

## Eulogy

*By Kristen Habeeb*

Robert Sidney Jordan was known to the world in many ways - Bob, Robert, Rob, Robbie, Husband, Father-in-law, Brother, Son, Uncle, Cousin, Grandpa, Boss... friend.... Growing up, Matt, Mike and I always knew him as the MAN in our lives and what a DAD should be. He taught the boys and I to be strong and to think for ourselves, to do the right thing, to work hard and not to take crap from anybody. He liked Levi Jeans & a black leather jacket, Kung Fu, Sci-Fi and Western movies. He taught us how to throw a punch and to be smart and proudly raised two of the most mentally and physically tough boys at Independence High School. He taught us to ride a bike and work a butterfly knife, he carved pumpkins with us, he liked fishing and animals and nature and understood survival. He seemed to know something about everything and could fix anything. He loved us but wasn't "easy" on us. He was prudent and patient but when we finally pushed him to the limit (Usually this was Matt) the old belt might come off to get us back into line. He *liked* it when we "used" his tools and hardware on his workbench, he let us shoot arrows with the neighbors bow in their backyard (and not the fake Nerf kind either). If we were feeling sorry for ourselves, he certainly didn't feed into it (I guess that was grandma's job or something) but instead he would put our problems in perspective and IF we let him, he would help us solve them. And I know now there were years when we lived in Parma when times were pretty lean but *we* never knew it because *he* didn't complain. We still never missed a Little Family Reunion (no matter WHERE it was) and really *we* thought it was cool that you could see the road through the holes in the floor of our old blue van. Years later he recounted to us that at one point when the windshield wipers on the old car broke he actually chose to sew them back together because buying new ones wasn't really in the budget. And whether we kids understood it or not in those days, this man sacrificed and worked every single day to guide, defend, protect and support his family. Of course as you all know – his hard work and tenacity paid off and life has been a lot more comfortable for the family in the past few decades – but success didn't change him. He remained the same sensible, family-centered guy and if anything became more generous with his time and resources. He has been an active member of this church almost his entire life and has dedicated countless hours as a member of The Kiwanis Club of Independence.

Dad grew up in Brooklyn Ohio where again, he was a Levis, flannel and leather jacket kind of guy. He fondly spoke of hanging with his buddies especially Pat and Richard, working summers at the Jordan Boat House in Sheffield Lake, running Clague Stables, riding his favorite horse Penny, raising bunnies and running hayrides. He had a bunch of crazy stories that I won't tell at church but for those of us that remember them – they might have contained Mildred the Goat, sinking in quicksand, being pinned under a horse or some poor soul who earned the nickname Tidalwave. I obviously didn't know him in those days but my sense is that he was smart, industrious, fun and more than a little wild.

Conveniently for him, his older sister Jan had an adorable little brunette roommate at Ohio University named Gail vonStempa and Dad coincidentally ended up attending OU himself (studying industrial technology). He and Gail became an item, got married and started their family in Parma. They later planted roots in Independence and made some great lifelong friends. My parents took care of each other and stayed married, and this past summer celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding anniversary. It was a great day.

Anyway, years later Dad put the boys and I through college, and AFTER giving us all jobs, teaching us his business, walking me down the aisle *and* welcoming a son and two new daughters to the family, he became the best **grandfather** our kids could ask for. He has attended soccer games, wrestling matches and countless volleyball games. He has built (First Place) Powderpuff Derby race cars, baited fishing hooks (and gently removed them from tiny fingers), attended track meets & basketball games, participated in toddler swimming lessons (yes in the pool), enjoyed Grandparents Day, Easter Egg Hunts, Trick Or Treating and Visits to Santa. He was there to pick up my girls at the hospital (more than once) when their sister was getting stitched up, has taken the grandkids to countless lunches, played games of Uno, Spoons and a million rounds of Rummikub. The grandkids will undoubtedly remember him at one of his favorite places - Catawba Island, sitting up on the balcony of his condo on Lake Erie happily watching the waves come in and pondering the issues of the world while they played in the pool below.

So back to his business (that possibly could also be described as his 4<sup>th</sup> child - In 1980 after being laid off from his job at Ford, Bob founded North American

Machinery which later became North American Switchgear as we know it today. The first years were not easy – he was buying, selling and trading machinery and the fledgling business had plenty of frustrations that could have discouraged even the most tenacious entrepreneur. But my Dad persevered and after a happenstance discussion with his friend Joe Tate at a dinner party, he began to focus on circuit breakers and substation switchgear and he built his business into a successful enterprise. In 1991 he sold the company to a utility in Indiana and retired for a bit. Thankfully for those of us who work for him now, he bought the business back a few years later and returned to the used electrical equipment game. It wasn't long before he was rolling again, and soon after, Matt, Mike and myself, Megan, Habeeb, Bill, Will and Mimi were all employed by him, as well as his granddaughters Julia and Sadie who worked with us in the summer – Dad was unashamed of his nepotism. He achieved phenomenal success became one of the most respected switchgear experts in our industry. Bob Jordan was especially known throughout the US and Canada for his high integrity and honesty. He was a good boss with a knack for seeing the potential in people and bringing out the best in them. He was always willing to teach what he knew to others and he was generally patient with us and almost never got angry when we screwed up (except with cousin Bill who managed to push his buttons harder than anyone else). But really - anybody who took time to get to know him learned of his unique and special business philosophy that certainly couldn't be learned from any textbook. I personally feel that whether you are blood or not, if you choose to be a true part of the NAS team then you are family. He served as a mentor to many people – most certainly including myself.

I already miss my Dad so much – especially our daily lunches together at work, talking about politics, world affairs, the economy, my girl's volleyball drama or whatever else came to mind. Nothing will ever be the same without him at North American Switchgear or anywhere else in my world. In closing I wanted to repeat just a few of the comments that our friends, family and colleagues sent about my Dad in the past week.

“He was one of the good guys”

“He was a Good American”

“We liked your dad so much. I remember when I first started with (W) Engineering Service and Chino would tell me “just call Bob”...and your Dad would take care of things with no PO...just a “handshake” agreement. It was the first time in this business I encountered this and was so surprised by it-yet Chino said “it’s just the way Bob is...he trusts us!”. That endeared him to us so much-his honesty and trust....never mind his great knowledge of this business. We could always depend on him-no matter what”.

- Kim, friend and longtime business colleague

“Bob was a funny and easy going gentleman. You found that out if you ever had the opportunity to sit with him at a breakfast or luncheon”.

- Anita, manager of a local trade association

“Bob and I have been working together for 30 – 40 years and he is one of my all-time favorite clients. Loved his sense of humor and his views on life, business and politics”.

- John, friend and business associate

“I will always remember Mr. Jordan as an honest, loyal successful, honorable, hardworking and family loving American man. During my 1<sup>st</sup> full time job out of college, he helped instill in me the value of the dollar and his desire to keep chasing after it. I will never forget the years at North American Switchgear. He was there not only for me but for any employee, and I am grateful for those years shared together”.

- Tom, a former employee and family friend

“Such a great father and grandpa “

“An amazing family man”

“A Character who added color to my life”

And finally, my favorite:

“The world is a better place for his having been here”