



## Robert John Brinckloe

April 16, 1951 - April 5, 2024

On April 5, 2024, eleven days before his 73rd birthday, my brother Bobby passed away. I was not prepared to lose him so I'm ill prepared to write his obituary. I wish he were here to help me.

Robert John (Bobby) Brinckloe was born in Burlingame, California on April 16, 1951, the youngest of five children and son of Navy Captain William Draper and Josephine O'Brien Brinckloe.

Growing up on Naval bases in the U.S and overseas, Bobby was fascinated with boats and ships—their design, architecture and engineering. He was deeply affected by the RMS Titanic tragedy and keen to learn how the “unsinkable ship” went down on her maiden voyage. In a third-grade essay he explained the failure of watertight compartments with insight far beyond his years. He explored Navy ships in port and boat yards near home, driving and working on motorboats when he could barely see over the bow. Like his father in boyhood he longed to join the Navy and go to sea—and like his father, he did. He attended the U.S. Naval Academy and served on three Naval ships including USS Koelsch and Davidson. He would recall sea duty with reverence—the best years of his life.

Following his Naval service, Bobby worked for Naval contractors, providing electronic support to NASA and other agencies on key projects. He tackled

assignments as missions, believing in his methods and committed to success. The words of his mother—“good things happen if you believe”— became the heart of his life. Whatever the challenge or setback, he believed.

Bobby loved teaching and was determined to help kids, especially those lacking confidence. For decades he taught elementary and middle school students, motivating them to embrace learning. His creative approach led to “The Math Challenge,” a game that began with “three volunteers, please” and ended with students solving complicated math problems mentally. He was largely unsung and won no awards, but letters of gratitude from parents and former students proved he changed lives. Bobby also tutored middle and high school students in English, math, history and physics—often without pay. He was committed to see them excel and graduate. And never gave up on a single one.

Bobby had a whisperer’s bond with cats. Wherever he lived, abandoned cats found his door and he took them in. And spared nothing to make their lives better.

He also had a passion for preservation—of classic cars (he renovated old Lincoln’s) and classic architecture. He independently cleaned and cleared brush from abandoned mansions, acting as volunteer caretaker and generating interest among local historians. Several of his adopted homes were renovated and protected as historic properties, notably his ancestral home, Gibraltar, in Wilmington, Delaware.

Robert John Brinckloe was unique in this world—as are we all, in our own way. He was guided by a gifted brain; led by an open heart and undaunted in his will to persevere.

He lived by Ernest Henley’s poem, *Invictus*, that ended:

...It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishment the scroll; I am the master of my fate; I am the Captain of my soul.

He was Captain Bobby, and he mattered to this world.

In lieu of flowers the family would like donations to be made to the Laurels of Walden Park.