I mean I guess, you know, I have no idea, but evidently she was paid

pretty well. But she felt they weren't using her to her potential and she couldn't get them to do it. So she actually couldn't wait to get away from there, but she couldn't leave because they paid her damn good. As I think about some of the things that she looked forward to, I think she would have gone into a business of some sort.

Tom: Yeah, and in retrospect I wish I-, it's not worth being miserable, professionally. [22gg]

Despite her frustration, Bobbie did not shy away from hard work and volunteered for some of the grunt work that others did not want to do. Her co-workers recalled that she would stay after work, helping with the filing during busy season. She did not think any task was below her and her main concern was to help. At Bobbie's memorial service, Paul, a retired partner at the firm, related his take on Bobbie's early days at the firm and her attitude:

Bobbie came with us in 1998 as our receptionist, and she immediately took over the job, learned it well, and the very next thing she did was look for other things to do.... We could always count on her; if you needed something, she was there. If you needed somebody to put in a little overtime, something had to be done in a weekend during tax season, she was always willing to pitch in and help.

Even though she worked hard and was sometimes recognized for this, the opportunities for her to grow were limited. Her co-workers speculated that gender roles might have played a part in this:

Kimberly: So it seems like then there's maybe a little bit of tension at work for Bobbie, that people weren't always kind of giving her a chance.

Jaimie: She always knew the right way to do things ... and no one would listen to her. Certain someones wouldn't listen to her, because they had their own way that they thought was right. And so it really frustrated her that they wouldn't listen to her.

Xhilda: Right, and also I would say that a part of it is the culture of the firm that we have, most of the share-...

Jaimie: Very male-oriented.

Xhilda: Yes, dominated, and the shareholders kind of make the decisions.... That's not because they would have anything against her, but they just didn't know her good qualities. [111]



The men at work in particular did not take time to get to know Bobbie, and since they made decisions about delegating work tasks, she was not in a good position to make a case for herself when possibilities came up. One specific example of Bobbie feeling undervalued was related to the interior design of the office:

Xhilda: One thing that really made me a little unhappy at the time when we decorated the office was that she was the perfect person to do that, but they didn't select her because they selected one of the shareholders to do the decorations. And I would tell her, I would mention to her that, "If they had chosen you, my God, like it would be looking so much better," the couch and everything, right Meg?

Meg: Oh, yeah, she would have gotten the whole thing coordinated and probably coordinated at a price they could afford too, you know?

....

Margie: But it was so frustrating, because we had somebody that had the talent to make a good job, but they weren't seeing it.

Tom: Yeah. And I know she was upset that she was not asked to do that. And I think she felt like she had hinted enough, or said enough to try to get the job, or to get that responsibility.

Margie: And I've often said, "You should see Bobbie's home, how she's decorated it if you don't believe that she has the talent to do it..."

Xhilda: Nobody had, I don't think.

Margie: but it didn't happen. [11k]

Despite Bobbie's disappointment at work, she carried the same attitude there that she did at home: she wanted to create a community of people who cared for each other and so she did many things, small and big, for the co-workers that she had chosen to be part of her family. During tax season, when they were stressed, she would buy them roses to lift their spirits. One time, again during tax season, she sent out an email saying she had gotten positive feedback from a client about what a good job they were all doing, and that she just wanted to let them know

how appreciated they were. She became very involved with the charity work that the firm was involved in. Paul, the retired partner, said of Bobbie and her involvement with this aspect of the firm:

One of the things that we take a lot of pleasure in is Adopt-A-Family at Christmas time. The first year we did that with [name of non-profit] in Alexandria, I recruited Bobbie to help me with that and that was the end of my involvement. [laughter] Thereafter Bobbie took care of that, and every year thereafter. She recruited other people to help, and it was a very, very successful program.

Bobbie always chose to shop for the baby or youngest child in the adopted families. Meg recalled going shopping with Bobbie and the event always turned into a girls' night out:

Whenever we'd get the list and there'd be a little baby, she'd be like, "Meg, Meg, let's shop for the baby, you want to shop for the baby with me? When do you want to go after work?".... She always wanted to make the [adopt a family] shopping trip an event, and we'd have dinner or something beforehand or afterwards.... So we would go shop for the baby, we'd go to Target and we'd walk out of there with two carts, and I'd always be handling the money, and she made sure we picked out stuff that matched. "Was this on their list?" and "Oh, this is fun, let's go ahead and get it for them anyways." [11m]

Bobbie and Margie worked together closely at the front desk. Margie was pleased with the friendship they developed, and Bobbie gave Margie a present once that Tom was unaware of:

Margie: And the most moving time for me was she, she came to work one day and she gave me... [starts to tear up and coughs]

Xhilda: A cross, right Margie?

Margie: Um-hmm. It was her grandmother's cross. And um, just the words, what she said to me, it was something special she had and she gave it to me. [11t]

Bobbie's caring attitude extended not only to the co-workers she had befriended, but also included the co-workers' friends and family:

Meg: I think the thing that kind of stuck with me the most is that she cared about my friends who would call into the office, and she would ask me about them. I have my friend S. who I've known since I was little, and so every time he'd call in she'd stop me when I'd pass by the desk and ask how S. was. And [she'd say] "You should date him," and I said, "No, no, no, but no, I've

known S. way too long.” [all laugh]

Jaimie: She wanted everybody to date.

Meg: And then my ex- would come by ... and she'd talk to him, and I remember after she passed I told [him] about her and he said that she was the only one at my office that treated him kindly and that he really, really appreciated that.... And then my friend J. who has a 10 year-old daughter now, she [Bobbie] would always ask about J. and how her work was going, or how the child was, and so it just always impressed me, and it made an impression on especially those three of my friends who knew her, and actually J. came to the service 'cause she was just so touched by how much Bobbie seemed to care about her.

Kimberly: Which is really kind of amazing when you think about an office that's as large as yours is, that she would know your friends and family, and it's a lot of people to keep track of.

Margie: But she took an interest in everybody. I remember when I first moved here, I had to rent, and I was looking for a place to stay. And she even said, well, I could come and live here with her in her basement. [all laugh] Tom didn't know, but [all laugh] that's the kind of heart she had.

Jaimie: I'm not exactly sure how she got to know my mom, but my mom must have come in at some point in time to talk to me. And they got to talking, and they realized they went to high school together, for maybe a year or so. I don't know how she, I don't know how it is, but her and my mom, apparently even when I was away [in Colorado for several years], my mom would call up and talk with Bobbie. [all laugh] [11z]

During one of many times that Bobbie went job-hunting, her friend David tried to get her hired at his place of employment. She got some critical feedback about an aspect of her personality from them that she would have never considered a detriment. David recalled:

I remember the first time she came and interviewed at my office, they told her that the reason she didn't get the job was that they thought she was too nice, that they needed probably someone who was harder-edged, and could deal with other employees in the organization, and that she was probably too nice and kind. And she said, “I've never not gotten a job for being too nice.” [all laugh] [15h]

Several people commented that Bobbie was suited for a career related to fashion or design. David explained: “Bobbie certainly understood fabrics and patterns, and I always thought she would make an incredible fashion designer or interior decorator, 'cause she certainly

had that eye and could present herself that way.” [15i] Her father Jack thought that “she would have been great as a wedding coordinator. That was her thing, really. Interior decorator. She would have been unbelievable at interior decorating, she had that knack.” [22v] Bobbie had apparently thought of being a wedding planner herself and approached her stepsister Leslie about it. Leslie recalled, “That was her dream job, and I said, 'You should.... You should become one. What's stopping you, be one, go.' She goes, 'Well, what would you think about you going in there with me?’” [10z] Leslie didn't think this was a good idea, and apparently Bobbie did not pursue this any further.

### **“She definitely marched to the beat of a different drum”: Feeling different**

How many of us have the courage to be individuals and to refuse to follow the crowd? For Bobbie, this tendency came naturally. Bobbie liked to demonstrate her uniqueness in all kinds of ways. Although she was named Barbara with the intention of being called “Bobbie,” how she spelled her name changed over the years. Her family always spelled it B-O-B-B-I-E, but Bobbie at various times spelled it as “Bobbye” or “Bobbi,” most recently settling back on “Bobbie.”

Bobbie felt different from other people. She knew that at times her views on the world were different than others' and that she thought differently than a lot of people around her, especially when she was growing up and had less control over the people in her life. Her outlook was often described as child-like – full of wonder and amazement at everything under the sun. Her interest and enthusiasm for learning made her a wonderful student of this world. She seemed to have no preconceptions. At Bobbie's memorial service her brother-in-law Duane said: “Sometimes Bobbie, I think, wasn't even aware of the box that she was clearly outside of.”

Yet at times, Bobbie did seem to be aware of the fact that she was different. Tom provided an example of this during our interview with LeaAnne, who was describing a conversation she had with Bobbie before starting her job with Teach for America:

LeaAnne: The last bit of advice was, “Don't worry when the one kid at the end of the year still hasn't gotten it,” that it's OK. I don't need to spend my life worrying about that one kid if I've gotten the other 99 percent of them, it's OK to leave one.

Kimberly: Yeah. Which is funny, given that she was such a perfectionist, that was her advice to you, not to be a perfectionist. [LeaAnne and Kimberly laugh]

Tom: Although I was thinking, I was kind of wondering if she sometimes thought of herself as the one kid, 'cause school was not easy for her. 'Cause I think she just thinks differently than most people, and the teachers can teach to the masses, and not to the few who have a different learning style. [3i]

Bobbie was not afraid to “out” her differentness by using it to connect with others who also felt different. Joe remembered that when he first met Bobbie, he told her about him and his partner: “Well, in case you're not aware, your new neighbors are gay,' and she said, 'That's OK.' And she kind of hesitated a moment, and she says, 'Well, I'm Wiccan,' and I said, 'OK.' And I guess some people aren't accepting of different things like that, and I said, 'It doesn't bother me if it doesn't bother you.’” [1b]

Bobbie's identity as a Wiccan was clearly something that she knew was – and that others perceived as – outside of the mainstream. Her friend and former neighbor Drew said, “I thought she was very brave to live in the suburbs and decide she's going to be a witch.” [23c] Tom talked about the importance of Wicca to Bobbie and her Wiccan identity with Patty and Terri:

Tom: What the religion did for Bobbie is, you can tell me if you think I'm wrong with this, but through high school and all, [she] often felt like an outsider. She just thought differently, and did things differently, and she just always felt a little on the outside. And my sense is of that, there's a lot of people in Wicca that feel that way.

Terri: Yeah, definitely.

Patty: We're not mainstream. [laughs]

Tom: Not mainstream, and I think it was such an eye-opener, in such a positive way to see people, I mean like you, that are not in the mainstream, and just realize how wonderful you are. She felt like a part of a group that she had not really probably ever felt that way before. And to me that's what I remember most about what Wicca did for her.

Terri: Yeah, that I think makes a lot of sense, because there is definitely I think, you get this sense of, wait a minute, I'm not the only person who actually pays attention to these things, who pays attention to the trees and stuff, and that there's a community where my intuition, listening to my intuition actually is sensible, and...

Patty: And encouraged. [laughs]

Terri: and encouraged. Or all those things that kind of make you not the mainstream, people go, "Oh yeah, I do that too."

Tom: Yeah. I mean, like how your intuition with animals, and so forth, then when she talked to you about it, it was like, "Oh, here's somebody's right at the same wavelength I'm at," it's, really makes you feel...

Patty: Validated.

Tom: validated, yeah, yeah.

Terri: Yeah, yeah, that's a good word. Yeah, I definitely could see, I see that with a lot of people, and I definitely saw that with Bobbie. [9v-w]

Bobbie's Wicca teacher Millie definitely encouraged her students to think for themselves:

Our society is not really designed to be filled with people being who they are, just not designed. It's designed to have people do what they're told, and to be afraid, and to be enslaved to one thing or another, so they can be controlled. It's kind of how our planet is, it's how we harness the power of the human condition because human beings are powerful creatures, they can create. It doesn't take a powerful creature to destroy. It takes a very powerful creature to create and what they're told in our culture is, "Oh, wait, creation is God's job, not yours. [laughs] And you can't do that, and everything that is good and true and perfect in the world is out there somewhere." It makes it very easy for human beings to be controlled. So they do. It's no longer necessary [to live in fear; I tell] all my students, you know, "Shh, we don't have to do that, we can live in freedom." And once that happens, they're a force to be reckoned with. [21y]

In many ways, Bobbie did not fit a mold. She looked "mainstream," but did not feel this

and she did not have a standard family because she and Tom had no children; she saw her religious beliefs as outside the societal norm; she worked full-time but did not feel valued by her employer. In her relationship with Tom, she was the older person by 7½ years and she worried about looking older than her spouse. She was not college educated, yet she married into a family where higher education was valued: everyone in the Bosworth family has graduated from college, and many have gotten advanced degrees. Rick summed up Bobbie's attitude with the following:

[Bobbie] definitely marched to the beat of a different drum.... It never felt to me anyway, that she would want to do something because everybody else was doing it. If there was something that interested her, that she found intriguing, she would follow that path whether anybody else was or not. And that's what kind of made her unique. I think in a lot of ways, it's the personality of a dreamer ... and in some ways you can look at that person and say, "That's just Bobbie with another dream of hers." But then on the other hand, it's also very endearing because they have that sense of hope, that in following dreams and chasing after dreams – where a lot of us may have lost that over the years – I think she always, always kept that. [4g]

Carlos, later in the same interview, indicated that when Bobbie started developing some self-confidence and stopped trying to fit in with the crowd and started to follow her own path she was “very brave” to do so. [4oo] One way that Bobbie did this was in her choice of friends.

**Example: “Being kindred spirits with the gay community”: Choosing gay friends**

I was struck by how many of Bobbie and Tom's couple friends are gay, as well as Bobbie's individual friends. Was this a coincidence of just having a lot of gay neighbors, or was there something else at play?

Tom indicated that when their neighborhood Early Street Village was being developed, the developer put an ad in the local gay paper. Tom speculated that this may have increased the number of gay couples who bought homes there. Therefore, when it came time to make the neighborhood more than just a place to live, the people Bobbie made friends with were all her

neighbors, many of them, coincidentally, being gay. Their friend Joe seemed to agree with this when I asked him about it:

Kimberly: Do you have any thoughts about, I mean, because you choose who your friends are. So it seems deliberate [that Bobbie and Tom have so many gay friends].

Joe: Well, you choose, and I guess it's because, well, we're in a neighborhood, and I kind of like to know my neighbors, but some people are just more outgoing, and Tom and Bobbie are one of those couples that are more outgoing. They're just, you meet somebody and then as time goes on, you grow closer and closer and closer. You don't know you're going to be friends [when you first meet]. [1w]

However, the majority of Bobbie and Tom's neighbors are not gay, but straight. So it stands to reason that even though they would have some gay friends, the majority of their friends would be straight. But this is not the case. I attended a New Year's Eve party of 8-10 people when I was visiting Tom, and the two of us were the only straight people there.

In addition to having gay friends, Bobbie's friends were most often male. Her closest confidantes, aside from some of her Wiccan friends, were the gay men in her neighborhood.

Rick speculated on why this might be:

She also wanted to have fun, I mean, that was kind of her personality, she liked to laugh. So I think that's another reason she liked hanging out with all the boys, 'cause we were just all silly together, and [we] make stupid jokes or tell stupid stories, or stories about our families, and she would tell very funny-, we knew, intimately, stories about her family, or everybody's quirks and all, we would all share that stuff, and it would be fun, and we'd get to know each other better, and even closer sharing all those stories. [4ff]

David had also noticed that Bobbie surrounded herself with men and he and Tom commented on it:

David: The other thing is, Bobbie was often the only woman. So it'd be like seven men and Bobbie. And I always worried that she felt-, that she would have liked to have another female companion among the group when we went out to Harry Potter movies, or to dinner, or whatever. And it never seemed to have bothered her, and she certainly seemed to love being with her [sic, us], we certainly loved having her with us, and so she had a whole gaggle of men to admire her in the evening. [Kimberly laughs]



Tom: I don't think she felt bad about being out in a restaurant with seven men around her, and being the only female, I don't think that bothered her a whole lot. [laughs] [15v]

Bobbie and Tom, the straight couple, were the sexual minorities in their circle of friends.

Tom and Joe joked about this:

Kimberly: It seems that Tom and Bobbie have a lot of gay male couple friends. And so...

Joe: Uh-hmm. We've made him honorary gay. [Tom and Kimberly laugh]

Kimberly: Good!

Tom: OK, I have my card, I have the card in my wallet. [all laugh]

Joe: Yeah, it flashes every time he pulls it out. [all laugh]... Yeah, because most of their, well, from being around them, most of their friends are gay and they're like our token straight couple. [all laugh] 'Cause we don't have any, I mean, we do have straight friends, but they're the only couple that we know.... We don't even think of them as gay or straight, we just, they're our friends. [1w]

Rick and Carlos offered their take on Bobbie's extensive circle of gay friends:

Carlos: Well, it's, I think it's just a fact that I think Bobbie considered herself not having a standard family either. She, there was some distance between the family, Tom and her did not have kids, and she was older than Tom, so I think it all fit.

Rick: I think that the reason she found it easy or comfortable to be around gay men is because I would guess that Bobbie probably, not in a bad way, but Bobbie probably saw herself as a square peg in a round hole, and that's kind of what we are, I mean, we're different. And I think Bobbie saw, or understood that she was also different, and felt comfortable and knew that she would be accepted for who she is by gay people, and that there was a comfort level there. For a lot of gay people, you struggle with self-confidence, or your sense of worth, and I think those are some of the things ... that she experienced growing up. So she could kind of understand what it felt like to not be completely valued for what you are, for your goodness to be recognized by others, so I think in some ways it's almost like being kindred spirits with the gay community. [4cc]

Tom noted that Bobbie was often the one who “took the lead on our behalf ... I'm more shy, and I would be less willing to go out and take the chance to go meet somebody, that Bobbie probably took more, I always felt, took the lead.” [4v] Because of this, it seems that Bobbie was

the one who was more attracted to being friends with gay men, and Tom was willing to engage in those friendships because Bobbie broke the ice for them as a couple.

Having gay friends meant that Bobbie had people to shop with who were genuinely interested in clothes and jewelry shopping. Not that Tom couldn't shop with Bobbie; he often went shopping with her and could even pick out clothes for her that he thought she would like.

He recounted:

Frequently when we shopped together, that wasn't related to a Christmas gift or something, I often felt I had a role of advanced scout. She would kind of look at certain things in certain areas, but I would then go around to all the other racks and then I'd come back with two or three suits or blouses or whatever she was kind of on the lookout for, and frequently she'd say, "Oh, that's great," so I kind of feel I did that for her. [15ff]

But even Tom couldn't always keep up with Bobbie, so she would go shopping with her gay male friends. They would give her second opinions on clothes; she would help pick out suits and ties for them.

Bobbie's friendships ran deep. Tom and David recalled:

Tom: I think Bobbie had a very great affinity towards David. There was a connection there, and if he weren't a gay man, I would have been jealous. [all laugh] I mean, I think she was very attracted to you, [as a] person. Just really adored David.

....

David: And I remember last summer she telling me that she had had a dream about the two of us being together, and she said, "I don't know what the dream means, but I just wanted to share that I had this dream about the two of us being together." So I felt there was a mutual kinship. [15m-n]

### **Bobbie's background and relationship with her biological family**

Bobbie was the oldest of three children born to Wanda and Jack Spink. Her brother Barry was six years younger and her sister Bonnie was 10 years younger than Bobbie. Jack was Assistant Fire Chief and Wanda a stay-at-home mom who eventually worked in a bank.

Bobbie had several health problems that went undiagnosed by doctors for years. As a result, her sister Bonnie said, “you gotta figure for about the first 15 years of her life, she probably didn't feel good, she probably didn't know what feeling good was.” [19e] Her dad Jack recalled, “Almost the first year she was born, it was hell. She cried 24 hours a day, and she had problems that we didn't know what it was, doctor never said it, but she cried and she cried and she cried and cried. It was not fun. It almost made me get a vasectomy, let's never have any more children after that, but it was not [fun].” [22b]

As a result of her not feeling well and being relatively weak (she was still wearing size 6 dresses when she was 10), Wanda, her mom, recalled an incident when Bobbie didn't even have the strength to finish the walk home from school:

Wanda: She was [in] the first grade, and I had Barry in the stroller. She didn't come home from school one day. All the rest of the kids came down, everybody in the neighborhood that's about that size. So I asked one little girl as she went by, “Is Bobbie with you?” She says, “No, she slowed down for awhile.” I thought, “Oh.”... And so I put Barry in the stroller, pushed it up the hill. She had stopped at a lightpole. She was tired, she laid down and went to sleep.

Kimberly: Oh!

Wanda: The poor little thing had come all the way down that far from school, but she couldn't make it the last eight houses. And I don't know how I got her home, I probably woke her up and said, “Come on, we'll walk slow, get between me and the stroller,” I mean, I am assuming that's what I did, 'cause I don't remember how I got her home. I had a baby in a stroller, I couldn't carry her. And that still didn't trigger too many alarms, because she would get tired in the afternoon, I didn't think about it, I thought that was fine, I could sit down and do my own things, I didn't think that was strange that I had a child that took a nap in the afternoon. I didn't know 'til these came along [Bonnie and Barry], they don't do that.

Bonnie: You gotta figure when you take the kid to the pediatrician for the normal check-ups, and the doctor doesn't find anything, hey. Why would you even think [anything was wrong], you know? [19f]

Eventually, the doctors did find the problem when Bobbie was nearly 10 years old: some urinary tract issues including three kidneys and a kink in her urethra. Wanda remembers being

pregnant with Bonnie when Bobbie went in to the hospital for the first of several procedures to straighten out the kink. Each procedure took place over the Christmas holidays, which meant that Bobbie spent a lot of time in the hospital around Christmastime when she was a child.

Bobbie was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade when she was diagnosed with hepatitis. Jack recalled:

She was still in junior high school, I think. She got hepatitis. And God, that was a big thing, we didn't know where it came from. It happened, I was sitting at the table one night having dinner. And I happened to look at her, and I said, "Bobbie, what's the matter with your eyes?" "What do you mean, what's the matter with my eyes?" I said, "They're yellow." So that started it, so we took her to the doctor's the very next day, and she come up with hepatitis. Now in those days, that was bad, bad, bad.... She had gotten it at school somewhere.... But we had to put her in the hospital and she was pretty sick. And then she was quarantined in the hospital, you had to put masks on and everything else when you went into her room. Nobody went in there really except us, and the nurses put masks on to bring her food, and sort of shoved it through the door 'cause there was a big quarantine sign on the door. [22h]

Wanda recalled that this illness, as with the urinary problems, took place around Christmas and once Bobbie returned home, she was home-schooled for the rest of the year. As Tom and I talked about this, he realized that Bobbie's health issues as a child, and having to be in the hospital around Christmastime, probably, at least in part, was the impetus for her making such a big deal out of Christmas and wanting to really celebrate the holiday.

Jack and Wanda both readily admit that they didn't necessarily know what they were doing as parents. Wanda said she described it to Bobbie later in life as:

"Well, honey, I made my mistakes with you. You were the first and for six years I had nobody but you, so I made all my-." I had no brothers or sisters. I didn't know how to raise a kid. My mother was in Colorado, I'm in Virginia, and her father's mother was, "Oh, she'll be alright," or "Oh, all kids do that." I mean, "OK." And so it was just a matter of what I felt should be done, what I could do, what was right for children, so I made all my mistakes on [Bobbie]. [19r]

Jack described their early parenting:

Bobbie, I think she had a hard time, because she was the first child. Never having kids we thought [we could just tell her] you don't pick that up, you don't get into that, and stop that. So she was supposed to be, we'd take her to somebody's house she was what, two years old or three

years old, she was supposed to sit there like a 22 year-old and enjoy conversation, I guess. So she was not treated like the rest of them after that, you learn real quick that that isn't how kids are. Being the oldest, [we] expect[ed] more of her. [22d]

Bobbie's sister Bonnie indicated that Bobbie was a “typical red-headed little child.”

[19d] Wanda added: “No, she wasn't stubborn, she agreed with you, and she turned around and did what she wanted to anyhow.” [19g] Jack described her as “very willful. When she decided she wanted something, or she didn't want something, she would let you know.” [22g]

Tom recalled that Bobbie had fond memories of growing up in the suburb of Springfield, Virginia, particularly the lake that was in their development that they could walk to in the summer. Although she did not enjoy school, she had friends and boyfriends.

The family was not well-off financially. Wanda was a stay-at-home mom and Jack worked two and sometimes three jobs to make ends meet. Wanda recalled how she would carefully manage the grocery budget so she and Bobbie could enjoy a treat:

We lived in war housing, and she was still in a high chair, so I [would] pull the highchair [out] and put her in there, and I pulled [a] chair out in the front area. The ice cream man would come around. Now, with trying to budget on Jack's income, I would get one of the round little [ice cream sandwiches that cost] 52 cents from the Good Humor man. And we would sit there, and she'd have a bite, and I'd have a bite, and she'd have a bite. And it was great when I could go to the grocery store and come home with more than 52 cents left in my pocket, 'cause I'd tell myself, [the] grocery budget [was mine and] Bobbie and I could have whatever was left over. And [when] I could buy her a Popsicle, and still have a Creamsicle for myself, that was a great day. [19o]

Because Wanda had to watch the budget so closely, however, Bobbie could not get the kinds of clothes she wanted to have. Wanda recalled one of many arguments that she and Bobbie had about clothes when Bobbie wanted an Oxford shirt: “We had several arguments about that: 'I cannot afford a five dollar shirt. I've got a two dollar shirt [for Barry], and a two dollar shirt [for Bonnie], why should you have a five dollar shirt, those kids have two dollar shirts, you can have

another two dollar shirt just like them.' [laughs] But after you say 'no' sixty to seventy hundred times, she realized. [19p]

Bobbie's lack of what she perceived as appropriate clothing did not hurt her prospects with the boys; she had boyfriends in high school, and married her high school sweetheart. This marriage only lasted a few years. She followed a boyfriend out to Indiana and broke up with him, but soon married a second time, to a supervisor at her work. Again, the marriage lasted a few short years, but it was characterized by her sister Bonnie as not a healthy relationship and that Bobbie's husband was very controlling. By many accounts, Bobbie's self-esteem was at an all-time low after leaving this husband. Bobbie moved back to Virginia when she was 34 and met Tom six months later.

By this time Jack had divorced Wanda and was married to Nina. When Bobbie returned, her relationship with Nina and Leslie, Nina's daughter, was cool at first, but slowly warmed up over time during family functions, which Tom eventually attended after they started dating.

Bobbie helped Nina tremendously before she died of cancer in 1999. Leslie recalled:

At some point [they] bonded very closely, very close, that was nice. When my mom was dying, Bobbie I think and Tom came over there a lot to see her, spend time with her, and my mother was being helped by Bobbie. She already was taking her jewelry and dividing it up, and telling Bobbie what she wanted, and I could hardly take it, I just, I didn't want any of it, really. [10n]

Leslie also discussed the relationship between Bobbie and her mom at Bobbie's memorial service:

Over the years our family had been through a lot. My older brother Paul passed away suddenly, and with my mother already pushed to the limit physically and emotionally with her bouts of illnesses, she passed away soon too. Bobbie had been there helping and guiding, listening, and letting my mother cry on her shoulder when the pain was bad or if she was scared. I saw Bobbie hold her hand and speak to her gently and encouragingly during some very hard times.

Jack and Wanda both talked openly about the fact that Bobbie was not particularly close

to them as an adult and that they rarely saw her or heard from her after she and Tom were married. Wanda described their relationship:

Well, Bobbie and I weren't that close at the latter part, I guess from about the time she and Tom were married. We saw each other, enjoyed each other's company, we could talk, but to know her and be around her that much-, she had her life, I was working, she was working at hers, and they didn't coincide except when we got together with another member of the family. Or every now and then she'd call, say we hadn't seen each other for awhile, let's go out for dinner, so Tom would take us both out to dinner. [laughs] But as far as knowing the attitudes and the feelings.... Bobbie and I had gotten further apart to where it was hard for me to read her. [19i]

Jack had similar thoughts: “Actually I don't know that we heard that much from Bobbie. A lot of times we didn't hear from her for a long, long time. In fact, even after she married Tom, sometimes didn't hear from her six months.... It wasn't that there was anything wrong, it's just that she was in with Tom, and she became very close to his family, I think much closer than she was to her own.” [22q]

Despite some emotional distance from her parents and siblings, Bobbie was there for the important family events, including the crises. Bonnie's daughter LeaAnne, with whom Bobbie was particularly close, also had health problems as a child, including getting open heart surgery when she was 14 months old. Bonnie recalled what a comfort Bobbie was during this time and the comic relief that they provided each other:

Bonnie: She [LeaAnne] was in seven hours or something surgery, it was only supposed to be four, here we were going on all these extra hours.... So you get to that point where you're just past the worrying, and now you're like, “OK, what the heck is going on,” so finally one of us said, “OK, let's go downstairs walk around, let's do something,” so we ended up in the gift shop.

Wanda: You don't take Bobbie to a gift shop! [all laugh]

Bonnie: Well, we were just walking, our minds weren't really on what we were looking at or whatever, so she was picking up stuff, and I was picking up stuff. Well, she couldn't read what she was picking up, and I couldn't figure the prices out on what I was looking at, and we got to laughing, and we got to laughing so hard, because she was trying to read something and couldn't read it to save her life, and I'm over here trying to figure out prices on – 'cause they've got

umpteen million different prices on it – and of course your mind is just mush. And we got to laughing so dang-gone hard, at each other and ourselves, and of course there's other people [looking at us], and we're over there just acting like two idiots. But it was like a release that, it was some type of emotion, because you didn't want to be- you were trying to be strong for each other, and everybody's trying to be strong for me, and I'm just going nutso and trying to be on good behavior.... But we got there, got to laughing so dang-gone hard, and so after that, it was kind of like a running joke between us whether we couldn't read something or couldn't add up price tags or something else, “Well, we never could do this,” it was just kind of a running joke that we had, it all stemmed back from LeaAnne having her surgery. [19j]

Jack and Marge attempted to bridge the gaps among the children by paying for everyone – Bobbie, Bonnie, Barry, and their partners and kids – to take a cruise together in 2004. Jack described why he decided to do this and the conditions he set beforehand:

Jack: Well, that was probably the best money I ever spent.... My kids, I've always said, I'd like to see my kids' fathers, because no two of them are the same.... You know, I got tired of [the] kids bickering.... [When] I decided to do this, why I told them, OK, there's one condition, number one, I don't ever want to hear one word while we're on this cruise of, well Barry did this, or Bonnie did this, or Bobbie did that. I don't want to hear it. You're gonna get along. And the other thing is, I don't care what you do on the cruise except that everybody's gonna eat at least one meal a day [together]. Everybody. And it worked out. It ended up that the kids were talking, first time in [a long time], they even got birthdays, got them calling each other on their birthdays, that's something they never did.

Tom: Yeah, I would say Bobbie and Bonnie's relationship was really good from that point on. And they both kind of understood each other. And even the last summer, they had talked about going on a cruise together, but financially for Bonnie it wasn't happening.

Jack: Yeah, right. But I heard that, I said, “You what?!” [all laugh]

Marge: He couldn't believe it.

Jack: I said, “That is so cool!” And I'm sorry it didn't pan out, I think that would have worked out really-, they would have been much, much closer. [22w-x]

Despite a smoothing of relationships in later years, Bobbie's formative years with her family did not necessarily include happy memories. In interviews, many people alluded to the fact that “functions with her family were stressful” [1m] and that she gained a stable extended family when she married Tom. She preferred spending holidays, such as Thanksgiving and



Christmas, with Tom's side of the family.

Bobbie particularly struggled in her relationship with her mother, feeling that Wanda never accepted her. Leslie, Bobbie's stepsister, remembered Bobbie saying, "I feel like no matter what I do, what I say, I will never make my mother proud of me, of who I am." [10o] Joe recalled that:

She was always had this, uh, [pause] this distance between her and her mother. And she always felt like no matter what she did it wasn't good enough. And that was stemming from her mother always supposedly downing her. You know, not necessarily out and out, but just in subtle little ways, but Bobbie would catch it. And maybe her mom didn't mean it that way, but that's the way Bobbie took it or interpreted it. And so she spent, I think, a lot of her life trying to please her mom and other people, but more so to do something that her mom would give her approval on, which she seemed to never get. I'm not saying that she disliked her, she just was always striving. [1k]

Rick also recalled getting this sense from Bobbie. His take on this was:

I always had the sense that growing up, Bobbie needed to be told, "You're a good person," and I got the impression she always felt like she didn't measure up, growing up, or that she wasn't smart enough, or whatever the case may be. It seemed like her confidence wasn't as strong as it should have been or could have been, and I'm not sure where it came from or why that happened. But I think that's why it was important to her that everyone respect each other and treat each other right because I don't think she necessarily always had that or felt that growing up.... And sometimes it's the type of thing that you never can get beyond, if you feel that's what happened in your childhood or growing up, you can never get beyond it. And I think Bobbie was able to recognize that that's what had happened, and that's why it was important to her that that you don't do that to anyone else. [4q]

Wanda herself described her daughter as someone who did not act like Wanda expected her to. In the context of showing how LeaAnne and Bobbie were similar, Wanda said, "You expect everybody to jump over [something] – not those two. They'd either wade, or find stepping stones. They are always off on a tangent that I didn't think of." [19hh] It seems clear also, however, that Bobbie sometimes intentionally pushed her mom's buttons, particularly around the subject of her being a Wiccan. Wanda illustrated:

But what she told [me] they were doing in their little worship thing, anybody who has studied what the American Indians did in their pow-wows, it was exactly the same thing. You're honoring air, fire, the water, earth. And so in that part, I can see no harm in the thing. But I kind of got the impression that she was saying it just to tick me off, "Well, I'm a witch. I'm a good witch, but I'm a witch." Can't debate, I just shut up and changed the subject. [190o]

Bobbie's stepsister Leslie also provided some insight into Wanda's consternation with her daughter:

What I get from Wanda is that Bobbie was a girl she couldn't really relate to. Bobbie wanted the same kind of sweaters that the girls in her classes wore, and they didn't really have a lot of money. So she kind of thought Bobbie was putting herself above what – this is Wanda, this is just Wanda's vision – that Bobbie was trying to put herself above whatever station in life they were at, or nothing was good enough.... I think it's more that her mother and she could not relate to each other. And it's funny too, 'cause I think there's some similarities in them, that they're the same kind of person. There's things of Wanda in which I could see in Bobbie, and vice versa, but I think they just couldn't relate to each other. They didn't have a good relationship, and by the time Bobbie had gotten old enough she left the area, which basically ends any kind of working on a relationship. [10o]

Tom has thought about this and added his perception of the family dynamic between Bobbie, her mom, and her dad:

I think when she [was] growing up, Wanda [made sure] things revolved around Jack, and Wanda made sure that Jack was happy, and she also made sure that all the children kind of viewed Jack as the person up on the pedestal. So to her, her "daddy" was always the epitome of-, and sort of her mom, I think, sacrificed feelings towards her to make her dad look good.... So for the rest of her life, her dad was this person up on the pedestal, was perfect, and I don't think Jack did things to make Wanda seem, in reverse, to make Wanda seem like a more attractive figure. [10t]

## Interlude: Wiccan Magick

One of the more interesting aspects of Wicca is the practice of magick (spelled with a “k” to distinguish it from card trick and other types of “magic” that are slights of hand, not true pagan “magick”). One funny story that Patty and Terri narrated concerned the use of magick with a neighbor of Bobbie and Tom's. The interview with Patty and Terri took place on Tom's patio overlooking a somewhat wooded area behind the house:

Patty: Bobbie and Tom were having some issues with some of their neighbors at one point in time that were getting really [bad].... And this had just been going on and on and on, and, from Bobbie's description, she had tried to be reasonable with these people and everything, and these people were just insane, so there was only one solution and that, of course, is magick.

Terri: And it just happened to coincide with the class that we were having about magick...

Patty: Right, on a similar subject.

Terri: the second year.

Patty: So, this was in our second year, and Millie decided to teach us a concept called poppets [a puppet/doll], which has a strong, direct influence with specific people, whoever you make the poppet about.... So we were able to take this problem that Bobbie had and use it to find a real-world, practical solution within the magickal class we were doing. And it was really interesting how that class turned out. Bobbie just grinned and giggled through the whole thing [Terri and Patty laugh], and the rest of us after hearing all of this saga of how awful these people were, grinned and giggled, and it was amazing, I don't remember the time frame of the time that class happened to the time that the people moved away.

Terri: I think it was by the next class.

Tom: Was it that [soon], I mean, I know [it was fast].

Terri: It was really, really fast.

Patty: I was going to say within two months, it was definitely quick.

Terri: And what the idea was, when you make this poppet, this doll, then what you do with it, there are different things you can do with it. [Patty laughs] And Millie's suggestion was for transformation for them, always trying to put things in a positive perspective, that it should get buried someplace ... [and] let the Mother Earth energy transform stuff, so that's what Bobbie did.

Tom: It's buried 30 feet out this way.

Kimberly: Wow! [Patty laughs]

Terri: And I think it was the next class...

Patty: It was really soon after.

Terri: Bobbie came back in and went, "Heh, heh, they moved." [all laugh] It was quite entertaining. It was quite effective. And they moved because they had a good opportunity someplace, it was a good transformation for them, it was a good move for them, and it got them out of Bobbie and Tom's hair.

....

Patty: And it gave all of us in the class a chance to contribute to Bobbie, as well as learn the specific methodology that we were learning about in the class, and it was just really exciting and invigorating.

Tom: The part that you were saying that I kind of remember [was] there was the potential for sort of negative energy to be associated with it, but the larger percentage was a positive.

Terri: But the way it was done [was positive].

Patty: Which took some discussion, it didn't just naturally get everybody going, "Oh, let's be nice to these people." [laughs]

Terri: Yeah, I'm sure, there were a few of us...

Patty: That wasn't where I went with it. [laughs]

Terri: yeah, I was going to say, I'm sure a few of us, Patty, were probably all for having them smacked by lightning or something. But part of the whole process and the conversation was, how to set this up so that it would happen in a positive light...

Patty: Right.

Terri: and get everybody what they wanted, essentially. And that's what happened. But she had such a grin on her face when they moved.

Patty: She really did. [Terri and Patty laugh]

Terri: It was great. [9y]

Another time Bobbie used magick was witnessed by her stepsister Leslie one day when they were in a crowded shopping mall:

Leslie: Bobbie's a little thing, she's tiny, and she was in front of me, and she was going towards these women that were in a group, they were blocking people, people were going around them. And I would say it was like three very large Black women, and people were veering around them, they didn't care. Bobbie's walking right towards them, and I saw her hand come up like that [moves hand up], but I was kind of behind her. But I saw one of the women go like this, "Oh!" and kind of move. I go, "What the hell did she do to that woman?" [laughs] And a few minutes later she turned to me and she said, "Did you see that?" I said, "Back there?" She goes, "Yeah." I said, "Yeah, what'd you do?"

Tom: Parted the waves.

Leslie: She said she did, she said a little saying, and she...

Charlie: What'd she say?

Leslie: She, part of her Wiccan ways, she said a little something that made some energy and kind of pushed them aside. I saw that woman react. I didn't hear Bobbie say anything, I didn't see her do anything. I saw her hand come up, but I saw the way that woman kind of jumped, and I went, "Teach it to me!" [all laugh] I wanted to know how to do that!

Tom: It can only be used for good! [10cc]

## **Chapter Four: Bobbie and Tom**

Everyone was impressed with their devotion to each other, and you so rarely see that kind of commitment and old-time values. -Joan, friend and neighbor

The story of Bobbie and Tom is a love story; their mutual admiration and support ensured that they got more out of life together than they would have ever dreamed possible of experiencing without the other. Their virtual fairy tale life together – from meeting at work, to their wedding, to the community celebration of their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary vow renewal – is a testament to the love that grew between them that expanded to encompass their friends and family.

### **Bobbie meets Tom**

Bobbie and Tom met in the fall of 1982 at work. Bobbie's view of their courtship was related by Joe, who said:

We'd talk about how they met, and she said, "I more or less chased him." And I said, "OK," and she kept saying, "I don't know what it was about him, I just thought he was the cutest thing." And she said, "I just knew that he was going to be my husband." Because apparently her previous husbands, one was kind of like a whimsy kind of thing, and then the other just didn't work out for one reason or another, but she said that when she saw Tom, there was just something about him. [1c]

In an interview with me, Tom related his version of the story of how they met and started dating, which doesn't include Bobbie's remembrance of liking him right off the bat:

She got a job working at the company I was working at.... It's a polling company, and unfortunately a Republican polling company. [both laugh] I was running their telephone center, so this would have been in the fall of '82. And she got hired as the receptionist there. One of the things was that the phone work happens mostly in the evenings, and so I would come into work at say, one o'clock and work 'til 10 or 11 or something like that. But between 1 and 5 when the calling started, I had some things to do, but I kind of had some free time, so I could hang out around her desk a little bit, or I had time to chat with her and things. I remember thinking how nice she was, and she was attractive. So we just started out just kind of talking. She would, on, with at least two women, tried to set me up on dates. [both laugh] 'Cause I think she thought I

was probably young, too young, we were, [because] of our age difference, or I'm not sure what. [Tom was 27 when they met, Bobbie was about to turn 35.] But we started just talking and then we would go out to lunch together, just as co-workers, and then finally we just said, "Let's go on a date," or I asked her on a date, I guess. [pause] Possibility she asked me. [both laugh] I can't remember, but then, it just from there, I mean, we quickly just became like exclusive to each other and we moved in together not very long thereafter. So it went pretty quickly, but I think we both knew it was [the real thing], and she was definitely looking for a – she had been through two bad relationships, well, one was bad, one was just too, I think she was too young, but one was not good – but she was definitely looking for something real permanent. [20]

Tom does not think his good relationship with Bobbie was luck. He discussed this with his mom in the context of how you know when you're with the right person:

Sue: I think it's really great when that feeling comes out with each other, but also other people look at you that way, that somehow you find a mesh.... But it takes some talent to do that, to be right for each other, or some luck maybe, I don't know. Right person at the right time.

Tom: It's more than, I think it's not luck.

Sue: I do too, Tom, I don't think it's luck either, I really don't. I don't either. No, at some point you make a choice who you're going to be with, and I think we're very fortunate if we make the right choice, but it also comes from deep down inside of who you are, that your choices are based on some deep things inside of you that are good. [16ii]

### **“We do the best we can do for ourselves”: Bobbie and Tom's wedding**

Bobbie and Tom got married on May 19, 1984. The wedding ceremony was a big deal for Bobbie. Tom quipped, “she would say she wanted it to be really special because it was my first wedding, but I think she wanted it to be special because it was her wedding.” [2s] As a groom, Tom was very involved in the entire wedding planning process from giving his opinions to Bobbie about the dress, to ordering the cake and flowers. Tom recalled his involvement with helping Bobbie with the dress:

She would buy all the brides magazines and sit there on a couch and I would sit with her, and she would say, “Do you like this neckline, do you like this sleeve line, do you like this train, do you like,” and, you know, as a guy, it was hard to, [both laugh] I mean, things look nice and some things I would give my opinion, “No, I'm not crazy about that,” or something. But then I also remember she would say, “Do you remember that neck line we saw a month ago that was in this

magazine,” and [both laugh] I'd say, “Well, no, not really,” and she'd say, “Oh, you remember, we talked all about it,” and I'd say, “Oh, yeah, yeah.” So, one of the co-workers at our work was a seamstress and she [Bobbie] paid for her to do the work, but it was very reasonably priced, so we had to go to fabric stores and buy fabric, and beads and the veils and all this sort of stuff, so we spent, you know, a lot [of time] and she included me and we did it together. So this woman made the dress and it really turned [out well]. And I think it felt very special to Bobbie 'cause it incorporated many of the things that she wanted and I think she felt very special about that. [2t]

Bobbie's family was not in a position to contribute financially to the wedding, and so Tom's family stepped in. It meant a lot to Bobbie that Tom's family got so involved in the wedding and helping with various tasks, like hosting the reception at the church with punch and homemade cookies, in addition to the cake she and Tom had purchased. Tom's cousin Ann decorated their car with the assistance of all of us cousins in the next generation, who were between the ages of 2 and 13 at the time. Bobbie and Tom's favorite wedding picture was actually taken by Tom's cousin, Al, despite the fact that they had a professional photographer. But most touching for Bobbie was the degree to which Tom's mom Sue got involved. Tom and Sue talked more about her role and how appreciative Bobbie was:

Tom: I think it was very important to Bobbie that the wedding went off just right, and she spent so much time, we spent so much time planning it. But it also was very important that you put so much effort into it, and that helped make the whole event meaningful.

Sue: And without, I don't mean it as bragging, but we did, it was important to me, I wanted her-, I don't even know if I thought of that, but we were doing it. Her parents weren't doing it, it was us, and I never had anybody really get married that I had a chance to do that, so that was fine with me.

Tom: Yeah, no daughters coming down...

Sue: Yeah, there were no daughters coming down the pike, so, no, it was fun. It was fun, and it was special too.... It just was a beautiful wedding. [16m-n]

Among other duties, Sue gladly hosted the rehearsal dinner at her and her husband's house in Springfield, Virginia:



We worked a long time getting, it was a special time for me. And J. was there, do you remember Dee's [Tom's brother Duane] first wife? And we were working in the kitchen the day before, and I was doing all kinds of stuff, and recruited her to do something, and she said, "Why didn't you just have it catered?" And I remember saying to her, "Because I want this to be part of me." Now I'm sure it had to do with expenses, I never thought about having it catered, but I think at the time I was having her fill little peapods with [laughs] some kind of cream cheese, but it struck me like, well, that wouldn't be part of us, if I had it catered. You know, we don't do that, we do the best we can do for ourselves.... I remember feeling it was very elegant, it was at the beginning of Martha Stewart. And we had Martha Stewart's entertainment book, and that's where the peapods came out of, I did a lot of things out of that book, because I wanted it to be really special. [16k]

### **“Whatever Happened to Old Fashioned Love”: Bobbie and Tom's relationship**

As a couple, Bobbie and Tom enjoyed many activities together: traveling, square-dancing, working outside in their yard, and playing with their cats. They especially enjoyed travel and went on several cruises together. Tom describes their Mediterranean cruise, taken for their 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 2004, as the “trip of a lifetime” and the “yardstick” [2dd] against which all of their other vacations were measured. Even though the actual travel and site-seeing of eight different cities was fun, Tom said the people they met and became friends with were what made the trip so special:

You have assigned seating for your meals, and we ended up with a table of 6 with two other couples that were from Britain.... So there were three couples, one couple was pretty much our age, and the other couple was 15 or 20 years older than us. But we really had a lot of fun with them and good, a lot of dinner conversations, and we'd go to the evening shows with them, and we would go on the shore excursions [and] we would do things with them.... For that time, I mean, for a two week period, it was a two week cruise, and it was just extremely special, and on subsequent cruises where we had not made that close connection with other people it feels like something's sort of missing. [2dd]

They also took trips to the Bahamas (honeymoon); to Europe (in 1985 for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Bosworth field); to Cancun (10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary); a Disney cruise with Bobbie's extended family in 2004; and a Western Caribbean cruise, which was their last big trip together, taken in the fall of 2007. They also took trips within the United States,

including traveling cross-country when they moved from Virginia to Oregon in 1990 (they moved so Tom could try out a new career in teaching, but decided to head back to Alexandria three years later) and vacations with their friends Rick and Carlos to New York and Boston.

Bobbie and Tom each brought their own individual interests to the relationship. Tom has always loved bird-watching; Bobbie loved nature, but not necessarily getting up early in the morning to do this activity. However, she did do some bird-watching with Tom. Similarly, Bobbie loved horseback riding; this would not have been Tom's choice of an activity, but frequently on their vacations Bobbie would arrange for the two of them to ride horses.

Once they moved into Early Street Village and began building a family with their neighbors, they did more social activities with other couples. Rick, Carlos, and Tom had a hard time describing the start of their friendship:

Rick: When we sort of first started becoming friends with Bobbie and Tom, it was one of those friendships where you look back and you don't really kind of remember how it all [started].

Tom: I was having the same feeling, that I just don't remember that much of our first meetings, or anything, it just...

Rick: It was very, just very natural how it evolved.

Carlos: Because it was very natural. It's not that you plan it: "Oh, we need to do something to hang with [our neighbors]." It's just, we're your friends all of a sudden, and we're family. And, "Come on over, walk on over, let's go there, let's go shopping, let's go to the movies," it's one of those things, and you really do not even consider, "Why am I friendly?," it just happens.

Rick: Yeah, it was, we all felt at ease with another, it all felt very comfortable and it just happened. [4t]

Bobbie and Tom went traveling with Rick and Carlos and had a lot of fun. Tom talked and joked about this aspect of their friendship:

Tom: They had an exhibit of Jackie Kennedy, a lot of her clothing, and other sorts of things up in the Kennedy Library in Boston, and so they said, "Let's make a road trip out of it.".... We're so

cheap though, we all-, [starts laughing] the four of us shared a room. [both laugh]

Kimberly: You have to be good friends with people to be able to do that. [both laugh]

Tom: So Bobbie could say she had a night with three men. [both laugh] [2ee]

Bobbie and Tom hosted and attended dinner parties. They went out to dinner and to see movies. Bill, their friend and neighbor, recalled one eventful evening attending a movie:

Tom: One thing I remember is the three of us went to to the third episode of Lord of the Rings movie...

Bill: In costume.... And it was not costume night. [all laugh] And we snuck in Lembas Bread, the Lord of the Rings-style pastries.

Tom: Oh, yeah, that's right.

Bill: And we got a parking ticket! [laughs] It was just wild. It was a wild night. But it was so fun.

Tom: It was fun.

Kimberly: So did other people kind of look at you funny?

Bill: No, because we had a dinner with about six or seven other people who were in costume and who were like fans.... And nobody made fun of us or anything, I think some people actually came up and said it was quite cool. And, you know, if you were a total Lord of the Rings fan, you were probably like, "Oh, I wish I had the guts to do that." [18n]

Bobbie became involved in the lives of her neighbors as close friends and family members do. Bobbie was sometimes a sounding board for her friends when they were having difficulty in their relationships. On shopping trips, she would talk with her shopping companion about problems she was having at work, or problems with her family. She developed, with her friends, the sort of extended family she wished she had been born into.

One example of this was what she and Tom did on 9/11/01. Rick and Tom differed on the specifics, but clearly have a similar memory of the importance that each couple placed on the

other:

Rick: We kind of shared all the good times and the bad times. One in particular that stands out to me was September 11<sup>th</sup>. We were all in our different offices, and that was really before there was instant messaging and everything else, and I remember us emailing back and forth to one another as the news would break. “Well the second tower went down,” and we’d be sending emails to one another, getting emails communicating, and then we all came home, and the four of us, we, did we order pizza?

Tom: We went, I think we went out somewhere, but I can't think where. Maybe we did.

Rick: Wait, I thought we stayed in our kitchen, and we were watching the news, and I think we had pizza at the house. But I know that kind of the first thing we did when we all got back was the four of us – so that we knew we were safe – we wanted to be together as it was unfolding.

Tom: And if you really think about it, at the time, everybody wanted to be with their family, and in a way, for Bobbie and I, to be with you two was to be with our family. [4u]

Despite all the closeness and camaraderie with her neighborhood friends, Bobbie's relationship with Tom was of primary importance. Joe, their neighbor and friend, described them as “two peas in a pod.” [1o] Tom's mom Sue described what makes good couples such as

Bobbie and Tom work:

You each are individuals, you're not the same, and you have different things that interest you or don't interest you, but in the long run I think the couples that manage to stick together are people who have a great deal in common. Think about you and Bobbie, you didn't have a common background at all, but deep down inside there was something very, very similar or meshing for the two of you.... There was something, somehow you figured out that you two were right for each other. [16jj]

At Bobbie's memorial service, Rick told a story about the vision that Bobbie and Tom had for their marriage: “Around the time they were getting married, there was a country western hit song called 'Whatever Happened to Old Fashioned Love' by B.J. Thomas. Tom told me yesterday that this song symbolized what they hoped their marriage would be and what it did in fact turn out to be. In fact the title is engraved in Tom's wedding band.”

They were so close that Bobbie did something most women never allow their husbands to

do: she let him pick out and buy her clothes for gifts. Their friend and neighbor David related:

As much as Bobbie loved buying stuff for herself, she always said the person who really knew how to buy beautiful stuff for her was Tom. And I don't know many husbands who actually go buy clothing for their wives without their wives saying, "This is what I want, go buy it and wrap it up for me." But she said Tom could go out shopping for her and buy her the right size and the perfect outfit and surprise her on Christmas day or her birthday and she would just be thrilled, so whatever connection they had gave Tom the ability to buy for her. [15ff]

Their relationship as a couple meant a lot to Bobbie. She considered herself lucky, and she appreciated Tom's support of her. Her relationship with Tom gave her an increased confidence; as Tom put it, "when I first knew her, her self-confidence was not high at all, because of her family, and then just going through a divorce doesn't help your confidence at all, but, certainly the woman that was 24 years later was quite a bit more different confidence than when we first met." [4ii] Bobbie grew in ways that she might not have without Tom's support. Carlos said of Tom's role that, "[Bobbie] accomplished many of the things she wanted, the places she wanted to go and visit and things, because with Tom she found that she could do it; he was an enabler." [4ss]

Rick and Carlos further discussed the role that Tom played in Bobbie's growth:

Carlos: I think being with Tom she gained a confidence; sometimes you don't get the confidence alone. So Tom, I think, gave her the opportunity to be herself, and that was very important, and that's part of [why] it was the perfect match, because I don't think Tom forced her to a role of, you have to be this way, a perfect whatever.

Rick: Well, Tom supported her in no matter what direction she wanted to go, or what she wanted to explore, and they were partners doing it together. She knew that if she had some idea or scheme or wanted to investigate something, that Tom would be along for the adventure and the journey with her, supporting her, even though he might not be doing it with her physically, but he would be supporting her. And I think she really valued that and she certainly recognized how lucky she was in that regard.

....

Carlos: Tom gave her that ability to really be who she was, because I'm sure there are partners

and husbands or wives that, you know, the other partner says, “Listen, I'm gonna try this religion, I'm going to try to do this,” and they say, “Oh, you're crazy.” [4pp]

Tom remarked in several interviews when this idea came up that it never would have occurred to him not to be supportive, to encourage his wife to explore the things that she was interested in. When he said this to friend and neighbor Susie, her response was, “But, you know, there are marriages where it does not happen that way.” [14aa]

Bobbie often referenced her relationship with Tom when discussing plans and schedules with friends, saying that she would have to check with him. She let her friends know just how much her relationship with him meant to her. During one of the neighborhood disputes when Tom was on the neighborhood board and getting some flack for a decision that was made, Bobbie told her friend and neighbor Joan that, “When somebody hurts Tom, they hurt me.” [13n] David recalled that, “Tom absolutely was the love of Bobbie's life.... She thought of him constantly.... It was a great pairing.” [15w]

Aside from her confidence, Tom also served as a sounding board for Bobbie, particularly when it came to her family and the relationships and the conflicts that were present. In an interview with Leslie, Bobbie's stepsister, she and Tom noted:

Tom: And not to kind of like toot my own horn, but I think I helped smooth out some problems ... we would have discussions.

Leslie: Well, you give her a different perspective, right?

Tom: But she could accept that, I mean she could incorporate that in her thinking and re-evaluate her thoughts in the process.

Leslie: Yeah, well, I think when something is really emotionally close and in your face, it's hard to see anyone else's perspective. [10aa]

Tom's mother Sue thought strongly that Tom “had a lot to do” with Bobbie's development

in her becoming “her own woman.” [16b] His unconditional acceptance of her brought out her strengths. Sue tried to explain the dynamic at play between the two of them:

Sue: Bobbie was open to try things, do things.

Tom: Yeah, open to a lot, I mean, beyond religion.

Sue: Yeah, to all kinds of things. Open to changing her hairdo, open to changing her hair color, open to putting on a five, not five-inch, but a four-inch heel, or whatever it was that struck her at the time. She was-, but I still think this is an important part of it, you were accepting of all that. Not every man would be. You know, I'm gonna take a little prejudice here, but I think a lot of what was developed in Bobbie was because of you and your relationship to each other, whether that's true or not, it's what I want to believe. [laughs]

Tom: No, I guess I always did feel we were, I was-, I never had a right to say no to her on something she wanted to do, that she still was an individual who could make her own decisions, and I wouldn't make her feel [bad about those].

Sue: Yeah, but you know, I don't think DB [Sue's husband] ever said no to me, or anything else, but I think it was even deeper than that, Tom, I think you, what do I want to say, enjoyed-. I think you brought out her strengths in a different way than Dad did maybe with me ... you were always so accepting, and so – I want to say appreciative, and that's not the right word – pleased, happy when she was happy, and she could do some funny things and you still would be happy with her. Because that's who you are. [16dd-ee]

Tom in return, received unconditional acceptance from Bobbie. Sue noted:

I think she always believed that you could do anything, I really think she did. She knew that if you'd decided to stay in teaching, you would have been the best teacher there was. She knew that if you could've had children, you would have been the best father there ever was. She always believed that in you, whatever you were doing, you were going to do it the best. That was her belief and that has to have made a difference in how you felt about yourself. [16gg]

At Bobbie's memorial service, Sue made a similar point. Tom commented that it was one of the most touching things, both for himself and for other people, at the service. Her words were:

I'm Tom's mother, and of course then, Bobbie's mother-in-law. And if there's any kind of gift in the world that a mother can receive, it is the gift of knowing that your child is loved and taken care of and safe. And Bobbie gave me that gift the 24 years they were married. I knew that Tom was in the right hands, was in the right love, and was in the right care. And forever that will

mean something to me, it will be my treasure. Bobbie was so many things, but she was the keeper and caretaker of my son. And that was wonderful.

**“That wouldn't have been the stairway I would have gone up”: Balance in the relationship**

Bobbie and Tom struck a balance in their relationship and how they related to each other.

Many people shared Sue's sentiment to Tom that “Bobbie finished you, and you finished

Bobbie.” [16d] Tom's brother Duane reflected on this aspect of Bobbie and Tom's relationship

during Bobbie's memorial service:

I think that Tom may be among the least likely people, at least pre-Bobbie, to ever have engaged in square dancing. [laughter] He certainly would be among the least likely. Tom went on cruises with Bobbie. Tom renewed his vows, and that is something the more placid Bosworths don't usually do; these are stretches of spirit and emotion and heart and soul that Bobbie brought to Tom. And in turn, Tom brought to Bobbie the ability to patiently watch a baseball game, even the Washington Nationals. [laughter] And to bird-watch, although of course Bobbie had a tremendous awe of nature that has less to do with classifying the precise warbler that's in front of you, and she came to that through Tom. And so they had greatly different interests that meshed, and I couldn't think of what the proper metaphor was, really: is it a mortise and tenon joint, or is it the homely Velcro that meshes together?

Tom's cousin Al described one of the strengths of their marriage as they “helped each other.” [81] Many people remarked that Bobbie was insecure early on in their marriage, and that she got the support she needed to grow from Tom. For example, Susie, their friend and neighbor commented, “I think she really relied on you, I think she was a bit insecure at times, and that she needed-, she really looked to you for security.... You kind of balanced her out.” [14aa]

Tom's cousin Al described an incident that illustrated to him the depth of Bobbie's low self-confidence. Bobbie had said that Tom's mom Sue had not thought that Bobbie was good enough for Tom, and that changed over a period of time with changing circumstances within the extended family. Bobbie's impression was that Sue came to appreciate that Bobbie was a “loyal, loving wife” [8i] and that she was good for Tom. But Al wasn't sure whether this was objectively



accurate, or an impression that Bobbie had because of her low self-confidence and her sense that “she wasn't appreciated for awhile, but that had changed over time.” [8j] Al thought this memory stuck in his mind because he hadn't had this impression at all of how Sue felt about Bobbie. Jane, Tom's cousin, assumed that Bobbie felt this way because “Bobbie wasn't real confident.” [8m] Tom's take on this was that it was mostly due to Bobbie's low self-confidence.

Tom also received support in the marriage, but the support he got was encouragement to go for things that he might not have otherwise allowed himself to dream of. Tom told the only reporter he spoke to after Bobbie's death, “While I'm very calm and factual and practical, she's more emotional and intuitive and spiritual. Where I ended up in life, she's the one who pulled me along.”<sup>viii</sup> Many people who read this article were struck by this and mentioned it in the interviews. Paula, one of their dog park friends, remembered the quote as, “where I am now, she has brought me,” [6k] and thought this demonstrated that “she was the person who always kind of pulled him along, and he was the one who kind of followed.” She also recalled that it was Bobbie who convinced Tom that they should go to the dog park with Beau. [6d] Jane, Tom's cousin, described the interaction as “she was able to pull Tom out and encourage him to do things he probably would not have done on his own, which I'm sure was good for both of them.” [8o] Tom's mom Sue depicted it as:

I think Bobbie brought you along and out of your little shell to a wider, broader, more open person, not that you weren't, but Bobbie exposed you to things that you probably never thought about. She was more accepting, maybe, or-, no, I don't know if that's true at all. You were always accepting, but Bobbie brought it out. You would never not accept somebody, but Bobbie did it with joy, she did it with glee; while you would be more quiet about it, Bobbie just embraced it. So I think you complemented each other that way. [16e]

Tom himself alluded to this quality in his relationship with Bobbie both directly and indirectly. In perhaps two of the most important areas of their life together as a couple, Bobbie's

initiative was essential. Tom recounted the stories with friend and neighbor Susie as we sat in Bobbie and Tom's well-appointed and comfortable living room:

Tom: One of the themes that comes up [in the interviews] is that she pulled me along to do a lot of things, a lot of things I said, "Oh, we probably can't do that," and then she would persist and then we did it, and everything worked out fine, and it was actually for the better that we did things.

Susie: Oh, really? That's interesting, she got you out of your comfort zone.

Tom: Right, yeah, I would be very much stuck in a comfort zone, and she [would say], "Let's do this."

Susie: Like the cruise?

Tom: Yeah, the cruise, or we would not have bought this house if it wasn't for her.

Susie: Really?

Tom: I was like, "No, we can't afford this."

Susie: She said, "Yes, we can."

Tom: We looked, we walked through the house, and she said, "I don't care what it takes, we're going to get it." [Kimberly laughs] So, you know, we talked to mortgage people, and they said, "Well, your income's like right at the borderline."

Susie: Yeah, but you got it.

Tom: So we wouldn't have been here if it hadn't been for her.

Susie: So she was persistent.

Tom: Yeah. Well, she convinced me it was worth going for it, and instead of me saying, "No," I mean, if I had persisted I would have said, "Well, we can't do it." Or, "It won't happen." And part of it I know is a sort of defense, I didn't want her to get disappointed.

Susie: If it didn't come through.

Tom: With Beau, you know, he had two other people were in line to take him before us. And she said, "Well, we should still put in an application." I said, "We're not going to get him, let's don't do that."

Susie: Get disappointed.

Tom: She said, "Well, let's do it," and then the shelter encouraged us, "Put it in, you never know what happens."

Susie: Well, how did you get him, the other two people said no?

Tom: The other two didn't show up, they had like up until 8 o'clock the next day.

Susie: They didn't show up to get him? Well, good for you, but that's sad.

Tom: It is sad, but I feel, as important as he is in my life, that it just was meant to be. [14bb-cc]

Tom also provided an example of this quality in a more mundane context. During our interview with LeaAnne, Bobbie's niece, Tom described a family outing in Old Town Alexandria when Bobbie and her stepsister Leslie decided they should all visit a psychic. Tom and LeaAnne recalled:

Tom: It was right on King Street [which] has a lot of nice little shops, and there's this one stairway that on the sign says, "Palm reading," and "Tarot card reading," I think, and "Walk up the stairs."

LeaAnne: Whose idea was that, was that Bobbie's idea? Or did Leslie say, "Oh, I've always wanted to do that."?

Tom: I would say Bobbie and Leslie kind of jointly said...

LeaAnne: [laughs] "Let's do that!"

Tom: I mean, I think that wouldn't have been the stairway I would have gone up. [all laugh] But it was fun. It was a fun experience. [3q]

Bobbie could easily get her way with Tom. He described how she would call him before buying something when she was on shopping trips with one of her friends:

Tom: I can remember several times that she did [call before buying something], but it was more like, it was usually like amounts that were over a hundred dollars or something. And it was like, I want to buy a lamp, or something that we were sort of in the market for buying, and I knew we would be looking for a lamp at some point, but she'd see something. Or I remember that a wreath for the front door was like 80 dollars or something, so she called in to [tell/ask me]. And

it was a good strategy because she knew I probably would not say no, but if she'd come home with it I might have been more like, "We didn't need [that], you didn't need to buy that," [both laugh] so it was a good-, she cut me off at the pass [both laugh] to complain about purchasing something.

Kimberly: Because you already OK'ed it.

Tom: Yeah. And you know, with Joe there, it would make me look bad, "No, you can't have that." [laughs] And I would probably say no if it was just a totally extravagant thing that was pricey. So I guess technically I had some veto power, but [laughs] I didn't feel that power. [2c]

Usually Bobbie was the one who took initiative on things they did, like redecorating the house or choosing where to go for vacation, with input from Tom. But for the vacation for their 10th anniversary, Bobbie asked him to plan the trip without telling her where they were going:

For our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we went to Cancun. And one of the things I remember about that was, she said, "I want to be surprised as to where we're going." She said, "You decide." And so I kept it as a secret, and made all the arrangements. And then the night before she, I don't know, something slipped out, she goes, "Will I be needing a sweater where we're going?" And I said, I just, without even thinking, I said, "You're not going to need a sweater to go to Cancun." [laughs] So it was like, "Oh!" [both laugh] So, the goal was to get her to the airport and she'd see, "Oh, we're going to Cancun.".... It's like, well, I came that close. [2hh]

### **"This very much became a family": Vow Renewals**

It was important to Bobbie that she and Tom formally recognize and remember their commitment to each other. Tom described: "To really psychoanalyze it a little, I think there was a need for Bobbie to somehow-. In my mind, the first marriage [ceremony] was our commitment to each other, and to Bobbie there was a sort of need I guess to make sure it was still there or for whatever reason to have a re-commitment." [16aa] Perhaps this need for a re-commitment on Bobbie's part stemmed from her parents' divorce. Her spiritual teacher Millie thought that part of Bobbie's growth as a witch was her recognizing that she made a choice, every day, to be with Tom, and that she needed to have her family and friends celebrate with her and validate this choice.

Bobbie and Tom had their first vow renewal on their 10-year anniversary. In an interview with his mom, Tom described the disappointing result:

Tom: [It] didn't turn out anything like what we'd hoped, it ended up being like in a lawyer's office.

Sue: Oh, I didn't know that because we weren't here.

Tom: No, and Nina and Jack were there, and the office was somebody's [everyday office with] papers all over the place, books all over the place.

Sue: I never knew that, because she had a beautiful dress, and the pictures of you.

Tom: We had talked about, she had even investigated going down to, I want to say Key West or somewhere in Florida, and going to a hotel that you go out on a pier and get re-married. And I think we ended up owing taxes and didn't get a refund, and so we couldn't afford it, so she kind of put together this other thing.

Sue: So that may have been why the 20<sup>th</sup> was really important to her, that the 10<sup>th</sup> didn't turn out. [16bb]

On their 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, Bobbie and Tom had their second vow renewal. They learned their lessons from their first renewal: this ceremony would take place in the neighborhood and it would be a community event with their friends involved in all aspects of preparing for and participating in the ceremony. David explained:

This was not just something that Tom and Bobbie were doing, this was a neighborhood production, we had lots of different people involved and helping to plan, 'cause again, back to that very start, this was not just to be a neighborhood of strangers, this very much became a family, and Bobbie and Tom brought us all into their family as neighbors here. [15jj]

For Bobbie, getting to plan her vow renewal was just as fun as planning her original wedding. Her friend and neighbor Susie recalled, "how excited she was about that ... getting her outfit, her dress, her plans, that sort of thing." [14g] Bobbie and Tom's friends and neighbors David and Bill hosted the rehearsal dinner; additionally, Bill found the woman who made Bobbie's dress and David sang at the ceremony. They along with other friends even helped to

pay for Bobbie's dress.

David shared Bobbie's desire to make everything perfect, and he related the following about his hosting of the rehearsal dinner and his involvement in the preparing for the ceremony:

And I remember it was that we had the rehearsal a week early, and we had the rehearsal dinner at our house. And it was one of the more eclectic dinner parties I feel like I have ever thrown. And I was so concerned that it would be nice enough for the event that it was supposed to be representing. I remember stressing with my mother over the menu of that, this has to be really, really fine at this rehearsal dinner at our house, and I remember what fun we had planning and picking out the music. I remember going to rehearse with the harpist at her house in Fairfax, because we wanted this to be as perfect an evening and event for the renewal of the vows as it could be. [15g]

Tom, Patty, and Terri remembered the perfect setting and how everything came together for the ceremony:

Terri: Well, like everything, [it was] just really well-prepared and really elegant. And she always-, things were elegant, they weren't ever overdone.

Patty: Done. I was just going to say.... And it was a nice day, and it was just...

Terri: It was gorgeous day...

Tom: May, end of May.

Terri: and everything was beautiful. It was really cool to see the outfit that she had pulled together, since we had done some of the shopping together. I mean she had a great [outfit], and you [to Tom] had a great outfit, it was all very cool.... And like I said, it was just, it was gracious and elegant.

Patty: And it was very warm, obviously they were celebrating their renewal of vows, but it was sort of...

Terri: But it was such a community feel to it, the way she did it.

Patty: Right, it was very interactive, it was designed to be kind of a, spread the warmth for everyone, and you definitely got that feeling there.... And from what I observed, everyone there, whether or not they'd ever been to anything like this or in this format, had thoroughly enjoyed it, and felt very welcomed, and just had a grand time. [9cc]

By this time, Bobbie was fully immersed in Wicca and the vow renewal was a Wiccan

ceremony. When some of the neighbors refused to attend because it was a Wiccan ceremony, Bobbie was upset. The vow renewal was the first time Charlie, Leslie's fiancé, met Bobbie and Tom. He provided the viewpoint of someone who was a little unsure about the ceremony:

I thought that the ceremony was quite different, but I started to enjoy it very, very, very much.... But this ceremony was quite different. And I'm very, very Catholic. So, going to this was like, "Oh, my God," this was like the sacrilege, you know, "I don't know if I should be here." That was the thoughts that was going through my head. But in meeting all the people, I actually kind of liked them. [10d]

Tom is not Wiccan; in the interview with his mom, he said the following about why he participated in the ceremony:

Tom: I think I would say it was more I was doing it because it was very important for Bobbie. But it also, my nature is I don't really like to be the center of attention; Bobbie does like to be the center of attention. I didn't want to, it wasn't as important to me to be the center, and have people around us, have that celebration.

Sue: But you did it. And I always thought that was great, because I knew that that was not you, in your heart.

....

Tom: But it's interesting also, and I think also for her, it was because it was sort of a new religion, to sort of get married in that religion, not because we were married in that, but to re-commit in that religion.

Sue: But I would say to Kimberly that Tom did it for Bobbie, not that the Wicca meant that much to you, but you knew it meant a lot to her, so you were willing, and so were all your neighbors. Because there wasn't any one of them that was any part of that [Wicca]. But Emmanuel and everybody that took part.

Tom: And Rick, there's a picture over here of the four of us.

Sue: I mean, they even wore the tights, they all went along with it, because it was important to Bobbie. [16aa]

Rick and Carlos wore tights with their outfits for the ceremony; Bill has a different memory of where the idea for wearing the tights came from:

Bill: And [laughs] I hope Bobbie is laughing about this, and Carlos insisting on the tights.

Tom: Yeah. [laughs] Bobbie didn't want Carlos to wear tights. Carlos has the flair for [doing that]. [all laugh]

Bill: He had the legs, he said, and he was not going to let that opportunity go to waste. [all laugh] [18l]

### **“You were a complete unit unto yourselves”: How friends saw their relationship**

Tom was surprised to learn over the course of interviews just how favorably people saw his relationship with Bobbie. He explained, “when you're living that life, I don't think you have any clue what other people are thinking about it, and I still don't, I wasn't aware that people thought how good we were together.” [16hh] Joan, their neighbor and friend, described: “You guys were so close, that it just seemed like you were just a complete unit unto yourselves.”

[13cc] She seemed incredulous that Tom didn't realize that his and Bobbie's happiness was not the norm:

Tom: I don't know if I realized that we were a unique couple, I just thought we were...

Joan: You thought every couple was that happy?

Tom: No, I knew...

Joan: Come on! [laughs]

Tom: I just didn't realize it was that abnormal.

....

Joan: You didn't realize what a perfect marriage you had? I mean, maybe it wasn't perfect perfect, but to the outside it was just-, I mean, Susie talks about it, everybody thought that it was just...

Tom: No, I would say I know it was above average, but I didn't know it was quite observed as being really special.

Joan: A role model, this was the kind of marriage everybody would want. It was like that kind of



marriage: “If I get married, I'd like it to be like that.”

Tom: No, I didn't know that, but I've heard it [since]. [13dd, hh]

David described his take on Bobbie and Tom's relationship:

Tom absolutely was the love of Bobbie's life. And that their relationship was as mutually beneficial to one another, and she thought of him constantly and again even buying dresses, it wasn't, “Oh, I only want what I want,” it was, “I want something that Tom will like me in,” or, “What will look good when I'm out with Tom,” or, “How much is this compared to what Tom told me I could spend today.” [all laugh] And so I know she thought about Tom constantly and it was a great pairing, and I know that Bobbie thought about the age difference. And I remember her telling the story of the first time you took her home to meet your mother, and she said, “I knew this was going to be a disaster because here's her little boy, bringing home a twice-divorcée, seven-year-old woman,” but again, a great love affair occurred between the Bosworths because they knew how much Bobbie and Tom loved each other. But you could just see the sitcom script being written right there, and I think one of the reasons Bobbie loved having a younger man as her husband is that it allowed her to even have more reason to not look or act her age, and some people, no offense Tom, thought Bobbie might have been younger than you were at some moments in time. [laughs] And so I think that she constantly saw themselves as a couple, and even within the house and everything, although Bobbie did probably take a lead in a lot of stuff, it was always in consideration to your opinion as well. [15w]

They were so close that Susie worried about how Tom “would survive” after Bobbie died: “At least from the outside, everyone said, 'How is Tom going to get on, because they were so close, we've never seen a couple so devoted and so close to each other?’” [14z] Paula, one of their dog park friends, echoed this sentiment, “I look at little Beau and, oh, my God, my heart just aches for this man because he was just so totally devoted to her.” [6p]

In addition to the words that Tom's mom Sue said at Bobbie's memorial service, Sue commented in her interview that, “I always knew that Bobbie and you were right, and that she was taking care of you and that you would be loved by her come hell or high water. [laughs]... You two were right for each other, right from the beginning.” [16ff]

### **No regrets: Not having children**

One final area of Bobbie and Tom's relationship that came up in the interviews was their

decision as a couple not to have children. Bobbie and Tom discussed this and made this decision before they were married. Bobbie was physically unable to have children, but beyond that, she did not think she would make a good mother, or perhaps she did not want to inadvertently recreate a family dynamic like the one she grew up in. Tom readily agreed with not having children, and does not regret it; as he told one interviewee, “our lives would have been totally different with children.” [13uu] I asked his mother Sue what she thought about their decision as a couple, and her response surprised Tom:

Sue: I remember early on, and I don't know if I ever said this to Tom, saying to Dee [Tom's brother Duane] – when you first must have been thinking about getting married or you were engaged, I don't know – “I feel it's too bad that they won't have children because Tom would be a good father.” I remember saying that, and Dee kind of, he scolded me. He said, “This is Tom's decision, whatever he decides has got to be the right decision.” And that was all I ever remember thinking.

Tom: I never heard that before.

Sue: I know, I never said it to you, because I always felt badly that I even doubted it. But I remember saying to Dee, “I just feel really badly,” or “It's too bad that Tom won't have children,” because I thought you would make a good father, and you would have. And him telling, flat-out, he wasn't kind about it, he just said, you know, “It's Tom's decision not yours, Mom. Back out of it, lady.” [all laugh]... And he was right, it was your decision, but I don't remember ever thinking, worrying about it again. I just closed off the discussion and the thought and that was what you were [doing].

Tom: Yeah, cause I don't, I mean, I know we told you we weren't going to.

Sue: Yes, you did, that Bobbie couldn't have children.

Tom: But I can't recall any discussion after that point. [16v]

Despite Bobbie's fear or trepidation that she would not make a good mother, in her later years she grew quite close to one of her nieces LeaAnne, and their relationship approximated a parent-child relationship. LeaAnne recalled going shopping for her first communion dress with her aunt and the fun they had:

LeaAnne: Bobbie, she likes to do the hair, and the make-up and the clothes. And my mom does not. [laughs] My mom does not care about any of that stuff.... So Bobbie agreed she'd do my First Communion. And so we went dress shopping. And I think she took me to every single seamstress and tailor in the area getting it. And she had this dress like designed and fitted and it's like a wedding dress for a seven year old and it only fits me, or fit me at the age of seven, it didn't fit anyone else.... So it was like a tailor had designed a wedding dress. But, one of the times that we had gone out, we had gone and we got lunch and then we were going to another fitting and I don't know where we were, but I remember she was like, "Let's do something illegal." [laughs] And I was like, "OK." And she goes, "Let's jaywalk!" And so we ran across the street at an angle in the middle of a street, and it wasn't busy or anything, but that was my original memory of Bobbie, was like, "Let's be illegal; let's jaywalk." [all laugh]

Tom: Yeah, when she did things illegally, she just went all the way. [all laugh] [3b-c]

Growing up, LeaAnne was frequently told that she and Bobbie were very similar; however, in the context this was said, LeaAnne recalled at Bobbie's memorial service she was not always sure if this was a "compliment or an insult." (After she got to know her Aunt Bobbie better, she decided it was the former.) LeaAnne's mom Bonnie lived in Ohio during the time LeaAnne was in college in Virginia; Bobbie became her second mom. Bobbie visited LeaAnne on-campus several weeks after school started and LeaAnne frequently visited them in Alexandria and stayed over the holidays with them. Even though Bobbie could envy all the opportunities that were available to LeaAnne, she was incredibly proud of what LeaAnne had accomplished so far and her potential for growth in the future. Tom reflected on Bobbie's pride related to LeaAnne's putting herself through college and graduating, as well as Bobbie's bond with

LeaAnne:

So I know she just felt that you really accomplished a lot, under difficult, difficult circumstances, and you excelled, I mean, not only did you do it, but you were very active in student government and other sorts of things. I think she always thought- I mean, we've said this before, but LeaAnne was the closest thing she had to a daughter, to a child, and that you have some similar personality traits that Bobbie had too. [3w]

### **Interlude: Tom's Background**

Tom grew up in an upper-middle class family. His mom Sue worked as a school librarian and his dad DB (short for Duane Bosworth) worked for the federal government for the Department of Agriculture. He grew up in Ohio with his three brothers: his brother Duane was two years older and his brother Tim was three years younger. Tom was a twin; coincidentally, he and Jon were born under the horoscope sign of Gemini, the twins. Tom and Jon were mirror twins: the swirls on their heads went the opposite way, and although Tom is right-handed he plays sports left-handed, and vice versa for Jon.

Tom has many fond memories of his growing-up years: playing with his brothers, all so close in age; playing with their dog Boots in the yard; swimming in a nearby lake; visiting their older cousins at their Aunt Betty's house.

In the summers when they were in college, Tom and Jon had a yardwork business; they mostly mowed lawns. One hot day Jon complained of a headache and went into the bathroom of the home where he was working and collapsed. He died instantly from an aneurysm. He and Tom had recently turned 20.

Tom graduated from college and went on to graduate school, earning a Master's degree in Public Administration from George Washington University. He worked in Virginia and met Bobbie when he was 27.

## **Chapter Five: Bobbie's Death**

Women live, on average, about five to seven years longer than men. Bobbie was fond of saying, "I'm seven and a half years older than Tom, so we should just about make it together..."

### **"That could have been you": Hearing the news**

Bobbie's death was a tragedy and a shock. To know that she was randomly picked and targeted in a public place in broad daylight caused many people to call what happened a tragedy, as well as threatening. Friend and neighbor Joan noted that when she told her husband about what had happened, his response was, "'That nice couple?'.... He said, 'It could have happened to anybody.' It could have been-. And I guess because of the red-head similarity, he immediately thought, 'That could have been you, because you go to Springfield Mall.'" [13r]

Debbie, one of their dog park friends, characterized it as, "You just don't expect something like that. If Bobbie had passed on in a regular car accident, you would be shocked and saddened and things do happen, but this is just so horrendous." [12o]

Bobbie's friends and family often spontaneously talked about when they first heard about what happened to Bobbie and their shock at the news. Bobbie and Tom's friends and neighbors, Bill and David, were on vacation when Bobbie died. Bill recounted the painful phone call:

Bill: I was really devastated on the trip to Canada finding out kind of in the middle of the night...

Tom: How did you find out? Did someone call you on your cell phone or something?

Bill: I had just taken, I have trouble sleeping. I had just taken, about a half an hour before, my Lunesta, and it was maybe about 10:20 or so, and Joe called. And he asked me if I was sitting down, and I thought something maybe was wrong for him or for Gary. And I was [sitting down] because I was just getting ready and changed into my pajamas, and he told me, he just said what happened. And I think I must not have responded for at least 20 seconds, and it was one of those things where I just couldn't, it just didn't sink in, you can't even process it. And I know Bobbie wanted us to enjoy our trip, but the reason I called almost every other day, and talked either to you or to Joe, or to Rick or to Carlos, tried to come up with music and crazy things, is I so, I

really did so want to be there. [tears up]

Tom: I know you were torn, I mean I hoped you would continue your trip, I don't think Bobbie would've wanted you to cut short your vacation.

Bill: No. But seeing like the video [of the memorial service]...

Tom: Was that good?

Bill: It was. It was good to know, I mean the outpouring of friendship and love for her, and also, and maybe this is selfish, maybe a little jealous that I wasn't there. I mean even when we mourn, we have to be careful that it's not about me. But I think that was one of the most incredible things, that you could see how many people's lives had been touched by Bobbie, and how many people really did love her, and that's really a sign of how important somebody's been when they come through life. [all crying] [18aa-bb]

Despite Bobbie not always feeling appreciated at work, she had clearly made an impact on those she came into contact with, including co-workers, clients, service people, and friends and family of co-workers:

Xhilda: She actually, there were so many of our clients that loved her. I answered the phone [during the first work week after Bobbie died], but one of the clients said, "Oh, where is Bobbie? Is she sick today?" And when I gave her the bad news, I will never forget, you know, "Oh, my God," it's like she received news from her family or something, she couldn't talk to me, she hung up on me and that's, you know, they knew her [as a family member].

Margie: I mean, even the FedEx guy and the [courier] guy...

Jaimie: The postman.

Margie: all of them were terribly upset when they heard, because they all had a connection with her.

Xhilda: The guys downstairs from the cafeteria brought a bouquet, she would go downstairs to the cafeteria and eat lunch and they brought a bouquet for her.

Jaimie: Yeah, people in the different offices in the building bring things and they just put it at our door. It was a lot of stuff.

Xhilda: And Meg's family sent, I will not forget, beautiful white roses.

Meg: Yeah, my parents enjoyed talking to her, and I think they had come to a company picnic

once and had talked to Bobbie quite a lot at the picnic. So she would also ask about them, but they were, they really liked Bobbie. [11bb]

Paula, one of their dog park friends, recounted her memory of getting the news in the dog park the day after Bobbie's death:

And the morning after, that Sunday morning when I saw Rick when I was coming up, I saw Rick, and I'm thinking, "I wonder who that guy is? We've got a new guy here. Maybe he's got a dog," and I was looking for this dog to go with this guy that I had never seen before. And Rick was just kind of standing by himself, just looking down at the ground.... And then when I approached the fence, I was right up, I still hadn't entered, I yelled to Debbie, and I said, "Hey, Deb," and she didn't turn around, she was talking to Tom. And then I looked at her from the side and she looked to be upset, and so Debbie's friend came over to me and leaned over the fence before I came in and told me what had happened. And I remember saying, "I don't understand. Tom's right here. This couldn't have-, wait a minute, no, no, not Tom's wife, not To-," and she's saying, "Yes, Tom's wife." And I'm, but I'm saying, "But he's right there," and I kept saying to her, "He's right there." And what I couldn't understand was how somebody who had had such a horrific event happen, how they could be here, standing there, like I said. And then I realized he was crying, but I just thought it was incredible that he would come, and he said, "No, I wanted to come and tell all of you in person." And that was something, in hindsight I look back and say that was a really good sign, that Tom was handling things the way [he was], was doing the right things that he needed to do in order to kind of grieve properly. And also just kind of have others around him informed rather than having them hear it second hand, he wanted to make sure we heard it from him. And so that was so impressive to me that he would have the courage to come down there and face every single one of us, because each of us comes in at a different time, and so as every person came in there would be this horrible sigh, or cry, or scream, or something, and then each one of us individually would go up to him and hug him and tell him how sorry we were. So he had to have known that it was going to be a very, very uncomfortable situation, and yet he chose to do it. [6f-g]

Judy and Joe, dog park friends who were not at the park that Sunday morning, saw what had happened on the news, but couldn't quite believe it was the same person they knew from the dog park:

Judy: I turned to channel [number], and they kept saying, but they never showed a picture. And that Monday morning is when, or was it Sunday night? Monday morning you had gone to work, and I turned on the news, and I saw her walking in that store with those guys. I called him on the phone, I said, "Honey, it's her, it's her, it is her, I saw it."

Joe: I told her, I said, "Don't tell me that."

Judy: And he said, “No, honey, you got to be kidding, did it look just like her?” I said, “It was her, she had just got her new glasses, her new black glasses.” I said, “It's her.”

Joe: I said, “Don't tell me that.”

Judy: I was just like, I was wrecked, I was so wrecked until we finally-, who finally told us that it was? Somebody at the park told us it was.

Joe: Well, I knew it was as soon as I saw it on TV. It was plain as day.

Judy: I didn't want to believe it. I saw it, but I didn't want to believe it.

Joe: It was plain as day, it was Bobbie, you could tell [by] the way she walked, the way she looked.

....

Joe: I told Judy, “She is not 60-something.” Judy said, “That's her, I saw her.” I said, “No, it's not.”

Judy: And I'm just flicking the channels and that morning when I saw it, oh, my heart just went out.

Joe: And then I came home that night and saw it on TV, I said, “Oh, man.” [17n-o]

Tom's mom Sue recalled the phone call that changed her life. Tom always calls her on Sundays; when he called that Saturday afternoon, she noted the caller ID, picked up, and said, “Hi Tom, is everything OK?” He replied, “No, Bobbie was killed today.” Sometime later in the conversation, or in another conversation, she said, “You've had such a hard, tough life.” “No, I haven't,” he countered. “I've just had some hard things happen to me.” And then in a later conversation, referencing the death of his twin brother, Tom shared with his mom, “I know I'll make it through, because I've lived through this before.”



## **Interlude: Support for Tom**

### **Letters and notes written to Tom**

Tom has kept every single piece of correspondence expressing sympathy for Bobbie's death in a basket. When I last counted, there were well over 140 separate letters, cards, and notes. These were received right away, or on the day of Bobbie's memorial service, or in some cases, weeks or months later.

Here is a sampling of some of the thoughtful words that Tom has received. Some were written to Tom by people who knew Bobbie at her work, others were written to Tom by his work colleagues, family members, friends, neighbors, and others who knew Bobbie and/or Tom, and, most surprising to Tom, a few were written by total strangers. Letter writers are only identified with their first initials.

#### **Bobbie's work**

Dear Tom, When I first walked into Kasitzka Wicks and Company 6½ years ago, Bobbie was the first to greet me. She told me how much I would like working here ... “the people are so nice...” Well, Bobbie herself was one of the nicest. She presented such a warm but professional image for our firm, and it was so nice to be greeted by her each morning. She is missed tremendously. My deepest sympathy to you, Tom. I cannot begin to fathom your loss or the sadness you must feel, but I know that you must have many, many memories of wonderful and treasured times and moments with Bobbie that will keep her close to you forever. With deepest sympathy, M.

Dear Tom:

My name is E., and I work on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor for [company name] in the same building as Bobbie. I would see Bobbie almost daily, taking the mail to the mailbox always looking like a million bucks, make-up flawless. Over time, once she got to know me, she would always have something nice to say about how I was dressed (on my good days I might add) and was just so gracious whenever I ran into her.

I want you to know Tom that I know you're hurting; we all are. I've tried and tried to make sense out of all this, but of course I came up with nothing. There is absolutely no excuse for this senseless act – plain and simple.

I will miss Bobbie's smile. I often look for her to come out that door with that box of mail and give me that look like she's dreading taking it to the mailbox! I often laugh about that now, but it's something I truly will miss.

Although I didn't know Bobbie very well, I do consider her a very dear friend. This has made me appreciate those that I love and those that I consider friends as well. Life is so short, and above all precious. I know that Bobbie is at peace and in God's care.

May God Bless You and your family Tom during this difficult time. From what I've read and heard from her co-workers, Bobbie loved you oh so much!  
Your friend, E.

#### Tom's work

Tom, My heart aches for you. I can't imagine what the impact of such a tragedy is. Please know that you are in my thoughts and the thoughts of the many, many friends you have at Westat. Take comfort in her memories. C.

Tom – I was devastated to hear about your wife. My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. I am guessing that she probably felt sorry for her captors – what a wonderful spirit! Her memories will live on, I am sure. All the best, D.

Tom, We're thinking a lot about Bobbie and you this week. Losing family is hard, but the tragedy of losing your spouse and best friend so suddenly must be very painful. May God comfort you. Bobbie, you and your families will continue to be in our prayers. Sincerely, B., P., and B.

Tom: From the picture and story in the paper, you can tell that Bobbie was a beautiful person and soul mate, and your loss must be very painful. Know that Bobbie, her family and you will be in our prayers. B.

Dear Tom, I am so sorry for your loss of your dear sweet Bobbie. My heart breaks when I think of the grief and agony you are enduring. May warm memories and cherished thoughts help ease the pain. With deepest sympathy, M.

Tom, I can't even begin to describe the range of emotions I've felt since I spoke with D. on Sunday and can only imagine the depth of yours. The only comfort I can find in having read articles and talking with people is that you both knew you were truly loved by one another. May every morning from this day forward be a little bit easier to wake up. I'm so sorry, K.

Tom, There are no words and nothing I can say to relieve your pain. Just want you to know how much I care, and my thoughts are with you and your family. D.

Tom – I was very touched by the Post article this morning. We at Westat, most of us, did not know Bobbie. She was a wonderful person, and her loss to you is a great sadness to us all. Our best wishes and prayers are with you. T.

#### Family

Dear Tom – Your cousin Jane called us with the terrible news of the tragic death of Bobbie. We both feel terrible with your loss and you have our deepest sympathy. There is just no way to understand how these terrible things happen, but if you are like your mother you will have the strength to endure. Sincerely, J. and R.

Dear Tom, Today on Bobbie's 61<sup>st</sup> birthday we are thinking of you and remembering the many wonderful things Bobbie brought to our lives. We love you and are comforted that your mom is with you today. Love, M. and J.

Tom – I don't know how to express the deep sympathy I feel for you. Surviving this horrendous act will be very difficult. You and Bobbie had a fabulous 24 years together. I hope in the future you can look back on those years and be comforted. Bobbie was a wonderful and kind person. When C. died you wrote me a letter. I have never forgotten your kind words. Time does help you heal, at least it dulls the pain. I hope over time you find peace remembering the wonderful times you and Bobbie had. S.

Dear Tom, Please accept my deepest sympathy for the loss of your beloved wife Bobbie. I remember the last time I saw her beautiful face. It was when we were all at Betty's for lunch and your mom Susy was there and Janie. I was so glad to see the two of you. Please take care of yourself. Love, B.

Tom, I want to thank you for the beautiful bowl that you and Bobbie chose for me. You were so careful to remember the colors I'd chosen in July when you were here to visit! I truly wish I could have made the trip with Mom and Dad. Please know that you and Bobbie are continuously in my thoughts. My deepest sympathies and all my love as you continue adjusting and healing. Always, A.

Dear Tom, Sorry I can't be with you during this time of loss. I always looked forward to seeing both of you at family gatherings. Remember that whimsical breakfast last Thanksgiving when people were choosing what plant or animal they would turn into if they could? Ann chose the Oak tree; you the Red-Tailed Hawk. Bobbie picked the Red-Tailed Fox, who would use her cunning to help other creatures. That really seemed to fit. I'll miss her warm, gently mischievous presence. You're both in my thoughts, Tom. Red tails and all. K.

Tom, I am so sorry this happened to you. Life has a strange way that isn't always kind. For as long as you love her she will never be lost or far from heart. As you look to the sky you will see her float by on a cloud. J.

#### Friends/Neighbors/Others

Tom – There are no words that we can offer that will bring you peace or ease your pain at this difficult time. But in the days ahead, perhaps these will bring some relief, as they have for us over the years at times like this - “They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old; age shall not worry them, not the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we

will remember them.” - Lawrence Binyon. You have our deepest sympathy for your loss. T. and M.

Dear Bosworth family – On behalf of the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria's staff and Board of Directors, I'd like to express our sincere sympathy on your loss. I understand from my staff in the adoption department that you were in a number of times looking at dogs and they very much liked you both. I cannot even imagine what your family must be going through. Please know that our thoughts are with you. Sincerely, T.

Dear Mr. Bosworth, We were deeply saddened to read about the untimely passing of your dear wife, Bobbie, and the horrific circumstances surrounding that passing. You and she are in our prayers. She was a very lovely and classy lady. Sincerely, the staff of [name of cosmetic center]

Dear Mr. Bosworth, I am so sad for your loss. We all lost a very special person. I was privileged to work with Bobbie professionally and to become her friend. She will always be remembered for her thoughtfulness and kindness to me. Sincerely, S., [name of physical therapy center]

Dear Tom, Thinking of you and sharing your sorrow. Love, K. (as in your “corner” K. from modern western square dance classes 1985-1986).

Tom, I'm so glad I talked with you and Bobbie Saturday at Panera [the day she was killed]. Words cannot convey how devastated I am. We are so very sorry and pray for your strength and healing. T. and F.

Tom, I keep seeing Bobbie's smile – even as you and she helped us with serving our clients living on the streets through our hypothermia program. Words can't express how sad we are that the world has lost such a beautiful lady. N. at [name of non-profit]

Dear Tom, We took riding lessons with Bobbie at [name of stables]. Although we hadn't seen her for many years, we remember her fondly for her enthusiasm, kindness and joie de vivre. We were deeply saddened to hear of your tragic loss and send our sincere condolences. With sympathy, K. and S.

Dear Tom, Bobbie is very special and I know that she will always be with you. I was her spiritual student and she offered me kindness when I was going through the hardest time in my life. Warmest sympathy, C.

Tom, There are no words to express how sorry I was to hear of what happened. Bobbie was such a fun-loving, up-beat and warm person. Remember the good times you shared. May those memories, in time, bring peace to you and a smile to your face. Know that you and your family are surrounded by folks who care about you. Don't be hesitant to lean on them. H.

### Strangers

Dear Mr. Bosworth, I write to express my sympathy for the loss of your beloved wife, Bobbie Bosworth. As a fellow Alexandrian, I was shocked to read the news of her death, which was so senseless. May you find comfort from friends and family and from our local community, who is thinking of you. All the best, S.

Tom, I've never met Bobbie but through your reflections of love, she has grasped my heart. The places you've visited, your walks together and the goals you've attained will be in your memories forever. The journey that she had to take alone preys on my mind. I think about her throughout the days. You mentioned that Bobbie pulled you along through life. I believe that God will continue to have her push and pull you. Thank you for sharing moments of her dreams that you made together. I have two cats. If you all decide to do a foundation in her memory please let me know. May God's love sustain you and your families. Love, R.

We cannot know what lies ahead from day to passing day,  
What changes God is planning in His wise and loving way.

We cannot know the reasons He allows both joy and tears,  
Why we must lose the precious ones we've cherished through the years.

We cannot know but we can trust, and faith can help us find  
Our way to those tomorrows that will bring us peace of mind.

I can't recall where I read this and wrote it down several years ago. My prayers are with you. R.

Dear Mr. Bosworth:

My name is V. Although you do not know me and I do not know you, other than through what I have heard and read about in the news, I am writing to extend my condolence to you and your family. For some time now, I have wanted to reach out to you just to offer words of encouragement. I just wanted you to know that the premature death of your wife has truly touched me like no other. So much so that I felt compelled to write to you and let you know that her loss not only affected your family, but those of us in the community.

How could such mindless individuals be so cruel? One would never know. No time nor energy or thoughts need to be wasted on trying to figure that out. Leave that to the justice system. Please use your energy to determine how you will continue to uphold the character traits of kindness, warmth, genuineness and humanness displayed by your wife in her lifetime, and so graciously shared with the media by friends and persons who knew her.

The spirit of your wife's warmth, kindness, joy, smile, love and impact of her life on others shall live on forever. She has really touched so many of us without even knowing the magnitude of her influence. The pain you feel must be immeasurable and unbearable. However, please know that people such as I, and hundreds of others, do care and do wish that you find comfort in knowing that others really do care.

Hundreds of folks will be keeping you in prayer. Please remain prayerful as you continue to face the difficult days ahead. May God continue to show you peace, direction, comfort and love.

God Bless, V.

Dear Mr. Bosworth, I have never written to a stranger before, but I was truly saddened when I heard what had happened to your wife. It sounds like you were a very close couple and my heart

goes out to you to have to deal with such a terrible loss in such a violent way. How anyone can be so cruel and callous, without regard for another human being, is beyond me. I hope the surviving criminal gets put away for the rest of his life as a reminder of the terrible crime he committed. May your wonderful memories get you through this difficult time. Sincerely, A.

Dear Tom,

I have been wondering for several weeks whether to write to you or not. After all, you don't know me, and I feel sure you have received many cards and letters, but every day I think of your precious wife, and I pray for you often. I know from experience that grief does not pass by quickly....

When D., who you worked with at Westat, told me about your wife, it gripped my heart. Your wife was a very brave woman. I am so, so sorry that the outcome of her ordeal did not have a happy ending. It grieves my heart, and I didn't even know her. I do know in part what your wife went through, but I do not know what you are going through as I have not lost a spouse. I do however know what grief and hardship feel like....

I have a deep, deep faith that has seen me through a lot. Though my faith has been tried, it remains intact. I keep pressing on, knowing that only God understands and only He knows the length of our days. I pray for grace often, and that is what I am praying for you. I hope, in some way, it helps you to know that others, even someone that doesn't know you, cares about what you are going through.

With heartfelt sincerity, J.

Dear Mr. Bosworth, My husband and I cannot recall when we have been so profoundly saddened by a news story as we have by the loss of your beautiful wife. We are also at a loss for any words of comfort that we may offer. But we hope it will help to know that even strangers are affected by this tragedy. May Barbara's memory be eternal and may God grant you the strength you will need as you face the future without her. Our deepest sympathy to her parents and siblings. We shall keep all of you in our prayers. With our heartfelt sympathy, M. and N.

### **The Living Landscape Fund book from Tom's co-workers**

Tom feels incredibly lucky to work with a group of people who have supported him so well. Over 100 employees at his company contributed to a Living Landscape Fund that went to purchase a park bench and four trees to honor Bobbie at the park where Tom and Beau walk every day. As part of this project, each person who contributed to the fund had an opportunity to write something to Tom; these papers were then bound in a book and presented to Tom. Some of these entries are reprinted below.

Tom, I wish I'd known Bobbie in life. I feel I got to know her at her service. Shoes and all. A.

Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal. -Irish headstone

My hope is that you have found comfort from the care and concern of all of us at Westat. A.

Tom, I never met Bobbie but from everything I have heard, the world was a better place with her. I'm sure that you, Beau, and all Bobbie's family and friends miss her very much. The Living Landscape bench seems an appropriate way to remember her. I hope it gives you comfort in your loss. B.

Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow. -Helen Keller

Tom, As you and your pup sit in the sunshine on Bobbie's park bench, may the warmth of your memories be a comfort to you. Bobbie and you both will continue to be in our thoughts and prayers. Sincerely, B., P. and B.

Dear Tom, I hope this book gives you some small measure of comfort as you think about Bobbie in the days to come. It has been clear to all that she was a special person deserving of the love and friendship she enjoyed from so many people. Please know too how special you are to so many of your friends and loved ones. To have been so dearly loved by one so special is a true testimonial to you as both a husband and friend. Take care of yourself. Regards, B.

Tom, I know for certain that we never lose the people we love. They continue to participate in every act, thought, and decision we make. When someone we love becomes a memory, the memory becomes a treasure. We find comfort in knowing that our lives have been enriched by having shared their love. Your friend, C.

Dear Tom, From attending the service for Bobbie and listening to friends and family speak about her, it is clear that the two of you had 24 more years together than most people ever have. C.

Dear Tom, Sometimes it's hard to find just the right words when a friend is going through a difficult time in their life. You want your words to be supportive, comforting and a source of healing. But sometimes an action or gesture can say more than words possibly could. That's why I was so pleased to be able to contribute towards the memorial bench and landscaping project. I hope this memorial will provide a place of comfort and remembrance throughout the healing process. You will continue to be in my thought and prayers. D.

Tom, As you reflect on your memories of Bobbie and the life you shared with her, I hope that you will focus on the love, joy, and happiness of that time. I also pray that you can eventually leave the sadness of these unsettling events where they no longer cause you pain.

Life is eternal; and love is immortal; and death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. -Rossiter W. Raymond

Enjoy the walks with your dog and the bench in the park. Please know that so many people care about you and want the best for you. With sympathy, D.

Tom, With best wishes for healing and grace, E.

Dear Tom – It makes me so happy to see how well good old Alexandria and all your friends here at Westat are looking after you and your beautiful wife. Peace and blessings, H.

I'm really not sure what to say. Take care. I.

To my friend Tom:

Being a devotee of history and literature, I recalled the following passages from a letter written in 1861 from a Rhode Island soldier home to his wife, as he feared, correctly as it turned out, his passing in the coming action. Although not directly analogous, I hope there is some small meaning in these words that you will find of comfort. J.

“How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot on your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortune of this world ... but I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you ... and watch with sad patience till we meet to part no more.”

“If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the garish day and in the darkest night – amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours – always, always; and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by ... do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again.”

“To live in the hearts of those left behind is not to die.” -T. Campbell  
Bobbie is still very much with us – in Peace, J.

“Those who loved you and were helped by you will remember you. So carve your name on hearts and not on marble.” -C.H. Spurgeon

Tom, I know I told you this after Bobbie's memorial service at your house, but I'd like to reiterate how much I enjoyed getting to know your wife through the stories that both your family and friends and her coworkers and spiritual friends shared in September. I have been to many memorial services for personal loved ones and to support the loved ones of others and can honestly say that was one of the best celebrations of life I have ever witnessed. Thank you for sharing Bobbie with me. It is evident she carved her name on the hearts of many. With love, K.

Dear Tom, I can't imagine how difficult these past months have been for you, but I hope knowing that so many of us here are thinking about you is a comfort. K. The following is a quote that comforts me when I've lost loved ones:

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says, “There, she is gone.” “Gone where?” Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and she is just as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port. Her diminishing size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says, “There, she is



gone!," there are other eyes watching her coming, and there are other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "Here she comes!" And that is dying. -Anonymous

Tom, I am so sorry to hear about the death of your lovely wife Bobbie. It is so hard to lose a loved one to begin with, let alone the terrible things that led to her death. I think when one is ill or has been ill we start preparing ourself. We must even though we are unaware that we do. I say this because I know and understand that a sudden unexpected death is even that much harder on the survivor to deal with, I guess due to lack of time to prepare one's self and the shock. My thoughts and prayers are with you and I hope time will ease your suffering. L.

Tom, I think the memorials your friends chose to give were just the right things and I was glad to contribute. I found that after I lost my husband, those kinds of things were amazingly touching and helped put things back in balance and perspective for me. M.

Tom, May you find peace in the memories of your heart. M.

Dear Tom, As a fellow animal lover, I was especially touched to hear what a kind and gentle woman Bobbie was. I hope the bench and trees bring you comfort and peace. N.

Tom – My heart fills with sadness when I think of your loss. And then I remember the extraordinary person Bobbie is and know you were blessed to know her. S.

In the next room

Death is nothing at all:

I have only slipped away into the next room. I am I and you are you; Whatever we were to each other, that we are still. Call me by my old familiar name, Speak to me in the easy way which you always used. Put no difference in your tone; Wear no forced air or solemnity or sorrow. Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together. Play, smile, think of me, pray for me. Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight? I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner. All is well. - Canon Henry Scott Holland

Wishing you peace and comfort, S.

Tom, Bobbie was a beautiful woman, inside and out, and she will truly be missed. [Feather taped to page] I found this feather outside after her wonderful service and it reminded me so much of how we are all connected to nature and each other, never to be forgotten. Peace to you, V.

## **Chapter Six: Aftermath**

We should be a little bit more like her. -Carlos, friend and former neighbor

### **Thinking of and missing Bobbie**

People who knew and loved Bobbie feel a hole in their lives. They notice times when they miss her, times when she would have been there. Memories and thoughts of Bobbie seem to come at all kinds of moments. On the serious side Bill stated, “You wonder if life itself would have taken a different track if Bobbie could still be here and her influence was more direct. I know my life is poorer without having her directly here. But I'm also grateful for the good times.” [18r] On the funnier side, David stated, “I open up my closet, I'm like, 'Oh, this is the blazer Bobbie picked out, oh, and this is the one she told me I needed to buy too.’” [15hh]

Joe, Bobbie and Tom's across the street neighbor, said:

We'll always miss her. But we'll always think about her and remember her. So that's the sad part, she's not here, 'cause I used to always look out my windows all the time, and I don't see Bobbie coming home at noon now to take care of the dog, and I don't see her in the evening coming home, and stuff like that. And when she would lock herself out, she'd come knocking on the door, and we'd sit here and have iced tea and talk. [1cc]

Joan also misses seeing Bobbie in the neighborhood. When asked what sort of things remind her of Bobbie, she noted:

Oh, she crosses my mind a lot. And my main thought is that, “Oh my God, I wish this had never happened.” That's always my first thought. My second thought is, how are you [to Tom] doing. Then I would think, well, there's going to be neighborhood things that she won't be at. I can see out my front door, a lot of times I'd just look out and I'd see her getting the mail from work, and she's always all dressed up.... And to see Bobbie would just cheer me up for a minute. [13u]

Friend and neighbor Susie noted that she feels Bobbie's loss in everyday contexts and at parties. For example, she used to see Bobbie and Tom on the weekends running errands or spending time with Beau: “And just outside, Saturdays, when I see Beau being walked by Tom

alone, it makes me sad 'cause they were always together. When the car pulls out Saturday going to Home Depot, she was always sitting in that seat.” [14p] During the holidays Susie particularly noticed Bobbie's absence because she was the only woman at neighborhood parties:

Like at Christmas this year, David and Bill always do a tree decorating party, and usually it's Bobbie and me, and this year was hard for me because she wasn't there. And I was really kind of on the outskirts without her there. I ended up taking pictures of all the guys, but they were doing their own thing and I didn't have someone to be with. She and I used to, I didn't realize until then, boy we were hanging out together. So that was hard. [14n]

LeaAnne will always remember her aunt in a particular context; given that Bobbie was the first person LeaAnne ever jaywalked with, every time LeaAnne crosses a street this way, she thinks, “let's be illegal.”

Marge, Bobbie's step-mom, has a Christmas gift for Bobbie in her closet:

Actually I was in Pottery Barn last spring [2008], and they were having a big sale. And I bought a bunch of chargers, big, beautiful red chargers, I was so excited that I bought Bobbie's Christmas present. It's in the closet. It was terrible. But it was so fun, because I'd never gotten excited about buying a Christmas present ahead of time. But for her, because it was like, oh, you could buy for her. So that was kind of fun. But that's, yeah, that was sad for me. [22cc]

Millie, Bobbie's Wiccan teacher, when asked how often she is reminded of Bobbie, said: “Every day. I have things that she has given me, and all my students benefit from those things. I feel her presence, much like I did when she wasn't speaking to me. I think the separation prepared me in a way, because we're connected the same way we were when we weren't talking to each other. [laughs] That transcended the crossing, the relationship we shared.” [21aa]

It would be difficult to describe in words how much Tom misses and thinks of Bobbie. However, he spoke of a few examples during the taped interviews. With Susie, whose interview took place in Bobbie and Tom's living room, he noted that the house reflects Bobbie's style and design and that this is comforting for him; however, “I remember having a feeling not so long

after her death, I almost feel like I'm going to be in a museum, that I won't ever change the exhibits. Because she changed them all the time, you know this room, you've seen this room looking four different ways, couches in different positions and different paint. And I started thinking I'll never change it." [14q]

The holidays were particularly difficult for Tom. At the same party that Susie mentioned above, Tom discussed how painful it was to be there without Bobbie:

Tom: That was hard, that was a hard event for me too.

Susie: That had to be hard for you.

Tom: 'Cause I always could picture her [being at this gathering] [tears up].

Susie: Oh, and definitely that day, I could see her sitting on the couch.

Tom: Yeah, I felt more like I just wanted to observe, not participate.

Susie: You were participating.

Tom: Yeah, I was trying to.

Susie: Yeah, I was amazed. Yeah, I thought that was really hard. I mean, nothing like how hard it is for you, but you know, I felt her loss then. [14o]

### **“What Would Bobbie Do?”: Lessons Learned and Bobbie's continuing influence**

Many people who knew and loved Bobbie have thought about the way she chose to be in the world, asking themselves, “What lessons does Bobbie's life teach me? How can I live my life in a way that honors hers?” Bill stated that he associates Bobbie with animals, and any time there is a donation to be made to help animals, he will do it. In Joe's view Bobbie is still “bringing people together” [1aa], even in her death. He and Rick checked in with each other every day on the phone in between Bobbie's death and the memorial service. They split up tasks – Rick busied himself with helping Tom, while Joe was more involved with helping the extended

family that came in for the memorial service.

Rick also had something to say on this subject. He asks and answers the question:

It's almost going to be four months now since everything happened, and I think part of it is what happens after, and how you manage and cope and what that loss means in your life.... And there have been several times, whether it's been in a movie, or somewhere, [and] I'll think "Well," [pause] think of her for some reason and start to cry. So it makes you question, for us that are left behind, it makes you question, "Well, what's important, what do you want to do with the rest of your life, what do you take out of this tragedy?".... Because of the circumstances too, it makes you realize – and it's all so sad, being so corny and clichés – but it does make you realize how precious life is, and that it shouldn't be wasted, and that you should make it mean something.... I think the message I take out of Bobbie's life, if you want to kind of look at it that way, is: Bobbie wasn't a person that found a cure for polio, but she was a witness to others on how an ordinary person could live their life in a way that God would want you to live your life. And she was an example of that or a witness of that. I think you don't necessarily know that or recognize it at the time, but when you reflect on it afterwards, you realize that. [4xx, 4ccc]

Bill also had a thought on this subject: "The lesson is that everybody's life is important, and to value the connections and the gifts of friendship while you have them. We don't realize, often, what we have – it sounds so cliché – until it's taken away from us, and so the best way to honor Bobbie is to let that life kind of take root in us and to have her continue through us."

[18ee]

During Bobbie's memorial service, Rick noted that, "Bobbie had so many good qualities, but I realized this week that the one I admired the most was her ability to recognize and bring out the best in all of us." Carlos described what he learned from Bobbie during her memorial service:

So I just want you to remember Bobbie for her kindness and her openness. I learned from her many things, but for Bobbie there was no black and white. She never had sides, she taught me to learn about shades of gray. In her thoughts, in her love for people, in her religious feelings, in everything, her love for nature, and everything that's around us, she did not have sides. She was very open and welcoming to everybody and she loved everybody. We should be a little bit more like her.

Bobbie also is bringing another group of people together: the dog park people. Many of

the dog owners that Bobbie met commented that they didn't get to know her well, since she and Tom had just started coming to the dog park when she died. As a result of this tragedy, however, they have grown closer as a group and have done things together outside of the dog park. Paula noted:

I've got to tell you, we've all become very close, it's too bad, because, although I wasn't close to Bobbie, we have all become very close to Tom because of this. And we all said, "Why didn't we think of getting together outside of the dog park before this?" You know, everybody said the same thing, and it's really too bad that we didn't do it, because we all really like each other. You couldn't find a more eclectic group than [us], you just look around and say, "How would these people ever come together other than in this situation?" [6h]

Judy and Joe echoed these sentiments:

Tom: Well, one of the things I think Bobbie would've enjoyed was the fact that we've gotten together as a group, and done things as a group.

Joe: That's kind of a sad way to have to get together. You know what brought us all together? Bobbie. After all this happened and it brought everybody together closer.

Judy: Tighter. We got closer.

Joe: Yeah, it did. And that's kind of too bad it had to take that to do it.

Judy: But if she'd had more time, it would have really been good, we started doing things together.

Tom: She would have, I know we would have had people over here as a group, she would have wanted [that].

Joe: She would have loved it, she would have loved it, because she was that type of person. [17q]

Bobbie has also indirectly had an impact on Tom's family members through her choice of friends. One of Tom's uncles, a fairly conservative person, talked to Tom's mom Sue about his experience coming to Bobbie's memorial service and seeing "how all of these gay men were taking such good care of Tom." [author's journal dated 3/29/09] Tom's mom Sue also had a

funny story to share along these same lines. She was visiting Tom over the weekend closest to Bobbie's birthday a few months after Bobbie died. She and Tom hosted a brunch at Bobbie and Tom's house to thank all the friends and neighbors who had contributed so much to the family (including providing and serving food for several hundred guests after the memorial service, providing food for almost a week for extended family, and all kinds of other gestures of support). After everyone had eaten at the brunch, "a couple of men surreptitiously went out to the kitchen, and before any of them realized it, they had done the dishes, put the leftovers away in the fridge, and cleaned up. Sue came out and exclaimed [about all the work they had done], and someone said, 'I bet you wish you had a couple of gay sons!'" [3/29/09]

Rick and others also noted that thinking about Bobbie and the kind of person she was has an effect on their thoughts and actions. Rick stated he thinks about Bobbie for guidance and doesn't want to let her down. Tom also thinks about Bobbie for guidance. He joked with Rick and Carlos about it: "I think the Christians would say, like, 'What would Jesus do?' Then it became later on, 'What would Martha do?' [Carlos and Rick laugh] for Martha [Stewart], but I think of that occasionally, like, 'What would Bobbie do?' and it's like, I think, 'WWBD.'" [Kimberly and Tom laugh] [4yy]

Tom also has thought about the things that Bobbie used to do, both for herself and on behalf of them as a couple, that he may want to do now. Paula from the dog park explained:

There was this one day when Tom and I were walking around, and it was probably a month after it happened, and we were walking the dogs. And there was this perfect stranger who came down, and I said, "Hi, how are you," and, and he said, "Hi, how are you." And then there was a woman that came by and I said, "Hi, how're you doing." And so Tom said, "I need to do that," and I said, "What?" And he said, "Well," he said, "Bobbie always, always said hello to perfect strangers, she was not afraid to approach people." And he said, "I've never been that kind of person who was comfortable doing that," and he said, "I really need to start doing that now." [6j]

The circumstances of Bobbie's death also have engendered greater empathy when those who loved and knew Bobbie hear about other tragedies. Joan and Tom provided an example of this:

Joan: And now that this happened to Bobbie when I watch stuff on the news, and it brings it home closer. So every time I hear of a tragedy, it really impacts you more, because you know how the family is really feeling, and how the community really-. It's really sincere.

Tom: I definitely feel that whenever I see something.

Joan: I feel, "I just went through this." And it does hurt. [13rr]

### **"When you get up in the morning you don't know how your day is going to end": Having regrets**

People also spoke in the interviews of the regrets they had related to Bobbie. Joan spoke poignantly about this: "I wish I'd known Bobbie were-, see, now you think, 'If only I'd known, if only I'd known,' and everybody feels like, if we just could have done something differently. Like I wish I had gone shopping with Bobbie, and I wish I had got to know her more, but I just took for granted that nothing was going to happen." [13t] Bobbie's stepsister Leslie noted that she "was also supposed to go to a full Moon meeting with her, but we could never seem to get together at that time.... I thought that would be an interesting experience, I just wish I had now." [10dd]

Susie also talked about her regrets in not spending more time with Bobbie as a girlfriend:

Susie: I can remember a couple times when we would have tea at my house and talk.... And those were rare, because it was rare that it was just the two of us. But those were special times. Those are my regrets, that I didn't have more times with her on my part, that I didn't seek her out to actually open up some of those things, she I think wanted a girlfriend to talk with about some things.

Tom: I think everybody sort of has regrets, I mean, you never expect anything to end that suddenly. And it makes you think, "Oh, I wish I had more opportunity to be with her," and so



forth. You feel like you have several more years.

Susie: You just think there's always tomorrow. You think, "Oh yeah, I'll get to it." [14d]

Bonnie, Bobbie's sister, wished that she had been able to go on a cruise that she and Bobbie had talked about doing:

We were trying to do a cruise that we should've done last summer [2008], and I couldn't financially do it, her and Tom got together and said, "OK, we'll pay for two excursions for you, and we'll try to pay-," but there was just, I had done that so many times, "Oh, instead of getting this, let's get the next grade up." I was just determined, no, I can't do this anymore, I've got to live within my means. And we sat there for months trying to figure out a cruise that her and I could take, and we thought we had it, and thought we had it, and finally I said, "Bobbie," and I was like, now I wish we had, but nobody can see into the future either. [19w]

Jack, Bobbie's father, has a regret as well: he thinks about the pain that Bobbie experienced early in her life. Jack's wife Marge explains:

Jack wakes up some mornings early, upset. Missing Bobbie, you know, [upset about] what happened. And it's sad that she started her life for those two years crying, in pain all the time. And [he] thinks about, you know, you can't go back, but how sad it was that she had to have that pain as a child and to be crying and to have nobody understand is something that troubles him. [22i]

People also had regrets that were focused on the circumstances of Bobbie's death, and therefore not under their control. Debbie summed up the feelings of most of the dog park people when she said, "We just started developing memories actually.... You develop relationships over time and we were just beginning to develop that relationship.... I wished I had known her longer." [12e-f]

Joe and Judy from the dog park also talked about this:

Joe: It would have been nice for Bobbie to stick around.

Judy: It would have been nice for her to be there, it would have been so cool.

Joe: Stick around and be here now, because everybody has a good time when everybody gets together.

Tom: Well, she thought, she kind of thought that the dog park people would become part of her extended family.

....

Judy: Yeah, I think she would have really, and you know, it's just so sad that it happened this time in her life, when she's just gotten so, she's just nestling down into her life, just got Beau. And getting a dog is just like getting a little child.

....

Joe: There were good times, though. Little bit of time there we had.

Judy: Great times, it just wasn't long enough.

Joe: The little bit of time we had, it was fun, it was nice.

Judy: But I just don't understand, I don't understand, God works in such crazy ways, 'cause how could someone so good like her be taken away so tragically? That's the whole part, I can't get that part, you know what I'm saying? How could someone be as good as her, why did she have to go so tragically like that? I don't understand that part. [17t, u, x]

Jack has a regret about not being able to help Bobbie on the last day of her life, feeling that he wasn't there for her as a father and protector when she needed him:

Jack: I tell you what hurt me more than, it hurt. Bobbie knew as she did at various times through our life, I'd get a phone call, "Daddy, can you help me?" or, "Daddy, I need you." And I'd take off, whatever it was, I'd be there for her. And it made me feel that when she really, really needed me-. And I'm sure, in her mind, somewhere all along [the day she was abducted], she said, "Daddy, help me." And I couldn't. I didn't know anything about it, but that really.... But those are the things that really, I keep thinking about, "You let her down." [crying]

Tom: Oh, don't do that.

Jack: I know. Logically [pointing to head], I know, but this [pointing to heart] doesn't help. [22j]

Tom talked about one of the things that he and Bobbie had been planning on: going to Ireland for their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary which would have been in May of 2009. Tom related, "She always wanted to go to Ireland. So that was probably what we were going to do, I'm pretty

sure.... She always had some connection that she felt to Ireland, and I don't know if it was 'cause of the Celtic religion, but she always wanted to take some of these tours where you can ride horses and go through the Irish countryside.” [2ll]

Joan, I think, expressed what was on a lot of people's minds: “I just wish we weren't doing this, I wish she were here. When you get up in the morning you don't know how your day is going to end; that's the only thing I know about life.” [13qq]

### **“I remember the very last conversation I had with her”: Comforting memories**

Individuals remembered the last conversation, or the last meaningful interaction they had with Bobbie. Sometimes these were ordinary memories of shopping trips or lunches; in other cases the last interaction seemed to hold greater importance. Bill recalled a picnic he put together for David's birthday in August that was the last get-together that their group enjoyed. Tom remembered that in Bobbie's last six months, they did a lot of things with a lot of different people, including hosting his brother Tim and family to sightsee in the Washington DC area in August. David remembered his last conversation with Bobbie:

Bobbie also had a natural knack – which I think comes unnaturally to most people, I think she would have made a good counselor because of this – she could always make other people feel better about themselves. And she always, no matter how down you might feel, or negative opinions you might have of yourself, she always held a positive in other people. And I remember the very last conversation I had with her, she said to me, “You don't give yourself enough credit,” and I thought that [was] how Bobbie always was, on trying to make other people feel better about themselves and seeing where they might be too hard on themselves and she could always see beyond that. [15k]

Jaimie, one of Bobbie's co-workers, loved to read as much as Bobbie did and they enjoyed several authors' books together. Jaimie recalled that one of their favorite authors came out with a new book a week before Bobbie died:

I ordered on Amazon.com 'cause I wanted it, and she went to the bookstore and went looking for

it, and couldn't find it, so I got the book before she did. [all laugh] 'Cause she was looking in the wrong section, and so I was like, "Well, when I finish reading it, I'll make sure you get [it].".... So, and she's like, "Are they, is this gonna happen in this book, is this gonna," I'm like, "Wait until I finish the book.".... And that was the Tuesday before, so I didn't finish it until Saturday [the day Bobbie died]. [11w]

Xhilda, another co-worker, recounted their last lunch together:

One week before the tragedy, she-. I had promised her that I would just spend some time with her during lunch, because every time I was busy, and I'm glad I had that opportunity. We came home to walk Beau, and she showed me the pictures upstairs [in the hallway] when she was young, and of course, I made her day again because I would say to her, "You're so beautiful, like Miss United States." [all laugh] [11u]

Bobbie's co-workers collectively recalled the last Christmas party she hosted at her house:

Tom: Well, I remember where I saw you folks a lot was at a couple Christmas parties that she had here.

Xhilda: Yes. The last one she hosted was very, very nice, special to us. That was the highlight of the Christmas time for me, I didn't do anything special at home, but when we came here it was very nice.

Jaimie: And everything was so beautifully decorated.

Xhilda: The Christmas tree was...

Jaimie: And it was a new one, she had just gotten a new...

Xhilda: she had spent so much time.

Jaimie: Christmas tree with the lights that were already pre-lit.

Margie: It just stood over there, in that corner.

Jaimie: With just the right tinsel. [11x]

There were two notable shopping trips that were "lasts," one from Leslie and one from David. Leslie recalled that Bobbie convinced her to get her eyebrows waxed for the first time and the disaster that ensued:

I said, "Does it hurt? [laughs] I don't think I want to have my eyebrows waxed." She goes, "You need them, you need them waxed." "OK." [laughs].... [Afterwards] she gives me a mirror to look in, and I have what look like two lines, you know, line drawn here and a line drawn here. [laughs].... And all I did was look in the mirror and go, "My eyebrows are gone. Bobbie, it's a lie!".... So we went to another department store where we talked, she talked to this lady about my eyebrows. I'm still over there going like, like God, they hurt, they're pink up here, it's pink down here, and they're just like one thin line, and this woman comes up, she goes, "Oh, she did a terrible job." So she gets this pencil, eyebrow pencil out, right, she starts penciling my eyebrows and Bobbie's on the other side checking it out, and Bobbie goes [shakes head].... And by this time I really wanted to go home, [all laugh] I didn't want to be, so Bobbie's looking for the right color, you know, she's tel-, advising the make-up person which kind of line to get me, which kind of eyebrow pencil. And I just couldn't wait to get home and make them grow back in, I was just, and I wasn't mad at her at all, at Bobbie, it was actually kind of funny later, I could see the humor in it. But that to me was quite a day too, because Bobbie always looked over me, I mean, she was like my big sister, she was going to take care of me, she was going to take care of this or, you know, "I'll see to it." [10bb]

David's shopping trip with Bobbie was for an item he wouldn't have gotten had Bobbie not convinced him to get it:

One of our last shopping trips in the summer, I had bought a new suit, and I wanted a navy sport coat. And so Bobbie went with me to get the navy sport coat, and she's like, "Well, of course you need a new tie." I'm like, "Bobbie, I have tons of ties." "No, you need a new tie, if you bought this new suit, and you just bought this new navy sport coat, you need a new tie." And so I thought, "OK, we'll find a tie." My problem is, I can't find stuff I like, but Bobbie's like, "Now, this is the tie you need." I'm like, "Are you sure, Bobbie?" "Yes, this is the tie you need." And probably, had I been looking by myself that day, I'd have never bought a tie, because I looked and said, "No, I don't like any of the ties here." And I have worn that tie more than any other tie. I wore it for my cousin's wedding that I was in this summer, I wear it more for any training and work functions I go to, just because 1) it is a beautiful tie, and 2) Bobbie picked it out, and I always wear it and think of Bobbie, and so when I'm standing up in front of a meeting or doing a training or cantoring at church, I'm wearing that tie. I always think a piece of Bobbie is here with me because of this particular tie.... Because I travel so much now for work, I see people only once. I'll never see those people again for the rest of my life probably, so I will always take that tie. So if someone were starting to take pictures of me on all my business travel and put them together, they would see I actually wear the same outfit no matter what city I'm in [all laugh] 'cause I'm wearing that particular tie with that particular suit. And it's the last new tie I have, so I'm like, "Oh, it's my newest tie, I'll wear that one." I'm packing to leave again this week, and that tie will be with me on every business trip, it has been nearly all year. [15hh]

David also factored into an important last for Tom. Bobbie and Tom had a formal portrait taken of themselves every once in awhile, and the last one was taken during their 2007 cruise in

the Western Caribbean. David convinced her to buy the black dress she wore in this picture when they went shopping for a dress for a wedding that she was going to:

But in the looking for that dress [for the wedding], we found another very elegant little black dress. And she was like, “Tom's gonna kill me if I buy both dresses, I'm just here to buy one dress.” And I said, “Bobbie, when Tom sees you in this little black dress, the last thing he'll think about is killing you.” [all laugh]... And I convinced her she should buy both dresses. And I said, “If you don't, you'll regret it.”... 'Cause her concern was, “Where will I go that I'll need to have a dress like this?” And I said, “Bobbie, no, now you find the places to go because you now have a dress like this.” [15e]

Aside from feeling that Bobbie had a lot of good interactions with others the last six months of her life, Tom also is at peace with where he and Bobbie were in their relationship at the time of her death. Bobbie and Tom were enjoying spending time with each other and Beau and were on an “upswing” according to Tom.

#### **“It felt like Bobbie was there”: Feeling Bobbie's presence and receiving signs**

Some of those interviewed talked about feeling that Bobbie is with them sometimes. Rick, David, Bill, and Millie have felt this. Friend and neighbor Susie noted that she can feel the difference between when Bobbie is there or not:

Susie: But, you know, I do think she is here. I mean, she might be here right now.

Tom: Yeah, I feel that.

Susie: I mean I can feel it sometimes when I don't think she's around, and then I can feel that she's here. You know, we don't know what the spirit world is.

Tom: And if anyone was going to be sort of active in that world...

Susie: It would be Bobbie. [14t]

Millie felt her presence in the interview and tried to explain to Tom what it feels like:

Millie: She was so willing to, or she wanted to try different things, but she was afraid at the same time. And once she learned you don't have to give up something to try something, like there wasn't a right way that things had, she could always go back and do them the way you did them

before, even though you did them a different way once. I was pretty proud. [tears up] She's here.

Tom: You got emotional a minute ago, what?

Millie: Oh, she just showed up. [exhales, then laughs]

Tom: I'm not always in touch with that, so I'm curious, how do you feel she showed up?

Millie: Oh, well, my heart just opens all the way, and I feel her presence.... She had an energy about her that I find distinctive, loving and open and passionate and guarded at the same time. [22s]

Many people additionally talked about getting some kind of a sign from her after her death. Rick relayed the following story at Bobbie's memorial service:

Yesterday I got to meet Bobbie's brother Barry for the first time. Barry came up to comfort me last night during a pretty rough time, and I had absolutely no idea who he was. He comforted me, and then introduced himself. When I should have been comforting him, he was comforting me. He was being the kind of friend that Bobbie would have been. But what Barry didn't know was that I had just gotten the message that I had been waiting for all week. When I arrived last night, the chapel just happened to be empty. I signed the guest book and the second I began to walk forward to see Bobbie, the song "Moon River" started to play. That was Bobbie; she was telling me, "Don't worry, I'm OK."

Two of her friends and co-workers have dreamed of her:

Xhilda: I have dreamed a lot of her, Tom.

Tom: Really?

Xhilda: Yes. Yeah, I've had a lot of dreams with her. I dream a lot perhaps, but I have seen her so many times, walking by, waving at me, and, but really passes by, and doesn't stop me or anything, is in her own world, free...

Jaimie: We sit on the couch and talk in my dreams.

Xhilda: I talked to Jaimie about that.

Jaimie: I can't explain it, but we just sit down on the couch and talk.

Tom: With Bobbie?

Jaimie: Yeah. In my dreams, that's how it happens in my dreams, it's like, we're just sitting there talking. [11mm]

Perhaps the most meaningful signs are those that relate to animals. Jaimie related her continuing encounters with a particular squirrel, who has a certain behavior pattern of stopping and looking at her as it runs around the roof of the work building and also seems to know where she lives:

Jaimie: [I] come out of my condo – I live like walking distance from the office – and I come out of the front door of the building, and there is this squirrel. He has this little boo-boo, like maybe, you know, a dog or something had gotten to him, and it's on his side, and he's standing there [makes squirrel noise], and I'm like, looking at him going, “OK.” So I walk to work and I put my stuff away, and in about a few hours later I see him, and I can tell it's the same one, 'cause he's got the boo-boo on his little side, and he runs over, he stops, he turns, he looks at me, and then he runs on.

....

Meg: Jaimie's made the comment to me before that she thinks that maybe it's Bobbie keeping an eye on her.

Jaimie: I know, she's like, “Go home.” 'Cause when the most activity happens it's in the afternoon, in the evening, after 5:15, and that's when, I don't know what it is, but they're most active at that point in time, or maybe that's just the time I actually start looking at them. And they're most active right then, and they're like looking at me going, “Go home, [all laugh] go home, it's time to go home.” [11kk]

Jack and Marge had an encounter with a dragonfly in Florida.

Marge: We get to Florida, and I don't know if I told you, we were in Florida, and we got a letter from some insurance company, we didn't know what insurance company. And I was holding the letter, the mail, and we got in the elevator, and the two of us look up, and we're like, what the heck is in the elevator? It's this funny-looking thing in the elevator, and I said, “Look at that.” Remember? I didn't think anything of it, we go in the house, and I open it, and it's a letter from the insurance company from when Bobbie was a child.... And Jack said, get that out of here, I don't want to even look at that, put it in a drawer and get away. And he was really upset. And Jenny [Marge's daughter] came that night, 'cause sometimes she's in Fort Lauderdale, and I said something to her, and she said, “Well, you know, there's a dragonfly in the elevator.” I said, “Oh?” She said, “There's a dragonfly in the elevator.” I said, “Oh, crap!” [Jack laughs] Really, I did. I go and get Jack. I said, “Jack, come on.” There's no dragonflies in Florida.



Tom: Oh, there aren't?

Jack: I don't know.

Marge: I've never seen one, ever. And you know, I said, "No, no, no, this is not right, come on, we gotta go out in the elevator." So we go out, it's not in the elevator. It's not there, and I thought, "Oh, God, I missed it, it's not in the elevator anymore," I turn around and look up, it's over our door, just sitting over it. I said to Jack – you'll think I'm a little strange – but I said to Jack, "You know, we have to talk to her. Because she knew that stupid letter was gonna come and get you all upset." And so we went back outside and closed the door, and we talked, had a talk with Bobbie. And we said, you know, "we know you wanted to come visit us and let us know you were OK, and we're glad, and it's OK, and we let you go.".... We told her that it was OK, she could go, and we were at peace. He [Jack] took it really hard. We stood there for a long time. And then we went back in the house. We went back out again a little while later: gone, not around, not in the elevator, nowhere. I'm telling you, it was absolutely wonderful. [22hh] <sup>ix</sup>

Others have had signs to do with foxes. Patty told about her experience:

Out where the farm that I have my horses, there are several long rectangular pastures. And it's bordered by woods, and we frequently see deer, and occasionally fox, and other wild animals. And it was the Saturday after, so a week after Bobbie died, and I was out at the farm. And I was in a mode of just wanting to be kind of alone in nature, I'd groomed my horse or whatever, but I wasn't really in the mood to ride or anything. So I was just kind of walking along the pasture one day, just thinking, and I came across something that I had never seen before, probably never will again, that was clearly a gift from Bobbie, and it was an intact skull of a red fox. So I looked at it and went, "I think that's what it is, it's clearly not a cat or a dog." So I picked up the phone and called Terri and said, "You're not going to believe this." [both laugh] "I think this is what it is," and Terri said, "Why don't you bring it over, we'll look it up.".... And it was just the most amazing thing. It was, like I said, it just, it struck me at a very profound level, that this was definitely something from Bobbie, saying, "Hey, I'm OK, just wanted to let you know," and that skull is still on my altar at home, it's kind of the centerpiece. And we cleaned it up and identified it, and sure enough it was a red fox. [laughs] [9kk]

Terri, in the same interview, had this story:

Yeah, see my communications aren't quite that profound. I just found myself driving behind a truck that had a picture of a fox face on it. [Patty laughs] I tend to get like weird bits and pieces as I'm driving up the highway to work. I'll see trucks that I only see one time ever, and I'm just driving behind this truck, and I'm like, "It's got a fox face painted on the back of the truck, OK." [laughs] [9kk]

Tom has had several of these "sign" experiences. Three stand out in particular. The first I recorded in my journal, as Tom told it when I did not have the recorder on:

Tom had a wonderful story to share. We were in the car driving back from Leslie and Charlie's house when the song "She's Gone" by Hall and Oates came on. He asked if I knew the story behind the importance of this song to him, and I didn't. Apparently when Jon died in 1975 this song had just come out and Jon liked it and bought the record. He died in July of an aneurysm and Tom has always associated this song with Jon. Before Bobbie's visiting hours, Tom was resting with the radio on. He said to himself he was going to listen to one more song and then get up and get dressed and ready to go. The song that next came on was "She's Gone," and in that moment he realized the double meaning of the song for him now. [1/1/09] <sup>x</sup>

The second story was from when the park bench bought by Tom's co-workers in Bobbie's memory was first installed. Tom recounted the story at the park bench dedication:

As I was walking out on this peninsula I was aware of the osprey that was flying overhead but didn't think much about it. I was more focused on the bench. After admiring the bench and reading the plaque, I turned around and sat down. The minute I sat down I looked straight ahead and saw the osprey go into a nose dive and splash into the water. He came out of his dive with a fish and flew away. I remember saying out loud, "Bobbie, how the hell did you arrange for that to happen?" It was a magical moment.

The last story Tom had was a fox story:

I drive to work on GW Parkway; I go through Rosslyn and take the Parkway out to the American Legion bridge. So one morning like a month after Bobbie died, I-, and then driving in the car was really hard 'cause you have, then you really have [time], you're kind of thinking a lot, and so driving was hard. And I was at one point just really feeling sad, and kind of in tears, and off to the side of the road there was a fox, it was kind of walking along the side of the Parkway, and then all of the sudden I smiled. And I said, you know, it felt like Bobbie was there, or she had done something to make a fox go there so that I would think of her that way, versus feeling sorry. [11kk]

### **"It will never not be hard": Losing Bobbie**

The pain of losing a loved one is difficult; when you lose a loved one in a tragedy, the pain gets intensified and complicated. When you add an additional layer of losing a spouse or losing a daughter, it becomes difficult to fathom. Tom, Wanda, and Jack each have their own grief journey that they are taking.

In one of my journal entries I noted a particularly moving moment with Tom: "I teared up a couple of times today. We were driving back from taking LeaAnne to the airport. Beau was on

my lap. Tom said something to the effect of, 'I get these fleeting thoughts in my head. I look over and think, "That should be Bobbie sitting over there."' It was very poignant and I was genuinely sorry I wasn't Bobbie." [1/2/09]

The first holiday season was especially difficult for Tom. Bobbie loved Christmas and loved to shop for gifts for people. In that first year, Tom and his friends chose not to exchange gifts, but made donations to the local animal shelter instead. The day after his first New Year's Eve party without Bobbie, he noted that although it was good to be in a new year, it also put him farther away from his last contact with Bobbie. Still, Tom tried to be as festive as possible during the holidays. He decorated the tree by himself, but when it came time to decorate the rest of the house, he knew he was out of his league. His friend and neighbor Susie asked him about this:

Susie: Was it hard to do the Christmas decorating?

Tom: Yes, it was. I wanted to do the tree by myself, 'cause that's what she and I did together. [starts to tear up]

Susie: That had to be so hard for you.

Tom: It was, but it's almost as if...

Susie: She was here?

Tom: She was here, and you're just honoring her memory. But then I couldn't figure out how to decorate the rest of the house, because she always did it so nicely. So Joe and Bill and David came over...

Susie: Good. Yeah, Joe told me.

Tom: we got pizza, and they just took over and they would say, "OK, do you have ribbons? Do you have wire, do you have..." [all laugh] I'm running around getting stuff, but they're putting things up, and it looked really good, and I thought, you know, Bobbie would be a), happy in the way it turned out, but b), happy that it was the four of us doing it. [14s]

Susie also recalled how supportive Bobbie and Tom were for her during a difficult time over the holidays and how she returned the favor to Tom during his first holiday season without

Bobbie:

Susie: And I remember right after we moved here, you guys came to Christmas Eve with all my family. It was hard because my mother wasn't there [she had just passed away], so I was trying to make Christmas for my extended family, I'm from a large family, and they can be kind of weird, like all families. And so I had everybody, and I had Bobbie and Tom come over, who might have been totally overwhelmed by my family...

Tom: No, I don't remember that.

Susie: but it was nice.

Tom: No, I remember a very pleasant evening.

Susie: Oh, good. That was right when we met each other pretty much.

Tom: I guess so, yeah.

Susie: It was in the first year.

Tom: And then, kind of to bring it full circle, was that this past Christmas Eve, I had Christmas at their house.

Susie: Oh, yeah, you came.

Tom: It was a more, it was just your immediate family.

Susie: It was more intimate, yeah.

Tom: It was a really pleasant evening.

Susie: It was very nice. And you know, my kids were a little nervous about having you, because they said, "Oh, what do we say, what do we do?" I said, "You don't have to say or do anything. Just be." You know? Because people don't know what to say. They said, "Well, it must be hard for him." I said, "Of course it will be, but this is how you get through it." It will always be hard. It will never not be hard. [14v-w]

When I interviewed Wanda, Bonnie, and Bunky in Ohio, about nine months after Bobbie's death, Wanda pulled me aside after the interview to tell me that she should have died

instead of Bobbie – she's 84 and doesn't have much to live for, she said – and Bobbie had a lot more to give. Wanda said as an only child she never had to learn how to share, but Bobbie did learn and she did it very well.

Bobbie was cremated and her ashes are interred in Portland, Oregon, in the same cemetery where Tom's brother Jon is, as well as Tom's father DB. Bobbie and Tom discussed having that cemetery be their final resting place to be near other family members, but also because it is an absolutely beautiful setting with the mountains in the background and lots of grass and trees. In our interview with Jack and Marge, Jack and Tom told the story about Jack carrying the urn holding Bobbie's ashes; this was an important responsibility for him and it reminded him of carrying Bobbie as a baby:

Jack: And I might have told you this, how much I appreciated that you allowed me to carry the urn.

Tom: Oh, no, I...

Jack: It was exactly the same size as she was when she was a baby. [crying]

Tom: I can't not tell that story to people without bawling at what you said.

Kimberly: I'm not sure I've heard the full story.

Tom: I'll try to tell it.

Marge: Hard to tell.

Tom: Jack and Marge came out to Portland for the burial, and I don't know, maybe it was an 11 o'clock service, or something like that, and so just before we left, I had the urn, and I carried it out there, but I wanted them to see it before we went up to the cemetery. And so as we, so we had a cry, and a private moment where the three of us saw it together. And then I don't know what, I guess I gave it to you to carry.

Jack: You said, "Do you want to carry it?" And I said, "Thank you, yes."

Tom: And so as we were driving up there, Jack and I are in the front seat, and driving my mom's

car, and Marge and my mom are in the back seat, and the whole trip you didn't, you just were, hugged her...

Jack: Holding her.

Tom: and the rest of us are kind of having some small talk or whatever, but Jack didn't say a word, he was just holding it, and pretty much held it until we had to pass it to...

Jack: They finally decided they had to take it away from me. [laughs]

Tom: the funeral person to take care of it.

Marge: Both of you put it in the ground together.

Tom: We both put it in the ground together.

Marge: That was amazing that you allowed him, that that would happen.

Tom: No, but at some point, I can't remember where, but at some point Jack said something, he said as he was holding it, he thought, "I carried Bobbie home [as a baby and now I'm carrying her to her final home]," as he carried her to the cemetery. [all crying] I mean, it's a great story. I like the story, [but] I can't tell it without crying. [22ee]

### **Interlude: The Importance of Beau**

Tom has said that if it weren't for Beau, he isn't sure how he would have gotten through all of this. He told Paula, one of their dog park friends, "I'm convinced that Beau came into my life for a reason." [6v] Bobbie and Tom got Beau in May; she died in September. Tom wonders what Beau remembers and if he understands what happened. Judy and Joe, a couple from the dog park circle of friends, recalled that Beau's behavior changed dramatically after Bobbie's death:

Joe: And you know what? After Bobbie left, you could see it in him.

Judy: Oh, my God, we could tell, when he came to the park. When we came to the park and we finally saw you guys.

Tom: What did you see?

Judy: He wasn't himself.

Joe: He wasn't Beau.

Judy: He wasn't happy, running around little dog.

Joe: He had duller eyes, you could just tell.

Judy: When you talked to him, he just laid in your arms, he was so sad, he was sad, like, "I miss my mom." And you could tell it in him, and it was like that for almost a couple weeks, wasn't it?

Joe: Oh, it was like that for a long time.

Judy: You could tell that he wasn't the same little Beau.

Joe: And then he started acting up, he started chasing one of the dogs?

Judy: He was starting to get a little more, um...

Joe: Aggressive.

Judy: Aggressive. Yeah, he started getting a little more aggressive, and he just beat up on little Beau [Paula's dog, also named Beau], he used to get him really good. [laughs] But you notice

now he plays better with him, he used to get really aggressive with little Beau, but then he got better. He was just missing Mom, that's all.

Tom: You're the only, you're the first people who've said that.

Judy: Yeah, we noticed that, and I told Joe, "He misses his mom." I said look at him, when he got with little Beau? Any other dog that he was chasing, you could see him, he was getting nippy.

Joe: He was getting irritable, he was.

Judy: Yeah. He was like, "I'm mad that my mom is gone, I'm gonna get somebody. I'm gonna bite somebody." But then he came back, he came back. [17p]

Tom flew Beau out to Portland when Bobbie was interred there. I wrote down the story in my journal of what happened when they arrived in Oregon:

Another example of how much Tom depends on Beau – when he flew Beau out for Bobbie's funeral in Portland, it took a long time to get the crate once they arrived. They waited and waited. Tom got to wondering if something had happened to Beau. Finally they brought the crate out. Tom was so anxious he couldn't get the padlock open on the crate – Tim [his brother] had to do it for him. Beau was fine. Tom said it was the closest thing he has ever had to a panic attack. [3/27/09]

Tom has said that his favorite parts of the day now are his morning and evening walks with Beau. I have gone many times to the park with Tom, and have seen and heard complete strangers come up to him and remark how much Beau looks like a fox. Tom seems happy when they say this; it is one of the reasons I am sure Bobbie was drawn to Beau and it makes Beau himself a special connection to Bobbie for Tom. Beau is Tom's talisman; during interviews when the talk turned heavy, Tom would reach for Beau and pull him into his lap.

Tom noted that it was especially hard at Christmas because he and Bobbie had been looking forward to celebrating Christmas with Beau and seeing his reaction to unwrapping gifts. Tom told me that the times he tears up the most are when he thinks about how much Bobbie is missing with Beau.



LeaAnne was able to provide Bobbie's view of the relationship between Beau and Tom:

She'd [Bobbie] sent me an email actually this summer about Beau. And she was saying how happy they were with Beau, and they'd just started going to the dog park, and they'd met a couple there that they thought were nice. But she said that Tom especially loved Beau, so that she was glad that they got Beau because Tom enjoyed him so much.... Because I know Tom was the one that got up early and walked him and more of that stuff, and Bobbie I think appreciated him liking Beau so much. [3t]

In a letter to the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria written in December of 2008, Tom put into words just how much Beau has meant to him:

This past year has been a bittersweet one. There were two very memorable dates for me during 2008.

The first date is May 1<sup>st</sup>. That is the date that my wife Bobbie and I adopted Beau from the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. A week earlier, with some hesitation on my part, we went to the shelter. That day we instantly fell in love with Beau, a 2-year old Pomeranian. However, there was one catch. Two other people had submitted paperwork to adopt him. Not wanting my wife to experience disappointment, I recommended that we not put in an application for Beau. When she looked at me and said, "That is our dog, I just know it!," what could I do? So we submitted the adoption application with our fingers crossed that somehow he would become the newest addition to our family. A day later, the first applicant failed to show. One down, one to go. The next evening, Bobbie and I waited at the shelter playing with Beau, hoping beyond hope that the second applicant would be a no-show as well. As the minutes toward closing time grew nearer, our hopes grew stronger, and a few minutes before closing time a staff member said, "It looks as if you are going to get your new dog!" The next night we passed the home visit and our miracle dog named Beau was ours.

We had no concept as to how quickly Beau would melt our hearts. Now you may have a

different opinion based on your experiences, but our Beau is the greatest dog in the world! We started taking him for walks morning, noon, and night, and soon discovered Ben Brenman park as a great place to take Beau. While we have lived in Alexandria for over 20 years, for the first time Bobbie and I truly felt like we belonged to the community as we walked Beau and saw all of the activities such as children playing soccer and baseball, families taking a walk with their children, and people enjoying a picnic. We also found the dog park at Ben Brenman Park and added a whole new facet to our lives as we met a group of fellow dog owners who became a new set of our friends.

Thanks to Beau, we were walking daily and with a renewed commitment to a better diet, we each lost 25 pounds. Being healthier and adding to our circle of friends, we thought our lives were on a high. Most important of all, Bobbie and I had day after day of quality time together on these walks with Beau.

As I mentioned earlier, there were two important days in my life in 2008. The second day was September 13<sup>th</sup>. On that day, my beloved wife Bobbie was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and she was abducted in a carjacking from Springfield Mall and eventually killed as the carjackers lost control of her car and crashed into a strand of trees. Our beautiful life together was shattered in an instant. Needless to say, these past few months have been extremely painful, trying to move on without my partner of 25 years. The one constant I still had left in my life was our dog Beau. Beau and I have bonded beyond what I ever thought possible with any animal. He has kept me grounded. He encourages me to get up in the morning and take him for a walk and he is right there at night hopping into bed as I go to sleep. As I am typing this sentence, he is curled up asleep next to me, warming both my toes and my heart. I really do not know how I

would have gotten through the past few months without Beau. I am often reminded that there wouldn't be a Beau in my life if Bobbie hadn't insisted that we submit an application and add him to our family. I have a strong sense that Bobbie instinctively knew that I would need Beau in my life. While there will be many difficult days ahead of me, I know that Beau will be here by my side to get through whatever challenges I might face.

I am extremely grateful that the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria exists to protect pets like Beau until they can find a loving home. If you are thinking of donating money, items, or time to the shelter, please do so. If you ever wonder if your assistance makes a difference, remember our story and how it made all the difference in the world for Bobbie, Beau, and me. Thanks to your generosity, there will be other families that will experience the absolute joy and love of a pet that Bobbie and I have had the privilege of experiencing with our Beau.

## **Chapter Seven: Making Meaning**

### **The heart of every group and environment she was involved in: Bobbie's legacy**

Although this book is about Bobbie's life, and the impact she had on others, it is undeniable that this book would not exist without her death. If Bobbie was still living, still connecting to her community, still dreaming about what her retirement with Tom would look like, there would be no need for this book; her values, her legacy would still be embodied in the world. The tragedy of her death – a life taken too soon, Tom becoming a widower at the age of 53 – is somehow magnified next to the brilliance with which she existed, including her last moments.

I had the thought often in speaking with her friends and family, and thinking about the kind of person she was, that Bobbie's behavior during the kidnapping was unusual. She did not try to fight back; she went along with the assailants. Perhaps it was the very real-looking fake gun that the two men had. Perhaps in her fear she froze and didn't react the way she wanted to. However, I strongly believe that Bobbie deliberately chose to act the way she did for a very good reason: she did not want anyone else to get hurt. If someone were to be injured that day, she wanted it to be her and not the young mother with her baby in the stroller, or the elderly man dressed up in a suit, or the gaggle of teenage girls who were also in the mall that day. Her friend Bill had the same thought. His take on this was, "I have to wonder to what degree Bobbie's passing was also a loving and sacrificial thing from her point of view. Because had I been in her place, I think I would have taken more risks, but that would have been risks for other people. I think Bobbie didn't want to put anybody else in jeopardy.... And that just tells you how caring somebody is." [18dd] In an untaped conversation, Bobbie's sister Bonnie agreed with this

explanation of Bobbie's behavior that day as well.

People have a natural instinct to create meaning out of terrible circumstances. Tom and Joan noted the striking similarities between Bobbie and Princess Diana:

Joan: [Bobbie] was like, you always think of people that are kind, as like, saintly. I always think of Princess Diana as somebody [who was] proof that you could be glamorous and kind and caring, and Bobbie was like the person that could still carry off the whole thing. She wasn't like an Amish kind of kindness, it was a glamorous kind, you could still be pretty and kind.

Tom: Princess Di was, like a lot of people, she [Bobbie] was very enamored of Princess Di.

Joan: So was I.

Tom: What occurred to me sometime shortly after her death was they both died in a car crash.

Joan: I thought of [that].

Tom: That's interesting.

Joan: You know she [Princess Diana] was really a red-head, Diana was a strawberry-blond, all the Spencers basically were kind of reddish hair and she made it blonder. In her early pictures you can see she's like a strawberry blond. [13p]

Bobbie's presence will be long-felt at the dog park. On the morning of the last day of her life, she and Tom were in the park with Beau. As they chatted with their dog park friends, a conversation developed about why there were not more trees in the dog park for shade, and why weren't there benches for people to sit on? Why didn't the city provide fresh water for the dogs to drink? They walked around the park and pointed out different spots that would be good places for these things. Then she and Tom got ready to leave with Beau. Debbie, one of their dog park friends, remembered that "she [Bobbie] had on a little sun hat, and we were commenting on how cute she looked in it." [12c] Then they were gone.

Once the dog park people found out about Bobbie's death, they knew what they had to do: start a memorial fund in Bobbie's name to pay for trees and a bench in the dog park. And that is

what they did. If you were to visit today, you would find two new trees and a bench in the dog park area. These are in addition to the four trees and bench that Tom's co-workers paid for out in the main park area.

Both bench inscriptions were written by Tom. The one in the dog park says, “Dedicated in loving memory of Barbara 'Bobbie' Bosworth, November 10, 1947 to September 13, 2008. A kind and caring person who was a true friend to all animals.” The inscription on the bench in the main park area, located on a peninsula with a view of the lake, says, “Dedicated in loving memory of Barbara 'Bobbie' Bosworth, November 10, 1947 to September 13, 2008. May those who enjoy this view be filled with peace and serenity.”

In addition to these two benches, there is a bench that the Early Village community bought that is in a little pocket park within the townhome development that Bobbie and Tom called home for 12 years. The inscription on this bench says, “Dedicated in loving memory of Barbara 'Bobbie' Bosworth, November 10, 1947 to September 13, 2008. A good friend and neighbor, you will be missed.”

Far beyond this physical representation of the impact of Bobbie's life, however, is the impact she had on others: bringing people together in her community and making connections with others. Her presence made the neighborhood a friendlier place. She looked after and took care of her co-workers as friends, not colleagues. Bobbie's spiritual side touched many people, some of whom practice Wicca and some of whom don't. It is no accident that so many people described Bobbie as the heart of whatever group or environment she was involved in.

Interviewing the family Bobbie created was a chance to see, up-close and first-hand, the way Bobbie was able to connect with all kinds of people. She was a straight, white woman from

Virginia, but only a small handful of her friends were similar to her in all these ways.

Interviewees were from Puerto Rico, or Albania, or South Africa, or from a different part of the U.S.; they were African-American, or Latino; they were gay, or transgendered. Stories told of other friends who were not interviewed – the Korean Taoist priest who Bobbie invited to join her Wicca class, for example – speak to Bobbie's ability to connect with all people, not just those who look like she did and had similar identities.

Bobbie's ability to be her own person is another striking aspect of her life. She followed the path she wanted to, with Tom's support. She read the things she was interested in, she had conversations about ideas that were important to her, she rooted into her environment and extended herself to those around her.

Bobbie grew as a person; reading about new ideas, talking to people who were different from her, opening herself up to nature – she learned and was open to it all. She didn't try to fit new things into old boxes; she examined her old boxes, and when she found them unsuitable, tossed them aside for new ones. In this way she managed to change herself, without many of the defenses that the rest of us have to deal with. Her child-like ability to be fascinated with something new and different, rather than be repelled by it, or ready to make an argument about why it was stupid, or irrelevant, or boring, was demonstrated over and over again. She relished new experiences, new opportunities, new identities, and she tried them with joy and glee. Some things she stuck with, some things she didn't, but she always enjoyed the trying.

Bobbie's example stands in stark contrast to those who barely know their neighbors and stay inside their climate-controlled homes, watching television or surfing the net or playing video games for entertainment instead of interacting with the real, live people who exist only 500 or

200 or even 10 feet away in the next house. What would this world be like if there was a Bobbie in every neighborhood, on every street? What kind of changes would there be in our society if neighbors actually knew each other, knew each other's children, got involved in each other's lives? Can you imagine the impact that this type of neighborhood might have on a child growing up in such an environment? What if Bobbie's assailants had grown up in such an environment?

Perhaps that is the ultimate lesson that Bobbie's life gives us: she strove to build connections with others and to create a safe, loving community where the kind of senseless tragedy that happened to her would be unthinkable. If we tried to do the same – if we lived with our hearts open to our fellow life travelers – maybe we could make this world a better place.



## **Chapter Eight: Bobbie's Memorial Service**

Bobbie's memorial service took place on Friday, September 19, 2008, at Everly Wheatley Funeral Home in Alexandria, Virginia. The main room was packed and there were people crowded into the overflow rooms. Tom was so concerned that there wouldn't be enough programs that I asked the funeral employee to only give one program to each couple or party. What follows is the transcript from the service, which I transcribed from a DVD recording that was made.

Rick: I can say that this is absolutely the hardest thing that I've ever had to do in my entire life. How do you get up to speak after you've lost one of the best friends you could ever have? How do you honor one of the most gentle and caring individuals you could ever meet? I wanted to speak this morning without written text, but I know I'll never make it through. So I'm going to read the text; I'm going to do my best to make it through. This week we were faced with a tragedy that we'll never understand. All we were left with were questions. The hardest one of all was a question that doesn't have an answer: Why? But we're not here today to try to answer any of those questions. We're here today for a service of celebration, a service of remembrance, a tribute to a life lived to its fullest. Obviously we can't ignore or ever forget what happened, but Tom made me promise that this service wouldn't be sad. And I'm really counting on all of you to help me keep that promise. This doesn't mean that there won't be tears; tears are allowed.

Earlier this week, as Tom began planning this service, he knew that a traditional service with a minister or a pastor just wouldn't do. It wasn't Bobbie. I think Bobbie's mom, Wanda, summed it up best shortly after arriving from Ohio. Her words couldn't have been any simpler.

Wanda said, "Bobbie is an individual." And that's what we're hoping this service will show you today: just what an individual Bobbie was. For those of you that knew Bobbie, it'll be a chance to share your stories and recall the laughter and joy. For those of you who never met her, hopefully you'll be able to walk away understanding just what a wonderful and special person she was. Now the second words out of Wanda's mouth were, "Bobbie had her quirks."

[laughter] And I said to myself, I didn't say to Wanda, but I said to myself, "No truer words have ever been spoken." [laughter] And you know, that's why we love Bobbie, her quirks; Bobbie was like no one we'll ever know again. But you know, more than the quirks, it went a lot deeper than that. The truth of the matter is, Bobbie was one of the most multi-faceted people that most of us will ever meet. Tom selected five people this morning that he felt appropriate to speak about five facets of her life. And today I have the honor of speaking about her qualities of friendship and community.

If I had to think of a single word to describe Bobbie, there's no question that word would be, friend. A more loyal or devoted friend has never walked the face of the Earth. We all have to grieve in our own time, and in our own way, and I'm not exactly sure what that means for me yet, but I do know for me this week it meant not looking at a single news story or single television story at all. All I knew was that when that call came from Tom Saturday afternoon there was a job to be done. We needed to do right by Bobbie. I wasn't sure what that meant at the time, but as the week progressed, I began to understand.

I still remember the day that I met Bobbie. I was visiting the model home in Early Street Village in 1996. Tom and Bobbie had already moved into the neighborhood, and Bobbie was in the model, bringing a piece of cake to the sales manager. [laughter] And you know, Bobbie and

I would talk about it years later, and she had absolutely no recollection of the meeting. [laughter] And it's clear, it's totally clear why: to Bobbie, that's what you did. You took a piece of cake to somebody. And from that moment I knew that Bobbie was somebody special. What I didn't know is that my partner Carlos and I would move into that very same house and we would become fast and furious friends with Bobbie and Tom.

I've also thought a lot this week about the friend that I choose to remember. The friend I'll remember is the one that was always ready and willing to embark on a new adventure, big or small. Being Bobbie's friend meant going with her to get her first tattoo. [laughter] Or helping her pick out that perfect dress. The friend I'll remember is the one that was always there for you when you needed her, good times or bad.

For those of you that know me well, you know that there were two girls in my life: Jackie and Bobbie. So when the time came to make a pilgrimage to the Jackie Kennedy exhibit in Boston, all I needed to do was pick up that phone, and Bobbie was in. [laughter] And once you were Bobbie's friend, it meant that you were part of her family. It meant invitations to family dinners hosted by her dad Jack, his lovely wife Marge, where, by the way, Carlos learned how to sharpen a hunting knife from Bobbie's sister Bonnie. [laughter] Now, you know, that's the type of story that would just tickle Bobbie to no end, she loved those kind of stories. Being Bobbie's friend and being part of the family meant Christmases spent with Leslie, Charlie, and Bobbie's niece LeaAnne. We would be searching through the house for the presents that Bobbie had hidden and frantically opening them; she loved Christmas. Bobbie loved all of her family so, so much and LeaAnne, Bobbie was especially proud of you too.

Yesterday I got to meet Bobbie's brother Barry for the first time. Barry came up to

comfort me last night during a pretty rough time, and I had absolutely no idea who he was. He comforted me, and then introduced himself. When I should have been comforting him, he was comforting me. He was being the kind of friend that Bobbie would have been. But what Barry didn't know was that I had just gotten the message that I had been waiting for all week. When I arrived last night, the chapel just happened to be empty. I signed the guest book and the second I began to walk forward to see Bobbie, the song "Moon River" started to play. That was Bobbie; she was telling me, "Don't worry, I'm OK."

When Bobbie and Tom were celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, I foolishly volunteered to bake her wedding cake. [laughter] Now, you know, knowing how particular Bobbie was, I thought she wouldn't take me up on that offer in a million years. [laughter] So, before I knew it, I was baking 40 individual two-tier chocolate wedding cakes with raspberry filling and white chocolate cream cheese frosting. [laughter] What was it about Bobbie? What made you want to do those things for her?

Bobbie had so many good qualities, but I realized this week that the one I admired the most was her ability to recognize and bring out the best in all of us. This became crystal-clear to me this week when I saw how all of her friends and neighbors rallied to support the family. Some of the first folks to show up at the house on Sunday were friends that Bobbie and Tom had made at the dog park. For those of you who may not know, Tom and Bobbie have adopted a lovely dog named Beau from the Alexandria Animal Welfare League. It was about five months ago, and these friends, Debbie and Paula, arrived with enough food to feed an army. And they had only known Bobbie a few months. That's what being a friend meant to Bobbie. And then there was Joe. An angel from heaven, only a phone call away in his kimono, ready to do

whatever needed to be done. [laughter] There were Gary and Steve, putting together the program for this service. Susie running over from across the street at just the right times to help. Natalie dealing with the media. Joan and Michael and Steve and Linda and Emmanuel and so many others preparing food for this afternoon. The list of names goes on and on and on. But the one common thread is that these people all wanted to thank Bobbie. They wanted to pay her tribute. They wanted the chance to say, “Thank you for expecting nothing but the best of yourself and teaching us how to find it in ourselves.” And now, from all of us, I'd like to say to Bobbie, “Thank you for being a friend.”

Another aspect of Bobbie was her professional life. For the last 10 years, Bobbie worked as a receptionist at Kositzka, Wicks and Company in Alexandria. Paul, one of the principals of the firm, will be representing this area of Bobbie's life this morning. While I don't know Paul, I do know from Tom that's he's held a special place in Bobbie's heart. It seems Bobbie and Paul shared a similar sense of humor, so I just kind of wanted to give fair warning; we all know Bobbie's sense of humor, so I'm not sure what we're going to expect here. [laughter] But before I ask Paul to come up, I do have one sort of work story that I think he might get a chuckle out of. I remember one Sunday I called the house and Bobbie answered, and she said, “Kositzka, Wicks and Company, how may I help you?” [laughter] And I said, “Bobbie?” [laughter] And there was a pause, she didn't say anything, and I said, “This is Rick.” And she said, “Dammit, why did it have to be you?” [laughter] She knew I would never let her forget that one. [laughter] But now, I would like to welcome Paul up to say a few words.

Paul: Thank you, Rick, appreciate that. Bobbie came with us in 1998 as our receptionist, and she

immediately took over the job, learned it well, and the very next thing she did was look for other things to do. She wasn't satisfied with just sitting there, saying, "Kositzka, Wicks and Company, how can I help you?" [laughter] The things that she has done for the firm, I could stay up here and talk to you all afternoon, but basically she took care of us. She was the center point, focal point, very important part of the firm. For our clients, she made a big impact on them, she developed many friendships with them. And that's evidenced by all of the emails and phone calls that we've got, and we've got flowers, just about as many in our office as you have here from the clients and from the other people that she met and impacted at her job. The thing that I remember most about Bobbie was her ability to change. For those of you who are into fashion, [laughter] Bobbie was into fashion. It was always an adventure to come into the office in the morning and see what Bobbie was going to look like today. [laughter] Hair styles, hair colors, clothing changed with the times and she pulled it off pretty well. One day when I was walking by her desk I caught a fragrance, and I thought, "I know that fragrance." And I walked over to her desk, and I said, "I think I know that fragrance, what perfume is that?" She had this little grin on her face, and she said, "It's not perfume, it's a man's cologne; I just like it." [laughter] It was Obsession for Men. [laughter] I don't know if she was telling me something there or not. [laughter]

Another aspect to Bobbie was her willingness to give. The firm does quite a few things in a charitable mode, different things at different times of the year. One of the things that we take a lot of pleasure in is Adopt-A-Family at Christmas time. The first year we did that with United Community Ministries in Alexandria, I recruited Bobbie to help me with that and that was the end of my involvement. [laughter] Thereafter Bobbie took care of that, and every year

thereafter. She recruited other people to help, and it was a very, very successful program. We could always count on her; if you needed something, she was there. If you needed somebody to put in a little overtime, something had to be done in a weekend during tax season, she was always willing to pitch in and help. We're gonna miss her terribly; there's a big hole there, but I think the way that we'll heal is by remembering the good times and the good things, and there's a lot of them. Thank you.

Rick: The other part of Bobbie's life that was very important to her was family. Tom has such a terrific family, and they've all rallied around him strong this week, particularly his mother Sue. As her heart was breaking for her son, and for Bobbie, she somehow found the energy to keep going. Family members have been arriving from Portland and Ohio all week long, including Tom's brothers Duane and Tim, and Tim's wife Melissa, their uncle Guy, nieces, nephews, and cousins. It's been a loving testament not only of their love for Tom, but of Bobbie also. Bobbie was immediately accepted into the family as one of their own. She would frequently talk about how much she enjoyed the Bosworth brothers' dry sense of humor. Today, Tom's older brother Duane from Portland will be sharing some memories and hopefully some of that Bosworth humor.

Duane: Well, let me say that it's an honor to speak on behalf of the Bosworth family on this celebration of Bobbie's life. And when I say Bosworth I also mean the Hummons, and the Wagners, and the Sextens, and the Canton, Ohio Bosworths, and others, and for Tom I'll say, and the Winkles too. [laughter] Kind of an inside family joke. I should say also that although I

speaking for a living it's in a very, very different context and I have asked myself over and over again in the last few days why on Earth I was chosen to do this. I'm not the most emotionally expansive member of our family by a long stretch, and it's just my fervent hope that when I'm finished the question of why on Earth I was chosen to do this won't rise to the top of your mind [laughter], but we'll find out in a couple minutes.

But it turns out that the task that I was given is actually an easy one and that is again to celebrate Bobbie's life. And the one thing that I know with tremendous certainty is that the Bosworth family took enormous joy from having Bobbie in our lives. First, there was the joy that we took in seeing the joy that Tom, excuse me, well both, but that Bobbie first I'll say brought to Tom. That was an extraordinary thing for all of us to see. I once was introduced as a speaker, and the introducer said that I was a model lawyer. I was relatively flattered for a moment until he reminded the audience that when you look in the dictionary under model, the first definition is, "small replica of the real thing." [laughter] And Tom and Bobbie however had a model marriage in exactly the opposite way, the other primary definition of an example par excellence, of the epitome of what a marriage and a partnership could be. And I think that's illustrated in many ways by the kinds of things, and Tom mentioned this in a news article, the kinds of ways in which they stretched each other. I think that Tom may be among the least likely people, at least pre-Bobbie, to ever have engaged in square dancing. [laughter] He certainly would be among the least likely. Tom went on cruises with Bobbie. Tom renewed his vows, and that is something the more placid Bosworths don't usually do; these are stretches of spirit and emotion and heart and soul that Bobbie brought to Tom. And in turn, Tom brought to Bobbie the ability to patiently watch a baseball game, even the Washington Nationals. [laughter] And to



bird-watch, although of course Bobbie had a tremendous awe of nature that has less to do with classifying the precise warbler that's in front of you, and she came to that through Tom. And so they had greatly different interests that meshed, and I couldn't think of what the proper metaphor was, really: is it a mortise and tenon joint, or is it the homely Velcro that meshes together? But in any event, they brought very, very different things and they, in that way, had a model, that is epitomical, marriage and partnership. And this is something that simply was extraordinary.

I got to thinking about trying to paint a word picture of Bobbie, synonyms and antonyms that captured her; frankly there are of course hundreds of examples. Rick's alluded to a few. She was certainly one of the most genuine people that you could ever have met. I think Rick said child-like, and I think that's a very important compliment, and it's immensely different from childish, it has nothing whatsoever to do with it. She had a natural awe of nature, of the world around her. Antonyms would include hidebound. Sometimes Bobbie I think wasn't even aware of the box that she was clearly outside of. [laughter] And that was just a wonderful, wonderful thing. I'm a huge fan of what's called naive art, and it's the opposite, and Bobbie, I think naive is a good word. The naive artist doesn't care about the Western tradition of art, and what has gone before, the naive artist is simply expressing him- or herself. And the genuineness and the lack of artifice and the lack of pretense in which that's done is what speaks to me, and that was what Bobbie was in every moment. Again, artifice and pretense would be tremendous antonyms for the life of Bobbie. She was open, she was loving, she was tremendously interested in family. There's some words that cut both ways: shy. I think there's a certain sense in which she was shy, although we've heard a little bit about work in which that's not the case. She wouldn't necessarily be the first person to speak. On the other hand, I don't know that you could ever

successfully call someone shy who has five-inch leopard print heels [laughter] in her closet, and wore them. I think she has two pair actually. [laughter]

The Bosworths, and I'm talking here again about very extended families, have so many memories of Bobbie and I won't talk to you about all of them, but when Tom and Bobbie were in Portland, we had the height of sophistication every Friday night, without fail: we all went to Taco Bell [laughter] 'cause we could afford it. And then we all went home and watched, I think the program was "The Dinosaur Show" [sic, "Dinosaurs"], if anybody remembers that, but it was just a crazy, nutty comedy, and we had so much fun. My son was an infant, and Bobbie would help to make him cheese cannonballs out of the loose cheese at Taco Bell, which he could choose to either eat or throw, and she was good with either result. [laughter] We have tremendous memories in my family of Bobbie taking my daughter Tiffany to have her ears pierced. There was some controversy about the authority for that, [laughter] but her heart was absolutely in the right place, and I think Tiff has enjoyed that ever since. Bobbie and Tom had a tremendous tradition of going to Ohio for Thanksgiving, and again, I think that family outing with regard to the Bosworth/Hummon/Wagner/Sexten, etc. families was very, very important to them. It was always followed however by one or two days of 18-hour shopping, and getting ready for Christmas, and Al and others remember the impossibility of keeping up with her, and that time Tom [was] just sitting on a bench in the mall [laughter] thinking this will be over by 9 p.m. or so. [laughter] Another memory which I hope is acceptable to everybody is Bobbie having a half glass or even a full glass of wine. That was a tremendous entertainment for all of the Bosworth family. It didn't happen very often – I think it's fair to say Bobbie was not a drinker – but when it did happen, we all had more fun than we could stand, it was rolling on the floor. And like Tom,

who you don't expect at first to come out with any zingers, when Bobbie came out with a zinger, there was nothing grander on Earth, it was just spectacular, and you'd remember it for weeks, and she would bring down the house and the house was usually 15 or more people around. Those are tremendous memories. My uncle has memories like this picture here [picture near speaking podium of Bobbie with birds] of hummingbirds at the Desert Museum in Tucson, and again, her incredible love of nature and the hummingbirds in this aviary with hundreds of birds coming to her.

There's another word that I love, velleity, and it means the lowest level of volition or willingness or action on a human scale. Something is a mere velleity when you think about it, but you just never do it. I don't know that Bobbie had any of those. And this is something I've discussed with nephews and nieces; when Bobbie had an idea, subject to the fiscal responsibility that Tom would impose [laughter], when Bobbie had an idea, it simply became reality. And that is an extraordinary, extraordinary thing. What she dreamed, she did. She did that spiritually, she did that in her celebrations of rites and of rituals and of travel and of swimming with dolphins, etc. What she dreamed, she had no velleities in her life unless they were too expensive. But she simply accomplished what she thought she would do, and that included really spiritually reaching out in so many ways that the hidebound among us would not. So I think that is just a tremendous lesson that I will always take from her life, and it adds so much to the joy that we had in being with her.

The Bosworths didn't earn this honor, in any way, but we're going to be entrusted with continuing an honor, and that is that Bobbie is going to be interred in Portland. And that's something Tom and Bobbie talked about, and that places a lot of responsibility on anybody who's

there, but it also is a blessing and an honor that we're going to treasure greatly. And for anyone in this room who ventures to Portland, we hope that we will be able to see you and continue to share the blessing that was Bobbie's life. Thank you.

Rick: I've already talked a bit this morning about Bobbie's wonderful family, but we'll also be having Bobbie's stepsister Leslie share some memories from the Spink family. Now while Leslie may have been Bobbie's stepsister in title, that title could never, ever, ever be further from the truth. Leslie and Bobbie were true sisters in every sense of the way, and I know Leslie, that Bobbie would be honored to have you speak today.

Leslie: Thank you, Rick. Like him I'm going to have to speak from paper. [tears up] [to casket] I'll be good. I've been asked to speak on behalf of the family of Bobbie, and if you didn't know the history of our family you might think, well, why not, somebody has to speak, so why not you. So allow me to tell you a little bit of history of our family. So many are still confused despite so much note-taking. When my mother married Jack, they shared seven kids between them, all ridiculously close in age. We also knew each other from Wakefield, the same high school. I dated a boy in the drama club when I was a freshman, and I would hear, "Spink!" being yelled from what seemed like the ceiling of the amphitheater while the kids practiced their lines. I thought, "Hmm, that name sounds familiar." Bobbie's brother Barry worked the lights and electronics for the school, and it was his name that was being yelled about. Bobbie wasn't living in Virginia yet; she had moved away and it would be awhile before I got the chance to meet and get to know her. But in the meantime I had gotten to know Bonnie; we were still adolescent

girls, like 15 or 16, and wondering who and what the other one was like. By the time our parents married, and I had won over Bonnie, Bobbie was back in town. When I met her, I was expecting her to be similar to Bonnie, not this petite, sweet, quiet, and feminine one. [laughter] Whereas Bonnie and I played team softball together, and “top this” type mind games – and we both still do – Bobbie wanted to take me shopping and do my hair. [laughter] It was the best of both worlds to have them for my sisters. We all became closer as the years went by. When Bobbie and Tom got married, she asked me to be in her wedding, and I returned the honor about a year later and asked her to be in mine. I don't need to tell anyone who knows Bobbie how much she enjoys helping in the decoration [and] pleasures of shopping for a wedding. I went shopping armed with ideas and many, many, many sheets from catalogs.

Over the years our family had been through a lot. My older brother Paul passed away suddenly, and with my mother already pushed to the limit physically and emotionally with her bouts of illnesses, she passed away soon too. Bobbie had been there helping and guiding, listening, and letting my mother cry on her shoulder when the pain was bad or if she was scared. I saw Bobbie hold her hand and speak to her gently and encouragingly during some very hard times. At the end of the day, on the day that my mother died, we all went out to dinner at a favorite Greek restaurant near their home, and everyone was shattered. I remember at some point Bobbie asking, “Does this mean we're not a family anymore?” and she looked so sad. I went, “No!” [slams hand on podium; laughter] “We'll always be a family, no matter what.” We are. We have been and always will be a family, and we have grown, adding Marge and her two daughters Jenny and Amy to the clan, whether they like it or not. [laughter] We've had children and some of our children have had children. So this family still grows.

I asked some family members for their thoughts of Bobbie. It's not right that I just get to speak on behalf of everybody. And her mother Wanda reminisced about her first baby, a very pretty little girl with a bright cap of the reddest hair. And her father Jack, a baby with complications at first, but turned into a smiling and very sweet child. And he felt so protective of her. Barry, I heard some stories there, I can't repeat them. [laughter] I promised. But he said she was a sensitive sister who was quick to come to his rescue, even if she sometimes did the terrorizing to begin with. [laughter] And a man Bobbie was proud to strut around Old Town with him when he was in his military blues. Now Bonnie let me know that sometimes they were friends, they were allies; sometimes antagonists, but they would kick anybody's butt if another one messed with their sister. Charlie, my fiancé, he's a Southern gentleman, he recognized a Southern lady and thought she was the sweetest and quietest of all my sisters until Bobbie promised to bring him severe pain if he ever hurt me. [laughter] LeaAnne let me know that Bobbie was accepting, and she enjoyed her aunt, and she knew that Bobbie thought that if she ever had a daughter, LeaAnne would have been just like her. And Tom let me know that that was his soul mate. Bobbie was someone who made living easy for him. So I am still honored with being the sister of Bobbie, a sister to her siblings and Tom, and why I am up here. And we will remain a family. Thank you.

Rick: Now I know it's not easy for folks to come up and speak, but Tom wanted to open up the service for any friends or family or co-workers who may like to share some memories, maybe a funny story. And believe me, I know more than anybody it's not easy to get up in front and speak, but if you feel so inclined, I know Tom would be thrilled. If you want to come forward

and stand here, come to the mic, or stand where you're seated, we would really like to hear a few stories or some memories of Bobbie.

Charlie: I'm Charlie, Leslie's fiancé, and I came into the family about four years ago and I met Tom and Bobbie. Coming from an Italian family from New Orleans, I had a very bonding and close family, and she reminded me of my family so much. She was extremely gentle and caring and loving and we started going to, as Rick mentioned, to her house on Christmas, and everything had to be perfect. Everything, and I'm gonna remember that so well, because she was the sweetest person that, I must say, I've ever met.

Carlos: I'm Rick's partner; my name is Carlos. I remember that day in the model home when I saw Bobbie with the piece of cake, and what Rick forgot to mention was that Bobbie had a measuring tape. She was measuring the curtains of the model home [laughter] because she wanted curtains just like that. [laughter] Then she confessed to me a few years later they became a bit heavy, but she loved them. That was one of her passions, her hobbies, Bobbie was full of ideas. She was always learning, she was always open for something new and that child-like, that bit of naive [quality] was so charming and so beautiful. Rick and I became part of her family. Both of our families are not in the area, so we had that comfort of a friend and a mother. [tears up] Bobbie was very open-minded, she did not care at all if we were gay or not. Probably you see on the news nowadays some politician thinking that gay people need to go to the psych ward to be cured; Bobbie was not like that. So it was really our intent, we were mentors in gay life and gay culture for Bobbie. [laughter] And the funniest one was when Bobbie said, "Oh, my

God, I did not know the Village People were gay!” [laughter] And I said, “Did you know about Liberace?” “No!” [laughter] So it's that sweetness and kindness from Bobbie that I will always remember, and she did not care who you were and [she had] none of the baggage that society will bring to people; Bobbie could care less, she would love you and care for you.

One thing I feel also I need to confess is, and I apologize to Bobbie for this, I need to come clean, was my reaction to some of Bobbie's stories. I remember Bobbie came one day, she was fairly upset from work because there was some issue about a birthday cake of the month. [laughter] And she started telling her story, and I'm trying to pay attention, but the story became more and more convoluted, and it went years back. [laughter] I woke up and said, “Oh, I'm so sorry that happened to you.” And so I have to confess that sometimes I was not paying attention. [laughter] But that was Bobbie. And a piece of advice for Tom: please don't open the ceiling and put the staircase to go to a loft in the attic. That's not gonna work. [laughter] So I just want you to remember Bobbie for her kindness and her openness. I learned from her many things, but for Bobbie there was no black and white. She never had sides, she taught me to learn about shades of gray. In her thoughts, in her love for people, in her religious feelings, in everything, her love for nature, and everything that's around us, she did not have sides. She was very open and welcoming to everybody and she loved everybody. We should be a little bit more like her. Thank you.

LeaAnne: Hi, I'm LeaAnne; I'm Bobbie's niece. Growing up, I heard from everybody that I should have been Bobbie. [laughter] Now, sometimes that was said in fits of anger; sometimes that was said when I did one of my many quirky things. So I was never sure whether that was a



compliment or an insult growing up. [laughter] Bobbie was this kooky aunt that came over with really expensive clothes for us at Christmas time, and always did our hair and always was trying to turn us into little porcelain dolls. And that was never me, and I didn't really know her too well until about 2000 when my family moved to Ohio and I came back to Virginia and stayed, and that's when Bobbie and I really got to be really close. My mom was in Ohio and Bobbie swooped in, she wanted to be my mom, and she said, "All right, here I am, I'm going to take over as your second mom." So she came down to college with me, and she saw my college campus, and she made sure I was fed, and she made sure I was doing everything, she kept in touch with emails and photos, and had me over for holidays when I couldn't afford to go up to Ohio. I found out that being like Bobbie was not an insult, it was a very good thing. And Bobbie is a very special person, and I'm going to miss her a lot.

Emmanuel: I'll just stand and speak of Bobbie, it's going to be hard, she was a dear, dear, loving person. When my partner and I moved into Early Street Village years ago, we were one of the first ones to move there, Bobbie and Tom were there, and they invited us to dinner. My partner Drew, he's in Malawi now, and as a result he's worked in African countries for many, many years. We gathered a lot of mementos from Africa. We went to Bobbie and Tom's house for dinner, and of course we reciprocated and invited them to our home for dinner. Well, Bobbie, being Bobbie, was shocked to see some of the artifacts, and she was like, "Oh, I could never stay here, I would get nightmares." [laughter] However, that did not stop Bobbie from developing and maintaining a loving, trusting friendship that will, for me and for Drew, will be a hallmark of what a true person is, to show her openness and willingness to be accepting. And one of the true testaments

was when they celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> year wedding anniversary, she came to me and entrusted me with decorating the outside area. [laughter]

Sue: I'm Tom's mother, and of course then, Bobbie's mother-in-law. And if there's any kind of gift in the world that a mother can receive, it is the gift of knowing that your child is loved and taken care of and safe. And Bobbie gave me that gift the 24 years they were married. I knew that Tom was in the right hands, was in the right love, and was in the right care. And forever that will mean something to me, it will be my treasure. Bobbie was so many things, but she was the keeper and caretaker of my son. And that was wonderful.

Tom: Like everybody else, I'm going to have to read this. It's not too long, but I really want to thank everyone so much for being here today and being part of the celebration of Bobbie's life. Words just can't describe how touched I've been by the outpouring of love and affection demonstrated by our friends and families. It's been a comfort for me and all our families far beyond what you'll ever know. One of Bobbie's favorite movies at Christmas time is one I'm sure everyone's familiar with; it starred Jimmy Stewart. It's the story of a man who's down on his luck and through the intervention of an angel is afforded an opportunity to look back at pivotal moments in his life to witness where he made a tremendous impact on the lives of others. Over the past few days through hundreds of conversations and cards and letters, I've been blessed with a similar opportunity to look back at Bobbie's life and hear wonderful stories about the tremendous impact she has had, both big and small, on the lives of so many. So Bobbie, my beautiful wife, while our life together was far too short, as you can see by this outpouring of love

and affection, you really did have a wonderful life.

Rick: I think I'm going to close it right there. There's one more aspect of Bobbie's life that we would like to share today also. Bobbie definitely viewed her life as a never-ending spiritual journey that would bring her closer to nature and closer to the Earth and closer to the heavens. Terri was one of Bobbie's closest spiritual friends and we're very lucky to have her here this morning to help us understand that journey that Bobbie was walking.

Terri: [lights candle] Everyone here, everyone who knew Bobbie knew she was a wonderful woman: gracious and full of light. It didn't take long to know how much she loved nature; all you had to do was hear about her cats or her dog, or be blessed enough to sit in her garden with her. What many of you might not know is how her love of nature connected to her spirituality. She loved nature, cats, foxes, trees, and flowers, and this love brought her to the Goddess, to Wicca, and into my life. I'm very grateful for that.

I met Bobbie eight years ago, while in a class on Wicca, and we got to be friends. Bobbie was pretty quiet with her classmates at first, but you could see the sparkle in her eyes. And when we needed a new place to have class, she graciously welcomed us into her home. As Wiccans, we believe in a God and a Goddess, that we are all intimately tied to nature and to each other. Bobbie's spirit is with us. When you think you hear her voice, her laughter, smell her perfume – or apparently her man's cologne – [laughter] she's there with you. When you dream, and Bobbie is there, say hello; she'll hear you. We are all connected, no matter which side of the veil we are on. And when one of these things reminds you of her, don't be sad. Remember how lucky you

are to have known her. I found this poem; I wish I know who wrote it, but I don't, but I think it says it well.

Do not grieve for me when I die for I am still here

I will be in the evergreen trees of the forest

I will be in the flowers of the meadow

I will be in the spray of surf at the beach

I will be in the sigh of the wind on a warm summer day

I will be in the waters of the rushing stream

I will be in the light of the Sun and of the Full Moon

I will be with the God and Goddess forever

I will be reborn.

So mote it be. Hail and farewell. [extinguishes candle] It's nice to know who went with the first tattoo, 'cause Patty and I were there for the last tattoo. [laughter]

Rick: I have a feeling there were quite a few trips to the tattoo parlor. [laughter] Now comes the part that I've really been dreading the most: closing remarks. We're going to be closing the service shortly with the song "One Moment in Time." Bobbie had told Tom that if events ever called for it, this was a song she wanted played. We couldn't think of a more fitting tribute. But before we close, there was one story that Tom wanted me to share with you. Around the time they were getting married, there was a country western hit song called "Whatever Happened to Old Fashioned Love" by B.J. Thomas. Tom told me yesterday that this song symbolized what they hoped their marriage would be and what it did in fact turn out to be. In fact the title is

engraved in Tom's wedding band. I don't think that Tom knows it, but through the years, Bobbie made Carlos and I promise over and over and over again that we would take care of Tom if anything ever happened to her. Of course, we promised, but you never give it much thought, you just say, "Well, that's Bobbie, that's Bobbie" – until now. And it makes me wonder if maybe Bobbie knew that something would happen. And I wouldn't be surprised if through the years that she had asked many others of you in this room to make that very same promise. In any case, I can't think of a truer expression of Bobbie and Tom's love. Well, Bobbie, I'm here to tell you, don't you worry, we have him covered. We have him all covered. All of us, we all have him covered. We love you, Bobbie, and we look forward to when our hearts will meet again.

[Song plays; service ends]

## **Chapter Nine: Park Bench Dedication**

Saturday, June 27, 2009 was a hot, sunshine-filled summer day in Alexandria, Virginia. Tom wanted a way to acknowledge all of the support he has received from his friends at his work and to thank them for their contributions to the Living Landscape Fund. He decided a park bench dedication would be a good idea; not only would it give him the opportunity to formally recognize his friends and provide them with lunch at his home, but it would also give his work friends an opportunity to see the park bench and trees that had been purchased through the Living Landscape Fund. Following is the speech Tom wrote for the occasion.

I want to thank everyone for being here this morning.

Many of you were at Bobbie's memorial service nine months ago. Thanks to the amazing help of family and friends who spoke at the service, the memorial service was successful in painting a picture of Bobbie's personality, the impact she had on so many people and a glimpse of the loving relationship that Bobbie and I forged over a quarter of a century.

Nine months ago was a sad occasion, but today is a happy occasion as we gather this morning to dedicate this bench in Bobbie's memory, to remember Bobbie once again and allow me the opportunity to thank my friends at Westat for everything that you have done. For those of you who were not at the service last fall, I hope that today will help provide a little insight into Bobbie. For those of you who were at the service, I hope this morning will enhance the picture you have of Bobbie.

As you walked to this peninsula and looked around, I hope you could appreciate the natural beauty of this oasis in a congested area. Virtually everyone who knew Bobbie observed how connected she was to the environment and nature. Her involvement in the Wiccan religion

was directly related to her connection to Mother Earth. While there are many facets to Bobbie that I could talk about, I thought it would be appropriate this morning, as we stand in the great outdoors, to talk about Bobbie's relationship with nature. Bobbie had a deep love of nature, the beauty of a field of flowers, the majesty of a full moon, the dragonfly at the edge of the lake, the bird that made a nest in the wreath at our front door, as well as the snake who found its way into our garage. I would like to share a few specific examples of Bobbie's intimate relationship with nature.

About 18 months ago Bobbie and I went on a cruise that took us to Honduras. One of the shore excursions we took was to a nature center. At this center was Monkey Island, home to a troop of Caputian monkeys who were allowed to roam free. As we crossed the bridge to the island, the small monkeys came toward us. Before we knew it we had monkeys climbing all over us, jumping from person to person. While many people were intimidated by the mischievous monkeys Bobbie marched right into the middle of the troop and had a ball with these monkeys climbing all over her. She was in awe of the splendor of these little creatures.

Another memory I have is at the Desert Museum near Tucson, Arizona. We went into an aviary filled with hummingbirds. Bobbie was wearing sunglasses with red frames as well as red nail polish that proved to be a magnet to the hummingbirds. Before we knew it she had half a dozen hummingbirds hovering around her and pecking at her glasses and finger nails. Bobbie was in heaven.

I also remember the trip to Chincoteague Island, the home of the ponies. Bobbie's Dad was there and remembers this story. We were birding and had parked the car along the nature drive to look at some birds on a pond. About 200 feet a way was one of the ponies. Bobbie

thought, “the heck with the birds,” and before we knew it, Bobbie was walking slowly toward the pony. I tried to tell her the pony could bite or kick, but she was determined to pet the pony. As she gradually moved closer, you could tell the pony was nervous. The pony had a quizzical look as if to say, “Oh, no she isn’t.” Bobbie eventually edged closer and let him sniff her hand. She gently started to pet the pony’s nose and eventually got to the side and stroked the pony. I learned an important lesson from Bobbie that day: don’t worry about being bitten or kicked when you have a chance to hug a pony.

I could have told you a dozen similar stories, but here are two things that stick out to me about these stories with the monkeys, hummingbirds, and ponies. The first is that she was an animal whisperer. All of these creatures felt safe with Bobbie and knew they were among a friend. The second is the child-like glee she felt at moments like this as she connected with nature. Bobbie was in her element. For a split second I was a little jealous that Bobbie could enjoy these moments of ecstasy, but I soon was overwhelmed with total joy that this loving woman was so happy.

I wanted to highlight these examples of Bobbie’s love of nature and animals to emphasize how important the location of this bench would be to Bobbie. This park has great significance for Bobbie and me. We had lived in Alexandria for years and barely knew about the existence of the park. That all changed a year ago in May when our dog Beau came into our life. We were looking for a place to walk Beau and happened upon this park and the adjacent dog park. It was such a pleasant location that we started walking Beau together every evening. On weekend mornings we would gather at the dog park and made a whole new set of two-legged and four-legged friends. I will be forever grateful that the last few months of our time together was spent



walking with Bobbie and Beau.

After Bobbie's death and learning about the bench, I met with the park officials to determine a location for the bench. I originally had thought about another location for the bench that was in a more central location and in my mind used more often, but the park officials were not anxious to put a bench in that location. Eventually, we came to this location and it hit me that it was perfect! The essence of Bobbie wasn't to be in a crowded area, but rather to be at this location surrounded by water that offered more peace and quiet and the opportunity for reflection. Since the bench was installed, I frequently see people sitting on the bench. I have even seen people reading the plaque and it gives me joy to think that for a brief moment someone is contemplating about what type of person would deserve the recognition of a park bench. In that moment of reflection, Bobbie lives on forever.

I have two stories about this location out here on the peninsula that I would like to share with you. The first memory was with Bobbie and the second one is after her death. Bobbie and I were walking out toward the gazebo one glorious summer evening where the temperature and the humidity were both comfortable. As we approached the gazebo we saw 18-20 geese swimming from the left across the point of the peninsula toward the right. They were swimming in single file and we stood here and watched for several minutes as they smoothly floated by. They were so graceful floating by; it reminded me of the swans you would see on an English lake. We stood there holding hands, holding on to Beau and both realized we had a beautiful life together.

The second incident happened the first time I came out here after the bench was set in place. As I was walking out on this peninsula I was aware of the osprey that was flying overhead but didn't think much about it. I was more focused on the bench. After admiring the bench and

reading the plaque, I turned around and sat down. The minute I sat down I looked straight ahead and saw the osprey go into a nose dive and splash into the water. He came out of his dive with a fish and flew away. I remember saying out loud, “Bobbie, how the hell did you arrange for that to happen?” It was a magical moment. Beau and I have been out here many times over the past few weeks and months and have shared some quiet moments, some tears, and most of all the peace and tranquility mentioned on the plaque.

I hope that the last few moments have given you an opportunity to get a greater appreciation of Bobbie’s love of nature and understand how this bench in this location is the perfect tribute to Bobbie who loved this park in all its beauty.

The second goal I would like to accomplish this morning is to share my gratitude toward all the kind and generous gestures that I have received from my friends at Westat over the past few months. Before I do this, for those of you from Westat, you probably see some faces that you don’t recognize and I hope you don’t mind that I acknowledge some others who have been important to me.

[Introduction of family members, friends, and dog park friends]

Hopefully, when you come back to my home for lunch, you will at least be familiar with these people who have had such an impact on me.

Now I would like to thank my friends at Westat. Your outpouring of love has been amazing. Over 100 of my co-workers contributed to the Living Landscape Fund, which made this bench possible. In addition to this bench, you have purchased four trees that are planted in the picnic area. The city arborist was thrilled to plant the trees there as some of the big oak trees are dying and these will eventually replace them. As if that wasn’t enough, the gifts kept

coming. As part of what I like to call the “Keep Tom Fed Project,” which obviously was successful, I received gift certificates to a number of restaurants in the Rockville [Maryland, where Westat is located] and Alexandria areas. In addition, a generous donation was made in Bobbie’s name to the Alexandria Animal Welfare League which I know made Bobbie smile that animals in need were being helped. Finally, each of you was given a sheet to write your thoughts to me and I was given an amazing collection of heartwarming thoughts that I will cherish forever. The variety of ways that you expressed yourselves in these thoughts speaks to the creativity of Westat employees.

In addition to these tangible gifts, I can’t begin to count the number of times that you have come to my office, passed me in the hall, or sent me an e-mail and asked how am I doing. Each time the question was said with feeling and wasn’t just, “Hi, how are you doing?,” but what was implied was, “Really, Tom, how are you doing? Do you need to talk? Is there anything I can do to help?”

Let me answer the question of, “How am I doing?” I can say with confidence that while I still have moments of sadness and grief, they are diminishing daily. I am moving forward, and despite a little trepidation, am anticipating a positive future in front of me. I wouldn’t wish what I have gone through the last nine months on anyone; however, you might find it surprising that out of this tragedy I know I am a both a stronger and better person for the experience. I now don’t let the little things bother me and I live more in the moment. Some of you may be familiar with a song by Tim McGraw called “Live like You Were Dying,” a song about what would you do if you knew you were dying. There are two lines in that song that have touched me; those lyrics are, “And I loved deeper and I spoke sweeter.” When reflecting on the significance of

Bobbie's death and how to live my life to the fullest, I am guided by these lyrics and strive more than ever to love deeper and speak sweeter.

As I look at the faces of my co-workers here, I could tell you for each person an act of kindness they have shown me. Whether it was a card or letter they have sent, a hug they have given me, a kind word of support, or an understanding smile. Some examples include Tim coming to give me support just hours after learning about Bobbie's death, Alicia on several occasions making quiche for me, and Ron spending a Sunday afternoon in a sports bar watching football. I can't begin to tell you how important those gestures have been in my recovery.

There are a few people at Westat that I would like to thank individually who have been particularly helpful to me. First, is Ruth. Ruth has been there from the beginning, frequently dropping by my office to ask how I am doing. More recently, she has given me guidance on the tone of this memorial. Next is Beth. As my supervisor, she has shown great compassion and understanding about my need to slowly come back and work at an efficient level. This was done at personal expense as she had to assume many of my responsibilities. Next I would like to thank three ladies: Dianne, Elise, and Nora. Each has been there as a friend for me to talk to. I have discussed many personal feelings and they have been there to give me advice and comfort. We have shared laughs together as well as tears. They have seen me in good times and bad. Their offices are right next to each other, and for whoever does office assignments, I would greatly appreciate the three of them staying next to each other. Finally, more than anyone, I would like to thank Dannie. I'm not sure what I did to deserve to have a friend such as Dannie, but I am thankful that she has been there for me. She has taken the lead on organizing everything, and she deserves a round of applause. For all that she has done, I can't think of

anyone who deserves more the honor of cutting the ribbon. Dannie, would you please cut the ribbon.

Again, I want to thank everyone for all that you have done in Bobbie's memory and support for me. Before we conclude I have some final thoughts I would like to share with you. It occurred to me that I have been coming to this park every day for over a year and over that time I have experienced a number of things at the park. I have put into a poem the sights and sounds I experience sitting on this bench. I call the poem A Year on a Park Bench.

#### A Year on a Park Bench

As I sit on this bench, I feel the changes of the seasons. The bitter cold of winter.

The pleasant warmth of a beautiful spring day.

The oppressive heat and humidity of an August morning

and the crisp air of a beautiful October day.

I feel the frigid air of January piercing the clothing of my bundled body.

I taste the snow as I catch it on my tongue.

I smell rain coming.

I see the flash of lightning and hear the crack of thunder of an approaching storm.

I feel a hard rain beat on my shoulders.

I feel the sun come out again.

I see a beautiful sunrise.

I see a beautiful sunset.

I see all types of birds at the park. I see the great blue heron waiting patiently for a meal.

I hear the green heron squawking as he watches guard in the branches of a nearby tree.

I catch a glimpse of a black crown night heron along the creek.

I hear the call of a red wing black bird in February announcing that spring is just around the corner.

I see barn swallows, rough wing swallows and chimney swifts skimming the water for insects.

I see a pair of ospreys soaring overhead looking for a tasty morsel.

I feel the anger of a dive bombing mockingbird who is upset that I got too close to her nest.

I feel the anger of a pair of Canada geese hissing at me for getting too close to their goslings.

I see the magnificent white crest of a dozen hooded mergansers as they dive for food in the middle of winter.

I hear the cawing of a family of crows. I hear the raucous arrival of a family of blue jays.

I experience all types of animal life at the park.

I see a school of blue gills waiting for a person with a slice of bread.

I see a number of turtles basking on a log enjoying the warmth of the sun.

I see a rabbit and a groundhog enjoying the new shoots of the spring grass.

I hear the croaking of male frogs trying to impress the opposite sex.

I see a beaver swimming low in the water.

I feel the presence of a dragonfly that just landed on my shoulder.

I experience all types of plant life.

I see the pink blossoms of the cherry trees that line the lake.

I smell the sweetness of honeysuckle.

I admire the deep blue of iris.

I see trees sending out new leaves.

I see brown, orange and red shades of leaves in autumn.

I experience all types of family life at the park as well.

I see parents pushing babies in a stroller.

I see parents giving encouragement to a child on a bike with training wheels.

I hear toddlers exclaim in glee, "Look at the doggie!"

I hear my friends from the dog park say, "Here comes Beau!"

I hear the excitement of a group of children playing at the playground.

I hear the squeaking of a swing set that needs oiling.

I hear the crack of the bat at a Little League game.

I smell hamburgers cooking on the barbeque.

I see extended families enjoy a picnic lunch.

I see the faces and clothing of a dozen cultures.

I hear the languages of a dozen cultures.

I feel joy when I see a couple holding hands.

I feel alone when I see a couple holding hands.

I sense a community coming together.

These are just some of the sights, sounds and feelings one would experience over the course of a year sitting on this park bench.

Perhaps in the short time you have been here today, you have experienced some of these sights, sounds and feelings.

Some of what I mentioned, I have experienced rarely.

Some of these I have experienced occasionally and

Some of these I have experienced often.

There are, however, two feelings that I will experience every time I sit on this bench.

First, every time I am sitting on the bench I will feel Bobbie's presence.

Second, every time I am on the bench I will fondly remember the love and support I have received from my Westat family.

I will never forget and will be eternally grateful for all that you have done to support and comfort me.

That concludes the dedication of the park bench in Bobbie's memory. Thank you so much for being here to remember Bobbie and to support me.



## Appendix

### List of Interviews

Who was interviewed, their relationship to Bobbie, and the date and place of interview. A \* means Tom was present and co-interviewed.

Interview 1, Joe, friend and across-the-street neighbor, December 31, 2008, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 2, Tom, husband, December 31, 2008, Alexandria, Virginia

Interview 3, LeaAnne, niece, January 2, 2009, Alexandria Virginia \*

Interview 4, Rick and Carlos, friends and former neighbors, January 3, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 5, Joyce, dog park friend, January 24, 2009, phone interview

Interview 6, Paula, dog park friend, January 24, 2009, phone interview

Interview 7, Annette, dog park friend, January 25, 2009, phone interview

Interview 8, Jane and Al, husband's cousin and husband, February 1, 2009, North Canton, Ohio

Interview 9, Patty and Terri, friends and Wiccan classmates, February 7, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 10, Leslie and Charlie, step-sister and fiancé, February 8, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 11, Margie, Xhilda, Jaimie, and Meg, friends and co-workers, February 9, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 12, Debbie, dog park friend, February 11, 2009, phone interview

Interview 13, Joan, friend and neighbor, March 28, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 14, Susie, friend and neighbor, March 29, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 15, David, friend and neighbor, March 29, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 16, Sue, mother-in-law, March 29, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 17, Judy and Joe, dog park friends, March 30, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 18, Bill, friend and former neighbor, March 30, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 19, Bonnie, Wanda, and Bunky, sister, mom, and niece, June 16, 2009, Clayton, Ohio

Interview 20, Beth, spiritual student, June 23 and June 29, 2009, email and phone interview, respectively

Interview 21, Millie, Wiccan teacher, June 28, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Interview 22, Jack and Marge, dad and step-mom, June 28, 2009, Severna Park, Maryland \*

Interview 23, Drew and Emmanuel, friends and former neighbors, June 29, 2009, Alexandria, Virginia \*

Last names of interviewees have been omitted to help maintain privacy.

## Endnotes

i Direct quotes are followed by [] with a number and letter; the number refers to the particular interview the quote came from, the letter to a specific place in the transcript for that interview.

ii How to Survive the Loss of a Love, by Melba Colgrove, Harold Bloomfield, and Peter McWilliams (1991). Los Angeles: Prelude Press.

iii In reading a draft of the book, Tom provided another example of Beau's seeming ability to understand Tom's comments. He said, "I was driving home from the dog park and it was dusk. There was a full moon on the horizon that was big and yellow. I said to Beau, who was sitting on my lap, 'Beau, doesn't that moon make you think of Bobbie?' And Beau, who was looking out the driver's side window, turned around and looked at the empty passenger seat next to me."

iv Quote from page 76 in Ecovillage Living: Restoring the Earth and Her People, Hildur Jackson and Karen Svensson, editors. Foxhole, Dartington, Totnes, Devon, UK: Green Books.

v As a psychologist, I have to say that Bobbie's statement sounds like an introvert talking (and Leslie's response very much an extroverted comment), rather than anything to do with intelligence. I've thought a lot about whether Bobbie was an extrovert or an introvert. She seemed to have been a combination: her love of reading and ability to get "lost" in a book and the sense that the conversation moves too quickly to add anything in all point to introversion, but her desire to forge a community and intense need to be around others and get encouragement and validation from them point to extroversion. I would call her an extrovert who was more quiet and thoughtful than most other extroverts.

vi Although strictly speaking "witch," "Wiccan," and "pagan" are not interchangeable terms, I will be treating them as such. Wiccan is the formal name for a religion, whereas pagan is a more general term; one can be a pagan and not be Wiccan. "Witch" is a general term that most anyone practicing "the Craft" or "the Old Religion" can use to refer to themselves.

vii Definition of namaste from wikipedia.org

viii Quote from The Washington Post article, "Loved Ones Recall Gentle Life of Va. Woman Lost to Abduction," by Tom Jackman, September 16, 2008.

ix A cursory web search shows that there are, indeed, dragonflies in Florida; however, I do not want to take away from the significance of the meaning of this event for Marge.

x Jon had the 1973 album "Abandoned Luncheonette" on which the song "She's Gone" first appeared. The song wasn't a hit for the duo until it was re-released on a subsequent record in 1976.