



Robert Mann

April 4, 1944 - November 30, 2020

Bob Mann lived one helluva life.

Professor, journalist, political consultant, aide to congressmen and senators, father, grandfather, mentor, friend, brother, and exuberant life-liver, passed away in his home in Austin, TX on November 30, 2020. Thanks to the excellent care of Hospice Austin, he was surrounded by his family, dogs, and a house filled with memories and memorabilia built up over 76-years of hard working, hard living, and hard loving. His death was beautiful, spirit-filled and peaceful after a wild and wonderful life.

Bob is survived by daughters Liz Stewart and her husband Duff and their children Adam (Justine Solan), Noah (Danielle Davis), and Gracie; Amy Mann and her husband Bob Miner and son Jacob Marsing (Becca Fenton); siblings Peggy Marshall and John Mann and wife Sudie; nephews Kevin and Kory Galbreath and their children. He is also survived by friend and caregiver Tina Garcia.

Bob was born April 4, 1944 in St. Louis, MO to Wayne and Vivian Mann who met during the height of the Second World War while Wayne was serving in the United States Army. Shortly after they married, Wayne shipped to Italy to serve as a radio operator. The family was reunited when Bob was two years old, and moved to Jacksboro, TX, where Peggy was born. The Mann family moved to Cameron after their third child, Johnny, was born.

The academic rigor of math and science may not have inspired him in school; baseball, Stan Musial, Roy Rogers, and using the written word to bring color and expression to the world did. He sank his abundant energy and effort into a job writing obituaries and sports stories for the Cameron Herald, beginning at age 12. As a teenager Bob was known to have an occasional backyard brawl to defend his sister or brother. The Mann family did not hesitate to voice opposition to injustice and segregation in all its forms, and Bob was the first to stand up for marginalized people.

Bob graduated from Cameron Yoe High School in 1962, and went on to earn a bachelor's

degree in journalism from Sam Houston State University (SHSU) in Huntsville, TX in 1966. In 2018, SHSU recognized Bob by placing him on the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Wall of Honor, the college's highest honor.

In January of 1966, Mann got his first job offer and went to work for the Ft. Worth Star-Telegram. In his three years there, he worked as a copy editor, reporter, and night city editor. Most notably, Mann was the Star-Telegram's reporter on the ground in Memphis, TN in April, 1968 covering Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination. He scrambled to a phone booth to relay his reporting back to the desk in Ft. Worth as the situation unfolded.

In 1969, Mann began to seek opportunities beyond simple bylines and the day-to-day life of a reporter. "I wanted to be more than a journalist," he said years later. "I wanted to be an advocate." In that spirit, he entered graduate school at the University of Colorado and earned a master's degree in 1970. Upon moving to the Rocky Mountain West, he and his small family settled in the town of Longmont, where at the age of 25, he was hired as the managing editor of the Longmont Daily Times-Call, making him one of the youngest managing editors of a daily paper in the country. Bob spent a year and a half living in Longmont, making lifelong friends in Boulder County.

Returning to Texas, Mann took a position as the assistant city editor of the Dallas Times Herald. Before long, he navigated his way into academia for the first time as an assistant professor, and later department chair (still in his 20s) of the journalism department of Southern Methodist University. For the next four decades, Bob developed a love for teaching and sharing his experiences as a journalist in classrooms across Texas, Virginia, and Washington, DC. He was an adjunct professor at both the University of Texas at Austin and Texas State University. He was also an advocate for Huston-Tillotson University. Bob retired in 2012.

In 1977, Mann left journalism for the first time in his professional life to become press secretary for U.S. Congressman Bob Krueger (D-TX). He served Krueger, who later became a U.S. Senator, in each elected office as well as in his campaigns.

In 1978, Mann joined the Carter Administration, taking a job in the White House as Assistant Deputy Director of the President's Council on Wage and Price Stability. Next, he was Director of Public Affairs for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC); "We changed the world," he said. "We took licenses away from people who would not hire minorities."

In 1981, Mann accepted a position as Vice President of Carl Byoir & Associates in New

York City; he became the senior account executive for Time and Home Box Office (HBO), helping build HBO into the nation's premier pay-television network. He also served as HBO's liaison to the FCC, Congress, and the White House. From that time in his life come many of the legendary "Bob Mann stories" his family and friends will be telling for generations.

In 1984, Bob received the life-changing job offer. He spent the next three years as press secretary to U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA); working, playing, learning, and traveling the world with the lion of the senate and American icon. During his time as Kennedy's spokesman, Bob became notorious among the DC press for his boisterous barroom stories, his love of the little Texas town he came from, and packing a whole lot of energy into each day. He continued to serve the Kennedy family as a consultant and friend for the rest of his life.

Bob Mann's passion: standing up for those who needed a protector and facilitator. He absolutely would NOT abide racists or homophobes, and actively worked to increase minority and female representation in newsrooms across America. A 1985 article in D Magazine chronicled how Bob "rankled" the Dallas journalism community via persistent pitches for more ethical behavior and more minorities in newsrooms. In the last 20 years, Mann was a contributor to CNN, Fox News, the Austin American-Statesman, Washington Post, and New York Times.

The role Bob was most proud of the last 28 years of his life was "Grandpa Bob." He loved showing Adam, Noah, Jacob, and Gracie the places he'd lived out his extraordinary life, introducing them to celebrities, and exposing them to real suffering. He encouraged each of them, and each of us, to right the world's wrongs.

Bob Mann charmed and was charmed by bartenders, CEOs, cab drivers, bellhops, elected officials, students, and strangers in cities from Denver to Boston and everywhere in between. In the final years of his life, he was happiest curled up in bed with his dogs (always sharing his meals with them), flipping between news shows and reading newspapers.

Bob is preceded in death by his parents, Wayne and Vivian Mann; his granddaughter Adeline Elizabeth Miner; decades-long partner Valerie Phillips, and countless friends, students, bosses, and pets who he's now almost assuredly joining for a "cocktail!" of Jack Daniels in heaven's best dive bar.

He is further survived by the hundreds of journalists across the country he taught, pushed,

motivated, and inspired in more than three decades as a professor and editor. His family wants to ensure each knows how proud he was to be “Coach Bob”.

Cremation has been entrusted to Austin Natural Funerals with a private COVID-19 conscious service planned in Austin on Saturday, December 5 at 5pm. Those who wish to attend via Zoom please contact noahmstewart@gmail.com. With the help of Marek Burns Laywell funeral home, Bob’s interment will occur at Oak Hill Cemetery in Cameron, TX on December 7 at 1pm.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be donated SHSU for the Arleigh B. Templeton Fellows Endowment for Community Engagement or the Bearkat Emergency Fund for students experiencing financial difficulties. Checks should be made payable to Sam Houston State University and sent to the Office of University Advancement, Sam Houston State University, Box 2537, Huntsville, Texas 77341-2537. Online contributions may be made at: <https://www.shsu.edu/dept/university-advancement/giving.html>.

Tribute Wall

RH

“ *This is late response but Bob was a great friend I'm going to miss him*

Ray Harvell - August 08, 2025 at 02:14 PM

RR

“ *Sending love to Bob's family, from a former Emory & Henry journalism student. He wasn't a professor there long—he was too progressive—but he did change my life forever. Bye, Bob. I may not have gone into journalism like you wanted, but I stayed in the world of words, adventure, human connection, and exploration, just as you did. You're always in my heart. —Rhonda R. Richardson*

Rhonda R. Richardson - September 03, 2024 at 02:14 PM



“ *Robert Mann*

October 14, 2022 at 12:02 PM

JM

“ *Bob was my favorite UT J-school professor. Although I'm pretty sure he only liked me at first because we shared the same last name, he supported and showed belief in me when I didn't have much myself. He challenged his students and showed us what a no-nonsense journalist should do. I'm sad to learn the world's lost him. My utmost love and support to everyone who knew and loved him.*

Jonathan Mann

Jonathan Mann - December 10, 2020 at 05:21 PM

AM

“ *Bob was a human smile button long before the emoji, as this picture shows. His hunger for life, and for justice, was unparalleled. He railed against inequity, and not quietly. I'll always remember the noise he made in the world. - Amy*

Amy - December 10, 2020 at 12:01 PM

DB

“ *My deepest sympathies are extended to the Mann family. I've known Bob since the summer of 1962 and we have remained close friends since that time. I will miss him.*

Dan Beto - December 06, 2020 at 11:34 AM

KY

Bob's love of life and people were infectious. I will always remember his laugh and his ability to keep a party going. He was close to a friend of mine in DC during the wild Kennedy years. Condolences to the family. Kitty Yancey

Kitty Yancey - December 10, 2020 at 10:14 AM

MK

Bob was my sister Vals life partner. I didn't get to know him and his beautiful daughters until late in Vals life but I'll certainly cherish Bob the story teller forever as well as the kindness of Liz and Amy. Ray and I were honored to have celebrated Bobs 70th BD with him and friends and family. He was in rare form and knew he was very loved. We are grateful for the stories that made us laugh and how welcomed Bob made us feel. Just like family. Mary Phillips Kalvitz and Ray Kalvitz

Mary Phillips Kalvitz - December 10, 2020 at 05:14 PM

SB

He was my hero, mentor and friend. I met Bob at Sen. Kennedy's office and worked with him at the trucking association. Bob encouraged and helped me professionally and personally. We emailed and chatted over the years, most recently last year. I will miss him and so will so many others. Thank you, Robert!

Scott Berman - April 01, 2021 at 06:17 PM