



Robert Buford

September 16, 1939 - April 18, 2018

Bob Buford—the business and ministry icon whose midlife journey “from success to significance” shaped generations of leaders—died Wednesday, April 18, 2018 in Dallas.

He was preceded in death by his son, Ross, and survived by Linda, his beloved wife of 57 years. Linda and Ross were Bob’s highest priorities, alongside his faith in God, in a life distinguished by goal-setting and priorities.

Mental discipline came early to the eldest son of Lucille Ross Buford, a business woman so ahead of her time that in the 1950s when she bought her first television station in Tyler, the transaction required femme sole—the co-signature of a man willing to back her.

Lucille’s career had begun with her first purchase of a radio station in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, where Bob was born on September 16, 1939. When Bob’s father, Paschal “Pat” Buford, fell ill, the family relocated to McAllen, Texas, but little improved. Pat died and the family—now with twins Jeff and Jerry—moved to Tyler and bought a radio station there.

By the ‘50s, when Lucille built Tyler’s first television station, Bob was prime for an after-school business education in writing commercials, selling airtime, or moving camera cables during a show. (The L in Tyler’s KLTV, Channel 7, is for

Lucille.)

“He used to say his mother read him profit-and-loss statements rather than Winnie the Pooh,” Linda said. “She gave him a briefcase when he was 12 years old.”

Still, the highlight of Bob’s early childhood, Linda said, was Mr. Sessions, a neighbor who taught Bible stories to local kids and sparked the faith that lighted Bob’s life.

In 1971, Lucille died in a freak one-room fire in a downtown Dallas hotel, leaving Bob to manage the family’s national TV company. As he bought stations and cable systems in small- and medium-sized markets, Bob also devoured books on management. Most authors failed to impress him, except one: Peter Drucker, father of modern management. One day Bob cold-called Peter, then consulting with the likes of Microsoft and General Motors, to ask for a one-on-one meeting.

After that, Bob annually trekked from Texas to California for consultations that remained professional until 1987, when Bob and Linda’s 24-year-old son, Ross, drowned in the Rio Grande. “Why does it take something like this to say I love you?” Peter said to Bob.

The friendship grew, and Peter’s thinking infused Leadership Network, which Bob had helped found in 1984 as a parallel career to bring best business practices to a new wave of young pastors. With Peter, Bob helped a roster of innovators like Rick Warren and Randy Pope to learn to scale church ministries to the needs around them.

Peter meanwhile urged Bob to write about his search for significance. Starting in 1981 when, having exceeded every business goal, Bob asked, “How much

is enough?" The answer eventually led to the selling of Buford Television and Bob taking steps to "do more than write check to charities." In time, he pioneered a model to bring business skills to human need.

"Halftime," (with a foreword by Peter) slowly became a million-seller. The Halftime Institute, now 22 years old, helps marketplace leaders move their lives from just making money to making a difference.

Bob's own "second half" work, meanwhile, touched the world. With signature lines such as "Go big or go home," "Operate from islands of health and strength," and "So, how do you measure that?"—and staying close to Peter—Bob helped thousands of gifted men and women tap and unleash their own highest passions for good.

"Bob liked to launch people, that was the fun part," Linda said. Just as Peter had observed to Bob, "Your fruit grows on other people's trees." Those trees, and that fruit, knew no bounds. And the world took note. Admiral Ed Allen, captain of a US naval carrier, told Bob: "You are not the carrier. You're not the airplane. You're not the pilot. You are the catapult that gets the plane airborne."

Connected, independent, faithful, innovative, verbal, fearless, brilliant—with wide-ranging interests and unusual depth, Bob built a non-standard business and a life that leaders will continue to study. He sought out interesting people of any rank; he loved art and travel. His many books are heavily underlined. He forever changed how leaders do well; "Halftime" stays current in bookstores.

In 1978, at age 39, Bob handwrote and sealed a stack of pages in an envelope titled "What If." Days before his death this week, Linda opened the

files to read these words to her and Ross:

“In overall life satisfaction, I consider myself in the very upper tier. I am ready to go on living and look forward to many exciting things, but I also feel that I have had a more-than-adequate life if it were to end today. Remember that I have just gone on to the next phase—like graduating from college. It has been fun, but what is ahead will be even better.

“If I die, my wish for you is to mourn, grieve, experience the loss fully—not repressing it—so you can be done with it. Recall the absolute confidence I have that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. And think how happy I will be, face to face with Christ, and to know everything not through glasses darkly.”

Bob was preceded in death by his son, Ross Buford, and his brother, Jerry Buford. Besides wife Linda, he is survived by his brother Jeff Buford, and Jeff’s children, Christopher Buford and Lauren Buford Beaird; nephews Scott and Vic Gardner; and business associates considered family, chief among them assistant and righthand BJ Engle.

A private graveside service at Rose Hill Cemetery in Tyler, Texas will be held on Monday, April 23. Dr. Robert Lewis of Little Rock, Arkansas, Rev. M.L. Agnew of Tyler, and Fred Smith, Jr. with whom Bob cofounded Leadership Network will officiate.

A celebration of Bob’s life is planned for early June in Dallas.

In lieu of flowers, friends may give to the charity of their choice or to Leadership Network or the Halftime Institute.

Previous Events

deliver all arrangements by 12p

APR **23**. 12:00 PM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Tribute Wall

RB

“ Linda - My sincere condolences. I was yours and Bob's CPA (from Longview) while Beryl Berry was still there. I once asked Bob "How Much is Enough" also - he told me at the time that "not now - but I will know when it arrives". I enjoyed his intellect and attention to detail - and his love for you and the two brothers (who were also clients). I have his books and always speak highly of him and his leadership. We will all miss him.
Russ Brown (4-21-18)

Russ Brown - April 21, 2018 at 01:08 PM

SF

“ Condolences to the Buford family. I worked at KLTV from 1981-1994, and met Bob on several occasions, including the sad afternoon when we all stood in the studio and he talked to us about the death of Ross.
Best thoughts and prayers to the Buford family; Bob will be sorely missed.

scott finley - April 20, 2018 at 11:00 AM

LM

“ Loretta Martinez lit a candle in memory of Robert Buford



Loretta martinez - April 20, 2018 at 04:40 AM

JJ

“ *Rest in Peace my friend. I recall when Bob called on my business in Tyler as a young man to sell me TV time. I am proud to have known him . What a great testimony his life has been May God give his family The peace and comfort that only He can give.*

Jeff Jones - April 19, 2018 at 11:04 PM

TN

“ *The Staff and Board of Leadership Network purchased the Heavenly Grace Spray for the family of Robert Buford.*



The Staff and Board of Leadership Network - April 19, 2018 at 01:22 PM