



Robert Stephen Cooley

January 31, 1940 - February 9, 2026

Robert Stephen Cooley, Sr., 86, of Wilmington, North Carolina, passed away peacefully at home on February 9, 2026, surrounded by the love of his family. Born in White Plains, New York, Bob was a proud graduate of Norwich University, where he was commissioned as an Army Second Lieutenant upon graduation. He served his country with honor for six years as a Special Weapons Officer, with assignments in Korea and New Mexico—an experience he carried with pride throughout his life. He was especially proud to see his children, Rob and Lauren, follow in his Army footsteps, a legacy of service that meant so much to him.

Bob enjoyed a long and successful career as a chemist before embracing his entrepreneurial spirit and founding a liquid chromatography company. After selling his company and retiring, he didn't sit still for long. Bob had a remarkable gift for turning his passions into new adventures and hobbies into business opportunities. Later in life, his appreciation of fine wine led him to become a part owner of The Wine Sampler, where he found great joy in sharing his knowledge and pouring wine for friends—both old and new. Anyone who attended a tasting knew exactly why he quickly became the most popular pourer in the room.

Those who knew Bob knew he was happiest outdoors tending his garden, fixing things around the house (measure once, cut twice... or three times sometimes), making stained glass trinkets, and making pancakes with his grandchildren. He treasured daily cocktail hour, lively conversation, and any

opportunity to talk about wine. He was an avid cyclist and found his greatest joy in time spent with his grandchildren, who brought endless pride and happiness to his life.

Bob is survived by his beloved wife of 59 years, Jan Cooley; his son, Rob Cooley, Jr. (Jeannie); his daughters, Lauren Cryblskey (Kevin) and Krissy Mingia (Jamie); and his cherished grandchildren: Robbie, Abby, Jack, Owen, William, Rosie, and Beatrice.

He is also survived by his sister, Leslie Cruz (Benjamin), along with his nieces and nephews: Charlena, Leticia, Matt, and Rob.

Bob will be remembered for his warmth, generosity, quick wit, and his love of family, good wine, and good company. He leaves behind a legacy of laughter, kindness, and countless wonderful memories. He will be deeply missed by all who were fortunate enough to know and love him.

A Celebration of Life Mass will be offered on February 20 at 10:30 AM at St. Mark Catholic Church.

Tribute Wall

RT

“ Heaven just got more crowded.
I'm saddened to hear of the passing of this “gem” of a man.
I met Bob at the Wine Sampler back on Oleander many years ago.
His enthusiasm for wine and for life was contagious. His presence filled the room.
In recent years , I could tell that his illness was wearing him down.
Never heard a complaint. Always spoke about his blessings.
The community will miss this wonderful irreplaceable human being.
My condolences to Jan and the entire family.
Heaven is blessed by your presence my friend.

Rick Taavon - March 25 at 08:07 PM

RS

“ Rest in peace brother. Norwich Forever

Robert L Sanborn - February 27 at 08:06 PM

SB

“ Measure twice. Cut once

S borkoski - February 27 at 05:06 PM

PF

“ Cooley family I am so sorry for your loss. Bob was such a dear man.
Loved by many. I hate I missed the service. I'm just hearing of his passing. My thoughts and prayers are with you all as you navigate this new territory without him. He will always be in my thoughts. We all had such great fun when we were in the company of Bob. ❤️
Patti

Patti L Felton - February 21 at 06:34 PM

BM

“ *Our thoughts and prayers for the family.*

Buddy & Brenda Main

Brenda Main - February 20 at 12:29 PM

KD

“ *My deepest sympathy to Jan and the whole Cooley gang. Chuck and I cherish our memories with Bob. We had a lot of laughter and fun over the years. Rest well my friend, until we meet again.*

*Hugs and Prayers,
Chuck and Kellie Drake*

Kellie Drake - February 19 at 06:08 PM

CM

“ *To Jan and the entire Cooley family, I am deeply sorry for your loss. Bob's kindness and devotion to his family is a lasting legacy, and it was my honor to know him. Keeping you all in my prayers,
Carol Meckstroth*

Carol Meckstroth - February 18 at 07:56 PM

JS

“ *Fair winds and following seas Uncle Bob!
Love
Jimmy the Sailor*

Jim Selkirk - February 17 at 11:48 PM

SL

“ *It was a pleasure to meet Bob all those years ago, when he married Jan and became a part of the family. I regret that our paths did not cross more often since then. I've kept in touch with Jan's sister Pat and niece Meredith, who passed along this sad news.*

What a wonderful tribute! The warmth and humor with which Bob approached life shone through with every word!

You are all in my thoughts.

Sheila (Tom and Sheila Lamont's daughter)

Sheila Lamont - February 17 at 06:38 PM