



## Robert John Comeford

May 23, 1944 - April 22, 2019

Robert John Comeford, 74, (Bob as he is known by his Utah family and friends and Rob as he is known by his Indiana family and friends) valiantly and triumphantly crossed the finish line after the toughest, longest leg of his mortal race in the arms of his loving wife and in the presence of his precious family on April 22nd, 2019. Bob endured the wicked ravages of Alzheimer's Disease with grace, dignity, and enduring patience--all traits that defined his entire life.

Bob began his race in Valparaiso, Indiana on May 23, 1944, born to Thomas Bernard and Mary Theresa Sprencel Comeford. He attended St. Paul's Catholic School through 8th grade and then became a Valparaiso High School Viking, where he excelled as a top athlete in cross-country as well as track and field, running the hurdles, 400 meter, 800 meter (which he ran in an astonishingly quick 1:58) and high jumping 6'1", well over his own height. Along with his twin brother, Willie Comeford, he also led his YMCA basketball team to win the Indiana State YMCA Championship—more about that later! Still today, Bob and his brothers Willie and Chuck continue to be remembered by their high school peers for their athleticism, but also, perhaps more importantly, for their graceful sportsmanship and easy willingness to bolster each of their teammates, even those at the back of the pack. Bob's athletic and professional success as a track, cross-country, basketball, and wrestling coach was forever recognized by Valpo High when in 2010, he was inducted

into the Valpo High School Viking Hall of Fame. Please take a moment to view that Hall of Fame designation on the Celebration of Life Table outside.

Bob joined the United States army in 1967 and trained as a paratrooper with the 101st Airborne "Screaming Eagles" Division. After completing jump school, he served his country in Vietnam in an infantry division where he received the Bronze Star for heroic and meritorious service in a combat zone. Bob was proud of his time in the service and wore his uniform and participated in community events with tremendous dignity each Veterans Day. After his discharge from the army, Bob ventured to Utah to attend Southern Utah State College (now SUU) where he quickly became a walk-on member of the track team, earning a scholarship after only one year. He was also offered a position on the basketball team due to his jumping ability and uniquely Hoosier-style basketball skills, but he declined this offer in order to focus his attention on his running, which sure did pay off. His school record for the 440 hurdles remains intact at SUU and is visible in the championship case in the Centrum on the SUU campus. In addition to being a championship student athlete, while at SUU Bob made many friends, earned a degree in mathematics, and met a beautiful Cedar City woman who worked in the college cafeteria, Geraldine Sorensen, with whom he quickly fell in love and married in the St. George Temple on February 25th, 1972.

After graduation, Geri and Bob moved to Moab for Bob's first teaching and coaching adventure at Grande County High School where he taught math and coached track and basketball. He also began his adventure as a parent in Moab with the birth of his son, Robby. He then attained his dream job that began at Dixie Junior High School (which was in the old Woodward Building on Tabernacle) and thus began a wonderful career of thirty-one years of teaching and coaching in St. George, Utah at Dixie Junior High, Dixie High School, Pine View Middle School, and Pine View High School (in addition to

working on his beloved paint crew during the summers with friends Earl Wood, Fred Page, Russ Saxton, Dean Hanson, and Paul Brooks). Upon arrival in Southern Utah, Bob was surprised to find no cross-country programs and quickly set about to change that, which he did, establishing robust cross-country programs throughout the high schools in St. George that are still thriving today (and being coached by his former athletes). He joyfully taught thousands of students everything from quadratic equations to the Pythagorean Theorem and the area of a trapezoid. His success as a teacher was grounded in his sense of humor in the classroom and in his motto for all of his students and athletes: Just do your best. And it worked for both the students he taught and the students he coached. They earned top honors on and off the field. Bob's former students and athletes continue to contact his family members to tell stories of his incredible influence on their lives. These successes were in no small part a result of Bob's patient and quiet mentorship, which became a hallmark of his coaching style. No matter the skill of the athlete or student, each one received the same championship training from Coach Comeford. Each athlete believed they were the best in Coach Comeford's eyes whether they finished first or last. This graceful coaching style earned multiple state championship trophies for Bob's teams as well as personal honors for Bob. He was selected by coaches around the state as the Utah State Coach of the Year not once but multiple times, and he was honored by SUU as one of its most prominent graduates in the area of athletic coaching. And even in the midst of all of this, Bob still found time to run in local races and the Utah Summer Games, where his talent and hard work garnered him multiple medals.

After retiring from his many years in secondary education, Bob became an instructor in the math department at Dixie State University, and he quickly became a favorite teacher and colleague there as well. The same patience, good-humor, and collegiality that defined his previous career and made him

friends wherever he went followed him into higher education and made him an outstanding teacher and colleague during his years at Dixie State University.

Not only was Bob a successful teacher, coach, and athlete, but even more importantly, he was an authentically kind man and devoted to a Christ-like life. He attended mass every Sunday as a child and teenager in Indiana where he learned and practiced complete acceptance and tolerance of others and their many differences, and then as an active Latter-day Saint, serving in a variety of callings and leadership opportunities in both ward and stake organizations. He loved people and would often be heard to say, "I like everybody and get along with everybody." And he did. His service to and love for his fellow life runners is a lasting testament to his good nature, which never left him, even in the face of the ravaging neurological disorder that came into his life.

In May, 2018, Bob moved to the Southern Utah Veterans Home, accompanied everyday from early morning until late at night by Geri, where his quiet and happy personality charmed the staff and residents there as well, and he quickly made friends with everyone he met. Despite the difficulty of the disease, Bob's gentleness and optimism still shined through until the very last steps across the finish line of his life.

Truly, Bob's advice to his children at every turn, "patience is a virtue," was something he lived and continued to live every day. Little wonder that the Pine View High School cross-country team under Coach Comeford's tutelage chose as their motto the stirring words from 2nd Timothy, which Bob has exemplified through to the end of his race: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Bob is survived by his devoted wife, Geraldine Sorensen Comeford, son Robby Comeford (Liesl), daughters Ami Comeford, Hollie Salley (Jimmy), Tracee McDonald (Austin), all of St. George Utah; brothers John Comeford

(Deanna) Brownsburg, Indiana; Charles Comeford Cedar City, Utah; twin brother William Comeford (O'Tillia) Wuerzburg, Germany; sister Dorothy Gilliam Valparaiso, Indiana; nephew Jim Gilliam Saratoga Springs, Utah; grandchildren Calin, Clara and Lottie Comeford; Gracie, Preston, and Cash Salley; and Becca McDonald, as well as many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents Mary and Thomas Comeford, brother Paul Thomas Comeford, and still-born son Curtis Sprencel Comeford.

The family would like to thank the staff and medical professionals at Southern Utah Veterans Home, particularly those who worked in the 100-hallway community for their loving, compassionate, and dignified care of our husband and dad.

A celebration of life will be held Saturday, April 27, 2019, at 11:00 a.m. at the Telegraph LDS Chapel at 700 East Telegraph Street, in Washington City, Utah. Viewings will be held on Friday evening April 26th from 6:00-7:00 p.m. and again on Saturday, prior to the service from 9:30-10:30 a.m. at the Telegraph chapel. Interment will be held at the Washington City Cemetery with military honors provided by the American Legion.

# Tribute Wall

JM

“ Dear Tracee and her amazing family, words can't express the sorrow you must be going through with the passing of your wonderful father. He was a remarkable man, summed up and more in the beautiful tribute written in his honor. What a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, teacher and friend. We honor this man, thanking him for making this world a better place by being such a wonderful human being and raising such a remarkable family. Continue in his footsteps until you meet him again. Heaven just gained an angel. May heaven send legions of angels to comfort you. All our love, Jim, Kris and Lundyn Milne

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**Jim, Kris and Lundyn Milne** - April 28, 2019 at 11:05 PM

CH

“ My deepest condolences to your family. I truly loved having Mr. Comeford as my math teacher during Junior High! He guided me through so many math classes and helped me to unlock parts of my brain that I did not realize I was allowed to use! I became the person I am due to his passion and guidance. I'll forever be grateful for such a wonderful man.

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**Cheryl Hawker** - April 26, 2019 at 05:48 PM

FH

“ Geri & Family.

*From SUSC through 30 yrs. as a fellow educator, it has been and is a real honor to know the Bob & Geri Comeford Family. Your daily lives of Christ-like living as individuals and as a family & community members is a beautiful example. Thank You -ALL.*

*WE will miss Bob and his quiet ways, his gentle yet purposeful manners and his thought provoking and stimulating comments. I have pondered much lately on our rides to school with Steve M., Ray Brooks and I all in the seat of one of our trucks off to Dixie Jr. High, then PVHS . Those were the good 'ol days of four young, goal oriented, optimistic teachers, who taught for the love of subjects and kids 'cause we didn't even get paid minimum wage. His example of service above and beyond in his passion for running lives on with a force in the Holt family. Thanks and Love to all of you. God Bless you in your recollections of your eternal companion and earthly father and your efforts to continue to "fight the good fight".*

*Ferron & Linda Holt and Family*

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**Ferron Holt** - April 26, 2019 at 11:35 AM



“ Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of Robert John Comeford.



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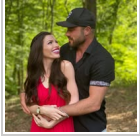
April 25, 2019 at 09:21 PM

JM

“ Out of all my teachers in high school, Mr. Comeford was the most memorable. Having him as a math teacher was fun because he made it fun. Anyone could tell that he loved teaching. He will be missed. Love and prayers to his family.

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**Janelle MacPherson** - April 25, 2019 at 06:22 PM

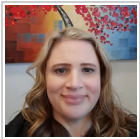


“ Coach Comeford had a huge impact on me as my four year cross country coach, and Calculus teacher at Pine View High. He took me from a slow little freshman to a not so slow senior. He was such a determined and supportive coach and made each of us feel like champs whether we were the state champion runner or the last to come across the finish line-- we had both on our team and he cheered each one on with no discrimination. He taught us how to strengthen our bodies, minds, spirits, and friendships. My years running cross country are some of my greatest memories.

*His guidance and support will be forever remembered. I am so sorry for your loss, Tracee and family. He was an incredible man and touched the lives of thousands of students and athletes. Sending all my prayers and love to you during this extremely difficult time.*

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**Caci Chapman** - April 25, 2019 at 05:56 PM



“ I am truly sorry for your loss. I will always remember him as being the best math teacher ever! He was so patient, kind, and always encouraging and supportive. He always made time for his students and made sure to remind us that we could do anything if we tried. He's truly an amazing man. My thoughts and prayers are with your family.

*Amy Sanders Hofer*

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**Amy Hofer** - April 25, 2019 at 03:16 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Robert John Comeford.*



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April 25, 2019 at 02:33 PM



“ *Bob was a willing hard worker as my back patio needed to have cement work done after I got new plumbing installed. He has always been a good neighbor and friend. He always came to the veteran's program in his uniform and had his picture taken along with Art and the rest of the men. I admired his goodness and I know your family will remember his kindness to others. He was a wonderful example of a righteous man and we were often in the same Ward - especially the old 3rd Ward. Our thoughts and prayers are with you as you complete his final journey.*

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**Lynda Paxman** - April 25, 2019 at 01:35 PM



“ *I was taught by Mr. Comeford at Dixie Junior High School and he was my best math teacher ever. His good wife taught me in 2nd grade at North Elementary in Cedar City. I love you both and thank you for the positive influence you have had on my life! So sorry to hear of Mr. Comeford's passing. Love and prayers to you and your family Mrs. Comeford.*

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**Daren Cottam** - April 25, 2019 at 01:18 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Robert John Comeford.*



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April 24, 2019 at 05:09 PM



“ *Mr. Comeford spent many days after school helping students like me. He would help us try to understand Algebra and high school math. To say he is patient is an understatement. He is the math teacher I will always remember because he was there for us, always encouraging and answering our questions no matter how many we had. He will be missed!*

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**Toni Kenney** - April 24, 2019 at 03:17 PM



“ *Summer's Light Bouquet was purchased for the family of Robert John Comeford.*



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April 24, 2019 at 02:36 PM



“ *Bob was a great man, coach, teacher, and we had a lot of fun on the district paint crew. This is such a shock. He will be missed . Men like him make everybody around them be a better person. God bless Bob's family. Life is eternal and families are forever.*

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**Wes Christiansen** - April 24, 2019 at 10:30 AM

RW

*At the front of every race ready to cross the finish line was the leader of the pack Bob Comeford. He was a constant leader and one who loved his wife dearly along with their children and grandchildren. He loved the gospel sincerely and led by example everywhere he went. No matter what he did he was a true example of faith, dignity, and a sense of humor that kept all students and families in stitches. May all of Bob's family members hang onto the rod with their testimony, and always be found hiking on the eternal trail of "families can be together forever." We love you Bob. Rex Winterton*

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**Rex Winterton** - April 24, 2019 at 03:46 PM

JE

*“ We're so sad to hear of his passing! He is such a special man and will forever hold a place in our hearts. He coached at least five of our kids on the cross-country team and made such a big impact on them. We love the whole Comeford family so much and send our deepest condolences and prayers. Love, Ellsworths*

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**Jenny Ellsworth** - April 23, 2019 at 08:34 PM

DW

*“ I am so sad to hear of Mr Comeford's passing. He was a great teacher. He was so patient and kind with those of us who struggled with math. I will always remember him as a great teacher! He's blessed a lot of lives!*

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**Denise Webster** - April 23, 2019 at 07:43 PM

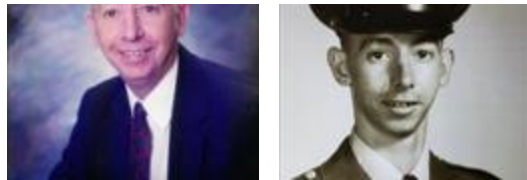
ES

“ A very sad day to have Mr. Comeford leave us. The one thing I remember from his Geometry class at PVMS is the Pythagorean Theorem (which I used when framing my basement). The main thing I remember about Mr. Comeford was his willingness to help. He climbed up on my roof with me more times than once to fix the swamp cooler on top of my house in Juniper Circle. Bob's smile will be greatly missed in Washington City.

Eric Snow - April 23, 2019 at 06:17 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Robert Comeford



Front Desk - April 23, 2019 at 12:54 PM

VT

Geri, you and your family are in my thoughts and prayers at this difficult time. Bob was indeed a very special man.

Valerie Turek - April 23, 2019 at 11:06 PM

MP

Mr. Comeford was always so kind. His life was spent in service to others. He has such a compassionate nature and made me want to be a better, kinder, more thoughtful person.

Michelle Perry - April 24, 2019 at 09:40 AM

TB

We have always loved the Comeford family! Brother Comeford was one of the kindest and most patient people I have ever known!

Tammy J Brinkerhoff - April 24, 2019 at 02:45 PM