

Eulogy:

Miriam, Louisa, family members, Mac, friends and neighbors

The ancient Greeks defined happiness as the application of ones abilities in pursuit of excellence. By such measure who could have led a happier life than Robert Richard Pyle?

I am honored to have been asked to undertake this most daunting challenge, but what words can describe a man who for more than 50 years stood firm as a bulwark of our community? A sturdy bridge spanning our summer and year round communities admired, loved, and respected by those fortunate to enjoy the pleasure of his company. Try as we will, words will never provide a significant measure of comfort to those who grieve, nor will they bridge the vast chasm of irreparable loss?

The great challenge in this endeavor is to be economical of word while doing justice, and paying homage to a rich life fully lived. Throughout his remarkable life Bob embraced these guiding principles:

It matters not what you buy but what you build

It matters not what you receive but what you give

What will matter is not what you learn but what you teach

What will matter is every act of courage, compassion, or sacrifice that enriched, empowered, or encouraged others to follow your example

What will matter is not your competence but your character

What will matter is not how many people you knew but how many will feel a lasting loss when you are gone

What will matter are not your memories but the memories that live on in those who loved you

What will matter is how long you will be remembered and for what

Living a life that matters happens not by chance it happens by choice

Was not our Bob far too busy for a mere trifle such as death to stand in the way of that yet undone? After all are there not problems in need of resolution; books in need of reading, songs to be sung, young people in need of tradition; drams of good scotch to be sampled; friends to be greeted with the familiar "You're fine, how am I". Yet as wrote Emily Dickinson" although he could not stop for death it kindly stopped for him"

He was a gentle giant of a man gifted with the grace, dignity, and manners from a time long past. He truly was a man vaccinated against, and immune to the pervasive cynicism and vulgarities of our age. Perhaps his finest hour came with his leadership in the effort to replace the beloved 1952 Northeast Harbor library with a larger modern facility. Common ground was difficult to identify for little consensus emerged concerning the necessity of a new library; friendships became strained, and so the house divided .This was not the happiest time of his directorship. Although kicking the proverbial can down the road might have been the easy thing to do, Bob knew that for the sake of the library's future, he must not call retreat but charge forward. He knew, as did William Bradford speaking in 1630 of the founding of the Plymouth Bay Colony that all great and honorable actions are accompanied with great difficulties and must be enterprised and overcome with answerable courage. To Bob an obstruction was merely an opportunity for advancement and the building at the corner of Joy and Summit roads stands now as testament to his vision. We need not more jackasses, eager to kick down barns, we need more are carpenters like Bob to build them.

He was a man blessed with a natural curiosity and a self- deprecating sense of humor. He reveled in life with all of its possibilities. He treasured learning as a life- long enterprise but was always aware that the greater our knowledge increases the greater our ignorance unfolds. He knew that knowledge without wisdom is not virtue and the commission of honest error is not vice.

Bob moved easily in society's circles yet at ease with, and a genuine affinity for those amongst us less fortunate. He was blind to both class and color rising always in summons of the better angels of our nature, never standing in judgement of those with whom he disagreed, yet holding firm in defense of those values and traditions which he cherished. He had courage, compassion, and wisdom and we stand in need of all three.

Bob's Friend Samuel Eliot Morrison wrote in his 1965 book Spring Tides of old salts at death's door who would always die on the ebb tide as his spirit would wish to float out of the harbor on the ebb to once more survey familiar scenes- kelp marked ledges- foaming rip tides circling sea birds- friendly lighthouses before departing for another world.

It is a fragile thread that binds us to this earth. Bob woke Christmas morning in high spirits filled with good cheer and song, surrounded by loving family. Yet by morning's passing he cleared harbor, his barque launched upon that unknown sea from which no voyager has ever returned

Is it not comforting to envision Bob's passage by Bear Island , down the Eastern Way to Isleford pausing once more to survey the ancestral Sawtelle summer home , to remember the fields where he played in childhood , then past Bakers onward to his reunion with parents, brothers , Godmother Lidia, friends Randy, Sandro, and of course Gunnar?

Bob loved to tell stories and tall tales of times and people long departed yet living still in memory. He was a living archive and chronicler of the history of the Town of Mount Desert. He knew that no one truly dies so long so their names are remembered and spoken, and this is as close to immortality as any dare to dream.

It is inevitable that the passage of time will one day sever the cord connecting the present with the past. Days, months, and years slip quickly by as life stretches ever onward towards the horizon; friends and family pass away, fewer people share common memories. I would like to share just a few memories from the days of youth when, Bob was beardless and the majority of his days lay ahead. Bob was great fun and quite a prankster

1. Home Brew story
2. Drug store
3. Lower Hadlock

And now dear Bob, we say well done. Your life's work is complete; lay your labors down; go now to seek your rest. As you journey far we offer to you this simple Gaelic blessing?

May the road rise up to meet you?  
May the wind be forever at your back  
May the sun shine warm upon your face  
May the rain fall soft upon your fields  
And until we meet again  
May God hold you in the palm of his hand