



## Robert John Thelen

June 28, 1924 - December 17, 2017

Robert John Thelen passed away early Sunday morning, December 17, 2017, at the age of 93. He was born on June 28, 1924, to the late John Peter Thelen and Mary Cicero Thelen of Chicago, IL. Bob's passing was peaceful after a long decline in his later years.

Bob was a decorated WWII combat veteran, a graduate of the University of Illinois, and an electrical and mechanical engineer with the Santa Fe and Association of American Railroads. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus, the Legion of Mary and the Order of Carmelites. Bob was a committed, faithful Catholic who gave away far more of what he earned in his life than he kept for himself. He was married to Peggy Thelen from 1946 until her passing in 1995, and together they raised a family of 7 children, 23 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren (so far).

He is predeceased by his wife, Peggy; son, Thomas J. Thelen (Dorothy (surviving)); and brother, Donald Thelen.

Surviving are children: Robert J. Thelen, Jr. (Kathleen), Ginny T. Still (Gene), David J. Thelen (Deborah), John A Thelen (Allison), Kenneth M. Thelen (Kim), and Timothy A. Thelen (Jeanne); brothers and sisters: Kenneth Thelen and Daniel Thelen. He is also survived by grandchildren: Kelley Getty (Jay), Scott Thelen (Jen), Mike Thelen (Karen), Chris Still (Bev), Jon Still, Beth Thelen, Sarah Mahone (Shannon), Matt Thelen (Ann), Brian Thelen (Santina) Steven Thelen (Amanda), Erin McCauley (Doug), Ryan Thelen, Alex Thelen, Nicholas Thelen, Gabriel Thelen, Rachael Thelen, Paul Thelen, Thomas Thelen, James Thelen, Joseph Thelen (Larisa), Anne Thelen, Claire Thelen, Catherine Thelen. Surviving great-grandchildren: Caleb Getty, Noah Getty, Leah Getty, Kyleigh Thelen, Jacob Thelen, Aubrey Thelen, Duston Thelen, Logan Thelen, Mackenzie Thelen, Martin Still, Hannah Gross, Rebecca Gross, Christopher Gross, Andrew Gross, Grace Mahone, Jack Mahone, Luke Mahone, Mary Mahone, Bernadette Thelen, James Thelen, Caedmon Thelen, Colleen Thelen, Michelle Thelen, Arabella Thelen, Rocco Thelen, Thomas Thelen, Jack Thelen, Matthew McCauley, Natalie McCauley.

The funeral mass will take place on Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2017 at Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church at 2pm, with a gathering for friends and family starting at 1pm. Burial will take place on Thursday, Dec. 21 in Fairfax, VA at Fairfax Memorial Park at 2:15 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations to Birthchoice at [supportbirthchoice.org](http://supportbirthchoice.org)

# Cemetery

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**Fairfax Memorial Park**  
9900 Braddock Road  
Fairfax, VA, 22032

# Events

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**DEC 20 Visitation** 01:00PM - 02:00PM  

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**Our Lady of Lourdes R.C. Church**  
2718 Overbrook Drive, RALEIGH, NC, US, 27608

**DEC 20 Funeral Mass** 02:00PM - 03:00PM  

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**Our Lady of Lourdes R.C. Church**  
2718 Overbrook Drive, RALEIGH, NC, US, 27608

**DEC 21 Committal Service** 02:15PM  

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**Fairfax Memorial Park**  
9900 Braddock Road, Fairfax, VA, US, 22032

# Comments

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“ Bob...I'm not sure if you're into eulogies, but since a eulogy concerns part of the life of one who has moved on into God's arms, then this is a eulogy. Still, for me, this is more like some of our past discussions...except you don't get to rebut or push the keys!!

I'll try to be brief...but, I have a few things I'd like to say that your grandchildren who you Love so much might enjoy. And since this is a eulogy, I will speak OF you, dear brother, not TO you.

Love is an essential when we speak of Bob's life so this is a place to start since the vibrant and vital Love of Bob's family for each other reflects the Love that exists within the everlasting Love of their parents for each other and their children.

Bob is our big brother. This was never questioned. Bob was always our big brother whose Love and protective efforts were apparent and shared and necessary. He was also a sign of the times...both practically and morally...and somehow, usually, out front.

As odd as it seems, I suggest that Bob sense of responsibility started as early as a few months after he was born in 1924. It probably began when Mom convinced Dad's boss to make him his personal assistant.

The very-apparent result of this decision, our Dad...who did this to maintain the family...spent most of the next 15 years away from home, riding the train routes most of each month to maintain their place in the national rail system. In the process, he became a key American railroader.

With Dad traveling, Bob began to grow into the de facto man-of-the house during the "good old days" of the early 1900's and the pains of the dust storms and The Depression. This responsibility became serious when the world troubles began to grow into what would become WWII.

By 1939, our Dad was finally spending months at a time in his Chicago office supporting the needs of a country soon to be at war. But, now in his teens, Bob was still our Mom's daily support. To help out at home, he worked through the last years of high school and the beginning of WWII.

We'll ignore WWII except to say that on Bob's way to prepare to invade Japan, he came home for a few days to relax. But Our Lady has a way of intervening...as She would continue to do throughout his life.

His cousin...an Air Corps man also home from the war...coaxed him into being his best man...and life changed. Almost immediately he knew that Peggy, the maid-of-honor he was paired with, would become his wife and (Bob's words) "the Mother of our children."

Suddenly the war ended and he was discharged...returned to the Santa Fe...wisely married Peggy and started their family...and, using the GI Bill, became an Electrical Engineer while staying with the Santa Fe. Eventually, he surpassed our Dad's railroader status as he applied his leadership skills in both the Santa Fe and the Association of American Railroads...often working with railroaders of other nations to resolve world-wide difficulties.

In the years that followed, Bob and Peg raised 7 wonderful kids and were always involved in the Church and the community. Still the son who was the Man Of The House, he and Peg assumed responsibility for our Mother after our Dad died.

Some might say that we grew up in his shadow. I prefer to say that we followed his

lead...as he had followed the lead of our parents...to simply see what needed to be done and to do it.

At this point, I'm sure he and Peggy are watching this farewell activity from box-seats, marveling at the activity, loving the camaraderie of their family, and asking Our Lady of Victory to continue to care for them.

Bob, I Love you. I miss the phone calls and contacts and friendly arguments that we shared in the past. And, while incredibly happy that you and Peg are together with all those who passed on before you, your physical absence just amplifies my feelings of separation.

I'll close with the words you learned from our Father and came to rely on..."Our Lady of Victory, protect us."

Dan

Dan Thelen - December 20, 2017 at 07:00 PM

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“ If I start writing, I may never stop. This man, this wonderful man made such an impact on my life that it's difficult to sum up in a few words. At times I wished he was "my" dad. At times, I felt like he was the only friend I had in the world who understood me. There were times that I just knew if I called Bob, he'd be there for me. No question. I know he's there for all of us NOW! Even more so. The last time I spent time with him I was packing up my house down the street from John. I was exhausted. Beyond exhausted. I promised Bob I'd come by because he knew how tired I was and he said he'd make dinner cause that next morning I had to get on the road for a 12 hour drive. I got so sick that I had to sit in the bathroom till I felt the "passing out" phase would leave me. I never wanted Bob to know I was "bleh". So, I finally came out of the bathroom, stay a few minutes longer and than had to leave. My heart broke because he thought I was leaving to just "go home" to my empty house around the corner and I just couldn't bear to tell him that I was just too overspent from cleaning and packing. I was looking forward to that time. Just to spend talking about God, life and just anything and everything. He always brought out the best in me. I wanted to be the best for him! I can just hear him saying "God bless you"..I love you, Bob Thelen. I am pretty sure you knew that but, it's kinda nice to put it in writing. It will always be written on my heart. Just think, he may be up there right now baking bread for everybody! How blessed heaven is right now welcoming him home. <3 love always, Mary

Mary Kerman - December 19, 2017 at 12:28 AM

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“ Several fond memories of Uncle Bob - they all revolve around family -- going fishing with bread balls for bait, hanging at the zoo, playing cards, crab boils at the beach, weddings, smiles, laughter, hugs and always a story to share. Thank you for sharing your life with us and including us in yours.  
Our Lady of Victory, pray for us.

andrea thelen landwehr - December 18, 2017 at 09:05 PM



“ We love you Grandpa! Sarah and Shannon, Grace, Jack, Luke and Mary

**Sarah Thelen Mahone** - December 18, 2017 at 08:59 PM

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“ I am so sorry to hear of Bob's passing. He and I have the same birthday which was right around the time I met him 16 years ago. My favorite memory is all of the rosaries he led over the 14 years we met on Tuesday nights. Bob came to my school and talked to the entire sixth grade. I can still see him laughing as he held up his belt from WWII stating he was a little smaller back then. Thoughts and prayers for all the Thelens. Love, Anne

**Anne Axberg** - December 18, 2017 at 08:22 PM

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“ My thoughts and prayers to all for my uncle Bob. Memories of he and my dad Ken staying up all night to argue different sides of anything. A very loving respected man.  
Randy  
Thelen

**Randy Thelen** - December 18, 2017 at 07:00 PM



“ As we grew up on the southside of Chicago we had our scrabbles growing up! Bob was the protector of his younger brothers. He was also the peacekeeper.

Diane and I miss you and we will see you again. Love you and God bless you big brother.

Ken and Diane Thelen

Atlanta, GA

**Ginny Thelen Still** - December 19, 2017 at 04:38 PM



“ I know both Beth and Sarah. Loved looking at his pictures and hearing the stories that have been shared about him. He sounds like a wonderful man! Please know that your families are in our thoughts and prayers!

**Sharen Kaska** - December 20, 2017 at 08:03 PM